

REFLECTION & HEALING

March 2013

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALING MEMORIES

INTRODUCTION

We regret that the Institute's newsletter has not been appearing in your in-box for some time. Simply put, the on-going recession has had a negative impact on NGO fundraising in South Africa and globally, so the Institute has had to make certain reductions in administration in an effort to preserve its programs. However, we hope to re-establish a regular publication schedule for the newsletter to keep the supporters of the Institute abreast of its activities.

Father Michael Lapsley's book **Redeeming the Past** is launched

Redeeming the Past – My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer. Father Michael Lapsley SSM, with Stephen Karakashian, Orbis Books-USA, Struik Inspiration-South Africa.

This book is a stunner! The autobiography of New Zealand born Anglican priest Michael Lapsley, it

traverses with great clarity his personal pilgrimage during 40 years of ministry in Southern Africa and the personal cost exacted en route.

This pilgrimage led him from being a lifelong pacifist to a position where he backed the armed struggle with the ANC, serving as a chaplain in the liberation



Picture by Mark Wessels at Cape Town Launch with Archbishop Tutu.

struggle to free South Africa. It led him twice into enforced exile, first in Lesotho and later into Zimbabwe. It was there, shortly after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, that he opened a parcel sent by the security forces containing a letter-bomb. It nearly killed him. Both his hands were blown off and he sustained horrific injuries to his sight, hearing, brain and internal organs.

But this book is not so much about these things. It more about the hope that springs from every page of the triumph of life over death, of good over evil, of faith over despair. His deep and powerful belief in the Resurrection of Christ and the hope that flows from this for humanity and his beloved South Africa permeates every page of this remarkable testimony.

Michael traverses the enormous changes that have taken place in his lifetime. He brings clear insights into the struggles which have occurred to try and make South Africa a fully democratic and free country.

He does not shirk the responsibility of looking at the shortcomings of the post-apartheid regime.

Perhaps his most compelling testimony comes where he speaks with passion of the Healing of Memories process which he initiated and which is now his full time work. He speaks of the remarkable changes which occur within that process every day in his workshops. He writes with depth of understanding about forgiveness and reconciliation, and how difficult they can be to achieve fully. 'Forgiveness does not come cheap.'

This is a must-read book for people who care about South Africa, past and present, for those who engage in healing work, for all ministers in God's Church and for those who want to get an excellent insight into what makes this remarkable priest tick. Daring to struggle as he has with all the great human issues of the age, it ranks as one of the great spiritual biographies of modern times. Fr. Jim Considine

Redeeming the Past

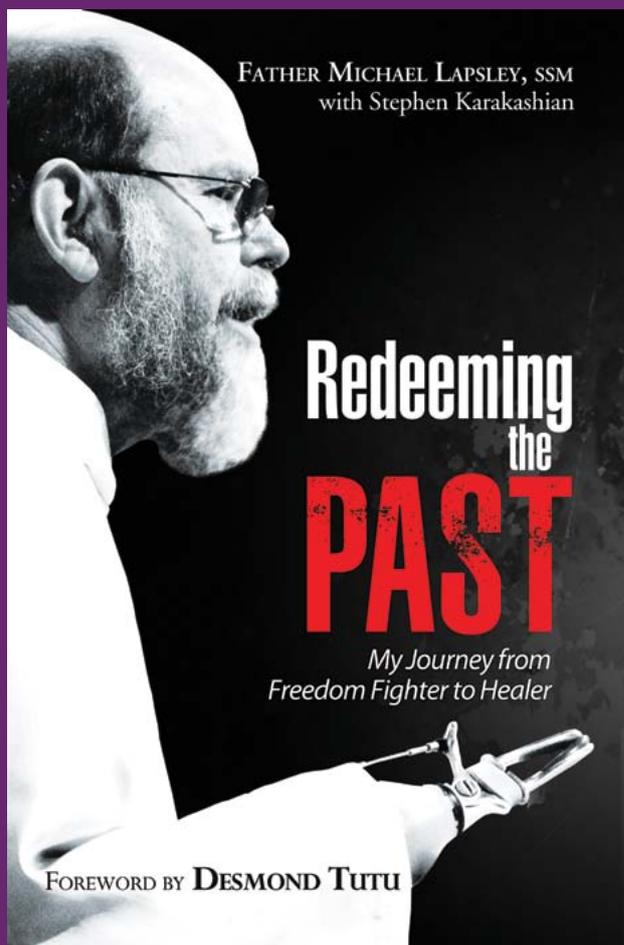
– How to buy the book and CD



Book inclusive of packaging and postage R200.00

"Michael's life is part of the tapestry of the many long journeys and struggles of our people."

