

HEALING REFLECTIONS

June 2017



INSTITUTE FOR HEALING OF MEMORIES NEWSLETTER



Building peaceful communities on Human Rights Day

By Liso Madikane

On Human Rights Day, 21 March, the Restoring Humanity team planned, organised and implemented the Human Rights Day at the Rocklands Civic Centre in Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape. A total of 93 participants and 17 facilitators, including the co-facilitators, attended the event. The young people that were present came from all the areas the Restoring Humanity team works with. These areas include Masiphumelele, Mitchell's Plain, Khayelitsha, Langa, Excelsior, Mamre, Atlantis and Mfuleni.

The theme for the day was Building Peaceful Communities. We played the clips about the events that occurred on Sharpeville Day, where people died fighting for the rights that all South African citizens are benefiting from today. Participants were divided into small groups, where they discussed the clip and also what human rights mean to them on a personal level. The groups then developed the adverts on how to build peaceful communities and stop the bullying in schools and the communities. Each small group had a chance to make a three-minute clip, and at the end of the day show their adverts to the whole group.

Launch of Arabic Edition of Redeeming the Past in Lebanon

By Stephen Karakashian

We were invited to Lebanon by Dar-el-Mashreq, a Jesuit publishing house, for the launch of the Arabic translation of Fr Michael's memoir, *Redeeming the Past*. Our delegation was made up of Fr Michael, Thapelo Marais from South Africa, Patrick Byrne from Luxembourg, and myself from the United States. Our visit began on the evening of 19 March, when Fr Michael spoke informally with a group of Jesuit seminarians and young priests led by Fr Cedric Prakash, SJ.

The next morning found us at the offices of *An-Nahar*, an Arabic language newspaper. There Fr Michael and I were interviewed by the associate editor, Hala Homsy, who asked questions about forgiveness and reconciliation. These



continued on page 02

Launch of Arabic Edition of Redeeming the Past in Lebanon

continued from page 1

issues resonate with the Lebanese people who experienced a 15-year civil war ending in 1990. Its scars are still evident in the remains of bombed buildings and in the pain that lies just under the surface of many Lebanese. In addition, Lebanon now hosts a staggering 1.2 million Syrian refugees, many of whom are deeply traumatised and in need of care.

After the interview, we departed for Tibnine, a town in southern Lebanon that was affected by the Israeli/Hezbollah war in 2006, and is now flooded with Syrian refugees. Our visit was sponsored by Alpha, a large social service agency that responds to the hardship of these refugees. Abeer Kassis, program coordinator for Alpha, and Father Albert Abi Azar, a Greek Catholic priest and the founder and chairman of the Alpha project in Tibnine, accompanied us. In Tibnine we visited a project funded by UNICEF and Caritas-Luxembourg that cares for the material and psychosocial needs of refugee children. Charel Krieps, Caritas' desk officer for Luxembourg, came to Beirut especially for the book launch and travelled with us to Tibnine.

Early the following day, Fr Michael was interviewed on Lebanese television, after which we spent several hours working with a group of about 20 young people from Syria who were on a respite visit in the safety of Lebanon. Working under the auspices of a Syrian organisation, Mobaderoon, they offer support and encouragement to people living amid the carnage of the civil war. In 2014, Mobaderoon was awarded the Danish Livia Prize of Honour for its advocacy of non-violence. These brave young people said they hope that the seeds of non-violence they are now planting will eventually grow into "the roses of peace". We spent several hours with them and began by asking them to list their most urgent questions. Not surprisingly, these reflected both their hope and their despair. "How do we motivate people to consider non-violence in the midst of war?" "How do we keep hope alive when we are surrounded by death and destruction?"

With no easy answers, we nevertheless had a rich day-long discussion that drew on the wisdom of the group. We spoke of the importance of taking the long view, and lifted up Martin Luther King who often felt despair and paid with his life, yet ultimately changed the United States. We also emphasised the need to care for themselves and to make time to grieve their many losses – especially important for men in the group who are not supposed to cry. We also comforted them by saying that they are not alone – that the world is watching in solidarity with them and admiring their bravery, and that at home we will talk about their courage.

That evening we attended evening mass at Fr Albert's church in Beirut where Fr Michael spoke and showed his video, after which we had dinner at an Arabic restaurant. Fr Albert had also invited representatives of Mothers of the Disappeared and Warriors for Peace, two organisations responding to the aftermath of the civil war. After the meal one gentleman from the Warrior group rose to speak about how tortured he still feels by the murders he committed during the Lebanese



Civil War, and one of the Mothers gave us lapel pins that commemorate the disappearance of her loved one.

On the last evening of our Beirut visit, the Arabic translation of Fr Michael's memoir was launched at Beirut's Saint Joseph University. At least 400 people were present, some sitting on the stairs of the posh auditorium. Fr Sami Hallak, a Syrian priest from Aleppo and the translator of the book, told the audience that the situation there is so dire that there had been no running water for weeks, and that he had to work quickly on the translation because he was worried that otherwise he might not be able to complete it. We sold 250 copies of the Arabic translation, with many people buying multiple copies for family and friends.

