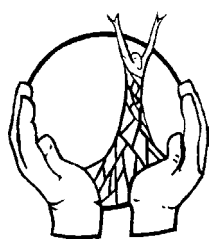
Journey to Healing & Wholeness

CONFERENCE REPORT

Robben Island ▪ 14-17 April 2004

INSTITUTE FOR HEALING OF MEMORIES



We wish to acknowledge with gratitude all those who have contributed to the Journey to Healing & Wholeness Conference:

South African Airways
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OPENING CEREMONY

THE WELCOMING EVENT TOOK PLACE AT THE CAPE TOWN CIVIC CENTRE ON ELECTION DAY…

Today our country took yet another very significant step in its own journey to healing. It is a journey that began many decades ago and it is a journey that will probably continue for a considerable time. This morning we watched on the television as former President Mandela took careful steps toward the polling station and passed his vote for the third time. The pride and joy that former President Mandela elicits from everybody is quite remarkable. His presence continually reminds us as South Africans of the miracle that we have lived through and are living through. Very many people have struggled and are to be thanked in making it possible for us to be where we are today. (Revd Chris Ahrends)

Message of welcome from The Mayor of Cape Town, Nomaindia Mfeketo

It is fitting that as South Africans go to the polls to exercise their hard won right to vote for the government of their choice, this timely conference looks at the legacy of decades of pain and oppression. At this time when South Africans celebrate our achievements, it is important not to forget what people have gone through.

As Mayor of Cape Town, I am honoured that you have come to the Civic Centre for this part of your program and that we can host participants not only from our own country, and our own struggle, but from countries across the world where the price of freedom, human dignity and rights has been too high.

One of our goals as a city is to position ourselves as a key centre for peace and reconciliation. Given over three centuries of repeated violations of human rights – from the decimation of the first people by early settlers, through slavery, bloodshed, forced removals and the incarceration of the leadership of our liberation movements – Cape

Town and its people have experienced much pain and suffering. But we have also seen hope and the triumph of the human spirit – on our streets, in our Parliament and, we hope, in our hearts and homes.

As a city and a nation we are beginning to take stock of how far we have come in dealing with the legacy of the past and in building a more just, humane and democratic order. I would like to thank the Institute for the Healing of Memories and the Desmond Tutu Leadership Foundation for their valuable work and the role they are playing in healing our nation and the world.

Messages of solidarity and support from Kirsty Sword Gusmão First Lady of East Timor

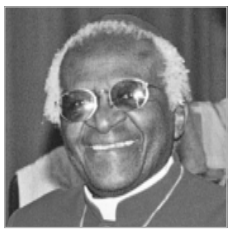
Dear friends,

It is just over four years since East Timor voted to be free of Indonesian rule and close to two years since we declared ourselves an independent nation. The demands of nation-building are all-consuming. As we go about building roads, rehabilitating infrastructure, putting in place the foundations of democracy and democratic institutions, we are constantly reminded of the need to provide individuals, couples, families, women and children, with opportunities to reflect on the past. By doing so, we permit them to think about the future with hope and optimism and to reflect this positive outlook through their work and relationships with others. This is a process to which the Institute for the Healing of Memories along with some of our own national institutions such as the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation have contributed significantly. As the journey is a long and bumpy one, however, we do look forward to having the benefit of the Institute's wisdom and experience in the years to come.

I send my heartfelt congratulations for realizing this important conference.

Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

May this conference at this unique place of suffering, Robben Island, strengthen all who attend in their communities to reconciliation – a quest sought in so many of our communities and countries.



Message of welcome Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke to delegates during the welcoming dinner after a dynamic dance performance by Jazzart. He began his welcoming talk by referring to this performance and all that it symbolised to him.

I don`t know about you, but as I watched this performance from our young people I found myself thinking that a few years ago this would have been impossible. Only a short time ago so many of our young people who were gifted did not have the opportunity of showing off their wares. It was just fantastic to watch these young people performing for us. Their giftedness is amazing to me.

This evening we have so many people here from overseas. We welcome you very warmly. Many of you come from countries which are still struggling with poverty. Your countries were also poor a few years ago when many of our people needed refuge. When our exiles had to find somewhere to escape to, your countries were fantastic in opening your doors for our exiles. May I say a very great thank you to you and to all of the people whom you represent in the countries from which you come. One of the deepest pains for some of us South Africans is that xenophobia still lives in this country and often this xenophobia is displayed to people from the very countries who welcomed our exiles. This seems to me to be a most awful example of ingratitude. And I would like to apologise here on behalf of all of us South Africans who seem to have forgotten so soon the times when our neighbours were raided and attacked by the South African Defense force. We seem to have forgotten so soon the price that our neighbours paid for supporting us against the Apartheid regime. They did it for us and as we celebrate ten years of freedom, it is a freedom that could not have come without the support of those African nations.

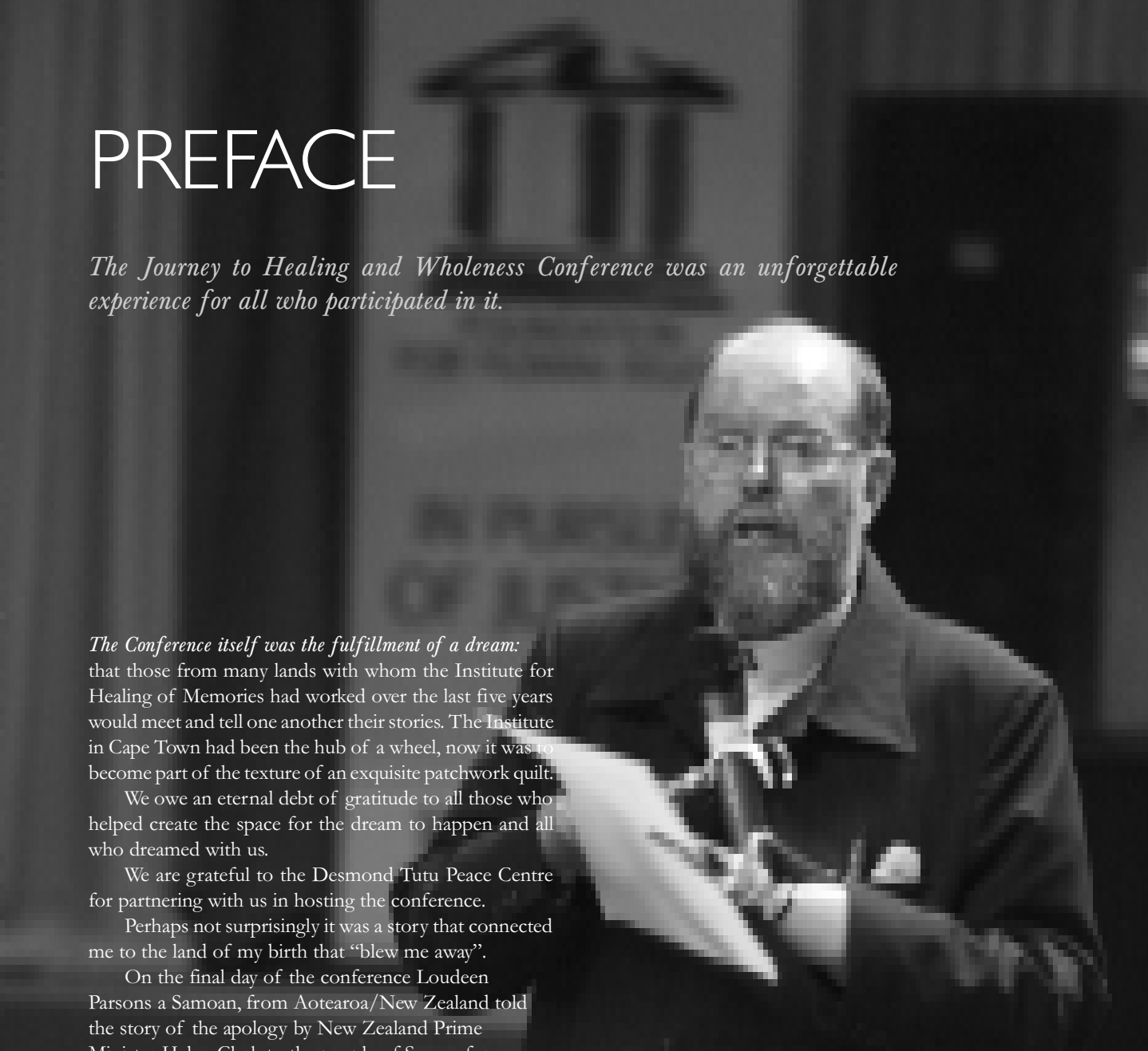
To those of you who come from non African countries who also supported our struggle, thank you, thank you so very very much for enabling us to gain freedom and enabling us to walk tall as we do now.

The South African story tells us that it is possible to make a new beginning. It is possible for an enemy to become a friend. It is possible to believe in the future. And because of this, South Africa has become a beacon of hope in other parts of the world: 'If they can do it in South Africa it can be done any where and every where.' And I believe this to be true. We South Africans are not especially virtuous, we are not especially smart, and yet the nightmare of apartheid has ended. The nightmares that other nations, other people, are currently living can also come to an end.

I wish you all a heartfelt welcome and the very best for your conference.

PREFACE

The Journey to Healing and Wholeness Conference was an unforgettable experience for all who participated in it.



The Conference itself was the fulfillment of a dream: that those from many lands with whom the Institute for Healing of Memories had worked over the last five years would meet and tell one another their stories. The Institute in Cape Town had been the hub of a wheel, now it was to become part of the texture of an exquisite patchwork quilt.

We owe an eternal debt of gratitude to all those who helped create the space for the dream to happen and all who dreamed with us.

We are grateful to the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre for partnering with us in hosting the conference.

Perhaps not surprisingly it was a story that connected me to the land of my birth that "blew me away".

On the final day of the conference Loudeen Parsons a Samoan, from Aotearoa/New Zealand told the story of the apology by New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark to the people of Samoa for wrongs committed during New Zealand's colonial past.

I wrote to Loudeen after the conference:

> "Although I had read of the apology before; what happened at your session was an overwhelming experience for me personally.
>
> I was confronted in a way that I had never before experienced personally with my own shame and guilt connected to New Zealand's colonial past and my own ignorance of that past.
>
> There was something quite extraordinary in the moment when you as a Samoan New Zealander presented the tapa cloth and photo of the apology to Glenda and me, representing the Institute but also with my own identity as a pakeha (white) New Zealander who has become a South African.
>
> Perhaps in a tiny way my own participation in the liberation struggle in South Africa and work of healing of memories can be seen as a contribution to reparation.
>
> I too am deeply sorry for the pain and wrong which your people suffered at the hands of New Zealanders."

I pray that this report (together with the videos, radio programmes and cds which have been produced) will also contribute to the healing journey of those who read it

Father Michael Lapsley,SSM
Director
Institute for Healing of Memories
CapeTown

INTRODUCTION

by Glenda Wildschut

Planning for a conference has many challenges. Thinking about the venue, money, invitations, size, staffing, collaborations and a host of other issues often overshadows the fact that careful thinking needs to go into the methodological, conceptual and intellectual aspects of the conference. Writing the conceptual paper for the conference started us on the journey to presenting the conference. It was to be our offering as thanksgiving for 5 years of existence and as a contribution to the 10 years of democracy in South Africa.

The conceptual paper (see website) shaped our thinking and the experience of presenting healing of memories workshops both in this country and in many parts of the world guided our planning work.

Looking back at the objectives we set, namely:

- Bring together people from different contexts of pain and oppression
- Create safe spaces for sharing, reflection and learning
- Record the experiences of participants in order to document the experiences
- Use the documentation as learning tools in further training
- Create an opportunity for networking amongst those who have experienced pain and oppression

I think these were fully achieved. The conference reports in both written and electronic form will be used as both a celebration of the stories told at the conference as well as learning tools. Participants found the space created for telling stories and sharing feelings as safe and containing. This was achieved in various ways and will be clearer when I reflect on the methodology.

Our Methodology

We were very conscious that the methodology used in the Healing of Memories workshops is well tested and tried and wanted to use it to both deepen our understanding of the thematic issues viz. anger, hatred, guilt and shame. This methodology draws, in most part, but not exclusively, from the narrative therapy approach. Although the workshops are not therapeutic in the classical 'treatment' sense, the activity is regarded as one step on the journey to healing. Some of the underlying principles of narrative therapy were clearly demonstrated during our interaction with each other on Robben Island.

"The basic theme of Narrative Therapy is that "the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem." It is applicable for work with families, groups, individuals and communities. The approach developed by Michael White and David Epston holds that the knowledge and stories (narratives) emanating from their culture, families and experiences shape persons."

Creating a space for the participants of the conference to reflect on their experience in a safe and contained space assisted them to look anew at those experiences and move forward to the point where they were able to see the problem as a problem. Many participants had already been part of a Healing of Memories workshop and were thus familiar with the methodology,

but those who encountered this approach for the first time found it liberating. Victims often feel that they in some way are the problem and the cause of their own misery. In a situation like this where shared stories of suffering, struggle and the quest for transcendence, the realisation "that the problem is the problem", is greatly emancipating. These moments happened at different times for many and were poignantly shared by participants both in the plenary and in small group discussions.

One of the interesting areas of Narrative Therapy is the use of deconstruction.

Donald Shriver, Rashied Omar (theologians) and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (psychologist), invited as our resource persons, provided wonderful insights shared from their personal experience and from their different professional and faith perspectives. I deeply appreciated their insights given generously and with great sensitivity to the process. A process deliberately intended to focus on the stories and the storytellers rather than on cold academic discussion devoid of the real life experience. Don, Rashied and Pumla helped us in a very important aspect of this approach –that of deconstruction. This deconstruction happened in different ways. Resituating and reinterpreting the story in its political, spiritual and psychological perspective helped us in understand the stories in a much deeper way.

