

## Transforming Horizontal Violence

Dr. Ani Kalayjian

Horizontal Violence is the outcome of oppression, discrimination, and colonization. Horizontal Violence is internalizing the aggression of the perpetrator/colonizer, and therefore, putting one another down. Preferring the oppressor's kind (e.g., their race, religion, color, gender, etc.) will cause us to make negative assumptions about ourselves and our own kind. We, therefore, will start behaving as our aggressor, feeling entitled and putting down those from our own group. We may see behaviors such as envy, jealousy, distrust, one-upmanship, negativity, and putting our family, cousins, and our own kind down by denigrating them and displacing our anger and frustrations on them.

***“Don't be a crab in the bucket; Be a true human and lift one another up!”***

We have volunteered in 48 countries around the world and have observed that in many countries the phenomenon of Horizontal Violence is rampant. In Haiti they did not know what Horizontal Violence was at first. But when we described it, they unanimously shouted, “Oh that is Haitian sickness!” In Sierra Leone they were sure it was the “Sierra Leonian disease,” while in Armenia they asserted frequently that “it is the Armenian condition to put one another down.” Meanwhile women, who are oppressed and abused in most countries in the world, often are said to be “jealous of one another.”

Within each country we served - while on humanitarian relief missions - we observed many acts of aggression derived from Horizontal Violence: internalizing the hatred and violence of the aggressor, putting one another down, stepping on one another emotionally, and humiliating each other with distrust. Oppressed peoples' frustration will become too intense to hide, and frustration cannot be expressed towards the perpetrator, as the perpetrator will cause more suffering. Governments, colonizers, or a body of aggressors continue to press down onto the minority people, and frustration increases within this minority group of people. As the frustration increases to an unmanageable level, it explodes horizontally, impacting the very people they love, who are living in proximity.

We learned from the African-Americans in the Southern USA, who call this Horizontal Violence condition "the crab in the bucket" syndrome. Have you observed a bunch of crabs in a bucket? I would recommend that you do. You will observe that one crab attempts to climb up out of the bucket, while a second crab pulls the first crab down. A third crab attempts to crawl up and out of the bucket, while a fourth crab tries to pull that crab down. So, this continues, and not one crab can get out of the bucket.

We have spearheaded this campaign of transforming Horizontal Violence in over a dozen countries around the world. We prepare banners in their native languages with this message:

***Be a true human and pull one another up.  
Don't be a crab in the bucket, pulling one another down.***

As John Andrew Holmes said:  
***There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.***

We at Meaningfulworld believe:  
***When one helps another, BOTH become stronger.***