On our last day in Beirut we visited Shatila, a squalid urban refugee camp for Palestinians displaced by the founding of Israel in 1948. This is the site of an infamous massacre in 1982. Since the Syrian Civil War, an influx of Palestinian refugees from that country have nearly doubled its population, now estimated to be between 25 000 and 30 000 people. The camp is a one km² make-shift ghetto where people are literally stacked on top of each other. Because the majority are Muslim, Lebanon restricts their opportunities to work and prevents them from owning housing or land, lest they upset the delicate balance between Lebanese Muslims and Christians. They exist therefore in a sort of slum limbo. Despite this environment, we visited a colourful, thriving kindergarten and children's library with a dedicated staff of young people that exists in the only available space, a windowless former bomb shelter, that is reached by climbing straight down two steep flights of stairs underground.

The project is supported by Project Hope, an NGO funded by Caritas-Luxembourg.



On 10 April 2017, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) conferred an honorary doctorate on Fr Michael Lapsley SSM (second from left). Sharing the moment with Father Lapsley is SA High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Ruby Marks (left), Archbishop Thabo Makgoba (second from right) and Cuban Ambassador to South Africa, Carlos Fernandez de Cossio (right).

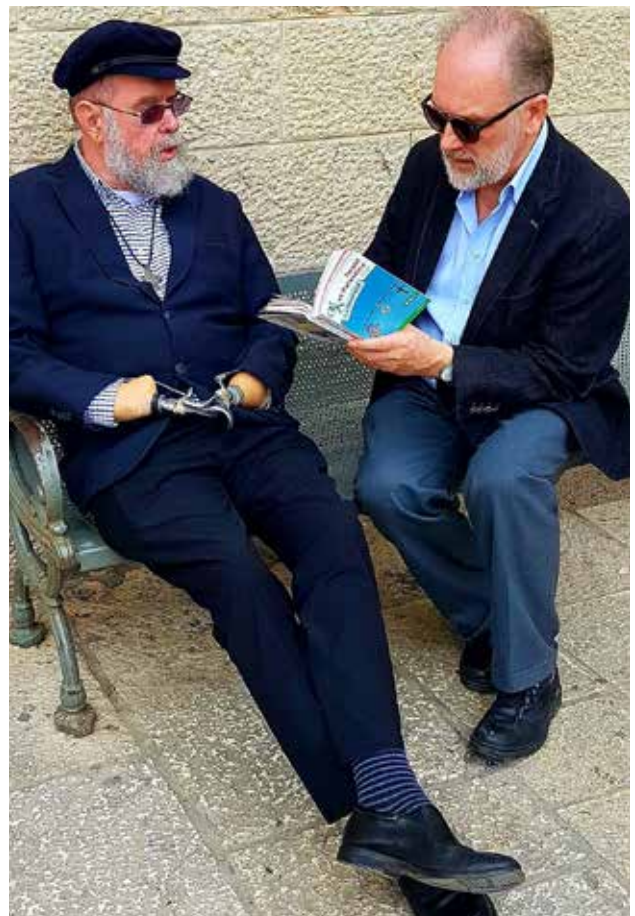
Launch of Redeeming the Past in Jerusalem and Nasareth

By Patrick Byrne

On 24 March, Father Michael, his assistant Thapelo Marais and I arrived late at night in Jerusalem, after spending five days in Beirut for the first launch of the Arabic edition of *Redeeming the Past*. We were still under the spell of our visit to Lebanon, a country so rich in diversity and yet still profoundly and visibly marked by the pain and trauma of its recent history. With Father Michael's co-author, Stephen Karakashian, whom I was privileged to meet for the first time – we had met so many amazing people – at the book launch on the St Joseph's University campus in Beirut, and on our visits to the Alpha refugee support project in southern Lebanon and the HOPE community development project in the Shatila refugee camp ... I wondered how we could possibly switch so suddenly and for such a short time (three days) to the Israeli/Palestinian context. And yet, the next phase was to prove as rich and inspiring as the first.

Having arrived shortly before midnight, we went straight to bed. It was only the next morning that I realised the full beauty of our location. And what a sight! The House of Abraham, a Caritas hostel, formerly a Benedictine priory and, before that, a Syrian seminary, is situated close to the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives. It overlooks the Kedron valley, and offers a spectacular view of the entire old city of Jerusalem. That morning, we were welcomed, on behalf of our hosts – the Sabeel ecumenical liberation theology centre – by Omar Haramy. Omar, an Orthodox Christian and a native of Jerusalem with a thorough knowledge of the city's intricate history, was an ideal guide, taking us on a long tour along the Via Dolorosa.