Narrative Therapy has to do with learning to tell a different story of yourself. "Different stories are possible, even about the same events. How we talk about what happens to us depends on our starting point, and how we explain what happens to us depends on the questions we ask."

This aspect of using the story as a healing tool was demonstrated in many ways during the conference particularly illustrated by Duma Khumalo's story of his experience on death row. During the first plenary session in answer to the question "How are you now?" Duma replied, I'm fine, coping well. When Duma was given the chance to retell his story in the small group setting, he was able to confide to the group that he really was not coping. He often has fits of rage as a result of his traumatic death row experience. In the plenary that followed he corrected the story of a "coping" man to one that was more in keeping with his reality. The response of the group was that of support, empathy and admiration for his honesty. This act of retelling his story gave him a new sense of liberation.

Conclusion

A memorable experience! A truly inspiring team of co-creators of a wonderful conference!

Reflection

by Christo Thesnaar

It is a difficult task to reflect on a conference that has been life-changing to say the least. Being part of the planning team of the conference and preparing myself to fully participate in the conference, was indeed challenging. With this in mind I tried my best to deal with this reality as the conference unfolded and to focus on allowing myself to be part of the conference with my heart, mind and soul.

I would like to share my thoughts on the conference on two levels. Firstly, I want to reflect on it from the perspective of that of a board member and secondly on a personal level. The conference exceeded my wildest dreams and expectations. To be part of such an experience with delegates from all over the world was indeed profound and humbling.

The theme on Robben Island set the scene for deep rooted discussions and life changing experiences. The fact that the conference was so well organised made an enormous contribution to it success.

On a personal level I was asked to share some thoughts on guilt and shame. As a white Afrikaans speaking South African, these two themes were something that I was grappling with for some time. It was therefore important for me to allow myself to be confronted with my particular past as I experienced the stories of others. Although I had the privilege to tell my story to many people throughout the country, I soon realised that I had to face the past again and again to be able to regain my own identity. The support of the group was an amazing experience. At no time did I feel threatened, I always felt safe.

The most profound part of the conference for me was the ceremony where we had to visit certain sites on the island as part of a closing procession. Each group was given a site of special meaning on the island and then had to prepare some ritual, mime, ceremony, short drama etc. I was part of the group who had to prepare something at the house of the former leader and president of the PAC, Robert Sobukwe. After spending time in the prison on the island he was released but was kept on the island by special decree from the government. He was confined to a small house by the authorities. The house stands in a dusty compound surrounded by barbed wire fences. It is close to the sea but it faces the other way. When he saw the prisoners walking by, he would pick up sand and let it fall through his fingers as a symbolic act of solidarity to encourage them in their struggle for their land.

Our group decided to stand along the road where the procession was going to pass and hold sand in our hands. As the procession came closer we let the sand fall through our fingers to symbolically remind us of the struggle of Robert Sobukwe. As the procession reached us, we picked up more sand and placed it in the hands of everyone. This experience helped me to deal with being a perpetrator again and to realise what an impact it had on the lives of people. It brought me back to the importance of dealing with shame and guilt.

I decided to take up the challenge to share my experience with as many people as possible. The conference has motivated and empowered me to keep on being an advocate for motivating people to deal with their past so that they can move on their journey towards healing and wholeness.

Reflection

by Judy Bekker

It all began on the night of the South African elections, marking ten years of freedom. To be on Robben Island, along with about 60 people from all over the world, each one with a unique story of struggle and courage in the journey towards forgiveness and healing was deeply rearranging for me. We were gathered for three days, at the invitation of Father Michael Lapsley and the Institute for the Healing of Memories.

I have had a long relationship with the Institute which Michael founded in the mid nineties. He is a priest and human rights activist, who was the victim of a letter bomb, sent him at the turn of the apartheid era, that left him without hands, and several other serious injuries.

His compassion, humour and total commitment to the journey to healing, have taken him all over the world to listen, share and engage with people and their stories. The workshop that he co-created, called the Healing of Memories, has now been offered in many countries and has heralded change for thousands of individuals and many institutions. The majority of those gathered were there because of Michael and the irresistible pull of the island.

After a rousing civic reception and dinner, that included words of support and encouragement, from Desmond Tutu and an electric and poignant performance by the Jazzart dance group, some sixty people boarded a ferry to Robben Island…… Across the bay we glided, on a sea of glass (thank heavens because frequently that stretch of ocean is full of wildness!) and to bed on the island in houses once inhabited by prison warders and their families.

The backdrop in the room in which we engaged each day was an exhibition called The F Word Project, shortly to begin a journey around the world. The F Word is Forgiveness and the exhibit consists of portraits and stories of people who perpetrated and suffered acts of hate and anger and who, through their own strength and commitment to reconciliation, sought each other out and have begun an arduous journey towards understanding and healing. Several of those featured in this project were with us for the three days of the conference.

The themes we were to explore were: hate, anger, shame and guilt, the voice of the oppressor in each one of us, forgiveness and the journey to healing and wholeness. We did this in an intense crucible we created together and the format was simple. Two or three people would share something of their stories and their current thinking in a plenary session, immediately after which the gathering rearranged into eight smaller groups (I was one of the eight small group facilitators) to dialogue further and to bring segments of stories from around the world… stories of survival, hope, courage, fear, humour, solidarity, isolation and…… on it went.

There was my friend Duma, incarcerated for a murder he did not commit and reprieved, many years later, from death row, 15 hours before he was due to hang. There were Christo, and Karen, one South African, the other German, both wanting to understand the stance of their parents, the silence of their parents, through eras noted for their hideous inhumanities to men,

women and children and both evolving ways to move through and beyond their guilt.

There was Bounthanh from Laos, whose village had been obliterated by a bomb and who, years later, traced the Vietnam vet who had dropped it. Together they have unpacked their painful and particular stories whilst collaborating on a project to get medical supplies from the USA to that same village. Andrew was the youngest, bringing his story and his tears to the larger circle. His brother died in the twin towers and together with his sister and the families of others killed, Andrew has initiated an organization dedicated to reconciliation, called 9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows…

The stories are just too many to tell here… I was deeply touched by them all. I loved the quiet wisdom of Marlene, an older Aboriginal woman, whose family had been among the stolen generation and Loudeen, the composed Samoan woman who, with lilting voice took us through the history of her beloved island and its troubled ties with New Zealand. Hers was a success story…. The story of the moment when Helen Clark, Prime Minister of NZ apologized publically and humbly to the Samoans for so many past travesties.

My room mate was Caritas, from Rwanda, who had lost the majority of her family members in the genocide. She now lives and works as a facilitator in Tanzania. She was beautiful, graceful, forthright and articulate. The quiet, almost emotionless way she told me parts of her story, made hearing it even harder…. "The past is the past…. Let it be….."

"The act of hope in dire circumstances is a mystery....."
"If we can understand the mystery of empathy and the mystery of hope, we might understand more of the mystery of forgiveness..." Prof. Don Shriver, New York

"Anger is an invitation to engagement... its calling you to see my pain. That demonstratable anger is the beginning of the road to forgiveness" Pumla Goboda, UCT, Cape Town

"If you bury your past in your backyard, your children will play in it...." Ghanaian saying

There were so many pieces that made this an exceptional time… a young man from Australia whose gift was to hear a story, put it to music and sing it back to the gathering. We each came home with a CD of the five songs that emerged out of our time together.

Our closing ceremony was a large scale co-creation! We walked parts of the island in slow and silent procession, stopping at eight particular sites, where each small group took the focus and represented with movement, poetry or declaration, the significance of that place. So at the old and rather neglected burial ground, we heard how people had been interred on top of others who had gone before…. The lepers from the days when the island was a leper colony, the "insane," incarcerated women who died in the asylum, and who knows who else. The group chose to wash the old, lopsided, cracked tombstones, symbolically representing the washing of wounds never cared for, and the remembering of souls harshly abandoned.

My group was given Robert Sobukwe's house….He was the founder of the breakaway Pan African Congress and served a sentence on the island. When he was due to be released, the Government of the time, aware of what a charismatic leader he was, passed a clause to detain him indefinitely

on Robben Island, under house arrest. Every year, when Parliament opened, the first order of business, was to re-enact the "Sobukwe Clause" which allowed the state to detain him for a further period as a "private citizen."

This form of house arrest, was effectively solitary confinement as he was prevented from speaking to any prisoners. The house stands in a dusty compound surrounded by barbed wire fences. It is close to the sea, but all the windows face the other way.

It is said that whenever Sobukwe saw gangs of prisoners, he would stoop to pick up a handful of soil and hold out his hand, slowly letting the sand run through his fingers. This symbolic act of solidarity was to encourage them in their struggle for the land. When Sobukwe was very ill with cancer of the throat, he was released to return home where he died within months.

Our group chose to represent him at that place by standing silently, with arms outstretched, and with sand falling through our fingers, watching the larger group approach us. Then, moving towards those in the front, whilst singing "Makubenjalo kuzekube kuna phakade"…("let it be") we took their hands and let the sand run through their fingers…

Shortly after this, when we were gathered on the steps of the prison, our ceremonial procession was abruptly and prematurely concluded by a summons from the skipper who said that if we did not leave immediately, the gathering storm would make it impossible for him to safely transport all 100 of us back to the mainland.

And so, we left…watching that dry, windblown, desolate strip of land recede, feeling the intensity of its many stories and knowing that it had entered us in ways that no other place could. It had touched those imprisoned parts in each one, made us sit up and pay attention to our own secret knowledge of oppression and victimhood and to own both….. without shame and guilt, but with the courage called forth by honesty.

It had shown me that there is no telling how many times a person must tell a painful story before it is truly told …and that every story needs a listener….a listener who will bring his or her compassion, interest, intelligence and open heart. When at least these qualities are present, healing and wholeness can begin….for both storyteller and story catcher.

It had shown me once again, that South Africa has come a long way in healing her memories and we have a long way to go… but then so do many others in many countries.

It had shown me the mystery, the resilience and the power of humour and laughter to shape shift and unite.

It had reminded me of how alike we are and how different. The island had proved an excellent container for all of us to explore, disclose, and thus risk, feel the fullness of our hearts and be inspired. What a time it was, what a time! Viva!

'This event represents the fulfillment of a dream – to have gathered in one room all of you who in many different countries are involved in the healing of memories. You have honoured us by accepting our invitation to be with us for these few precious days. We are looking forward to receiving your unique contribution which you will bring to our proceedings. We know that you are coming to us with your own life story and that you also carry in your heart and mind the stories of countless others who have shaped your life. At the same time our hope is that these days will be a blessing and a source of hope and inspiration for you which you will take back to the communities from which you come.' Father Michael Lapsley SSM.

About the process

This document describes the stories that were told over the three days of the conference. During the event, there were also many discussions, commentaries and reflections on a range of topics including the benefits, possibilities and politics of forgiveness. These could fill another entire document and are not focused on here.

The stories that have been particularly highlighted in this document are stories of healing, stories that describe what learning has taken place along the journey of healing. This is a deliberate choice as it is hoped that this document may assist others in different communities who are trying to find ways to heal the memories of what has happened in their countries.

Please also know that in order to make this document accessible, people's stories have been edited. Sometimes they have been shortened, sometimes words have been changed here and there to make the stories easier to read.

The team who put this document together consisted of Alison Preston, Peggy Shriver, Mary Judson, Anthony Chantry, Brenda Rhode, Amanda Klonsky, Samantha Wittenberg & David Denborough.

SETTING THE SCENE

Journey of Healing Song

It `s a journey that we `re on
One that we don `t take alone
So many have walked before us here
And future generations will carry on
This journey of healing
This song we are singing
This journey of healing
We `ll sing to this island
And to the sky
To the mountain
And the ocean
And to those who have long passed by
We `ve come from many places
We all bring stories from home
Of memories and dreams
Of loved ones and our own
The histories here will guide us
At times they will remind us
Of just what is possible
When we `re linked together
Through dreams
It `s a journey that we `re on
One that we don `t take alone
So many have walked before us here
And future generations will carry on
This journey of healing
This song we are singing
This journey of healing
We `ll sing to this island
And to the sky
To the mountain
And the ocean
And to those who have long passed by

Picture if you can, a ferry making its way at night from Cape Town to Robben Island off the shore of South Africa. On board are about 70 people from many different countries including Uganda, Rwanda, Namibia, Samoa/ Aotearoa/New Zealand, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Germany, Burundi, Liberia, Ghana, Northern Ireland, the USA, Australia and from South Africa. Their experiences of life are vastly different from each other, but all have at least one thing in common: a determination to find ways to contribute towards the healing of histories of trauma that have occurred in their respective countries.

This group of people came together for three days on Robben Island, and appropriately the gathering began on South Africa's election day. The histories of South Africa set an inspiring context for the conversations that were to take place:

Given over three centuries of repeated violations of human rights – from the decimation of the first people by early settlers, through slavery, bloodshed, forced removals and the incarceration of the leadership of our liberation movements – Cape Town and its people have experienced much pain and suffering. But we have also seen hope and the triumph of the human spirit – on our streets, in our Parliament and, we hope, in our hearts and homes.

These were words from the Mayor of Cape Town, Nomaindia Mfeketo, as she welcomed participants to this event. The South Africans amongst us had come straight from the polling booths and many poignantly described what this meant to them: 'It makes me very emotional to have voted now for the third time. I will not wash this ink from my thumb for quite some time. It will act as a reminder that I can vote and all that this means.'

Robben Island, where the gathering was held, was the place where the leadership of the South African liberation movements, including Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned for many years. The prison on the island stands as a monument to the histories of resistance that culminated in the transformation of South Africa. When you stand on the island, looking out over the water back towards Cape Town and the majestic Table Mountain, so many images come to mind. During the gathering we were constantly aware of the contributions of so many South Africans to address the injustice of Apartheid. We were also aware of the many lives that were lost along the way.