—Nelson Mandela



Restoring Humanity Project

The Restoring Humanity Project is aimed at addressing the needs of youth in South Africa. Its creation was recognition that in the 20 years since the victory of democracy and the end of apartheid a whole new generation of young people has appeared who do not bear the direct scars of apartheid but are faced with daunting problems of their own, including violence, HIV/AIDS, educational challenges, unemployment and economic insecurity. In addition, as they will provide the next generation of leaders, they need assistance to develop their leadership potential. The methods developed by the IHOM have proven to be effective in helping South African youth deal with their challenging environment and the Restoring Humanity Project aims to develop their leadership potential.

We thought the best way to highlight the work of this project is through the words of several of its young volunteer facilitators. Thandikhaya Ncosani is 30 years old and, like many facilitators, he heard about the Institute and its work through a friend in the community. He attended a three-day workshop because of personal issues and found the process very helpful. He subsequently volunteered to become a facilitator and attended the four-week facilitator training course. He said that this experience allowed him to see the world through new spectacles, to see himself as a “citizen of the world”. He has now served as a facilitator in 16 workshops and though he receives a small stipend for his work, his continued participation is driven by the personal satisfaction he derives from working with youth. Each workshop brings together 10-16 young people of both genders aged 14-18. They attend the workshops on the recommendation of friends, parents, teachers and community leaders, and each workshop deliberately mixes young people from different schools and communities. Thandikhaya feels a main benefit of the workshops is that they empower students to think of themselves as active participants in their schools and communities – as people who can effect change by organizing and working collaboratively.

Liso Madikane is 29 and she attended her first IHOM workshop on the recommendation of her mother who is a community worker. She had a background in volunteer youth work in her community, for which she had received some training. She attended her first workshop and was confronted with the issue of xenophobia. She went into the workshop sharing the view of many of her peers that their problems



in finding employment were all the fault of refugee foreigners from other parts of Africa and that the solution was to expel refugees. Several of the workshop participants came from refugee families and hearing their individual stories of oppression and hardship changed her view of refugees, as for the first time she saw them as people like herself who were not a threat but shared her problems for which they were not to blame. She used this experience after she became a facilitator to address the issue of xenophobia in workshops. Like many young people in South Africa, Liso has struggled to find full-time permanent employment. She credits her facilitator work and training with enhancing her sense of self-worth and self-confidence but also with helping her to develop various useful employment skills including event planning, designing workshops, conducting workshops, interviewing and report writing.



Clint Bowers

Clint Bowers, 28, is another facilitator who was introduced to the Restoring Humanity Project via a personal connection with Fatima Swartz, IHOM's coordinator for youth. He met Fatima through other volunteer youth work he was doing, in particular the Youth Peace Academy in 2004. Clint emphasizes the fact that youth are even more sensitive than adults to differences in race and community. These are reinforcing concepts in South Africa, as under apartheid each racial group was required to live in areas designated for it. Although this legal requirement was abolished with democracy, the apartheid creation of distinct black and coloured townships and white areas has only very slowly started to change. Thus young black South Africans largely grow up in "black" townships and coloured youth in "coloured" townships. Youth are sensitive to these differences, which are signalled by variances in speech, clothing and support for sports teams (amateur and professional). Clint sees his job as a facilitator to help breakdown these distinctions that define people as different from one another and to get young people to recognize their shared humanity, not just with other South Africans but with people around the world, regardless of nationality, race, gender or sexual orientation. Like Liso, Clint credits his facilitation work with building his own self-awareness and self-confidence as well as helping him to develop valuable employment skills. In addition, his work has helped him to define his future, as he has been accepted for a college program in project management for next year for which he has been awarded a bursary.