It was an extremely moving experience to suddenly find ourselves in the Holy Land of the three great faith traditions, in the footsteps of Jesus, and in this impressive and hugely varied 'City of Peace'. But we had come to launch Father Michael's memoir – a book about the pain that is so much a part of our common humanity, and about the poison of destructive memories and our need for healing. A theme



particularly relevant to the country we were in – a land of long memories and competing claims, ravaged by fear, deep-rooted injustices and bloody conflict. The book is also about the power of human resilience, and there were many examples of this among the people we met, notably two founding members of Sabeel, Naim Ateek and Cedar Duaybis, who shared with us their hopes for the Palestinian people – hopes of peaceful coexistence with Israeli Jews on the basis of justice.

continued on page 04

And so, that evening we made our way to the beautiful Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, where a mixed and engaging audience listened to Father Michael's presentation. As in the previous launch event in Beirut and the one we would attend the following night in Nazareth, one of the main issues in the ensuing discussion was whether a process of healing could actually take place in a profoundly unjust situation and in the middle of a struggle. Was it not too early? Is healing only possible once peace and justice have been restored? Father Michael reminded us of the example given by Nelson Mandela in South Africa during his long imprisonment: healing may be difficult in such situations of strife, but it is important that some people start the process and deal with their own demons as early as possible, without waiting for justice to be done and genuine peace finally restored.

The next day, we set off by minibus for Nazareth, driven by our faithful driver Yousef. We were welcomed there by the local Sabeel team, led by the wonderfully friendly and inspiring Violette Khoury, who took us to visit the Basilica of the Annunciation, and then to the book launch event. Father Michael's book was extremely well received by the large audience who turned up at the cinema hall to hear him. Here again, it was fascinating to see how his life journey provided a mirror for people to look at their own past experiences and discuss the prospects for a fairer and more peaceful society in Israel/Palestine. Out in the hallway, copies of the Arabic edition sold like hot cakes and Father Michael eventually had to be dragged away from his admiring fans and autograph-seekers to go for a well-earned Palestinian meal.

On the final day of our visit, back in Jerusalem, our hosts took us on a more sobering tour to view the former Palestinian village of Lifta, now a ghost village, depopulated in 1948. We then made our way to the extremely overcrowded Shu'fat refugee camp, witnessing the shocking living conditions of tens of thousands of people – deprived of water and electricity for most of the day, and with no refuse



Writing a prayer for peace and justice for all at the Western Wall

collection service. The Wall, or 'separation barrier', that runs along the area's boundary now means that Shu'fat, which technically belongs to the Jerusalem municipality, has effectively been abandoned and left to its own devices. We walked alongside the towering concrete slabs of the Wall, accompanied by schoolchildren making their way back home along strictly segregated passageways; and we experienced what it means to go through inhuman checkpoints every day of the week. And as we did so, Father Michael, Thapelo and I were left in stunned silence. A long, long way to go until peace and justice can prevail, and so many wounds that will need healing ...

We owe a debt of gratitude to François Large, Caritas-Luxembourg's Middle East desk officer. François suggested to Father Michael five years ago that he should visit Jerusalem and publish his book in Arabic, and this year he made it possible.

What Healing of Memories means to me



By Brother Tefo Rachaka SSM

I attended the Healing of Memories workshop that was held at Khotsong Lodge, Thaba Bosiu, Lesotho. It was a great experience to listen to people telling their stories. Some people came to the workshop full of anger, hatred, and confused. After revealing what was buried deep within them, I saw happy faces. I have learnt that humans need each other in the storms of life, which come upon us when our spirits are too hurt and our hearts are too pained to care. I realised that tears clean the windows to our souls. People started to forgive those who hurt them; they started to forget all their mistakes, and those who came to the workshop weak started to gain strength.

The healing journey doesn't take one, but two or more people to walk along the journey with each other. The healing journey comes alive for us every time we leave behind an old wound or worn-out hurt and discover that we are more at peace with ourselves. A big thank you to all those who make the Healing of Memories workshops successful. I would like to thank Fr Michael Lapsley for bringing a sense of hope; a pause from the pain; a little vision for guidance; strength to sustain, and a touch of happiness. I can't wait for the next workshop.

OBITUARY: Uncle Dick Herbert – ‘we owe you more than words can say’

By Sister Jacinta Banon IBVM



Dick and I go back many years – mainly through our involvement with the Healing of Memories workshops. I am very honoured to have been asked to pay tribute to such a person as Dick – affectionately known by all of us as ‘Uncle Dick’.

You may notice this paper I have in my pocket? It is there in honour and in memory of Dick. When he would come to a workshop, the first thing he would do is take a copy of the workshop timetable (which, of course, he knew by heart) – write whatever he needed to write on it – fold it and place it in his pocket. This timetable was consulted regularly and methodically during the weekend. So I place it in my pocket near my heart – where you have been during the last very many years Dick.

