

The Tom Mboya Mausoleum Dialogue: Memory, Leadership, and the Work of Unity

On 1st September 2025, fellows of the Second KPPC Program convened at the Tom Mboya Mausoleum on Rusinga Island for a powerful and, at times, deeply contested dialogue on *Legacies of Leadership and the Future of Unity, Community, and the State in Kenya*. The dialogue formed part of KPPC's experiential learning approach, which places sites of historical memory at the center of peace education and civic reflection.

The mausoleum itself became the starting point of a heated and meaningful debate. During the visit, one fellow, Max, raised a strong concern about the design of the mausoleum, which is shaped like a bullet. To him, the symbolism was troubling. He argued that the structure evoked sorrow, pain, and unresolved hatred, warning that such a monument risked becoming "*a recipe for future conflict and civil unrest*." In his view, instead of encouraging healing, the design risked keeping the community anchored in trauma and the memory of violence.

Other fellows strongly disagreed. They emphasized that remembrance is not the same as glorifying violence, and that communities who have experienced historical injustice have a right to hold onto their pain. For them, the mausoleum represented truth, resistance, and the refusal to erase uncomfortable history. Several participants argued that reconciliation could not be demanded in the absence of justice, insisting that the state has an obligation to acknowledge past wrongs, compensate affected families, and address unresolved grievances before calling for closure.

This exchange revealed a core tension that sits at the heart of peacebuilding: the delicate balance between reconciliation and victimhood, between healing and remembrance. As one fellow, Irene, later reflected, "*Reconciliation cannot erase history sometimes keeping the memory alive is part of reckoning with peace*." The debate demonstrated that peace education must grapple honestly with pain, memory, and disagreement, rather than rush toward simplistic notions of unity.

The dialogue was enriched and grounded by the presence of Paul Ndiege, brother to the late Tom Mboya, who led the session. Drawing from personal, familial, and national perspectives, he reflected on Tom Mboya's legacy as a leader committed to justice, Pan-Africanism, and inclusive nationhood. His contribution helped situate the mausoleum not merely as a site of death, but as a space for ongoing national conversation about leadership, sacrifice, and the unfinished work of building a just Kenyan state.

Ultimately, the dialogue at the Tom Mboya Mausoleum became a living classroom one where memory, identity, and politics intersected. It affirmed that peace is not built by forgetting the past, but by engaging it courageously, listening across difference, and holding space for multiple truths. For the KPPC fellows, the experience underscored a vital lesson: unity is not the absence of tension, but the ability to remain in dialogue despite it.