

SIR JOHN
GRAHAM
LECTURE
m 2019

Across Our Fault Lines

PROFESSOR PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA



Across Our Fault Lines:

Repairing the Brokenness of the Past

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GRAHAM
LECTURE

 2019

First published in September 2019 by Maxim Institute
PO Box 49 074, Roskill South, Auckland 1445, New Zealand
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Copyright © 2019 Maxim Institute
ISSN 1179-4305 (softcover)
ISSN 1179-4313 (PDF)
ISBN 978-0-9941479-0-5 (softcover)
ISBN 978-0-9941479-1-2 (PDF)

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ABOUT MAXIM INSTITUTE

Our mission is to investigate the ideas shaping New Zealand, engage with our nation's leaders, and enrich our democracy

We're deeply committed to the people, land, history, and cultures of Aotearoa New Zealand. As a team, we work to produce rigorous research and present our recommendations to New Zealand's leaders and public.

We've produced long-form research on issues including: intergenerational poverty, leadership in education, regional development, the effects of euthanasia legislation, and the barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

To increase the reach of our work we host public conversation events throughout the year, speak regularly through media interviews and opinion pieces, and make all of our work freely available on our website. We also produce *Flint & Steel*, an annual magazine that explores some of the underlying ideas shaping our society, and New Zealand's future.

To see our work and find out more, visit maxim.org.nz

THE ANNUAL SIR JOHN GRAHAM LECTURE

Sir John Graham was an exemplary New Zealander who throughout his life displayed the consistency of character and care for others we hope for in the best of our leaders. Along with his well-known leadership roles as Captain of the All Blacks, Headmaster of Auckland Grammar, and Chancellor of the University of Auckland, Sir John inspired and led many organisations, including Maxim Institute.



Appropriately, he was recognised with a CBE in 1994 for his services to education and the community, and was further honoured when he was knighted in 2011. As a Founding Trustee of Maxim, Sir John Graham's deep love for New Zealand, his passion for education, and concern for those on the margins of life remain at the heart of our work, and we are honoured to be able to hold this annual lecture in his name.

In honour of Sir John's life of service and contribution to public life, the Annual Sir John Graham Lecture provides an opportunity to invite leading experts to contribute to public debate in New Zealand.

PROFESSOR PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA

Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela is a clinical psychologist and Research Chair in Studies in Historical Trauma and Transformation at Stellenbosch University. She served on the Human Rights Violations Committee of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) between 1995–1998, and conducted a series of interviews with a man known as Prime Evil, the head of the apartheid regime’s state-sanctioned killing squad.



These interviews formed the basis of her critically acclaimed book, *A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness*, an account that shows the possibility for “forgiveness of the unforgiveable,” and demonstrates “the potential for dialogue, remorse and forgiveness to break intergenerational cycles of repetition.”

After completing her doctorate at the University of Cape Town, Professor Gobodo-Madikizela has “focused on questions around themes of remorse, empathy and forgiveness, exploring the role of dialogue when victims, perpetrators and beneficiaries of gross human rights abuses have to live together.”

The following text is Professor Gobodo-Madikizela's full written lecture, which includes content she was not able to share on the night of the Sir John Graham Lecture due to time constraints. For a full record of what she delivered on the night, head to maxim.org.nz/sjgl2019.

Professor Gobodo-Madikizela's address draws on her previously published work, including her article 'Psychological Repair,' from the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 2015, and her chapter in Alternative Approaches in Conflict Resolution, a 2017 book edited by Martin Leiner and Christine Schliesser.

Annual Sir John Graham Lecture Friday 5 July 2019

Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela

Introduction

Good evening everyone. I am conscious of the honour that Maxim has conferred upon me when the Institute asked me to deliver this year's Sir John Graham lecture. I am privileged to have the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of speakers who have participated in this annual event that honours the memory of Sir John Graham. I was a young adult and university student during a period known as "the turbulent 80s" in apartheid South Africa. Therefore, for me, being here tonight is a symbol of the connection between our struggle for freedom and dignity in a country where black people were considered second-class citizens in the land of their ancestors, and the struggles of Māori for dignity and equality in the land of their birth and home of their ancestors. It is heart-warming to see the generation after Sir John Graham following on his footsteps, leading these conversations that have brought us together this evening with such elegance, grace and dignity.