As you all know very well, it is not possible to condense a life like Dick’s into a few words or into a short time. There is so much I would like to share with you on this occasion, but I will highlight three outstanding characteristics of Dick’s life as I have known it.

1. His love of his family: Oh how he loved you all, each one of you. The only way I can describe it is that he was crazy about his grandchildren, and he was so proud of each of you. He loved to ‘show off’ your photos and his enthusiasm and joy and pride never failed. His voice went deeper, a smile lit up his face and his eyes twinkled when he shared about you.
2. The next characteristic I would like to highlight is his dedication to his family, the Church and the Institute for Healing of Memories. He carefully kept an accurate diary of all the various events and undertakings and he did not fail to honour these commitments.
3. Uncle Dick had a very particular love for the work of the Institute for Healing of Memories, especially the three-day workshops and the one-day workshop. He not only led workshops, he was interested in the growth in the number of facilitators and their development. Even when Dick stopped leading workshops, he never tired of taking every opportunity to speak about the Healing of Memories. He was such a motivational speaker, he took every opportunity to spread the good news of the work of the IHOM and its healing mission in the church. He was deeply concerned about the future of the Institute and delighted in its international footprint.

Let us all hope and pray and do whatever we can, even in some small way, to continue and develop that which Dick felt so passionately about, and what the Institute for Healing of Memories has been called to render in our world today.

Thank you Dick for your friendship, loyalty, support, encouragement and love – we owe you more than words can express.

Boys to men By Mandla Klanisi

The Boys to Men Project – a new project under Restoring Humanity’s Youth Project of the Institute – had its first Boys to Men activity in March 2017. The focus was on manhood and especially engaging young boys in creative ways to unpack this concept.

The key topics the Boys to Men project will concentrate on throughout the year, include masculinity/manhood; patriarchy; gender roles; family violence, and gender equality. The aims are to promote gender equality, and changing stereotypes and distractive perceptions in relation to manhood, patriarchy and family life.

The project accommodates 30 boys per year, between the ages of 14–18 years. The current boys involved in this



project come from Masiphumelele, Atlantis, Du Noon, Delft and Mitchell’s Plain (Cape Town).

Together with the boys involved, we will look at creative ways to unpack these concepts, such as the use of dialogues, research, drama, music, poems and painting.

banking details

Standard Bank

Mowbray Branch, Main Road, Mowbray, Cape Town 7700 South Africa

Branch code: 02-49-09 • **Name of account:** Institute for Healing of Memories

Account #: 075133164 (Marketlink account) • **Swift code:** SBZAJJ

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A Buddhist perspective from Sri Lanka

Ven Galkanda Dhammananda

My first visit to Cape Town was in 2016 to attend the Nelson Mandela Dialogue program. It was on this visit that I decided to meet the inspirational religious leader Michael Lapsley. The organisers of the program were not pleased to see the participants making their own plans, because in their eyes everything was already planned. However, when I informed them that I would like to visit Father Lapsley, they not only approved, but arranged a car and a guide to take me to his office.

What is the importance of a Christian priest to a Buddhist monk like me? I did not wish to talk about inter-religious dialogue or inter-religious harmony with him. It was Father Lapsley's dedication and untiring effort to heal the people all over the world from painful memories that drew me to him. As a Sri Lankan citizen, who has seen enough violence as part of the armed conflict from 1981 to 2009, and during the insurgency from 1987 to 1990 – and who has met people with painful memories of losing their loved ones all over the country – the meeting with this inspirational person was extremely important to me.

His recent visit to Sri Lanka gave us a deeper understanding about his method of healing people from painful memories. I personally attended two workshops conducted by him and was with him in a panel discussion held in one of the leading Catholic institutions in Sri Lanka, Thulana Research Centre where about 30 Christian priests attended. Further, we were fortunate to have him at our institute (Walpola Rahula Institute) as the guest speaker, where about 100 people came to listen to him. Among them were Buddhist monks and nuns from Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand and Vietnam, apart from the monks and nuns from Sri Lanka.

I would like to share here one of my personal experiences with him in the first Healing of Memory program that took place in Colombo, to help you understand why Fr Lapsley is so important to Sri Lankans. There were about 30 participants in the program and most were from the war-torn northern Sri Lanka, with many war-widows among them. The morning of the second day, all the participants were given a white paper and colour sticks and were asked to draw their life stories. After that we were divided into small groups of five people and each group was facilitated by a trained facilitator. I was fortunate to be a member of the group that Fr Lapsley facilitated. Each one in the group started telling their stories – one by one looking at the paper lying on the floor. Fr Lapsley helped each one to tell his or her painful story to the group and encouraged them by appreciating their courage. One old lady in the group narrated her story of losing her two sons in the war, one as a militant and the other as an ordinary civilian. All of us silently listened to her and shared our thoughts with her to give her moral support. Then it was my chance to tell



my story. When I came to the point of losing my brother in the war – he was a police officer – Fr Lapsley helped me to share how my family members and I felt when we lost our brother; how we felt his loss throughout the past and how we feel about it today.