BACKGROUND

This 'Journey to Healing and Wholeness Conference' was the initiative of the Institute for the Healing of Memories and the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre. The work of the Institute for the Healing of Memories grew out of Fr Michael Lapsley's work as Chaplain at the Cape Town Trauma Centre. Part of the Chaplaincy project there involved developing a way of bringing people together to address the trauma of South Africa's past. The Healing of Memories workshops they created were designed as a parallel process to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Over time, Fr Michael Lapsley and the Institute for the Healing of Memories were invited to host similar workshops in other countries. Over the last five years, to assist participants to address traumatic histories, these workshops have taken place in New York City, Rwanda, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Germany, Uganda, Burundi, Northern Ireland, East Timor and Australia.

This gathering on Robben Island was designed as an opportunity for people who had participated in Healing of Memories workshops in their own countries to come together, to share experiences and stories and to learn from one another. The stories told were also to be documented in the written word, on video and in song so that they could be made available to others.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GATHERING

The entire gathering was influenced by the metaphor of a journey. It was clearly stated that we did not know exactly where the conversations would lead, and that we would end up somewhere that we could not anticipate. At the same time, however, there was a very carefully developed structure which would shape the conversations that were to take place. This structure consisted of five parts.

Part One: An interview

Each session began with an interview in which either Father Michael Lapsley or Glenda Wildschut would interview two participants. These two participants would have been chosen well in advance and they would be invited to share their own stories around a particular theme. These interviews would take place in a large circle with all participants as witnesses.

Part Two: Small group reflections

As soon as the interview finished, the participants would then move into small groups of 8-10 people in each of which was a facilitator and a scribe. These small groups provided an opportunity for all participants to speak about what witnessing the interviews in Part One had meant to them, how they could relate to the stories that had been told, and what they learnt from them. There was also the opportunity for people to share something of their own journey around the particular theme that was being discussed. Approximately an hour was spent in these small groups.

Part Three: Large group reflections

Everyone would then reconvene in the large circle and a series of reflections would take place. The first of these was in the form of a song that had been written from the words spoken by those who had been interviewed in Part One. Following the song, three appointed people would offer their reflections on the interviews that everyone had heard, and then there would be an opportunity for any of the participants to share further reflections in the large group.

Part Four: Final words

Space was always then created for the people who had been interviewed in Part One to make final comments on their experiences of the process.

This four stage structure was then repeated as two more people were interviewed around a different theme.

Themes

Four themes were considered during the first two days of the gathering. These were:

i) Voices of those who have lived on death row.
ii) Exploring experiences of shame and guilt.
iii) Stories of transcendence.
iv) Stories of reconciliation.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF HEALING

Many of the stories that were told during the three days were accounts of considerable trauma. And yet, I believe that everyone present appreciated the event as significantly healing. While part of the explanation for this relates to the fact that the vast majority of participants had already been through a healing of memories workshop in their own country, I wish here to outline a number of principles and practices of healing that occurred during the gathering that contributed to creating a meaningful and significant event. I am sure there were many other principles and practices that were informing the actions of the facilitators and organisers of this event that I have not included in this short paper. Those that I have listed below are simply the practices and principles that I particularly noticed and valued.

Journey Metaphor

At all times, the gathering was constructed around the metaphor of a journey. By constructing a process of 'healing' as a journey, this implied movement, changes of territory, and an attention to differences of experience over time. When people were interviewed in front of the group, the interviewers took care to ask about the differences in experiences of the past in comparison to the present. They also took care to elicit the different stages of a person's journey, including the most difficult periods as well as the passages of relief. The themes of the gathering – 'coming to terms with shame and guilt', 'transcendence' and 'reconciliation' – also conveyed movement. In these ways, we were all invited to consider ourselves to be on a journey, one that would not be completed over these days but that would continue into our futures. This orientation captured participants' imagination and encouraged us to revisit the territories we have passed through in our lives, the ground we are currently standing upon, and the directions we wish to explore in the future.

The four part story-telling structure

The structure outlined above enabled all participants to have the opportunity to listen, reflect and share stories. Importantly, the structure enabled movement from individual story, to small group, to large group discussion, and this generated a sense of connection. What's more, participants joined the same small group each time throughout the three days and this built a sense of cohesion. As there was a facilitator in each small group this enabled the organisers to have a good sense of how everyone was experiencing the process and to respond accordingly.

Healing as action

Throughout the three days there was an emphasis on action as a healing response to trauma. For instance, when people were interviewed in front of the group, the interviewers took care to elicit the steps that people had taken to respond to the trauma they had experienced. Those who were interviewed had all taken a range of steps to respond to the trauma to which they were subjected. This action was not limited to their own lives but included steps that they were taking to either respond to the trauma experienced by others, or to try to prevent others' experience of trauma. This orientation to healing as action opened space for participants to acknowledge their own actions in response to trauma and also to consider possibilities for future actions and collaborations.

More than individual experience

In a range of ways throughout the three days, care was taken to link any individual's experience of pain or hardship to broader collective experience. While it was a caring environment, it was a caring with a collective spirit. When people were interviewed in front of the group, the interviewers took care to elicit not only the individual person's story but also how this fitted with the broader group or collective to which this person belonged. It also made a difference that two people were interviewed in front of the group in Stage One. The interviews would turn from one person to another at certain points in the interview. This meant that there was never an over-attendance to any individual's story and instead the emphasis was on building links between stories and experiences. Similarly, the journey of healing was not constructed as a journey simply for individuals to take, but one in which we had responsibilities to our broader communities. It became clear that all of us were present, not simply as individuals, but as representatives of broader groups of people. The documentation process was also a part of this. People were gathering together not only to share their stories with each other but to document these in ways that would hopefully be of assistance to others.

The linking of stories

The four part structure outlined above contributed to a sense of linking the stories told by those interviewed in front of the group to the stories of other participants. The process of the telling of stories and then inviting reflections in response enabled a sense of connectedness between peoples of many different lands, and this acted as an antidote to the isolation that so often accompanies experiences of trauma. Significantly, as people shared stories of their 'journeys' – their ups and downs, and learnings along the way – this offered participants a sense of comradeship as well as opportunities to learn from each other.

Space to speak about having done harm

One of the practices of healing during the gathering that stood out to me was the commitment by the facilitators to create space for people to speak about times in which they may have done harm to others. Even for those who may have been subjected to trauma themselves, space was created for them to consider and speak about actions towards others that they may sincerely regret. Michael Lapsley has described that:

... during the Apartheid years, to be a decent human being in South Africa required heroism, and most of us are not heroes ... and so when apartheid was finally overthrown, it was hardly surprising that so many of us, both black and

white, struggled to find ways of understanding how we acted towards others and how others acted towards us during those times. (2002, p.72).

This orientation, and the determination to enable everyone the opportunity to come to terms with actions they may regret, enabled stories to be told that otherwise would not have been shared.

Acknowledging complexity

As participants were able to speak of the experiences of their lives, this created opportunities for the acknowledgement of various complexities. This was perhaps best illustrated in the session on reconciliation which began with Andrew Rice being interviewed about his brother's death in the World Trade Centre on September 11th and his subsequent work with the group September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. Pat Magee was then interviewed about his involvement with the IRA and subsequent reconciliation work with the daughter of one of the men who was killed in a bombing that Pat was involved in organising.

Listening alternatively to the stories of Andrew, whose brother was killed in a terrorist attack, and then Pat who was involved in carrying out a terrorist attack and spoke of still believing in the necessity of armed struggle at certain times and places, invited us all into considering the complexities, politics and values associated with many experiences of trauma and the ways in which we respond to them.

The fact that these conversations were taking place in South Africa invited further reflection – we were all conscious that we were within a country in which the African National Congress, under Nelson Mandela, had turned to armed resistance (all be it with considerable care taken to minimise casualties) when other forms of action had not succeeded.

Humour

On numerous occasions, it made a difference that the organisers had a very cheeky sense of humour. It was clearly demonstrated from the start of the gathering that even though we were there to discuss stories and experiences of great sorrow, there would also be considerable laughter.

Silence

Moments of silence were also utilised in simple but significant ways. At different times in the proceedings, especially after someone had told a powerful story, and prior to the participants moving into small groups, the facilitator would simply request a moment's silence. This silence contributed to the ceremonial aspect of the meeting and in some ways offered a sense of reverence to the story just told.

The significant of apology and acknowledgement

On the final morning of the gathering, a presentation from Loudeen Parsons from Samoa/New Zealand described the process of acknowledgment and apology that has recently taken place in relation to New Zealand's colonial history in Samoa. The apology from New Zealand's current Prime Minister, Helen Clark, to the people of Samoa in relation to the events of the past was experienced by participants as powerfully moving. This led to many discussions about the healing significance of acts of acknowledgement and apology.

Invitation to consider our own healing traditions

Loudeen Parsons also invited participants from different countries to consider their own culture's rituals, values and symbols of healing and reconciliation:

I invite you to explore your own cultures for its rituals, values and richness on the subjects of forgiveness and reconciliation. In our experience, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation is not only or primarily personal or intra-psychic – it is about restoring the wellbeing of relationships between people and people, people and their ancestry, people and their Gods, and people and the environment. Finding ways to excavate the liberative cultural elements and rituals of reconciliation from our own cultures seems a vital aspect of this work. In the process, we are asking ourselves the following questions: How do we grow cultures of reconciliation? How do we tell the young of atrocities that took place? How do we not lose sight of atrocities and yet at the same time be free of the pain that goes with it?

This invitation resonated for many participants and contributed to thoughtful explorations.

Involvement of young people

On the final morning of the conference a group of young people, who had been completing a parallel 'Healing of Memories' process in their schools, drummed, sang, danced and clapped their way into the centre of the meeting hall. Their energy and enthusiasm was inspiring to everyone present. They shared with us their perspectives on dealing with the past and moving into the future and this provided a powerful sense of continuity. They ended their presentation as they had begun it, singing: Young people of Africa / Freedom is in your hands / Show us the way to freedom / In this land of Africa.

Use of song

As mentioned earlier, songs were crafted from the words that people spoke during the four-part story-telling structure and these songs were then sung as reflections. In creating the lyrics to these songs, a particular emphasis was given to including words that described the responses that people had made to trauma, the values which shaped these responses, and the histories which have informed these values (see White 2004). When the poetic and evocative phrases that people use to tell the stories of their lives are placed into melodies, they become in some way more memorable, more significant, and embodied in a different way. When these songs are recorded they can then be played at any time providing an ongoing reminder of a person's particular journey and the skills and knowledge they have accumulated along the way (Denborough 2002).The songs that were written during the gathering were recorded while we were on Robben Island. Two of these were recorded collectively so that everyone could hear their own voice on the CD that was given to participants at the end of the three days.

Written documentation

A written document was also given to each participant on the final day. This contained stories and reflections that had been told during the conference. This written document did not include everything that was said. It aimed to be selective and yet representative of the key themes and stories that had been shared. Particular emphasis was given to stories or practices of healing that had been identified. In this way, participants left the gathering with their own words documented in both the written word and in song.
David Denborough

DAY ONE: Morning

STORIES FROM DEATH ROW

On the first morning of conference, Elias Wanyama and Duma Kumalo were interviewed and spoke about how they had survived their experiences on death row. We have included here the stories that they told; some reflections that were spoken in the small groups in response to these stories; the song that was created from the words of Elias and Duma; some reflections that were offered by other participants in the large group; and then some closing words from Duma and Elias. We hope this will convey something of the process.

Reaching hearts

Elias Wanyama

To be a former prisoner and to come here to Robben Island, what is a former prison, is quite an extraordinary thing for me. I am from Uganda and twenty years ago I joined the national security personnel and became involved in the repression of the Ugandan people. I thought this was all right at the time. I felt justified in arresting and imprisoning others until the tables turned and I myself was arrested. This posed to me the first great challenge of my life. Suddenly I was face-to-face with those I had arrested. They were looking at me as their captor. Some years later I was sentenced to death and I lived

on death row for nine years. I was in prison for 18years. Death row involves waiting for death, knowing it could come any minute, any day. My entire time on the row of death was a struggle for hope, for when the electricity of hope is turned off, the bulb of life dies.

Now, I have no grudge, but at the time I was sentenced to death, if I could have fought my way out of the situation I would have. There were also times in those years when I would have welcomed death. I was overwhelmed with a sense of hopelessness. For me, what opened the door to hope was a spiritual journey. I still remember one day hearing men singing praises to God while on their way to the gallows. Their demonstration of hope and faith and how it meant they could sing on the way to their death, meant everything to me. It kindled a faith within me and this was the starting-point in turning my life around.

On death row in Uganda there was no system, as far as I could see, as to who was executed and who remained alive. We did not know when someone would be taken to die. This sense of chaos was very difficult to live with. There was really only one thing that was constant and that was the message from our dying friends to those left behind. They would always simply say: 'Tell the world'.

I now work for an organisation called 'Friends of hope for condemned prisoners'. There are still over 550 people on death row in Uganda and we are working to end the death penalty and to support the families of those who are on death row. Often the families of prisoners are victimised and many have to leave society. I owe this work to those who have been executed, to those who are on death row now, and to those who might be on death row in the future.

Despite this work that gives my life meaning, I cannot say that I am happy. When I was released I still had nightmares of being hanged. I would wake up at night screaming through my teeth. It has been very difficult trying to relate back to my family. How can I be a father to my children after being away for so long? What keeps me going more than anything else is the question: 'How can I reach everybody's hearts to end the existence of death row?'

They speak through me

Duma Kumalo

During 1984 there were demonstrations in Sharpeville, not far from Johannesburg, against increased rents. I was involved in these demonstrations and when the police started shooting we decided we would take further action. We decided we would take the Councillor (who was being used by the Apartheid regime) down to the Councilor's home and demand action. When we got to his home, the police started shooting again and someone in the crowd was injured. I went to help this person and, while doing so, the Councillor was killed. Three months later I was charged with the murder of the Councillor. I was sentenced to death and remained on death row for three years. I was saved only fifteen hours prior to my execution.

