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BOOK REVIEW:
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE DIFFERENT OTHER:
A RENDEZVOUS OF GIVING AND RECEIVING (FAUSTIN NTAMUSHOBORA)
BY KAY HENRY

Originally from Rwanda, Faustin Ntamushobora (Ph.D, Biola University) is President and CEO of Transformational Leadership in Africa (TLAfrica, Inc.) and Director of the Institute for the Study of African Realities at African International University (AIU) in Nairobi, Kenya. In his latest book, *Transformation Through the Different Other: A Rendezvous of Giving and Receiving*, he chronicles the problem of the human heart, the gap separating each of us and the different other, and the transforming work of Jesus Christ. Ntamushobora provides an African perspective on issues of injustice, racism, ethnic conflict, and violations of human rights. He has seen firsthand the power of the Word of God as it transcends culture, working with his fellow Rwandan brothers and sisters as they begin to heal from trauma suffered in the genocide. Ntamushobora has seen God apply His healing power to the hearts and minds of his fellow African brothers and sisters and provides a set of guidelines for all of us to learn from one another. This book is especially timely in the wake of the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, April 7, 2014.

Ntamushobora defines the different other (that is, people who are different from us) by explaining that “instead of the other constituting exclusion, the other becomes a continuation of myself” (p. xviii). We discover who we are in community. According to Ntamushobora, “the more one is exposed to the different other, the more he or she has opportunities to be sharpened – but this begins with intentional willingness to be sharpened by the other” (p. 93). This desire to learn from the different other requires a vulnerability to admit that we do not have all the answers and that we need each other to see the whole of what God is doing in the world around us. “Intercultural exposures are invisible books with invisible truths touching invisible places of the mind and heart, making the person exposed grow through experiences that bring lasting transformation” (Ntamushobora, 2013, p. 93).

Ntamushobora (2013) challenges the reader to realize that sometimes the only way we experience a paradigm shift in our worldview is through a disorientating dilemma. Learning something new can be a fearful endeavor for some, but the author encourages us that “once we know the new person and see the truth about his or her reality, fear is transformed” (p. 87). In addition, Ntamushobora takes us beyond Descartes’ declaration of “I think, therefore I am” to a deeper understanding of community with Ubuntu theology that declares, “You are, therefore I am.” Ubuntu theology is “a person is a person through other persons” (p. 78). By applying the principles of Ubuntu theology, Ntamushobora emboldens us to realize that what hurts one of us, hurts all of us.

The book ends with ten practical principles of transformation through the different other:

Principle One: As you plan to meet people from a different race, tribe, or worldview, remember that people all over the world are fallen like you, struggling with the same problems of self-gratification. The human heart is deceitful above all things and beyond all cure!

Principle Two: A human being has the capacity to consume or commune with another human being. While it is true that the heart can be deceitful beyond measure, the opposite can also be true: the heart of the different other can be a blessing to one’s growth, becoming a continuation of me – an inclusion that makes “I” and “You” a community of two different interdependent hearts capable of sharpening each other. This is possible because only life can shape life.

Principle Three: An uneasy relationship with the different other could lead to maturity in Christ. God may allow you to go through uneasy times when relating with the different other or a different environment for his glory and for your good.

Principle Four: Human beings are powerless to bring transformation into their own lives. Transformation only comes when we allow the Holy Spirit’s light to reveal things about our heart that we need to know. Then we can understand how we have fallen short of God’s glory, repent and confess our sin, and allow new perspectives to germinate – perspectives that deepen our love for God and for others.

Principle Five: Knowing that the different other brings transformation is not enough. Change happens when we know the truth, and that knowledge sinks into our heart until it moves us to new actions. It is important that we purposefully set out to know new truths and new people in an authentic and emotional way, so that we resist only gathering mind knowledge of others.

Principle Six: The different other can be transformative only if we allow him or her to sharpen us. This means that we need to open our heart to the different other. This requires trust – or taking a risk. When we open up to the different other and vice versa, a rendezvous of giving and receiving takes place in both lives, and both lives become transformed. The trust, acceptance,

and care for each other that results from this rendezvous creates a space not just for personal growth, but also for emotional healing, especially when one notices that “not everyone different from me is against me.” This is the kind of healing that expands into communities and brings healing throughout a nation.