When Sir John Graham visited South Africa with the All Blacks in 1960, he returned to his country to bear witness to the suffering of black people under apartheid. Yet his concern for the spectacular oppression of black South Africans by the apartheid government did not blind him to the plight of Māori and the marginalisation of his own country women and men, their families and their communities. 1981—the year of the so-called "flour bomb and barbed wire rugby tour" our struggle and

yours—although not many of us knew at the time—were inextricably linked by a quest for justice and to reclaim our dignity in the aftermath, or, as some might say, the *afterlife*, of colonisation in our countries. Sir John knew that the 1981 anti-Springbok tour protests were not—should not be—just about rugby, and he said as much, cautioning that the “obsession with rugby” may shift the gaze away from concern about issues of social justice and “solving the problems of poverty and unemployment” in New Zealand. Watching and listening to the Auckland Grammar boys’ rendition of the *haka* on YouTube, performed with such emotion and virtuosity at his funeral, evoked memories of those turbulent years in South Africa. The faces of those boys—in all their diversity—were such a force of beauty and affirmation of a people’s history and culture. After watching this movement of bodies that heaved, sighed, and pumped with the force of unity of spirit, the feeling that this evoked in me lingered for most of the night and into the next day.

I was reminded that these moments, so pregnant with powerful symbolism, confront one with feelings that one may not even have the vocabulary to express. Yet they explode and break open a different kind of voice, precisely because of their symbolism, a voice that speaks to the *recognition*—even “healing”—of pain and suffering endured over many generations into the present. This voice issues out in the tradition of a call-and-response, speaking and being heard, reminding us that the call to repair the past should be renewed every day, with each generation that carries memories of a past not lived, yet “re-membered,” and that symbols matter in the quest for the repair of the brokenness of the past. Hinewehi Mohi’s singing of “God defend New Zealand” in her native Māori on the stage of World Cup Rugby in 1999 was a call for recognition. The response to that call—no matter that it followed after heated debate—is testimony to the powerful force of the potential for change.

And so, in responding to the invitation to address you this evening on this title that unfolded from conversations with Alex and his team at Maxim Institute, I draw from the tradition of story-telling to share with you unique historical moments that have been illuminating. These stories are less from the great philosophers and religious or political theorists than from ordinary people who themselves have suffered irreparably. The lessons from these historical moments show that there is something to learn about what is possible in human behaviour in the aftermath of systemic oppression, genocide and mass political violence. I know that today my country is at a critical crossroads. It is a time of extraordinary upheaval in our country and the world, created in large part, by irresponsible leadership and the greed and runaway corruption that it has produced.

My country is haunted by this post-apartheid predicament—the brutality of corruption that has allowed the continuing exclusion of millions of South Africans from the full enjoyment of hard won rights that promised a “better life for all.” Dreams have been squandered, and destinies derailed by the rampant corruption that reached unimaginable heights during the last decade. Therefore, I am not blind to the problems we face in South Africa. My presentation tonight is motivated by my sense of hope and belief in the possibility of change. If the level of depravity and systematic oppression that has been witnessed in countries like mine—captured most compellingly by Hannah Arendt’s phrase “the banality of evil”¹—is fostered in an environment in which inhumanity against others thrives, then it should be possible that relationships that foster thoughtfulness and a sense of being human reproduce themselves in our relational world.² This echoes the guiding principle that Nelson Mandela offered us, that no one is born hating another person because of their race, religious background or their position in society. “People must learn to hate,” he said, “and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”³

I begin therefore with a story from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa, that shining moment in our history whose enduring lessons about what is possible in the aftermath of so much tragedy still shine bright in my memory, having served as the Chair of the TRC’s Human Rights Violations Committee in the Western Cape. My reflections in this presentation proceed with a discussion that will be framed by four constituent domains. The first three of these domains are organised around the TRC’s most visible aspect—the public hearings—and an understanding of TRC testimonies as public narrative. The first of these constituent domains concerns the collective dimension of individual testimonies. The second domain concerns strategies of silencing victims’ testimonies, which may be deployed ostensibly as concern for victims’ re-traumatisation; the discussion includes an illustration that shows the shortcomings of this argument. The third domain shifts the spotlight to perpetrators and shows how victims’ testimonies served to draw attention to the perpetrator’s own dehumanisation. The fourth dimension that I will discuss is what I have termed “reparative humanism,” which refers to those testimonial efforts that gesture toward transcending a victim or perpetrator identity in order to embrace a transformative vision of shared humanity.

The collective dimension of individual testimonies

I want to begin by inviting you to listen to a minute-long audio clip, *The Cry of Nomonde Calata*. The clip is the iconic scream of a widow who testified at the opening of the TRC's public hearings about the killing of her husband by the apartheid police. The clip ends—or rather begins again—with a *response* by a white South African music composer, who transforms the widow's scream into music. The performance of this music is itself a call to empathy for the suffering of the other.