Another youth facilitator is Babalwa Alven, 26, who unlike the others is a full-time university student in her first year of a Social Work programme. She too was introduced to Restoring Humanity through a friend and participated in a workshop which she found to be a very enriching experience. Despite her youth she identifies many contemporary youth problems as having their origins in apartheid policies which are still making their effects felt, even if youth fail to recognize that fact. She cites as one example the abysmal quality of non-white education under apartheid and the consequent lack of basic literacy and employment skills for many non-whites who are the parents of contemporary youth. Babalwa also sees a connection between her work as a facilitator and her studies and future employment, as she considers it a form of experiential learning which complements her more theoretical university studies, and views the experience she gains as being invaluable early experience for her career as a social worker.

Because the Restoring Humanity Project has as its goal to help young people to become youth leaders in their communities and schools, its activities include long-term projects as well as short workshops. Each group is expected at the end of their first year to organize a project which will benefit their school or community, a kind of graduation project which gives them the opportunity to define a need and then organize themselves to meet it. Recently one RH group decided that with the school term having ended they would organize a day of activities for





young children in Khayelitsha, one of Cape Town's black townships. The organizers knew one another from their RH group but they came from different schools and districts. The organizing committee solicited funds and supplies from local businesses, negotiated with the local community centre to use its parking lot, some rooms, tables, sound system and various other items of equipment, designed activities for the day and did the set-up, tear-down and clean-up. On the day of the event the organizers who came from other schools and communities brought some children from their communities/schools to join the Khayelitsha organizers and children. The organizers dressed themselves in funny costumes and some wore lime green and bright orange comic wigs. There was a wide variety of games and activities for the young children including face painting, races of different

kinds, team events that required cooperation, stilt walking, music and singing and of course food and drink. The events culminated in a massive tug-of-war with a rope that was at least 100 metres long. As the event terminated in mid-afternoon the organizers put away the equipment and tidied up the site and picked up stray papers and debris. When they were finished, the community centre grounds were the cleanest spot in the township! The young team amply met their goal of organizing and carrying out an event on their own that clearly delighted over 100 children aged 4-12.

We had the opportunity to speak to two of the organizers, Mishkaah Williams and Mas'oodah Samodien. Both girls have just completed grade 11 at the Athlone high school. They did not know one



Mishkaah Williams and Mas'oodah Samodien



another before getting involved in their RH group. They were both recruited by teachers to join the group. Their original group of some 30 young people has been meeting every Saturday at the District Six Museum. They have taken a number of trips together in the Cape Town area to visit various historical sites connected to the history of slavery and apartheid. These trips opened their eyes to things they had been taught in school but had not fully appreciated. The group is involved with several projects; Mishkaah and Mas'oodah have been participating in a group developing a comic book for distribution in primary and secondary schools. The comic book will address serious social problems facing South African youth in an engaging and accessible manner. The group has the support and encouragement of Fatima

Swartz who has brought in a well-known graphic artist to help teach the group the fundamentals of drawing, as well as other consultants to advise on writing, production and distribution. The project will resume after the summer vacation and distribution of the finished product is targeted for June 2013. Participation in the comic book project has helped Mas'oodah to crystalize her career ambitions. She has found working on the drawings to be very satisfying and something for which she appears to have some talent, as a consequence she has decided to pursue post-secondary studies in graphic design. As we have already seen, one of the many benefits of participation in Restoring Humanity projects is the impact on current and future careers.





VINCENT DIBA profile

Mr Diba is a very impressive figure. As a student he was arrested and jailed for his anti-apartheid work and spent 11 years in the notorious Robben Island prison. During his time in prison both his parents died and he was not permitted to attend their funerals. Following the victory of democracy he served for 5 years as a Member of Parliament. More recently he has been working with the Robben Island Museum and has a particular interest in reaching the youth of South Africa who came of age after the struggle years, to help ensure that they understand the past of their country and the struggles and sacrifices required to create the new South Africa.

Anyone could understand if Mr Diba was an angry and bitter man. Yet on the contrary he is a happy and smiling man. His life experiences have exposed him to some of the worst aspects of human beings but he remains positive and optimistic. He is not blind to the challenges his country faces nor to the failings of politicians and bureaucrats to address them effectively but he directs his energies in a positive direction. He has been active in the ex-prisoners association of whom there are some 2,500 surviving members and through the Robben Island Museum he has organized activities for them and for their wives and families.