Death row is like living in a graveyard. You are already dead. You are just waiting for someone to push you into the grave. 99% of the time I was prepared to die. It was my expectation and in some ways we died many times on death row. We were in pain every minute and I often thought that it would only be death that would provide an escape.

When we were told we were not going to be executed, it was unbelievable. It was hard to tell dreams from reality. Whenever we slept, we dreamt of being outside. But when we woke in the morning we were still on death row. So many things happened to us that we will never forget. You realise you are on the brink of death when they take your clothes from you and they give you the clothes of the dead. On one occasion they gave me two left shoes and when I pointed this out they said to me 'there is no walking here'.

At first I was filled with hatred but I was fortunate that I was surrounded by people who taught me about the politics of our country. These political understandings helped me make sense of my experience. We knew we were in a political struggle and we knew we were together in this. I learnt to identify that what was going on was much broader than my own life. Those in power had a collective hate towards us. And we, who had been condemned, could easily have developed and built upon a collective hate for our captors. But we saw that the hate of those in power made them do many stupid things and we realised that we did not want to hate like them. If we were as consumed with hate as they were, we realised that we might do very stupid things also!

As we struggled, we realised that it was those in power who would one day be condemned and this is how we survived. We reversed the power. We knew they expected us to hate, so when we learned to laugh about the painful things that had happened to us, it took away their influence over us.

When I am asked how this was possible, I think there were long histories of resistance for each of us. I would like to acknowledge my mother who was a maid somewhere in town. She would steal sugar, milk and bread for us and bring it home. On the weekends she would bring the white children's clothes home with her to wash and she would dress us in them. They would be our clothes over the weekend and only on Monday would they be returned to the city. During those days, if she had been caught, she would have been tried for treason. She took very high risks for her love of her children. Many of us on death row could remember the love of our parents and this helped us to survive those years.

It could not however save the lives of those who were executed. Day after day, others were taken to be hanged. We lost so many people. I was not aware at the time that one day I would be free. What drives me today is to tell the story. Maybe their soul is in me. Maybe when I open my mouth they do the talking. Maybe, through me, they can also be free.

Reflections in the small groups

Here is a small sample of some of the comments and stories that were told in the small groups as a response to the stories told by Duma and Elias.

Truth-telling

I want to say thank you to those who shared their stories this morning. Your words put me in touch with my own efforts over years to stay in touch with hope in times of adversity. Sometimes in our country, Australia, we still face a lot of contradictions. Some of these relate to how to deal with structural racism and how to deal with the social conditions of our people. This makes many of us wonder how we can make a contribution to responding to these issues. I'm very proud to be here today and I am also very moved that my story is valued here. I want to say that the stories I heard today I will take back home with me to Australia. I will listen to your stories again in my own heart. I will say to myself: I met those men, I heard those stories, how can I learn from them? I have long admired the redemptive value of truth-telling. Telling my stories in a truthful and honest way has been really important to me. There are certain practices of truth-telling that contribute to healing, and for me they are also linked to spirituality. (Marlene, Australia)

Learning to 'live with'

Not long ago, I was on my own version of death row with AIDS and so I felt connected to this morning's stories. They made me think of the shame that many people in this country are living with because of HIV/AIDS. Because of the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS many people keep their diagnosis secret and hidden. This brings me sorrow and also a sense of fear. I work as an AIDS counsellor and I have pride in those who are making it possible for people to live openly and positively with HIV. Dealing with AIDS is different than other political struggles. Those of us who are HIV positive must find ways of 'living with' AIDS rather than 'fighting against' it. I think we can all learn from each other. (Bongani, South Africa)

A Rwandan perspective

It was a considerable challenge to me to listen to the stories of the ex-prisoners. I am the only person of my immediate family to survive the Rwandan genocide. At first, I must say I wondered why on earth ex-prisoners had been asked to give the first talk at this conference. I was feeling quite tense about this. In Rwanda, we have 100,000 people imprisoned for the genocide that occurred in our country ten years ago. Many of us in Rwanda struggle to understand how those who committed the genocide could have caused such harm. As the ex-prisoners spoke this morning, I began to realise that I was very grateful that I could listen to their voices. I began to realise that I have never tried to think about the perspective of those who committed the crimes in Rwanda. In listening today, through overcoming some of my own prejudices, I have begun to feel more hopeful about my own country. (Jean-Baptiste, Rwanda)

Space to think and reflect

I was sent to jail on the expectation that I would never be released. It's a type of oppression that a state has the right to take away the life of a human being. Having been a prisoner I was much moved hearing the stories that were told today. Prison is all about loss. But prisons are also a key site within any political struggle. As republicans, we saw ourselves as political prisoners, while they saw us as criminals. Doing time in prison gives you space to think and reflect. You don't have that in the midst of the struggle and so we tried to make the most of this. I am glad for the reflection that I did within prison. And I truly appreciate the opportunity of hearing the stories that were told this morning. (Pat, Northern Ireland)

To make a difference

I was struck by the survival mode that these two men described…how there is often laughter alongside pain. I identify with this. In Namibia, during the most difficult years, even when someone came in bleeding, there was always this smile and later we could laugh together. I too have had the experience of being imprisoned, of torture, of solitary confinement. I have had the experience of being asked to dig a hole in the ground, a hole that was to be my own grave. For a time I lived each minute and hour in complete insecurity, complete uncertainty as to whether I would survive. There were times when I was being tortured that I knew I had to choose between living and dying.

I was imprisoned for three years after being forced to make a false confession to being a South African spy. The most painful part was that my worst suffering was caused by my own people. In the dungeons, people were moved from one place to another. People just disappeared. There was always the message, 'if you survive, tell others what has happened'. When I listened this morning and heard their determination to carry on the stories, I heard a sense of hope. I don't regard myself as a hero. I am just one of those people who had hope that we would one day be free and that we could make a difference in the life that continued. These stories today have reminded me of my own stories, and for this I am grateful. I would like to think further about how these processes of storytelling could take place in Namibia. (Pauline, Namibia)

Connection

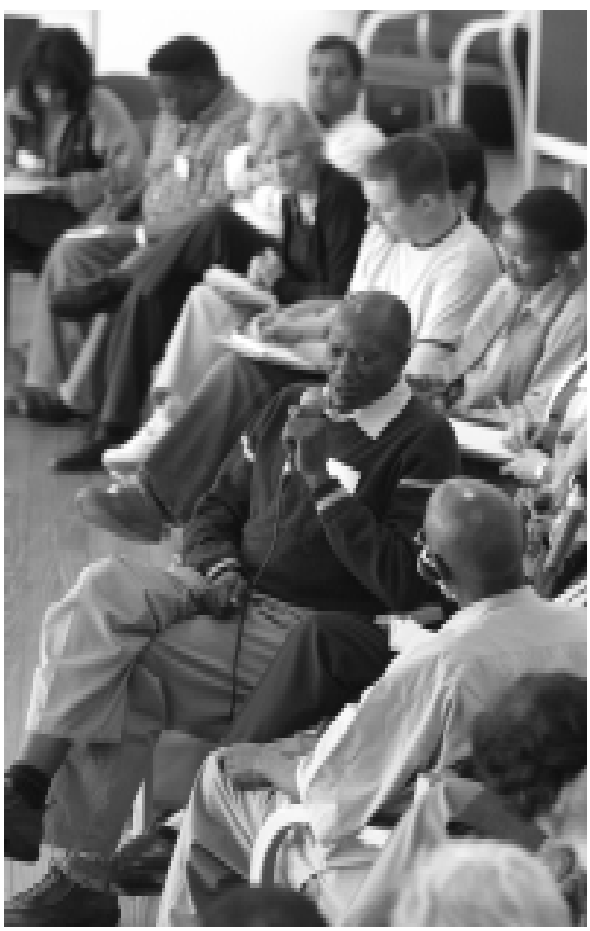
This morning's stories were told with courage and honesty and they have encouraged me to tell my own. In the 1970s, in Lesotho, relatives of mine were buried alive, soil was pushed over them while they screamed and cried and the effects of these histories have lasted generations. There has been conflict between different generations but it is very important to keep healthy links with your extended family. In our culture this is a vital aspect of healthy living. We perform rituals with our elders. We always need each other. If these relationships are strained then we become alone and we cannot function in isolation in the village or the township. The connectedness is very important to us. The stories told this morning reminded me of this connectedness and how it is such a part of healthy living in Africa. (Tanki, Lesotho)

Fighting for rights

As an Indigenous Australian woman, I would like to thank those who have shared their stories this morning and I would like to add the story of my family. My mother was two years old when she was taken from her parents. We were classified as 'sub-human', our government did not recognize us as humans. Even after the massacres had ended, our people were rounded up and put into missions. We were considered as heathens, our land was stolen and our women and children brutalized. My parents never knew their parents and yet they gave everything to us children. My father never saw his mother's face again, and yet he was our lifetime mentor. When my daughter was born, in 1972, I was not allowed to keep my baby. I never saw her face. It is experiences like these ones that have led me to fight for the rights of Indigenous people. To be with you all today and to share each others' stories feels important to me. Perhaps it will give us strength to continue the struggles in our own countries. (Heather, Australia)

Making connections

My brother was a victim of September 11. When I meet with groups in the US, often I am the only one who has been personally affected by political violence. There is a clear demarcation between me and the audience and I can often feel powerfully isolated by the interactions that take place. I've got used to this now. Only sporadically do I allow myself to be vulnerable, mostly I limit myself to the political analytic aspect of my story. Being here today with



many people who have been personally affected by political violence is a very different experience for me. I am appreciating very much the opportunity to make connections with the stories of others. (Andrew, USA)

The song and reflections in the large group

A song was written in response to the stories of Elias and Duma, and this was sung at the beginning of Part Three. Its lyrics are included here:

On the row of death

Living in a graveyard
Means you are already dead
Just waiting for someone
To push you into the grave
There are some things
We will never forget
I remember my two left shoes
I remember the feeling of no escape
We died many times
On the row of death
There we were condemned.
In our dreams we flew away
But then the morning came
Hope came through spirit or politics
Through being a collective
We found ways to turn it all around
Laughter is a beautiful sound
What drives me today
Is to tell the story
Maybe their soul is in me
When I open my mouth they do the talking
Through me they can be free
My mother was a maid somewhere in town
She`d steal food for us and bring it home
On the weekends the clothes she cleaned
Would become our own
We lost so many
We see them clearly
It is our duty to share their story

The following reflections were then made in the large group firstly from the three resource people:

This morning at breakfast someone asked me, how do you, (we were talking about memory, and in particular we were talking about notions of memory as facts and memory as experience, and she asked me, "How do you deal with memory of past traumatic events? Do you look at the facts, or do you not care whether the person is not speaking factually or not?" And my response was that it is the emotion that is critical, it is really how the people who remember the emotion associated with the experience and many times the focus in not so much on how things happened, it's how things are remembered. This morning for me was a testimony to that idea that we are connected. The pain that is experienced and the pain that we share through remembering involve so much else that is not necessarily like the pain that is being shared, but it is really the emotional memory that is involved, it is the pain.

In the group that I was in this morning, there were different stories, yet they were very similar stories, it was somebody's story that captured other people's stories. There were tears in the room people cried about the pain that was being shared, but they were also crying about their own pain. And that is the beauty of this gathering and I experienced that in that room, that it reiterates what psychologists have observed all the time, that when you begin to articulate what the pain is about, that is when you begin to heal. Many of the people, who spoke today, were sharing things that they have never shared before. That they had only thought and felt, but never actually articulated but, the healing and the cleansing began with the tears and the words and finding the language to talk about your pain through the vicarious experience of other peoples pain in the room, that's what connected us and that was the pain, at the same time it was the beauty of the moments.

So, I am very grateful to have been part of this morning's group and part of that much sharing
Pumla Gobodo Madikizela (South Africa)

I would like to make maybe three points. The first is about the process, some of the methodology that we are using. Secondly, just some of the key issues that emerged from the interlocution that we were witnessing and then I thought that sharing some of the stories that we heard in Group 5. So let me very briefly then, go into these 3 points, firstly about methodology. I want us to be very conscious about the methodology that we are employing, in a find of hermeneutic of suspicion. Kind of looking at it so that we are very conscious about this experience, I call it the Dynamics of Interlocution. Firstly, we have two people with very similar profiles being prompted by Michael. To what extent is the prompter leading? What kind of resonance is taking place between the two people, you look at, when the one is speaking, Elias looks at Duma's face and sees what's happening. the resonance that's happening there and in particular, what is happening to us. Are we really attentive in listening deeply, empathetically, because I think that especially for us who are working in organisations as leaders, it's very difficult then to become a listener.

Then, the second point is for me there has always been a tension, coming from a very religious background, being an Imam myself. A tension between the religious subjective, the personal and the structural. And I think that in this process for me, our strength is the subjective processes of forgiveness and on deep psychology, but I think also, we need to be very contextual placing it within the social and political power dynamics that takes place. So, it's tension between individual and structural. I think, I want to leave it at that, just always accentuate what is the power dynamic here. A kind of wonderful scholar, Michelle Fuchold always wanting to find out, Where is the Power Dynamic? When one becomes part of government, in the one experience one can also become a perpetrator, having been a victim before.

Is there a moral equivalence between someone who commits violation of Human Rights as being part of the disempowered and those who are part of an established power? Are their stories equal? Are they equally guilty?

Finally with regard to my Group 5, we had two wonderful stories one from Liberia and one from South Africa. The one from Liberia brought to me the way, the insidious way and sometimes the oblivious way in which religion is implicated in conflict. And something very painful for me as a Muslim, which great contrition I am prepared to acknowledge that, there is a deep crisis in the world with extremists having a center field, but also asking Christians, look at the insidious way in which religion can become implicated, perhaps with a veneer of being a secular state. We had that example of Muslims in Liberia and also the powerful role of inter-religious solidarity as a witness and as a source of healing.