At the opening of the public hearings of the TRC, the large city hall in the South African city of East London was capacity-full—all black with the white TRC commissioners and some reporters the only visible white people in the audience. When the audience rose to sing a song that was at once a poem and an anthem of black pain, sung throughout the years of apartheid repression by black people at mass funerals, political rallies, and peaceful protests, the song "*Lizalis'idinga lakho Nkosi*" (Fulfil your promise Lord), reverberated into the large hall, carrying the hope that the moment promised.

This was the same moment into which the widow of Fort Calata, Nomonde Calata screamed her pain, "daring" to give voice to it for it to be heard beyond the walls of the public hearings.⁴ Imagine that, a piercing scream that seemed to shatter the magnificent walls of the East London City Hall, a structure built in colonial times to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The building still housed memorial plaques for some of the fallen British soldiers when the British and the Afrikaners fought to take over South Africa. Reflecting on this scene at the time, surrounded by the walls that hearken back to an earlier generational time, it seemed to me that this wailing cry might be captured and interpreted in one's imagination as a moment that represents at once an expression of anger and pain. With the violent movement of Mrs. Calata's body thrown back as she let out her scream, it signified a crying out to a past that goes back several generations. Her body seemed to carry the haunting weight of this past, seemingly expunging it into the TRC's public space of communal remembering.

South African musician Philip Miller then resurrects this wailing voice from the archives of TRC narratives, producing the music/cry heard from the audio-clip. The iconic voice of South African soloist Sibongile Khumalo then picks up Mrs. Calata's crying voice and *re-presents* it through her magnificent and electrifying mezzosoprano. Later in the song, several other voices emerge, and merge into a choir, producing a chorus of collective voices, all bearing witness to this human cry and call for recognition of and response to her pain.⁵

As if this was the thought on Archbishop Desmond Tutu's mind. As silence hovered over and covered the hall later when the hearings resumed, the resonance of Mrs Calata's piercing cry still reverberating in the collective memory of the audience, Archbishop Tutu sang the question that has been sung by black people throughout the decades of apartheid oppression, *Senzeni na?* (What have we done?). It was a reminder of the strong intergenerational connection between Archbishop Tutu's own relentless anti-apartheid struggle, and the stories of pain recounted by Mrs. Calata and other TRC witnesses. Archbishop Tutu's singing of the song was itself a wailing cry of black pain, its resonance a force that provided solace and a sense of collective identification with all that Mrs. Calata's cry represented. Tutu's and the audience response in song seemed to carry the narrative of collective struggle through the wordlessness of a scream and the mournful sound of a song, symbolising an abiding framework of shared memory of the past. For Philip Miller, as a white South African's response, his work seeks to take us beyond thinking about guilt and shame into the terrain of direct engagement with the past. The story should be told and reflected upon instead of denied; he seems to be saying with his musical production. The denial of history is an urgent problem in post-apartheid South African society, and this denial came in many guises.

“Re-victimisation” claims: denial and silencing of victims’ voices

When I served on the TRC, I designed the Commission's “outreach” programme, which set out how the TRC's work would be organised, how testimonies would be collected and how public hearings would be conducted. Many people criticised us and argued that the TRC process would “open wounds” and “re-victimise” survivors of gross human rights violations. While it is true that a degree of re-traumatisation should be expected when victims and survivors recount their traumatic experiences, arguing that victims should be “protected” from re-traumatisation, however, is erroneous on two grounds. First, it assumes that the trauma is “in the past,” gone and forgotten—so we should let sleeping dogs lie and the stories should not be revisited. Second, silence—in this case the absence of possibility to speak about trauma—is assumed to make “closure” possible. Thus, we should not re-open what is already closed and we should tread softly around these ghosts of the past, lest we awaken them. Yet repeatedly across the globe, victims and survivors of historical traumas, and generations of their descendants who come after, cry out for public acknowledgment of their direct, or, in the case of descendants, inherited pain and suffering. For instance, Nomonde Calata was asked by Philip Miller how she felt about

hearing her voice in the music he created. She replied that her iconic cry, which the South African poet Antjie Krog has referred to as the “signature tune” of the TRC,⁶ was for her a living memorial to her loving husband. Archbishop Desmond Tutu called it “the defining sound that characterised” the TRC as a place where people could open up and cry out what had “remained locked up for so long, unacknowledged, ignored and denied.”⁷ Transforming the scream into music honoured the memory of her husband, she told Miller, and this “felt like a soothing balm” to her trauma.

