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## **HOUSED by CHOICE, HOUSED by FORCE - Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests**

January 21 – 22. 2016

Architecture\_MPS, University of Cyprus; Cyprus Institute

### **Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:**

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:** Rwanda Conversations: Housing, Development and Reconciliation

**2. Format:** verbal presentation

*Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / short film / other – please specify*

**3. Author(s) Name:** Yutaka Sho and Tyler Survant

**4. Email contact details:** yutakasho@gmail.com

**5. University or Company Affiliation:**

Yutaka Sho: Partner, General Architecture Collaborative, and an associate professor, Syracuse University School of Architecture, New York, USA

Tyler Survant: Architectural designer, SHoP Architects, NY, USA

## **6. Abstract (300 words):**

In Rwanda reparation of past violence overlaps with human rights for shelter, and low-income rural Rwandans grapple with moral and economic responsibilities. Yet opportunities or places for people to express their hopes for housing are seldom available. Before providing more housing choices, new communication framework is needed to candidly discuss what the right housing for Rwandans may be, how it should be built and by whom.

In August 2015, we organized two conversations on architecture in Rwanda around inter-related issues of "rural realities" and "reconciliation and architecture" in housing projects. In both conversations we focused on the experiences shared by rural and often uneducated citizens, voices that are often silenced. Three builders who participated in a self-build home project led the first conversation which was attended by 50 academics, municipal city planners, NGO workers and other construction practitioners. The second conversation invited two genocide survivors and three former offenders who participate in local NGO projects. The projects facilitate house building by former offenders for the survivors they directly harmed as part of the reconciliation process. This presentation in Cyprus will share what we found in the Rwandan Conversations.

Housing is identified by the Rwandan government as one of the most urgently needed development areas. However, low-income Rwandans have limited access to construction financing due to an imbalance between income and construction lending rates (triple what they are in the US). Making matters worse, Kigali's official masterplan (designed by a US firm) promotes home-ownership at the expense of a robust rental market. Financial lenders often require proof of employment in the formal (Western) marketplace. Aggressive national policies such as "Bye Bye Nyakatsi" that forcibly eliminates thatch roofed and mud brick houses, and "Imidugudu" or villagization further impact the low-cost housing sector. The presentation will focus on the effects of these policies on low-income Rwandans.

## **7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):**

Yutaka is an associate professor of architecture at Syracuse University in New York, and a partner at General Architecture Collaborative, a non-profit design and advocacy firm that works with neighborhoods, municipal and academic partners. In 2014 GAC's Masoro Village Project in Rwanda received the EDRA Great Places Award. Yutaka's research focuses on roles of architecture in the international development industry and post-conflict reconstruction. She has worked in Lebanon, Bangladesh, Turkey, Uganda, Ghana and Japan. She is the recipient of 2012 Arnold Brunner Grant from the American Institute

of Architects New York chapter and 2007 Deborah Norden Fund research grant from the Architectural League of New York.

Tyler is an associate at SHoP Architects in New York. His professional experience has centered around projects on the African continent, specifically in Rwanda, Kenya, and Botswana. At Sharon Davis Design he worked on a women's opportunity center, affordable housing, and urban vision planning for two rural Rwandan communities, with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Clinton Global Initiative. In November 2013 he helped organize the Rwandan Affordable Housing Symposium hosted by Pratt Institute. With SHoP since 2013, he has been working on residential mid-rises in Nairobi and the Botswana Innovation Hub in Gaborone.

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