That was a great experience for me to share my story with a group who had gone through similar painful experiences in their lives and were ready to listen to the stories of others with empathy. Once I finished sharing my story, Fr Lapsley gave the opportunity to others to say something to me. The old lady who was listening to my story very attentively was the first to respond. The only question she asked me was how my mother is doing; how is her health, where is she living and with whom. I very well understood that she could relate her pain with the pain of my mother.

Why is Fr Lapsley's intervention in reconciliation and healing of painful memories in Sri Lanka so important? We very much need an impartial third person who has no vested interest and has gone through similar pain, but has overcome it with great courage, to bring the divided people of this country together to understand the need for healing.

As a Buddhist monk, I see a noble human being in Fr Michael Lapsley. He has gone beyond all man-made boundaries to help people scattered all over the world heal of the painful memories they carry, with one simple solution: boundless love and compassion.

International training: an overview

By Babalwa Alven

From 29 March to 9 April, the Institute for Healing of Memories held an international training course at Ongegund, a beautiful farm situated near the Helderberg mountains in Somerset-West, near Cape Town. Participants came from Namibia, Switzerland, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Angola, Ghana and the United States of America. The training included a three-day workshop, where people were divided into small groups, which allowed them an opportunity to bond with one another at a deeper level by listening to each other's stories.

The purpose of the training was to equip, empower and educate participants that are interested to become facilitators with the necessary skills to perform well as facilitators. The main topics that were discussed were forgiveness, restitution, reconciliation and retributive justice. Participants came from all walks of life, but at the



end of the training they all had become one big family. They amazingly connected with one another despite the differences in culture, race, religion, class and educational background. The training was facilitated by Fatima Swartz and Fr Michael Lapsley, with the assistance of three Healing of Memories workshop staff, namely Busisiwe, Thandikhaya and Loret.

A new kind of Cardiology

By The Revd Dr Joseph Jeyaseelan CMF

I was privileged to be part of the international Healing of Memories workshop/training. Words can't fully express what this experience has meant to me.

There are several things that I like about this training and the methodology of IHOM. Some of which are:

- The safe space provided during the workshop for expressing vulnerability helped me to talk about some issues that I have never talked about before. The facilitators, who themselves had been participants in earlier workshops (later trained as facilitators), bring a unique perspective on issues people struggle with. Their vulnerability is not about weakness, but an enrichment to the shared vulnerability of the group.
- The IHOM's methodology tries both to uncover and generate wisdom from the group itself on life issues and how to deal with them. The facilitators do a good job on this. IHOM believes that wisdom (not mere book knowledge) can be found in the group. It also believes that healing power rests with the group (not in the facilitator as claimed by some other methodologies). So, the entire methodology is process-oriented and non-linear as opposed to the content-based and top-down approaches of many other healing methods.



- This methodology helps people to get in touch with the world of their feelings as opposed to their thinking. The IHOM emphasises the healing power of the "heart work". In that sense the mission of IHOM is a new form of cardiology! In this form of "cardiology" – if the participant is seriously involved in the process (through personal work and group dynamics) – there is no death due to "cardiac issues", but only healing! Healing without surgery! Fr Michael Lapsley is a great cardiologist without any medical training! How good is that?

(Joseph is a doctoral student in Chicago, with research focussed on healing of memories for post-war reconciliation in Sri Lanka)



My journey of healing at Ongegund

By Scofray Nana Yaw Yeboah

I experienced my personal journey of healing at the Healing of Memories Training course at Ongegund, Cape Town in 2017.

I have been a friend and admirer of Fr Michael Lapsley's good work across the globe. The courage to identify healing in the face of such a gruesome experience at the hands of one of the most inhumane governing system called apartheid, is the kind that spurs me on.

Somewhere last year, through our usual interactions, I expressed my desire to participate in the Healing of Memories training and workshop with the desire to become a facilitator as well.

The opportunity presented itself, and I was in Cape Town for the third time in five years – this time on a journey of healing at Ongegund. As a transformational coach I knew deep down that this training and workshop will augment my career to benefit my “coachees” and myself.

Most of the training courses I have attended had always been on the intellectual and experience levels, and I was expecting something different.

Emotional journey on the surface can appear a simple exercise, but when you subject yourself to vulnerability the miracle of allowing oneself to heal begins, and that was exactly the permission I gave myself.

I arrived on 29 March 2017 in Ongegund and had a lovely welcome by Fr Michael Lapsley. A few hours later, participants from the United States of America also arrived and again Fr Lapsley was awake to receive them too, although it was around 11pm. This welcoming gesture by Fr Lapsley set me up for the experiences I was going to encounter.

The ambience and serenity of Ongegund was simply ideal for such a unique journey I was embarking upon to find space to heal. As a transformational coach (healer) the best I am is what I can give, and indeed I learnt that I must be on a constant and conscious journey of my personal healing.