Finally, the South African example was for me also very relevant. De-mystifying the miracle, looking at what is happening at grass roots and the way in which gross inequalities of wealth still exists and perhaps the negotiated settlement that brought the New South Africa into being. Also its negative consequences and the way in which civil society religious communities instead of continuing the struggle have been perhaps too eager to legitimate the settlement so that we may have the order. So yesterday we were saying "Wonderful! Our democracy has matured, see we have had no conflict and forgetting that also on the other side we complain about growing crime and this is not seen as having any kind of power or political connotations.

Rashied Omar (South Africa)

This is our second visit to Robben Island from 2 years ago. But the first time we ever saw the place was in 1986 having it pointed out to us from atop Lions Head in Cape Town in the mist of this ocean, as the place where Political Prisoners were. By that date, Nelson Mandela had already been removed to a prison on the mainland, but no-one thought that within 4 years a great change would come to South Africa.

I think probably everyone in this circle, is conscious of what a mysteriously hopeful place this is and it is the mystery of hope that is one of two mysteries I should like to comment on. All of us understand that this place was built as a place of abandonment of Human Beings, a place of ultimate exile. One could have written over the gate of this place "Abandon hope, all you who enter here" Hope not only survived in the prison up the road, it flourished. And I find that to be a mystery and part of that mystery is the way in which people who suffered deeply are often the people who hope most profoundly. Whereas those who have suffered the least are often those most tempted to despair. And that is mysterious, certainly not mysterious is how Elias would have told us this morning that the main struggle on Death Row is to keep the hope that you will live tomorrow, but in fact he kept that hope and in all of that I find myself having to be reverent, not only toward the depth of suffering represented around this circle, but also reverent toward the height of hope in the midst of that suffering.

Well there is a second mystery to me, and that is the mystery of empathy. In our group this morning, Barry,

having traveled to many countries as a part of this Institute he said, "Pain, pain, pain! It's the same everywhere", and it's the same and it's different with every individual. Some say laugh and the world laughs with you, cry, and you cry alone. I think it is precisely the opposite. Laughter can separate us, pain unites us. It's what in one way or another we all understand. Anyone who has been very, very sick from a disease knows how the boundaries of self-hood suddenly restrict to the perimeter of a bed. For me the mystery is that some people never find a way into empathy for other people's pains through the door of their own pain, whereas others find that their pain is an open door to the pain of others.

I come of course from New York City and we suffered a political, social, violent trauma on 9/11/01, and New York had reacted in many different ways to that trauma. One of the hopeful things about it is that, our Mayor Giuliani said that the death of the 3000 Americans other peoples of other countries as well in that disaster, reminded him of the London blitz. And someone from England later wrote in the Wall Street Journal, well yes, it reminded her as well, 40 000 Londoners died in that blitz but if you want to do ethics by statistics you have to get into the multi-millions and then few were Americans I am afraid, few were the New Yorkers who were reminded that when it comes to burying Human Bodies and rubble, the Americans have perfected it, the Europeans have perfected it. Technology has done that on a massive scale prominent in our own memory ought to be how many bodies were buried in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Tokyo, Hamburg, Dresden, etc.

If we cannot use our own suffering as doorways into at least beginning to understand our suffering, in a way our suffering has been wasted. I was privileged to participate in only one funeral after the World Trade Centre disaster and that was the son, a 26 year old son of a Catholic family, whose father was a good friend of ours and he invited me to participate in the funeral. In that connection he said that he hoped that in response to this death of his 26 year old son, assuming that somehow or other a small group of Muslims were behind that disaster, he would like to do something to repair that relationship and he said he hoped that because of his interest in a certain College in Connecticut, he hoped to establish a Scholarship there that would permit Muslim students to come from other parts of the World to study there for at least a year.

At last notice he said sadly, he had been unable to convince his family that they wanted to do that, which suggests to me, when it comes to a certain amount of forgiveness and reparation to repair that breach of these hostilities, it may take a long time and it may have to begin in families

In conclusion that if we were paying more attention to the mystery of hope and the mystery of empathy we might be better prepared to deal with the mystery of forgiveness.

Donald Shriver (USA)

- I liked the ways in which mothers' feisty resistance was acknowledged and honoured this morning. Often the resistance of women and mothers is not as visible as men's resistance. But it is powerfully significant and I so appreciated that this was spoken about this morning.
- I appreciated the ways in which people spoke about the significance of humour.
- I found frightening the images of nightmares and 'inner landscapes' that continued to haunt people after their release from prison. What are we doing to assist people to deal with these nightmares?
- The church has complicity in many stories of trauma in different parts of the world. I am interested in finding ways to address this.
- In Kwa Zulu Natal there are people serving 400 year sentences who are asking us to organise meetings with the people they hurt. They know they will probably never be released but these actions give their life meaning.
- It seems to me that our memories, even the most difficult, are sometimes what give us the drive to continue the journey of healing.
- As people have been speaking, I have found myself thinking of the people who spent years in the dungeons during the Apartheid era who would have been able to contribute to the development of our country. Now some of those people are sleeping in pipes and others say they are worth nothing. Those who say this do not understand.

Final comments from Elias and Duma

***Elias:** The reflections that people have made, the stories they have told in response to my story, have been like a kind of treatment or medicine to me. As I listened, each story felt like a small dose to cure me from the events of my past.*

***Duma:** Thank you for this opportunity as it is bringing back my dignity. I believe every story needs a listener and you have provided that to my story today. You have enabled me to speak truthfully about my life. Thank you.*

The other themes

This sort of process then occurred around the following themes:

Exploring experiences of shame and guilt. In this session two people were interviewed in relation to the journey they have made and the steps they are taking in coming to terms with experiences of shame and guilt. Karin Penno-Burmeister from Germany spoke about her experience as the daughter of parents who were National Socialists and the work she now does at Ladelund Concentration Camp Memorial Centre honouring the victims of the Holocaust and linking descendants of those who were killed with descendents of the perpetrators. Christo Thesnaar spoke from the perspective of a white Afrikaans male and his work in coming to terms with the history and legacies of Apartheid.

Stories of transcendence. In this session two people were interviewed in relation to the journey they have taken in coming to terms with events in their past. Bounthanh Phommasathit spoke about her experiences of growing up in Laos during the time of the Indo-China war and her current work in Laos with a Vietnam Veteran, Lee Thorn, who was involved in the bombing of her village. And Marlene Jackamarra from Australia spoke of her experiences as an Indigenous Australian in coming to terms with the effects of the Stolen Generation – the forced separation of Aboriginal children from their families.

Stories of reconciliation. In this session two people were interviewed about the journey they have taken in relation to reconciliation. Andrew Rice spoke of his work with September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, while Pat McGee spoke of his involvement with the IRA and subsequent reconciliation work with the daughter of one of the men who was killed in an IRA bombing that Pat was involved in organising.

Reflections and songs were then woven around each of these themes so that by the end of the gathering a rich tapestry of stories had been created.

DAY ONE: Afternoon

EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF SHAME AND GUILT

The afternoon began with Glenda Wildschut interviewing Christo Thesnaar and Karin Penno-Burmeister about their experiences of journeying in relation to shame and guilt.

Other people's stories

Christo Thesnaar

As a white Afrikaans-speaking South African male, I feel very honoured to be here today. I grew up in Transkei. My father taught me to listen to stories and this has made all the difference. I have the privilege of knowing many people from different backgrounds in South Africa and have been able to hear their stories. The generosity that others have shown me, in sharing their experiences, has over years helped me to know more about what it is like to be a black South African or a coloured South African. It has been the stories of others that have placed my life in context. It has this story-telling that has built trust.

I have struggled with my identity as a white person and as someone who was very involved in the Afrikaans church which was instrumental in supporting Apartheid. What has helped has been to really listen to stories of others. I have tried to listen to what their stories meant for me and my life.

I can deal with guilt and shame in different ways. I can try to position myself to blame others, other Afrikaaners. For instance, I resisted going to the army and while this is an act of which I am glad, I used to use this in a way to distance myself from any responsibility for Apartheid. 'This makes me

okay', I would say. 'It wasn't me who did these things; it was them – the police, the government.' What helped me to realise that this was not helpful was that I benefited from the Apartheid system in terms of my education, health and wealth. I realised that I had to take responsibility for my place in this society.

Apartheid was created by generations before me and at times I have found it hard to believe how my parents and their parents and the people they knew could have voted this monstrous system into existence. At times it has been difficult trying to relate to the older generations, particularly when they did not want to hear the stories being told in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As they have contributed so much in my life however, I realise that it's my responsibility to try and share these stories, to talk about these things together.

Shame is a continuous process. Whenever I hear another person's story of how their lives were affected by Apartheid, I feel this shame. I think that shame is a continual process of saying sorry, of acknowledgment.

There are still many examples of racism in the community of which I am a part. I struggle with this. I can feel alienated from my own people and the Healing of Memories groups have offered me a sense of home. I am constantly trying to be someone who will stand alongside other white people who want to look at these issues and my commitment is to try to devote my life to this process. In order to do so, I think I must continually reach out to my own people to have these conversations. We must continue to ask, 'Did I do enough? Am I doing enough now?'

I think there are many things that are positive about shame and guilt but they can also be very destructive emotions that require a lot of care. They can make you feel as if you should be put in a corner, they make you want to run away, they make you want to be someone that you are not. And if you are struggling with shame and guilt, sometimes this is taken out on friends, family members or one's children. I think it is very important that space is found to voice your feelings of shame and guilt, to say I am sorry and to find ways of redressing the past. Shame rips the heart out of you and this can be very difficult. I think we must reach out to each other about these experiences, they are not to be dealt with in isolation; in fact I don't think they can be dealt with alone.

My children are still small but I am trying to expose all the young people I know to the real stories of people from many different perspectives of life. In my childhood we were all so separated from one another but now there are the opportunities for friendships across cultures. I hope to continue to build on these relationships in my own life and to foster them in my children's life. This offers me a sense of hope and is an antidote to shame.

Remembrance – the theme of my life

Karin Penno-Burmeister

I live in the north of Germany where I was born in 1956. I was not alive during the time of National Socialism and the Second World War, but I am member of what is known as 'the second generation'. My parents were young National Socialists. When I was a school pupil we did not learn anything about National Socialism. My first learning occurred when I went with my school class at age 16 or 17 to Dachau Concentration Camp. We were not prepared for this visit and when we went there and saw the documentation, we were horribly moved. We were young girls and boys and we did not understand so we went home and tried to talk with our parents about what had happened. As we tried, we felt a distance. Our parents' generation did not want us to talk to them about this. Many were angry to be asked.

I think this is a typical story from Germany. After the end of the Second World War many people did not want to remember. They did not want to accept their responsibility and their guilt. A lot of perpetrators never accepted their guilt. Some accepted it in their older years. It is now sixty years since the end of National Socialism and there are some elderly Germans who are speaking about the actions that they perpetrated, but this is rare. Also, the victims who survived, for instance those who were concentration camp prisoners, did not speak publicly for a very long time. Perhaps this was because nobody was willing to listen or believe what they would say. Perhaps some also did not speak because they wanted to live in a normal way, they did not want to be remembered for the experiences that they had been through during the war.

As it turned out, I took the shame and guilt of my family history into my profession. I didn't recognize this at first. I studied theology and worked in a church as a teacher and then began to work in a concentration camp memorial. Over time I recognized that remembrance of the crimes of National Socialism had become the theme of my life, my family, my identity. I am working on remembrance of the guilt of National Socialism. I am working with the children of the perpetrators and the families and children of the victims. I try to bring these groups together at the memorial centre. This centre opened very shortly after the end of the Second World War and held remembrance ceremonies and meetings between perpetrators and the families of victims. Today we have old people, former perpetrators, and the children of people who died in the concentration camps who now regard each other as friends, who invite each other to birthdays and weddings. It is possible for these people to understand each other because the children of former perpetrators are open to feeling the shame. They do not feel personally

responsible, as they were only children, and they are quite clear about this, but they feel a broader sense of shame because our parents were National Socialists, or because when they were young they believed in Hitler, or more broadly simply because they are members of the German nation and these things happened in our country.

I believe that the German experience shows that shame can be very dangerous and destructive. I think National Socialism came about because of the shame that existed in Germany after the First World War. Germans were very ashamed after the loss of the war and the international world shamed the Germans. This led to a lot of aggression and contributed to Germany looking for a strong man, someone who would free us from shame, someone who would show the world that Germans are not ashamed, are not feeble. Someone who would show that Germany was strong and powerful nation. This was a very dangerous situation and produced an absolutely criminal ideology.

On the other hand, the chance of shame is that we do don't want to ever feel it again and therefore it leads us to change our actions. To take shame as a motive for change can be a very good thing. In these circumstances, shame can be understood as symbolizing situations in which we have reached an ethical border. It is a sign that we must look for another way to live. We must accept this sort of shame and ask it to help us rather than fear that it will destroy us.

I think it is very important to teach the young people who come to our memorial centre that we are responsible for all that we do, and also all that we do not do. It is our responsibility to know this, to accept this. I also try to transfer the knowledge of history. I ask young people if they believe that something like the concentration camps could ever occur again and often they say that they cannot imagine this, that it will never happen again. If this is what they believe then I try to provide examples, of wherever in the world, where inhumanity, cruel actions, and racism still exist. We try to explore together how these are human problems. We also talk about small things that happen in every day life, such as on the school bus that has the same spirit as National Socialism. The hate against people who do not look like me, the hate about minorities, the fear of people who do not look like me, the discrimination against foreigners, all of these have the same spirit as National Socialism. We speak about how we can recognize this and then develop the civil courage to act whenever we recognize it.

Where do we go?