Recently Mr Diba had the opportunity to participate in a three-week Healing of Memories seminar held in the conference centre on Robben Island. This was a residential seminar and he got to know the other participants very well. They came from a variety of other countries and he was the only South African participant. His participation was sponsored by the museum which felt it would help him in his work and he also thought that he would benefit on a personal level. He describes his experience as very profound. Prior to the seminar he felt that he had come to terms with the trauma in his life and was moving forward. During the seminar he realized there were various aspects of his past that he had suppressed. The experience of sharing his experiences in a confidential, non-judgemental environment with people who shared their own traumas made him realize that there were still unresolved issues in his own life. In particular, he now felt he had permission to have his own space, to focus on his own problems. He also came to appreciate that what the Institute calls "active listening" was in fact a skill that one had to learn but that the benefits of doing so were substantial. He credits the acquisition of this skill with helping him to listen more effectively within his own family and also with aiding him in his work with ex-prisoners. Mr Diba is convinced that most ex-prisoners could benefit from one or several Healing of Memories workshops. They are, by definition, men whose early lives were poisoned by the prison experience on top of the oppression of apartheid and Mr Diba knows all too well that they continue to carry the scars to this day. Support for this view is provided by the comments of a group of current prisoners, incarcerated for various forms of criminal behaviour, who participated in a Healing of Memories workshop in their prison. While most participants in such workshops have high praise for them, the positive response of the prisoners was exceptional.

Healing of Memories Project

The workshops of the Institute for Healing of Memories are its core activity. Conceived originally in light of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose contribution was of inestimable value but which heard testimony from only 2000 people, the workshop structure is a tool for giving a voice potentially to the tens if not hundreds of thousands of South Africans who suffered trauma during the oppression of apartheid. If such workshops were successful they would provide a means of helping to heal the wounds of apartheid for South Africans of all races and backgrounds. Twenty years after the victory of democracy, it would be fair to ask whether there is still a need for what Healing of Memories offers. The best way to answer this question is through the first-hand experience of a facilitator and three participants.

Randall Bester is a gentle, soft spoken man in his late 30s. In a way he came to Healing Memories by accident. He has worked for a number of years with homeless men in Cape Town and four years ago his shelter, The Haven Night Shelter, made an arrangement with the Institute to provide a three-day workshop for 15 homeless men, as the manager believed that these men had lived through the struggle years and were on the street because of their inability to deal with the trauma in their lives. Randall and another outreach worker accompanied the men to the location of the workshop and discovered to their surprise that they were expected to participate in the workshop too.

Randall found that the experience of listening to the individual stories of the men opened his eyes to their individuality and the fact that each had a story to tell. They had wound up in similar circumstances through choices, often poor choices, but nonetheless choices they had made. He has also had the experience of encountering three men living on the street with whom he went to primary school, which came as a shock and posed the question of how they wound up on the street while Randall was employed. The workshop experience and his facilitator training aided him as well in dealing with interpersonal relations within his own large family. He feels that South African society was divided by race for so long that all South Africans look at things in a race conscious way and the tendency is to see the group rather than the individual. He feels that the workshop experience helps individuals to try and transcend categories and to see others as individuals with their own traumas and history.

Another appreciation of the workshop experience was provided by three middle-aged women from the township of Atlantis. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy. All three knew



one another prior to the workshop but they have become friends as a result of their experience. They were all recruited to the workshop by friends who had heard of it and thought that these ladies would benefit from it. Paulina is a widow who lives with her adult son who has a small business. She too has a small retail business and is involved as an organizer with a project designed to teach technical skills to women in her community. While old enough to have been an adult during the struggle years, her current problems relate to her sense of loss at the death of her husband and problems of lack of communication with her adult son.

Mary has several children ranging from teenagers to adults. She works as a trauma counsellor in the community and this brings her into contact with victims of rape and assault, families suffering from spousal abuse and/or substance abuse and many other serious problems. She has to maintain the confidences of those victims that she deals with and as a result she cannot unburden herself to friends

The case for Hope

Extract from the 2012 Havel memorial lecture by Father Michael Lapsley SSM:

"I would like to conclude by speaking about hope, because it is hope that buoys us up in the face of difficult odds. Hope is based on our vision for the future, but what I call realistic hope is not sentimental or utopian. Rather, it is practical and down to earth. It requires courage, but it is also based on collective hard work. People sometimes ask how it is that I don't become discouraged.