The encouragement to use the heart to do the listening and do it actively opened me up to have such an experience with the sand bag exercise. I learnt that my life (human life) consists of inward and outward energies and it intersect with that of others, consciously or unconsciously, and conspicuously or inconspicuously. I have always held the firm conviction and believe that I don't cross paths with people by accident no matter the difference of experience, and this exercise affirmed that belief. Too much physical knowledge has placed a lid on the power or danger of our emotional needs or wounds.

There is so much knowledge to acquire, but we pay no attention to acknowledge the reality when it comes to our individual and collective journey or experience. This creates an unending cycle of hurt, trauma and hatred, which is so obvious in the world we live in. I learnt that I (human) can be instrumental to healing, but it must be a conscious decision and a constant walk of awakening to emotional pain or growth.

The first step to healing is when the heart acknowledges the knowledge of emotional damage as a result of certain

actions or inactions I or others suffered as a perpetrator or that which were perpetuated.

The principle of the Institute of Healing of Memories that “all people are spiritual beings and of infinite worth” is an amazing one. It opened my eyes deeper and sharper to really relate beyond the five senses. The greatest damage we exercise or experience go a long way to affect our make up as human beings.

Black Christmas was another learning curve. I learnt so much about what it means to give a helping hand, but until one takes responsibility and authorship of every experience there is less of how much assistance I can give. I have learnt not to give HATRED a reason to live within or a justification to keep nurturing it, because the horror I can perpetuate with the foundation or seed of hatred is beyond what I can imagine. Nothing satisfies a heart of hatred and there is nothing like passive or active and small or big hatred because it consumes and destroys the individual before unleashing unto others. Restorative Justice, Restitution, Forgiveness and Re/Conciliation are potent forces that I am going to constantly practice and master, because it defines my humanity. There is potential and equal measure of good and evil in every human.

I have gained insight and knowledge with an acknowledgement that the damage we cause our society is what we do to our children in their formative years. Child molestation, sexual abuse, torture, neglect, less affection and the deliberate lack of discussion about these goes a long way to form men and women who are walking about, but who are wounded within.

The BBC documentary on forgiveness as it is encouraged in the Bible left me startled and worried. Forgiveness is absent in the church, as in practice and reality. I learnt that it is not an easy journey to embark on, but it is powerful in liberation to end the cycle of potential pain and suffrage. It is more healthier to forgive than not, because it will destroy me before I have time to think. “Not in my Son's Name” gave me deeper insight into the power of forgiveness. I equally learnt that the rate of forgiveness differ from one person to the other. Sometimes instantaneous confession of forgiveness takes time to take effect.

The facilitation tools and techniques will go a long way to augment my transformational coaching career as I stated earlier on. Heart listening, gentle firmness, heart of empathy, sense of confidentiality, and space for encouragement will be one of the cherished tools.

My journey of healing in Ongegund was one worthy to embark on, I acknowledge that it is an unending journey.



Every story needs a listener

By Dr Fulata Moyo

At the beautiful Ongegund farm in the outskirts of Cape Town, South Africa, 28 of us started this journey on the evening of 29 March. Interestingly, as if the Supreme Being knew the importance of pre-emptying my obsession with gender justice, we had a gender-balanced group. We were a very diverse group: our background contexts, our stories, expectations and perspectives, yet this diversity provided a very distinct aroma that spiced this training.

Together with the actual Healing of Memories workshop it was like a kind of concoction with therapeutic detoxifying elements that positively impacted each participant. I joined one evening session later, yet my expectations were met beyond imagination.

In this reflection, I intend to share my experience of this Ongegund journey towards healing by focusing on three things: firstly, my personal emotional journey; secondly, the beauty of the diversity of our group; and finally convince the reader why it's important for them to participate in this process.

You see, I had a very clear but complex expectation, to come out of the training as a "healed-healer"! As somebody whose portions of the story of woundedness have been privileged with multitudes of global listeners, I didn't think that there were any remnants of unresolved pain. After all, my story is no longer safely tucked off in the sacredness and safety of my subconscious suppressed memory! However, when I shared in the small family group, wasn't I surprised about the still unresolved emotional pain that our very able facilitator Loret from Kongo Brazzaville, carefully and sensitively brought out! She was like a midwife that skillfully woos an expectant, pain-drenched mother to birth a baby!

Our space was so safe and sacred containing our stories, some of which, if shared outside that space, had the power to destroy the one who embodies that story. Moreover, the fact that with the group taking a vow of confidentiality, you could tell your story, be listened to and affirmed rather than be judged and advised in turn, made the process of telling itself therapeutic. The drawing and moulding of our stories added to the process of detoxifying the still existing unresolved emotions, but these also brought out the positive parts of our stories which otherwise tend to be made invisible, and like a baby in dirty bath water, be

Our space was so safe and sacred containing our stories, some of which, if shared outside that space, had the power to destroy the one who embodies that story.

thrown out with the bath water! So the process of Healing of Memories workshop we went through became like a beautiful lotus flower emerging from the ugly muddy waters!