When the deeds of our parents
Led to other`s pain
When our own actions fill us with shame
When our own people
Hurt and maimed
Where do we go?
And what do we do?
Remembrance became the theme of my life
I find a home with those who think alike
But our role now is to reach beyond
Ensure the lessons from history are passed on
The chance of shame
Is that we don`t want to feel it again
It marks an ethical border
So we make a change
Now our children sing a different song
And we`re building friendships
that we should have built all along
Where do we go?
What do we do?
The journey goes on
For me and you

Reflections from the small groups

Our own shame:

- Hearing others speak of shame and guilt triggered my own shame. As a leader in South African liberation movements, I did not take responsibility for the actions of my comrades in the struggle – for instance those who killed Amy Biehl. (South Africa)
- As an English-speaking white South African, I felt like a princess for much of my life while being outraged about the actions of others. Upon reflection though, the class system of South Africa was entrenched by the English, my people, rather than anyone else. I will always carry a sense of shame that I was not more active in the liberation struggle. In terms of the future, I have a passion for speaking with young people to facilitate the next generation's knowledge. (South Africa)
- My son was seven years old when I was arrested and 21 when I was released. I feel guilt that my ideas had such an impact on his life. (Northern Ireland)
- Listening to people speak of their experiences of shame and guilt made me think about my children's experiences when I was incarcerated on death row. If I had been hanged, the stigma would have remained with them for life. As it is, my imprisonment has probably impacted on them in ways that I have not realised. Thinking more about this will make a difference to me when I go back home, how I speak with them. I am grateful for this. (Uganda)
- I feel shame now that I am not doing more about what is taking place in Zimbabwe. Our South African government should be doing so much more. I should be racing down to my local ANC representative and doing my bit. I feel ashamed that I have done so little about this (South Africa).
- Beyond feelings of shame and guilt, our actions must speak louder. We must be able to say sorry to other tribes for what we've done and not done. (Uganda)

Relationships that make a difference

I grew up on a farm in the Eastern Cape and I was aware as an English person of feeling superior over Afrikaans South Africans. As the white girl on the farm I was so secure, so cosseted, always protected from harm by the farm workers. When Christo spoke with such vulnerability it brought back strong feelings of my own shame for my lack of compassion towards the girl that my parents took in.

My father was part of my school's board and also close friends with an unusual family in our town – a glamorous woman married to a racing driver. Their daughter was at school with me, and at some point, when I was seven and she six, it was declared that she was coloured. This announcement was staggering in its implications. I will never forget the moment. I suppose now that these sorts of situations must have been quite common in rural towns but it was truly shocking at the time. There was no 'Coloured' school in our town. I remember thinking that my friend would have to go to school far away.

Tragically, her mother committed suicide soon after this announcement and her father left with her brothers to settle elsewhere. My parents took her in and home-schooled her. Although she was only with us a few months I found it profoundly unsettling. The girl's mourning and trauma was expressed in disrupted sleep, nightmares, mood swings and depression. This was my first real experience of witnessing someone's anguish.

Although she only stayed with us a few months, it felt to me like an eternity. In hindsight I believe this experience shaped me profoundly. I have spent my life working with children and broken families. Only now, looking back, do I realise that these steps I have taken are linked to the shame I have felt for how I treated that young girl.

Acting with integrity

My grandma and I were both taken away from our mothers when we were children. I made a documentary about this and how I was raised by German nuns and priests. It was only when I studied that I read about the treatment of Indigenous people and this brought anger. In terms of dealing with my own sense of shame, I have responded to this in a practical way. If I act as a person with integrity and dedicate my life to being the very best person that I can be, then this is an antidote to shame. Of course the journey continues. Four days before this conference I was re-united with my niece which was a major breakthrough for me. (Marlene, Australia)

Finding our own way

I have witnessed a number of realms of injustice in my life. I grew up in Australia not knowing anything about the Indigenous people of my country. When I began to notice them and what they were living with I felt angry about not being told about our country's history. Later, I found myself a convicted prisoner in Thailand where I had been dealing in drugs. Serving only a short time there I was incensed by the brutal injustice meted out by the prison guards on my fellow prisoners. My anger flourished. Over time I turned this anger into using TV, film and media to tell stories of injustice. This is the path I have chosen. I

think we must all find our own ways to healing and our own ways to make contributions. (Kim, Australia)

A sense of urgency

* This presentation especially spoke to me as I worry that my country, the USA, is moving towards patterns that will produce guilt and shame for me and future generations to endure. The sense of urgency I feel to contribute in whatever way I can to stop the harm that my country is doing is very real. Where and how to take a stand that is meaningful troubles me and this has given me a better understanding of those who have tried and failed in other contexts. How can we take action when we know what is happening around us is so wrong? (Peggy, USA)

* I feel considerable shame about the actions of my country, the USA, at present. I am feeling increasingly alienated form my own people and I am not sure what to do about this. Being in South Africa is such a different experience than being at home. There is a powerful sense of hope here, and there is engagement in the politics of life. I am struggling to get a foothold in the USA to talk about these issues and yet it so very important. (Steve, USA)

Honouring my mother

These conversations today have made me think about my mother. If only I could have made her happy. She never had a good life. I don't remember her ever laughing freely. When my brothers and I managed to amuse her, sometimes she would give a warm laugh that bore within it a hidden lack of freedom. I never saw her happy. If only I could have done more for her. Now I want to articulate this to young people – to honour their parents before it is too late. I don't want others to live with the regret that I live with. My wish to honour my mother influences my life now. Trying to encourage others to honour their elders is the way I am now trying to honour her now.

Building relationships across difference

I've lived with a sense of guilt for most of my life. As white Australians we have a serious unresolved relationship with Indigenous Australia. As a Christian I have a sense of guilt in relation to the role of missionaries. At the same time there is the sense of privilege of living in a safe, wealthy country, and recently, since September 11th Muslims in Australia have been treated badly. How do we deal with these situations and our personal responsibility and guilt in a constructive way? I am concerned that sometimes people's feelings of guilt can become self-centered, in a way, and can just perpetuate the problem. I would like to say that listening to the talks this morning was very helpful. It seems that other people are responding to these issues by trying to build solid relationships across differences. I am trying to do this too, and it was helpful to hear other people's stories and to think about what we can do that is constructive around these issues. (Alison, Australia)

Pride in South Africa

As the daughter of a German who had to flee Hitler's regime the stories this morning were significant to me. In some way they made me feel considerable pride in being South African. This is a little complex so I will try to explain as I am certainly not trying to take a pride in having reached an anti-racist place. What I feel pride in is that during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) I traveled to Germany and witnessed first hand the conspiracy of silence that to some degree still pervades that country. I know a bit about this silence. My father did not speak of his past and it took fifty years for many Holocaust survivors and first or second generation descendants to speak of their experiences. When I visited Germany, what I felt pride in was the contribution of the TRC and the ways in which South Africa as a nation has tried to enable stories of our past to be told, for tears to roll. We have made a considerable effort to overcome the barriers of speaking about the past. This doesn't mean that everyone has spoken the stories they need to speak, or that all South Africans have been willing to hear those stories that have been told. Nonetheless, I would like to pay tribute to all those who have played their part in creating space for the stories of the Apartheid era to be told and witnessed. I am grateful that this is something about which I feel proud as a South African. (Barbara, South Africa)

Other comments about shame and guilt

- I am white, had every material privilege, university education etc and yet I struggle with self-doubt and shame about the person I am. This is a shame about my very existence. Where does this come from?
- How can we talk about shame and not include the violence done by each of us to the Earth and animals daily?
- Anger is a motivating force for me. It assists me in continuing to strive for justice and reparations in this country. I don't see the point of getting rid of this anger until we've got rid of the injustice.
- What struck me this morning is that this process of the healing of memories does not simply involve listening to people who have experienced pain, who have been victimized, but also endeavouring to listen to the stories of those who have committed terrible acts against others.

- When I hear other people's stories, what is ultimately important is its interaction with my own life.
- Another way of describing guilt is to emphasise the need to take responsibility for our actions.
- I can feel free when I can own responsibility without reference to what others have done to me.
- Rwandans can sometimes be ashamed about what people of their country did even when they were the victims.
- These people who are facing issues of responsibility, shame and guilt are planting seeds of equality in our societies. They make me feel so hopeful and strangely encouraged.

A complex process

Imam Rashieed Omar South Africa

We had a wonderful, vibrant, animated discussion this afternoon in which we decided that guilt and shame are a complex process. They involve a kind of complimentarily between individual and collective responsibility. We spoke of how Afrikaaners have made public apologies in which they have spoken collectively but seldom acknowledged their personal responsibility. On the other hand we spoke of the importance of structural considerations. We have all been influenced by our own history and socialisation. When I speak to people I describe myself as a 'recovering racist'. This is because I was born into a racist country called South Africa. I went to a coloured school, lived in a coloured neighbourhood, this is part of my being. One way of dealing with it is by acknowledging it. This is a complex process. We are all undertaking it and to be doing so together here is something I am treasuring.

To know what love is

A reflection from Pumla Gobodo Madikizela, South Africa

It feels as if we have already been here a long time because of the richness of the stories. One of these rich stories was told by Tom today and he quoted from a man, Barry Williams-Peterson, whom he had been working with in prison:

'A little food is filling if it's been a while since you ate. And you truly know what love is after being exposed to an abundance of hate.'

Tom grew up as a white American man on the street that divides the white suburb in which he lived from the black community and I was very moved by the story that he told our small group. Tom was talking of his own journey of meeting black people for the first time when he was fourteen years old and how he was drawn to them in a positive way. Even though his family were very unhappy with him joining a black circle he went on and became immersed in this world and became all the richer for it. Two years later, however, he was rejected as not belonging, as someone who was not trustworthy, someone who was not trusting. This story which was told in a room to eight people. It was a story that has been experienced in South Africa over and over again. We do not know how to talk to one another. We do not know how to articulate this confusion. We don't know how to trust one another or talk to one another. And yet, that is exactly what we were doing today. We were talking together, sharing stories of our lives, trying to assist each other in understanding them. That is why Tom's story as a white American touched my life so much as an African woman.

The way to healing what has happened in our countries is not within private rooms with our private therapists. Instead it involves ways that our stories can become linked together, as they have today. We truly know what love is because we know so well what hate has been. I will remember this phrase and take it into the rest of my life.

DAY TWO: Morning

STORIES OF TRANSCENDENCE

As it was Friday, the Muslim holy day, the morning began with some words from Imam Rashied Omar.

Reflecting on our faith traditions

Imam Rashied Omar South Africa

On the fateful day of September 11th 2001, I was living in the USA and experienced first hand the trauma that visited the people of Manhattan. The anguish overwhelmed me and I took my prayer mat and began praying, 'Please let the perpetrators of this barbaric act not be Muslims.' But in the days that followed, as the evidence accumulated, my anguish deepened. How could some people claim to have been motivated to commit such an act against humanity by a tradition that I hold dear? How could I respond?

There were two common reactions to these events by Muslim brothers and sisters. Some responded with denial, that this act was not done by Muslims, it was a plot by the CIA. Some even concocted anti-semitic explanations saying that some Jews did not go to work in the World Trade Centre that day. I believe that within this denial there is an absent but implicit shame. These Muslims were not celebrating the attack on the twin towers, they were denying that they were connected to it in anyway. The second response I heard was one of ex-communication – those who committed these acts were 'bad' Muslims. But this implies in some way that all other

Muslims are somehow good. The harder course of action is to acknowledge that there is the potential within our spiritual traditions to contribute to violence. This is a painful realization but in coming to terms with it we can draw on experiences from the anti-apartheid struggle. The Christians of South Africa had to face the ways in which the church here legitimised Apartheid. Some even believed, and used to argue, that the Bible clearly legitimated the Apartheid regime.

Any sacred tradition or structure can be used for ill-will. The interpretation of any sacred text will be as tolerant or as intolerant as its reader. We come to the text with our own histories, our own values. This is why it is vital we all, constantly, reflect upon our histories and values. For me as a Muslim, I need to be a witness to the best traditions of my religion. The litmus test for me of any religion, or any ideology for that matter, is the extent to which it allows you to embrace the other as an extension of yourself. The journey of healing is also a journey from hatred of the stranger to welcoming the stranger. At this time in which the world is struggling, this is the challenge I wish to embrace.

Stories of transcendence

The morning then continued with Glenda Wildschut interviewing Bounthanh Phommasathit and Marlene Jackamarra around the theme of transcendence.

Repairing the harm

Bounthanh Phommasathit (Laos/USA)

I was born in Laos and raised there during the Vietnam War. I remember we lived in a large house surrounded by beautiful fruit trees. Suddenly, I remember my parents grabbing us and placing us in bomb shelters underneath the house. There were many bombs and as a child I saw many people killed. I remember we went to hide in a cave. We were there with many other families. But it too was destroyed. Over 300 people, men, women, children were killed instantly.

More bombs were dropped per capita in the northern part of Laos, where I was born, than anywhere else in history. I saw a picture of the area in 1953 and when this is compared to the site after the Vietnam war there is no comparison. There are still bomb craters, holes, landmines. The green trees are all gone and the land is still dangerous.

After 1975 and the fall of Saigon, thousands of people from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam left their countries to seek refuge elsewhere. I left in 1978 when I was 20 years old to come to the USA.

I returned to Laos for the first time in 1992. When I saw the emptiness of the hospitals and the needs of the villages I knew I must do something for the people of my homeland. I had heard of programs being run by Vietnam Veterans and so I wrote to them with a proposal. Six months later I received a letter from them saying they were keen to collaborate with me.

I was fortunate then to meet with Lee Thorn. Lee is a Vietnam Veteran who was a bomb-loader during the war. His role was to video the areas where the bombers were going to drop their bombs and to inform the pilot where to fly and where to unload. Lee's role was to load the bombs and to release them. When I spoke with Lee I learnt that the bombers were instructed that they could not return to base with any bombs remaining. As the planes left Vietnam they flew over Laos. It was these planes that dropped the bombs on my village, completely destroying it. Thousands of people were killed there.

Lee and I began to collaborate on various projects of repair. We began with my village. The people who had once lived there had all moved when the village was destroyed so we traveled to their new location. Lee was determined to try to make peace with the villages where once he had made war. He was received well by the people of my village. At first it was a little difficult for both me and the villagers to accept his acts of reconciliation. The US government is still hostile to Laos, because Laos has a communist government, but the people of Laos are very accepting. After Lee had apologized he began to assist in digging wells, repairing schools and together we worked to send medical supplies.