Principle Seven: Relating with the different other is difficult. The relationship does not even guarantee that it will lead to transformation. Rather than leading to healing, it may lead to hurting. In this case, the cross becomes a healing place where those with broken hearts can meet and receive inner surgery through forgiveness. Even in these circumstances, though, a person’s heart has the chance to connect more deeply to God’s love as well as become mature, and thus more durable for future bumps on the road to loving community.

Principle Eight: The Lord is seeking people who can serve as bridges for a rendezvous of giving and receiving that he is intentionally creating through globalization. People can become bridges when they are ready to change from “I am” to “we are” and from “my” to “our.” They are those who are open to accept the other as their extension. These are the people who will become global peacemakers. However, these global peacemakers should not compromise the truth of the Word of God for the sake of adjusting to the world. As peacemakers following the example of Christ, grace and truth should always kiss each other in our relationship with the different other.

Principle Nine: Churches and Christian institutions that are hesitant to accept the different other may be surprised when circumstances insist that they accommodate the different others because of globalization. It may not be the most constructive context for these institutions to grow if they are compelled by external factors to live with different others. But if this is the case, openness to the Holy Spirit will help the leaders of these institutions navigate unfamiliar and seemingly scary waters. God certainly uses external factors – but as the Israelites in the desert learned, change of heart this way can mean a longer and more difficult journey. Let us seek where the Holy Spirit is working now!

Principle Ten: Relating with the different other is the best way for believers to prepare themselves for the time when every tongue and every tribe and every race will stand together, singing praises to the Lamb of God who was slain for the redemption of every person from every nation. Relating with the different other is God’s will and intent. Let us prepare for such a time, then, and seek God’s glory through loving the different other!

After reading this insightful book, I came to realize that, as people from different perspectives share time and experiences, we have the opportunity to be transformed by any new knowledge gained. Thus, our learning from the different other must begin by building authentic relationships that provide space for difficult conversations and new ways of responding and accepting others, as cross-cultural breakthroughs become the new normal. I would encourage cross-cultural workers, students planning to work in unfamiliar settings, professors and teachers who desire to demonstrate a level of cultural competency rarely seen in some academic circles, and anyone who desires to expand their understanding of Ubuntu theology in their everyday life to devour this power-packed book— *Transformation Through the Different Other: A Rendezvous of Giving and Receiving*.



TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE DIFFERENT OTHER: A RENDEZVOUS OF GIVING AND RECEIVING

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FAUSTIN NTAMUSHOBORA

Trained by his father to be a tribal priest, Faustin became a follower of Christ after witnessing the transformation of his mother into a woman of extreme grace by Jesus Christ. His faith and that of his wife, Salome, were further deepened in Christian colleges in Congo, Rwanda and Kenya. Their faith was intensely refined during the genocide of 1994 and afterward when they lost relatives in the war in Congo in 1997. Surprising opportunities arose for Faustin to serve with African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM) which led ultimately to him earning a Ph.D. in Educational Studies at Biola University in California and to found Transforming Leaders Africa (tlafrica.com), which exists to come alongside African pastors to encourage their personal transformation and to provide tools for them to encourage the transformation of brothers and sisters in their churches.. Faustin and Salome’s four children are all pursuing higher education: Pelagie earned a BA at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya; Jean Pierre studies at Moody Bible Institute; Jean Paul has been accepted to the University of Texas, Arlington (UTA); Gentille studies nursing in Forth Worth, Texas.



KAY HENRY

Kay is office manager at Biola University’s School of Education and is presently pursuing her Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies at Biola University. She is passionate about celebrating diversity and new beginnings since her walk with Jesus began at age 38. She grew up in rural Nebraska and holds a bachelor’s degree from Doane College (Crete, Nebraska). Kay moved to Los Angeles as a single mom of three in her early twenties. Kay’s research interests include issues of race and ethnicity, challenges faced by multiracial families, and learning about the theology of Ubuntu as it relates to the importance of community.