While my small family group had eight members, including the facilitator, from at least eight countries, the whole group of 28 included at least 12 nationalities. While in the small groups each person had to share their story, in the facilitators training there were only a few of us who shared our stories during the sessions, when in groups of four we had to role play to the whole group, but using real stories. Even in these skits, every story was distinct and every person was unique but similar in many ways, and the process of crying together, celebrating the gifts of who each one of us are, including the beautiful vocals and dance, bonded us into one family! The rules of the game of keeping the space safe remained intact: utter respect of confidentiality and sensitivity to attentively listen and genuinely affirm. So each story shared bore the image of "transforming ashes of the past into a beautiful flower" as articulated by the wise Faustino from Angola.

Finally, let me use this space to entice every reader to consider participating in the healing of memories process. It's a journey that holds the key to unlock each participant's highest potential in realising their wholeness. It has power to restore every person to their full capacity as beings who were meant to holistically take their rightful place in the cycle of life. Starting from the sharing of the ground rules, anticipated expectations, to the actual immersion into the process and the experiencing of the existing agencies for change within the South African rural community context in Khayelitsha, both the Healing of Memories workshop and the training of facilitators complete each other as a journey towards healing.

Each activity becomes part of the carefully thought through necessary accessories that the wounded traveller needs and will certainly use on their journey towards healing. Each helps maximise the known possibilities to melt out the hard mercury that otherwise would emotionally/psychologically and spiritually poison one's whole being: mind, body and soul. The facilitators are well equipped as midwives to deliver healing. I cannot thank Fr Michael Lapsley, Fatima Swartz and each facilitator enough, as well as each participant that became part of my family.

Hidden Wounds

Follow-up effects of political traumatisatisation in the GDR and its trans-generational transfer

By Dr Karl-Heinz Bomberg and Erika Josephine Kunz

Thank you for inviting us to speak today. It is very important to tell our story in this place. As Germans, we understand the difficulties that arise in a country that was once divided. In 1949, not long after the Second World War, Germany was split. The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) were founded. My own story reflects the impact the political situation had on the citizens of East Germany.

I was born in 1955, right in the middle of the Cold War. As a young man, I was arrested and imprisoned for my political beliefs. This was not unusual. From 1949 to 1989 around 300 000 people were arrested in the Soviet occupied zone and GDR for political reasons. More than 25 years have passed since the Berlin Wall fell, but those who had been politically persecuted are still fighting to deal adequately with the consequential damages from the dictatorship. With the fall of the Wall, and abolition of corrosive laws, the first step in healing was completed. Nevertheless, numerous survivors are critical of inadequate pension payments, deficits in the process of recognition, deficits in tracking related health problems, and social trends of belittlement.

As a physician and therapist, I have seen the long-term consequences of political trauma in the former GDR. The duration and severity of their prison sentences are connected with disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Anxiety and Psychosomatic illnesses. Most of them have suffered up to the present day. In my book, *Hidden Wounds*, the effects of political persecution on the family and the descendants of the victims are the focus of attention.

In the 1980s, I was a young physician and singer-songwriter. I had a lot of support from the Evangelical Church in Germany. They helped me arrange concerts so I could sing my songs and spread my message. However, phone calls were monitored, and people could not be trusted. The

concerts were devalued and forbidden, but I carried on. In the end I was arrested. My artistic narcissism, which had once helped me to be politically active, was my downfall.

To go to prison is an attack comparable to a violation. Your pride is broken. You feel shame, guilt and misery as you sit in your cell. You can compare prison in a way with a psychosis, except that psychosis comes from inside, and insanity of prison comes from outside. In both cases, there is no escape.

I suffered terrible guilt concerning my wife and two little children. Even now, while I write this, I become tearful. I remember that I tried to improve my mood in the dark prison cell with pleasant dreams, day and night. My cell mate and I would go into raptures, talking about the outside world and freedom. However, it was always in my mind that he could have been an informer. Every day was a battle.

Thanks to a solidarity of friends in both East and West Germany, and support from the media, I was released after three months imprisonment. However, my insecurity and defensiveness continued long after I was released. I needed a lot of time before I felt really free from my time in prison, and able to enjoy life again.

Without the help of friends, colleagues and my family, especially my wife, I couldn't have achieved any sense of healing or recovery. In the time before I went to prison, I had thought about emigrating. Afterwards, I stubbornly decided to stay. Others could go. It was important for me to see a new Germany.

I found that humour helped me. I intensified my art work and looked for appropriate teachers. I experienced collegiality in my work as an assistant physician for Anaesthesiology. Gradually, I found my old self again. My family made me feel appreciated, and I got continuous support from my parents.