The relationship between Lee and I is not always easy. He is the first to admit that the Vietnam War has left him a troubled person. But we have no choice but to work with each other really. These issues are bigger than both of us. We are both absolutely committed to repairing the harm done to Laos.

For more information about the work of the Jhai Foundation see www.Jhai.org

A long way

Marlene Jackamarra, Australia

To begin, I would like to acknowledge my people and the land from which I come. I am a Yamuji woman of the Inguda people. I want to acknowledge my mother, my father and my grandmother whose stories I was very fortunate to learn. I would like also to honour Heather who is also here, Heather is an Indigenous woman from a different part of Australia.

My story is also one of struggle. I was born in an Aboriginal Settlement, the same place my mother was born. In fact, we had an entire family in this mission home, so many different members of different generations taken away from their mothers and fathers.

I was brought up by priests and nuns from when I was seven years old until I was sixteen. The orphanage was a strict and cold place and I am sure this is linked to

why I didn't really feel I belonged anywhere as I was growing up. I can still feel very alone sometimes.

For most of my life I have been an abused person. It took me some time to find the words to describe my experiences, to tell the truth about what happened to me and what happens to others in our communities. I have lived within violent relationships – I was 'black and blue' from the violence, as they say in Australia.

Alcohol was a comfort for a time. I became a heaver drinker and most of my days were taken up looking for booze. I have been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous for 20 years. The day I stopped drinking was a turning point in my life in dealing with the effects of sexual abuse.

I have had to deal with my share of shame and guilt and sometimes also a sense of hatred towards some of my own people. The violence I experienced was at the hands of my own people and this takes time to deal with.

We are a marginalized community in Australia, much of this due to government and legal legislation. I know that our communities have been terribly affected by histories of colonization, but I also know that we must now take our own action and responsibility for ensuring that violence in our communities stops.

When I started on this healing journey there was just me, me and God. And for a very long time this is all there was. Now though, I am the mother of five children. I have six grandchildren and one great grandchild. I think I have 23 step brothers and sisters. It is a big family and I am the eldest and therefore have the greatest responsibility.

I've had to do a lot of healing of memories. I have found it hard to forgive myself and to love myself again. I take it one day at a time. It's a long road and I've already come a long way.

We've come a long, long way

First things first where we come from
We honour land and family
And my sister Heather in the circle too
We've come a long, long way
My story is one of struggle as well
Me and my family were taken away
No wonder sometimes we feel alone
No wonder sometimes we feel the shame
Somehow I learnt to speak the truth
About the violence, about the abuse
In Australia we say 'black and blue'
In Australia we're dealing with this stuff too
When I started this journey
It was just me
Just me and God
But now I have a big family
I have all of you around this circle with me
Forgiveness is about ourselves too
Learning to love ourselves again
We're taking it one day at a time
We're joining with others who feel the same
First things first where we come from
We honour land and family
And my sister Heather in the circle too
We've come a long, long way

Reflections from small groups:

- It is helpful I think to remember what it was that has got us through our toughest times. My toughest times were in prison and it was my mother's visits that meant so much to me then.

- Sometimes it is the weak and pained who help us, rather than the strong.
- To move forward, we need to know our own history. We must know where we have come from if we are to know where to travel to on this journey.
- Hearing the stories over these few days has made me ask questions about the sermons I have preached. I have wondered if I have not given space for people to experience their pain…have I been too quick to ask people who have been abused, to forgive?
- There is a South African expression which says that to strike a woman is to strike a rock, such is the strength of women. I so appreciated the stories of women which we heard this morning.

A story of healing from exile

Hearing the stories this morning reminded me of growing up in Soweto in my grandparent's house, joining the MK and moving into exile. I don't really know what enabled me to begin a journey towards healing from these experiences. I intuitively knew not to go straight back home after exile. I came back to Cape Town instead and it was here my healing started. Six months later I returned to visit my family. This was the first time after fifteen years. One brother had been killed and the others had so turned to alcohol that they couldn't tell me what had happened. My mother's spirit had died in some way long ago. I got to see her and then she died two months later. She had been waiting for my return. So many ex-combatants have had similar experiences with their families. Others have themselves taken up drinking and dropped out of the world. I ask myself why I didn't end up going that way myself. I had always rebelled against alcohol and smoking because I had seen what they were doing to my family. Somehow I believe this history assisted me. Some of it was chance events. I connected with the right person when I was in Cape Town. Now I am working to help other ex-combatants with skills training. This work means a lot to me.

From Donald Shriver

What are the connections between justice, anger at evil, revenge upon evildoers, and forgiveness of evildoers?

Forgiveness is frequently misunderstood as forgetting, a bad definition. Not, "Forgive and forget," but "Remember and forgive" is the best slogan.

Once we begin to remember the evil we have suffered so unjustly, we are likely to be facing a fork in the road: One fork has the highway sign, "This way to revenge"; the other, "this way to restoration." If one dares to take the latter road, the next sign there may surprise you: "Be angry!" Pumla has rightly said that "even anger can be a first step on the journey to forgiveness." Yes, and a second step may be finding companions with whom to share that anger. From companionship may emerge some new partnerships of action against social injustice, new political collaboration for changing society enough to prevent the injustice from occurring again.

Again, the example of Mandela and his partners on this Island is memorable. He said in his autobiography that the "big mistake" of his captors here was to permit the political prisoners to work and talk together. (The big cruelty imposed on Robert Sobukwe was to isolate him completely from all contact with other human beings.)

The future importance of shared grief, shared conflict, even shared talk with one's oppressors can hardly be overestimated. In contrast with some revolutionary politicians, said Joe Slovo, "We stayed with our oppressors." They stayed, because they were steady in their hope that one day they and the oppressors would have to live together as neighbors in a more just, non-racially structured society. Martin Luther King, Jr. had the same conviction. To a young boy who threw rocks at him as his car was passing down the street of Louisville, Kentucky, King turned down the window and said to his assailant: "Young man, one of these days you and I are going to live together as neighbors in this country."

Like forgiveness, justice is a journey as well as an arrival. It has stages, advances, retreats, and new advances in the building of a just community between victims and perpetrators. It is a hard road to travel. But it is better than the road marked: "This way to revenge."

Final reflections from Bounthanh and Marlene

Bounthanh**:** I am proud to be an Asian American, but my greatest concern at this time as a citizen is how can we stop war? How can we join together to make the voice of citizens and communities significant? How can we make the greatest impact on the actions of the government? I have seen war and I will never forget it. I am also sure that Lee will never forget what he did.

Marlene: Thank you everyone for listening to my story and for the opportunity to share. For some reason as people have been talking I have been remembering my recent visit to the District Six Museum. I was very moved and touched by this place. I read people's poetry, saw the exhibits of people's shoes that were found in the rubble, photos and stories. It is a great work of reclaiming community, of restoring memory, of not letting that history slip by. I was quite overwhelmed and cried all the way while I walked through it. I am so pleased to be able to make links between the histories of our people and the histories of others and to see the ways in which they are caring for their past.

DAY TWO: Afternoon

RECONCILIATION

The afternoon began with Fr Michael Lapsley interviewing Andrew Rice and Pat McGee

Re-humanising the conflict

Andrew Rice

Having been born and raised in Oklahoma, in 2001, I was living in New York City. So was my younger sister Amy and my older brother David. On September 11th of that year I was in Toronto, Canada working as a journalist. In the morning, I received a call on my mobile phone from my mother. It was a very clear blue-sky day. I can remember it distinctly. I was walking to an interview. My mother said, 'Are you alone?' I instantly thought that one of my grandparents must have passed away. 'What's happened?', I asked. 'A plane has hit the World Trade Centre where you brother works.' I thought it must have been a small plane, but I instantly knew it was terrorist attack. It was a prize target for extremists and had been attacked before. I knew this had not happened by accident so I was immediately anxious. My mother said that it wasn't his building that had been hit. The plane had hit the other tower. My brother had said to my mother that it was a

terrorist attack, that they'd been asked not to leave the building because it was safer to remain inside, and that it was now out of his control. It was the last we heard from him.

Fourteen minutes later, a second plane hit the tower in which he worked.

I didn't know this yet. No phones were working in New York City then. I could not get through. I got out of the interview I was supposed to be doing and saw the first images in the press room. As I was there I saw the second plane hit the tower and I had a sense of dread come over me.

I ran to my boss' hotel. I knew that if I was going to hear bad news I needed to be with someone supportive. When I got there the next image I saw was of the tower collapsing. I ran to the bathroom and fell down. I knew my brother was dead.

Two days later the police called my parents. We were lucky, although that seems a strange word, that my brother's body was found. His body was one of only fifteen that were found intact.

There were many links between me and my brother. We had both been brought up in a white privileged family, but with strong values. When we left the cocooned environment of home we were drawn to liberation movements and issues of justice. So too was my sister Amy. My brother and I were drawn to the history of the Civil Rights movement, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the work of Martin Luther King, Jnr. Both of us had also struggled with alcoholism and substance abuse. I now have had ten years of sobriety. David had had 8-9 years when he died.

When my brother got back into school he came to Zimbabwe in 1994 and then to Cape Town in 1996. He worked on issues of land restitution here. He watched the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on television every day. He witnessed the signing of the new South African constitution while he was here. Mandela was a hero to my brother. And for all these reasons it is especially significant for me to be here this week.

When he was killed I found I was wrestling with myself. I remembered the quote, 'principles don't mean anything if you let go of them when they are inconvenient.' I wrestled with the anger I felt. Early on I caught myself feeling, 'We'll show them'.

It would be very easy for someone who has lived as privileged life as I have, to condemn anyone who carried out a terrorist attack as I don't personally know the things that can provoke someone to do such things. I returned to the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jnr. and these were very significant to me.

Sometime later questions of reconciliation became real. You may be aware that there is one man being held in the US on suspicion that he was involved in planning the September 11th attacks and even that he may have been onboard one of the planes if he hadn't been arrested before the attacks took place. Zaccharrias Moussaui is being held in solitary confinement and is allowed to see his mother once every six months. We heard that his mother wanted to meet with family members of those who had been killed in the attacks. And so, with my sister and a number of other members of our group (9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows) we went ahead and met with her privately in the Bronx. I remember this meeting vividly. Two of the members of our group, a mother and father, lost their son on September 11th. The mother of this couple went down to meet Zaccharrias' mother. All we could hear was sobbing and footsteps. The sobbing got louder as the footsteps got closer. For the first ten minutes together, all we did was hug and cry. There were no words, only the language of the human heart. She was just like my mother. Then we began to talk and we learned about her son's life.

It was only after this meeting that I realised how much I had needed it. It had allowed us to re-humanise the conflict. It was humanizing to meet this mother and dignifying of all of us in some way.

I have no hatred in my heart, but I am angry - not only at the perpetrators of the attack but also at my own government. America was the victim of an unjustified attack. But our government's actions played a big part in creating the context for it. And now our government is exploiting the tragedy for its own political purposes.

I draw strength from the other 120 members of our group and being here in South Africa is invigorating. South Africa has far surpassed the US in terms of political awareness. There is a great fog in my country. So many people are filled with hatred and notions of retribution. We get hate mail all the time. Whenever we make public statements we receive hate mail and it makes me feel crazy.

While I have been here I have heard a lot about how important it was for South Africans to have friends outside the country during the liberation struggle. While the situation and context are obviously incredibly different, I do feel that we in the US who are trying to change the direction of our country, need friends on the outside of the country now. I have drawn strength from this gathering of people.

The most unexpected development

Pat Magee

I was born in Belfast in 1951 although while I was young my father took us all to England in the hope of making a better living. At the age of 15 I called myself a Pacifist and admired Martin Luther King, Junior. I returned to Ireland when I was nineteen at the outset of 'the Troubles' and

witnessed some of the early civil strife. I wanted to understand what was happening. Internment of nationalist activists was introduced by the British in 1971. People on both sides of my family were affected by this.

I returned to Belfast to work, not to get involved in the conflict. But as I witnessed sectarian strife, seeing the conflict slowly changed my mind. Seeing the ordinary working class people being treated so badly by the aggressive British soldiers politicized me. And I decided I would join the IRA.

Just as I was about to, I was arrested and was transferred to a detention centre for interrogation. The interrogation shook me up. It wasn't excessively violent but they frightened me and I lost my nerve.

Once this was over though, a couple of weeks later I did join and was interned for two and half years. After my release I became part of an active IRA unit whose role it was to take the hostilities to England's doorstep. We reasoned that nothing was going to change until the English started facing repercussions for their actions on their own soil. Margaret Thatcher was their Prime Minister at the time and we targeted a Conservative Party Conference. We bombed it and five people were killed and others injured.

I was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1985. I served 14 years until I was released from prison as part of the Good Friday Agreement in 1999. Jail provides an opportunity for reflection which is not always available when you are in the struggle itself. I have heard others this week describe the ways in which the prisoners turned Robben Island jail into a university. This was true in Belfast too. The jail was seen as a key site of the struggle.

During my years in prison I always thought that one day we would need to sit across the table with our opponents and try to deal with the past and the future. About 16 months after my release, Jo Berry made contact and came to Ireland to meet me. She wanted to see me because I had killed her father. She wanted to try to understand what had happened, why her life had changed so suddenly. I don't know what to call what happened on this visit. Forgiveness was not on the agenda. She wanted to have an understanding of why I did what I did.

I felt an obligation to meet her and we met and talked for three hours. Through our conversations, although it has been the most unexpected development, we have become friends and partners in talking about reconciliation.

It's not always easy. We're both challenged by each other's perspective. The hardest part is my justification of violence. I still maintain that the context in which we were in meant that we had no other option than to turn to violent tactics. But that is an extremely difficult message for anyone who has lost a loved one.

