

UTS Faculty Roundtable: Conflict Resolution - A Case in Côte d'Ivoire

Natascha Phillips
November 3, 2020



The second monthly UTS Faculty Roundtable of this academic year featured Dr. Drissa Kone, Assistant Professor of Conflict Resolution and Ministry and Director of the UTS Doctor of Ministry program, speaking on "A Transformative Approach to Conflict Resolution: A Case in Côte d'Ivoire". Held on October 21, 2020, the virtual program was moderated by UTS Academic Dean Dr. Keisuke Noda and attended by more than 50 participants.

As a native of Côte d'Ivoire who lived through civil war, Dr. Kone brought his unique perspective to the ongoing research on conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities. He began with a brief overview of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, a West African country with more than 60 ethnic groups and a fractured national identity divided across religious, ethnic and political lines. Since the first civil war broke out in 2002, the country has faced waves of conflict and instability, and tensions have escalated again with the upcoming presidential elections on October 31.

Despite all the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and other members of the international community over the years to resolve the conflict, Dr. Kone argued that the core issues have not been addressed. While peacebuilding activities such as building up economic infrastructure and promoting fair elections are important, they do not address the need for internal transformation.

Dr. Kone advocated for the use of conflict transformation, working to shift people's perspectives and creating change from within. Building on the work of celebrated peace researchers such as Johan Galtung and Jean Paul Lederach, he developed material to educate individuals in his home country on the merits of conflict transformation. Dr. Kone shared his personal experience with using storytelling, self-reflection and other techniques to help his audience gradually shift from an ethno-centric to a world-centric view, which includes changing their perspective on "the enemy." Once this is accomplished, there is room for dialogue. He hopes to see conflict transformation be included in Côte d'Ivoire's universities in the future, as there are currently no academic peace studies centers in the nation.

The presentation was followed by an engaging QandA session. Stay tuned for details about our next Faculty Roundtable event!