Of course there are moments when I despair. It is very easy to become discouraged about my own beloved country of South Africa, beset by violence and corruption, by a world economic system that tramples on the poor, and by the constant threat of war. Nevertheless there are always signs of hope. There is a story about two men in a prison cell with one small window. One looked up and saw stars. The other looked down and saw mud. I suppose on a bad day I see mud and on a good day I see stars, and maybe on a realistic day I see both.

Hope is daring to work for what you believe, even if the odds seem daunting or impossible. We are not guaranteed success. However, the satisfaction that is guaranteed to us who hope is the knowledge that we did our best. In South Africa we are on a journey that will take many decades, indeed many generations. We lost many martyrs who never lived to see the triumph of their dreams, and yet others of us have witnessed the dismantling of constitutional racism in our country. I think we have to take a long-term perspective on the moment of history that we can neither control nor predict. Some things are known only to God. But we are called to be God's co-workers in creating a better world. That is the true meaning of courage and of hope.

Before we conclude I would like to invite each of you to consider, not just tonight but in the days ahead, what courageous citizenship means for you. Thank you to each of you, who in a wide variety of contexts are already courageous citizens. I hope that you feel validated in what you are doing and inspired to do more. Hopefully tonight we also have gained some more recruits."



or family members. She was feeling that the stress on her of hearing other people's problems and not being able to talk about it was damaging to her health and psychological well-being.

Rosemary has an adult son. She is a local community activist and it was she who organized the group for the interview. The major problem in her life is that her son has a serious drug addiction and disappears for long periods of time. She worries constantly about his health and safety.

All three ladies felt that the workshop they attended had benefitted them enormously. It helped them to recognize that they were not alone in having problems and that to be of help to others they had to be whole themselves. The message that you can't change the past but you do control how you define your response to it and you do control how you will behave now and in the future, was embraced by all three women. Paulina has chosen to focus more on the good memories of her late husband rather than her sense of loss and to put more focus on her relationship with her son who constitutes her current and future family. Mary found that unburdening herself in front of strangers from other communities lifted a weight from her shoulders. She has also decided to organize discussion groups for women about community safety issues in the local community centre rather than the police station as she understands that many people are reluctant to be seen going to the police station as they fear reprisals from drug dealers. Rosemary has come to accept that she can't prevent her son's drug abuse and that only he can do that. This recognition has given her permission to devote time and energy to her own needs and those of her neighbours who also want positive change in their community.

The Challenges of Fundraising

As a small NGO the IHOM faces a continual challenge to find the funds to finance its activities. Like many NGOs it receives annual grants mostly from private donors, many of them based in other countries. The recession has taken a toll on the funding groups in all countries in the charitable sector by reducing their income from donations and endowments. This means that long-term planning is difficult for the IHOM since there is no guarantee that annual grants will be renewed. In addition, in the minds of many, as a result of the success of the World Cup in South Africa the country is now perceived to be quite prosperous. The consequence of all these factors was a decline in IHOM revenue from 4.4 million Rand (\$517,000 US) in 2010 to 3.5 million Rand (\$417,000 US) in 2011. Full financial details are in the IHOM annual report available on the IHOM website (www.healing-memories.org). Despite the undoubted political gains in the last 20 years, South Africa continues to have some of the greatest wealth and income disparities in the world and the towering health and education problems that are the product of these disparities. Therefore the demands for the

services offered by the IHOM are greater than ever as the success of its programs is spread by word of mouth. Thus the IHOM has been squeezed by declining revenue but increased demand for its services.

Consistent with its philosophy, the IHOM has adopted a two-pronged approach to securing expanded long-term sustainable funding. The first approach has been, with the assistance of Board members, to increase the number of South African institutional donors with a long-term commitment to the needs of the country. A recent decision of the South African Lottery Corporation to become a supporter is one fruit of this strategy. The second approach is to make it much easier for individuals to donate to the IHOM not only on a one-time basis but as sustaining supporters as well. Very soon you will see a donate button appearing on the Institute website which for the first time will make donations with a couple of mouse clicks possible. We hope these funding measures will enhance and stabilize the Institute's revenue stream and permit us to offer our services to more people.

banking details

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