We'll be taking you with us in our hearts

All we could hear
Was sobbing and footsteps
The sobbing got louder
The footsteps closer
All we did was hug and cry
There were no words
Only the language of the human heart
She was just like my mother
There `s a great fog in my country
So much hatred in people `s hearts
We need our friends on the outside now
We `ll be taking you with us in our hearts
My brother was here
He saw the signing of the constitution
My brother was here
He watched the TRC each day
To my brother, Mandela was a hero
If my brother was here
I wonder what he `d say
There `s a great fog in my country
So much hatred in people `s hearts
We need our friends on the outside now
We `ll be taking you with us in our hearts

Reflections from the small groups

- When 9/11 happened my first response was that the US had got what it deserved. Later I realised that this was wrong, that they were innocent people who were killed. I can sometimes find it hard to put myself in the shoes of American people but I was deeply moved by Andrew's personal story.
- It is healing to put ourselves in the shoes of the other.
- Reconciliation to me is much broader than individuals reconciling with one another. It also involves communities reconciling and different people's reconciling different versions of history. These are collective processes too.
- Everyone has their own rich memories and at times over these days, as I have heard more people's stories, I find myself wondering how can I ensure that I do not tread upon someone else's treasured ground. I hope we will give each other space to get to know one another's histories.
- There is something powerful and beautiful that I see when people are able to say this is what I have done.
- I can say honestly to myself that I would never want those who perpetrated violence upon me to feel what I felt.
- I will always admire the ANC for setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and enabling it to examine wrongs perpetrated not only by the Apartheid regime but also by those in the liberation movements. This was a unique event as far as I am aware.
- In Burundi, war started a long time ago. It worsened in 1994. The shooting of guns has continued until today. When I returned to Burundi after being a refugee, everything was destroyed and there was little to eat. What is most painful is that we must live with those who have killed our family and friends. There is nothing we can do about this. This is very different than people choosing to make connection with those who have done you wrong. We have no choice. We know them. We live side by side.
- In listening to Pat's story about his IRA activism, I realised for the first time that if I had been in a similar position I might have made the same choices that Pat made. This came as shock to me as I had never thought about this before.

Our ancestry stands behind us
There is a Basque tradition that I relate to. It states that all of our ancestors stand behind each one of us. On the left there is a line of women. On the right there is a line of men. The Basque people believe that the reason we are on earth is to try to break the harmful patterns – both within the family traditions and the national traditions. They have a song and its words are like this:

'Oh Maybe this is the one. Oh maybe she is the one, or maybe he is the one, who will break the harmful personal patterns, the harmful family patterns, the harmful national patterns. Maybe this will be the one who will bring forward the good, the true and the beautiful. `

A different sort of power
Building relationships and reconciliation between victims and perpetrators demonstrates to me a different kind of power. Before, bombs and weapons were used, but now dialogue can offer a different way forward.

Amazing courage
I attended a Healing of Memories workshop in Northern Ireland and present there was a woman whose nationalist

husband we loyalists had tried to kill. Later on, when there was a feud within our own Loyalist group, she had the amazing courage to call me to say she was thinking about me. So much becomes possible when honest relationships are built…although I still find it hard to comprehend her generosity. (Alistair, Northern Ireland)

The strength of spirit
The stories told this morning remind me of the strength of spirit that I have witnessed in my work with refugees. I was deeply moved by witnessing the reaction of Hutus who had been so traumatized by the genocide in Rwanda. When they arrived in refugee camps they were paralysed by shock for the first three weeks. But as soon as they received tools, seeds to start cultivating the land, the strength of their spirits came to light. They were the most hard working diligent group of people I have ever worked with. And when they sang together…it was astounding.

Thinking of home
As we have been here this week, I have been admiring what has been occurring here in South Africa. As a Zimbabwean, I can't help but think that we in Zimbabwe should be so far ahead of South Africa by now. Our independence came about in 1980, fourteen years before South Africa's first democratic elections. And yet, we are having to learn from South Africa. What is occurring in my country at present is a tragedy.

Making public spaces intimate
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission made it possible for personal stories to reach the wider public. How can we continue to find ways of making public spaces intimate? How can we make public the sorts of stories we have heard over these days?

Amnesty for nothing
I recall that four young men approached the Truth and Reconciliation Commission saying 'we did nothing'. When asked what it was they wanted to seek amnesty for, they said again, 'We did nothing. We never joined the liberation struggle. We left it to others to carry on while we remained bystanders.'

Our country now
Until Mandela was freed from prison and we had our first free election, the South African flag was never mine. I never felt part of the country. Now it belongs to us and it is mine. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has brought so much healing to this land.

The turning of another page of hope
I have been humbled and touched by the process of healing being acted out here on Robben Island. This has been like turning another page of hope. It has sparked so many ideas and feelings in my body, mind and spirit. (Likando, Zambia)

We are Africans
Watching the play last night brought a sense of pride in hearing about Nelson Mandela's message of how all of us as Africans can live together with unity replacing the hatred of Apartheid. We are Africans. We live on this great continent together. (Bongani, South Africa)

Commentary by Don Shriver

We have visited, through each other's witness, painful places in recent human history. One such place on my tours of duty has been the sites of German concentration camps. It is not unusual for foreign visitors to those places to leave with the painful question, "How could they?" But

when Germans, especially young Germans leave, they are more likely to breathe the question, "How could we?"

There are at least four kinds of pain that emanate from evil, destructive acts by other humans: (1) The pain of the events themselves, done to victims;(2) the pain to oneself in viewing the deeds and empathizing with those victims, (3) the pain that these evils were done in one's own name; and (4) the pain of having to witness to others stories of the events. We have had touches of all four of these pains in this Robben Island meeting.

It is difficult enough for individuals to confess to their own part in the doing of great evil. It is even more difficult for the representatives of great governments and churches and other institutions to do so. The link between personal and collective confession, however, is very real. Antjie Krog reports that, in December 1996, as the time for closing out applications for amnesty to the TRC came, five young black men applied to the Cape Town office. The official asked them, "What did you do for which you want amnesty?" They answered: "Nothing." "What do you mean, nothing?" answered the puzzled official. "We did nothing. That was our crime. We let others carry on the liberation struggle, and we never helped."

Those young men exhibited a rare form of collective responsibility. They confessed that they were mere bystanders to the struggle for justice in South Africa. Many Germans confessed the same that they stood by doing nothing as Jews were herded from their towns into the death camps.

It usually takes a long time for large organizations like governments to repent. Imam Rashied has said that denial is usually a first response of both governments and citizens to crimes implicating them both. A second response, he said, was "excommunication" of a particular group of the wrongdoers. But a third, mature response is witness to the truth–that many of us are implicated. As these notes are written, after the conference, many Americans would like to deny the horrible scandals of American treatment of the prisoners in the Abu Graib prison in Iraq. These were crimes done in the name of America. Not to confess them and to witness to their wrong would be to add to the crimes themselves a willful silence about them.

When the leaders of organizations repent of the acts of some of their members, they help create a more humane culture for the future. Many observers were very proud of the ANC's confession, in 1993, of certain excessive violence and torture of some of its own members in the frontline camps. Less to be admired, many of us have to say, was the opposition of the ANC-dominated new government in 1998 to the very publication of the TRC report. It told too many bad things about the ANC, it was said. Thanks to President Mandela, the report was published.

In the Hebrew Bible, Psalm 15 defines "the righteous" as "those who swear to their own hurt." Recently in my country a high-placed White House security officer turned to the widows of the 9/11 disaster and said apologetically: "We in government did not do all that we should have done to prevent the deaths of your family members. We are very sorry." It was the most moving moment in the Senate hearing, said The New York Times. By way of contrast, said one of its article "The United States has a government which never admits to a mistake."

We all make mistakes. We all are bystanders, at least, in mistakes made by our representatives. We owe each other expressions of sorrow and repentance for what we or our representatives have done to harm others. If we ever pray, let us pray that all our governments will learn to repent of the deep injustices which they have inflicted upon others in the world!

Island Prison

By Peggy Shriver

Imprisoned on an island
Although I`ve been set free
I`m bound by anger, shame and hate
And still far out at sea
Release me from my island!
Connect me to the shore
So I can love my neighbour
And claim myself once more

DAY THREE

CULTURAL WAYS OF ADDRESSING WRONGS

O le Mau a Samoa: Acknowledging a history of colonisation and drawing on a culture of reconciliation

A presentation from Loudeen Parsons of the Family Centre, New Zealand

On the final morning of the conference Loudeen Parsons gave a moving presentation that described the history of colonisation of Samoa by New Zealand; a recent apology to Samoa that was offered by the New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark; and how this related to Samoan cultural ways of addressing wrongs.

As Loudeen described:

Our cultures have rituals, values and symbols of forgiveness and reconciliation. I invite you to explore your own cultures for its rituals, values and richness on the subjects of forgiveness and reconciliation. In our experience, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation is not only or primarily personal or intra-psychic – it is about restoring the well-being of relationships between people and people, people and their ancestry, people and their Gods, and people and the environment. Finding ways to excavate the liberative cultural elements and rituals of reconciliation from our own cultures seems a vital aspect of this work. In the process, we are asking ourselves the following questions:

- How do we grow cultures of reconciliation?
- How do we tell the young of atrocities that took place?
- How do we not lose sight of atrocities and yet at the same time be free of the pain that goes with it?

This presentation was warmly embraced by all those present who enthusiastically conveyed their wish to explore these issues further. The participants also responded by singing the song, 'Senzenina'.

Young people of Africa

Young people of Africa
Freedom is in your hands
Show us the way to freedom
In this land of Africa...

After presentations from a number of German groups who had been completing a parallel 'Healing of Memories' process during the week, a group of young people drummed, sang, danced and clapped their way into the centre of the hall. The energy and enthusiasm of the next South African generation was inspiring to everyone present.

- My name is Florence and I am an African, originally from Angola. I am proud and privileged to be an African. I have been through many different experiences but thus Youth Conference has helped me to know how to overcome. Although it's difficult, and it wasn't easy for me, it has definitely been worthwhile. Today I am standing here telling you that if I can overcome, then you can overcome anything. Thank you.
- During the workshop, we discovered a way to our past and how we could change ourselves for the better. Our global village is still going through a difficult time; we need to look at our past. We have started a journey together. Thank you.
- Our first day workshop gave us time to reflect on our country's past and we were all given the chance to give our feelings, thoughts and views. We were able to come up with good discussions. We warmed up to each other – we are all here for the same reason: to ensure the people of South Africa the beautiful and peaceful life that we all deserve.
- What lightened my heart and gave me faith in our country was the fact that all of us yearned to move on and create the best future for everyone in our beloved country. We stand here today on behalf of the youth of South Africa and we are not afraid. We hope that you can learn from us, as much as we can learn from you.

September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

Statement on 10th Anniversary of Rwandan suffering

This is an extract of a statement that was formally handed over by Andrew Rice to Rwandan participants on the final morning of the conference:

The members of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows stand with the families of Rwanda as you mark this 10th year since your people's great suffering.

We stand with you as you inspire the world to search for peace and justice by your courageous examination of the government-sanctioned evil that was unleashed in hundreds of thousands of horrific individual acts of violence.

We stand with you as you inspire the governments of all nations to examine the part their own inattention and lack of action contributed to this consuming genocide and to all ethic cleansings and genocides.

We stand with you to demand that all the nations of the world accept their responsibility to respond with preventive non-violent action whenever any government attempts the genocidal killing of people within or outside a nation's borders.

We stand with you as you inspire the peoples of the world to reject the revenge that only spawns more death, more violence in its wake, and instead to seek long-term solutions that will protect future generations…

We stand with you in recognizing our own failures to prevent and to remedy the evils that kill and oppress our sisters and brothers wherever they are in this world…

We stand with you in your hope that the beautiful green hills and misty mountains of Rwanda will never again know the agony of genocide, and will become for all nations a symbol of a people's triumph over the evil of destructive hatred as all your families find healing ways to live together.

September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
www.peacefultomorrows.org

Looking beyond

Despite the diversity of stories told, it was acknowledged that there have been a number of struggles in recent times that have led to immense loss of life that were not discussed over the three days of this gathering. Throughout our days on Robben Island many of us were thinking of the current events in the Middle East and how future generations may be needing to hold gatherings to heal the memories of events occurring now due to war, occupation, trauma, political violence and torture.

While the gathering did not, and could not, explore the stories of all countries' memories of trauma, it did provide an opportunity for everyone present to witness the stories of others, to contribute reflections, and to participate in significant story-telling rituals which linked people's stories together in healing ways. One aspect of the conversations that resonated for many participants was the importance of remembering those who have died while attempting to bring about changes in their countries. This was a theme taken up by a Rwandan participant at the very end of the gathering and it was a sentiment that also shaped the lyrics of the 'journey of healing song'.

We would like to end this gathering by honouring all those loved ones who have died in the struggles of our countries. Can we pause for a minute to remember and revere all those who we have lost and who look over us? Jean-Baptiste (Rwanda)

The end of this stage of the journey

The conference ended with participants walking to different significant historical places on Robben Island. At each significant place a small group of participants made a presentation to evoke and respect the histories of Robben Island.

Then it was back on the boat to return to Cape Town…which brought this Conference of Healing and Wholeness to completion.

Last words

Picture if you can, a ferry making its way back from Robben Island to Cape Town. On board are 70 people from many different countries, all grateful for the opportunity to have shared the last three days together and all looking forward to reconnecting with loved ones and colleagues to continue the process of addressing histories of trauma in their own countries. For more information about the gathering and/or the work of the Institute for the Healing of Memories please consult their webpage: www.healingofmemories.co.za

PARTICIPANTS

The following people were participants from this gathering. It was their generosity with their stories that made both the conference and this documentation possible.

Colin Griffiths
Heather Laughton
Marlene Jackamarra
Maureen Theresa McCarthy
Loudeen Parsons
Emmanuel Hlabangana
Dalene Thomas
Grace Kiconco
Elias Wanjama
Charles Berahino
Anastacia Ntibagendeza
Solomon Nsabiyera
Jean-Baptiste Ntokirutimana
Andrew Rice
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