My partner, Erika Kunz, has developed a therapeutic technique known as the Inherent Method®. This helps to detect and understand the inter-relationships between the psyche, the body and the voice. External events cause neurons in the brain to respond in a variety of ways. When trauma is experienced, it can become stored in the body. Therefore, it is possible to also find ways to work therapeutically with the body.

The client learns the wordless language of the body to understand and find a way out of the spiritual abyss and mental torpor, and comes back to life. The exercises become a journey between spirituality and the trauma that was experienced. The client can find access to him/herself again.

We both work with people who have experienced deep trauma, and have seen amazing results. We hope that through our concerts and writing, we can show others that trauma, no matter how severe, does not have to dominate life forever, and can be overcome.



Trip to Lesotho

By Loret Loumauamou

I had the privilege to travel to Lesotho with Father Michael, the Director of the Institute for Healing of Memories. The Lesotho program is a joint venture between the brothers of the Society of the Sacred Mission and the Institute.

The aim of our trip was to run a Healing of Memories workshop. The workshop took place from 10 to 12 March 2017 at Khotsong Lodge, a beautiful place. The meaning of Khotsong is a place of peace.

The lodge boasts magnificent scenery and a tranquil atmosphere. The place was appropriate to do the healing of memories work.

We drove from Bloemfontein airport to Maseru, the capital city, which is thankfully just over the border.

That was my first trip to Lesotho. As we approached Maseru, we passed by picturesque mountains.

I discovered that Lesotho is known as the Kingdom in the Sky because of its imposing height. We were surrounded by friendly and welcoming people.

The trip helped me to continue interacting with people with unfamiliar backgrounds, cultures, languages and religion. I again experienced the richness of embracing diversity in the work I do.

The workshop in Lesotho was a great experience for me. Working with facilitators who were newly trained and had different backgrounds was so special, and my experience in the field of healing empowered them and they were willing to know more from us.

The workshop was attended by 12 participants – nine females and three males. Participants were appreciated for the experience they had of the healing journey. Many of them shared their stories for the first time in their lives. The workshop offered them some tools on how to overcome the pain of the past memories.

The second day of the workshop fell on “Moshoeshoe Day” on 11 March, which celebrates the life of the founding



father of the country. And as I was watching the celebration on TV at night, I was amazed to see the procession involving many people dressed up in Lesotho's vibrant and colourful traditional dress, comprising blankets and sticks and Basotho hats. Women were carrying bundles of sticks, while men were involved in doing traditional dances, riding horses, or herding bulls along the road.

What was new to me is the fact that participants decided to wash their hands as a sign of cleansing from the past. It is amazing to always learn new things and the richness that diversity can bring.

It was a long drive for a short stay, but it was very much worthwhile. If I was not there for work purposes, I would have spent a few nights in Lesotho. Beyond Maseru is great beauty and nature. Yet, I was grateful for at least the taste I received of another country.

UPCOMING EVENTS

7-17 AUGUST 2017

- ▶ The Institute will be offering International Advanced facilitator training course. Closing date for applications are 25 July 2017.

21 SEPTEMBER 2017

- ▶ Annual Lecture by Phyliss Young from Standing Rock, USA

19-29 SEPTEMBER 2017

- ▶ International Conference on Healing the Wounds of History
- ▶ One World Healing Music Festival
- ▶ Engagement with Healing of Memories programs and local communities

Further enquiries for all events: info@healingofmemories.co.za

God has Many Names By Clint Bowers



Restoring Humanity embarked on the 3rd stage of the God has Many Names program, which focused on sacred music and art.

We recruited new participants to be part of this year's journey. These young people are from Langa, Mitchell's Plain, Masiphumelele, Delft and Belhar.

The young people were introduced to the backgrounds of different religions and to talk about their own background, as well as the challenges they face within their beliefs. We introduced them to a composer of songs, who shared with them the techniques of finding their inner voice, and to look at tools they can use to meditate, as young people need to equip themselves especially with the harshness of what is happening in their lives.

Restoring Humanity Open Day By Liso Madikane

On 28 February, the Restoring Humanity planned, organised and implemented the Restoring Humanity Open Day, that was held in Nyameko Primary School in Mfuleni. A total of 79 young people that are participating in the Restoring Humanity project were present, including 17 facilitators and co-facilitators. The participants were from Masiphumelele, Mamre, Atlantis, Langa, Mfuleni, Excelsior and Mitchell's Plain.

The aim of the open day was to welcome all the participants to 2017, and to introduce the new way of running the project with different programs that we want to implement in 2017. Firstly, we introduced the Healing of Memories and Restoring Humanity program to the new participants. After that the facilitators presented the small projects to the participants: Healing Journey; Boys to Men; God has Many Names, and Building Peaceful Communities.

The participants could then sign up for the program that they would like to participate in for the year 2017. Each participant was allowed to sign up for the Healing Journey program and one of the other projects.



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