Denial is part of the social fault line of historical trauma and of the failure of acknowledgement of this history and accountability for its continuities in the contemporary lives and lived experiences of victims and their descendants. Narrating their trauma and suffering is for victims a starting point of repairing their brokenness. As a “victim-cantered” space, the TRC provided an important societal context for making the trauma of victims visible. It allowed them to break their silence, and the listening and validation by a sympathetic public audience infused their testimonies with political meaning. It is in this context of the validation of victims’ experiences that victims can take the crucial step of healing, and the reparative elements of the dialogue about the past begin to emerge.

Narrating trauma: breaking open a path toward healing

At first, Mrs P. seemed unwilling to participate in the TRC process and to share the story of the killing of her eleven-year-old son. He was shot dead during the volatile situation of the countrywide state of emergency imposed by the apartheid government after the mass funeral of the “Cradock Four” victims. A group of TRC commissioners and members of the Human Rights Violations Committee were addressing Mrs P.’s community about the work of the TRC that was due to start. As if in defiance of our TRC “out-reach” presentation, she walked out as I was concluding my speech in the school hall where people were gathered. I followed her out and offered to drive her home. As I dropped her off to prepare to leave, however, she invited me into her home. No sooner had I sat down in the chair she had pointed me to than she started to tell her story:

He came home during school break at 10 o’clock. I was sitting right there where you are sitting, just sitting exactly where you are sitting in that chair. He walked in dressed in his school uniform, and went to the cupboard over there and cut himself a slice of bread. He is doing all of this in a rush. He is like that when he comes home during break. He spread peanut butter on

it and then put the rest of the bread back, leaving the crumbs all over the cupboard, and the knife, still smudged with peanut butter. He ran out. He is still chewing his bread and holding it in his hand. It wasn't long—I heard shots outside. Some commotion and shouts. Then I'm hearing, 'uLuthando, uLuthando, nank'uLuthando bamdubule! [This is Luthando. They have shot Luthando!]' and then someone calling out for me: 'mama kaLuthando! [Luthando's mother!]' I went flying out of this house. Now I am dazed. I ran, not thinking. My eyes are on the crowd that has gathered.

A mother's recollection of the violent interruption of the normal act of her child's short moment at home during school break. She tells this story with a visual and dramatic quality to it: *a young boy in school uniform; returning to class and being shot holding a slice of bread that he had only moments before smeared with peanut-butter*. She wants the interviewer to picture the moment—to witness it as it were. Listening to this story and others like it gives one a clear sense of the dangers that young people like Luthando faced, how vulnerable they were during the anti-apartheid struggle, and the fear with which parents lived that their children may not return home alive.

Evoking the memory of her son's lifeless body when she reached the crowd from which someone had called her by the name of her son "Luthando's mother!," she gestured to her kitchen floor: "Here is my son." Instinctively, my eyes followed the sweep of her hand, as if a body lay there in that spot next to her feet. I think this is the essence of *bearing witness* to someone's trauma. It is "being there" with them to attest to the knowledge that it happened. Being drawn "to see the body" in this way—albeit symbolically—and *feeling the presence of the body* means that she has at last found someone who can attest to the fact that these things really did happen. She told her story and someone was "present" as witness, and the witness can testify about the wounding effect of the trauma: "It was just blood all over," Mrs. P. continued:

My anguish was beyond anything I ever thought I could experience. They have finished him. I threw myself down on him. I can feel the wetness of his blood – I felt his last breath leave him. He was my only son.⁸

The "here" in this excerpt is evocative: It points to a specific place that resides not only in terms of its physical location "there" in the streets of the past where her son was killed, but more significantly for her, *here* in its embodied state in her mind. The events recounted cannot be understood to be "in the past," but events experienced as in the "here" of *now*. Thus, from this we may conclude that to suggest that people

should “forget the past and move on” creates great conceptual mischief. The past is an embodied psychic reality for many people whose lives are marked by violence. Or histories of violence. The narratives gesture toward the sites of the theatre of the original violence, but their recollections evoke the mental landscapes where the scenes of violence re-play in unending re-enactments of the original scenes of traumas recounted across generations.

In their testimonies, survivors who suffered under apartheid want acknowledgment of their pain not in order to forget, but rather to reclaim the dignity of the living and the dignity and respect of loved ones who suffered dehumanisation in life and in death. In this sense, then, the testimonies are not only to get the listeners’ “affirmation and validation.” In several foundational texts on Holocaust testimonies, scholars such as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have argued that testimonies are deployed “essentially in order to *address* another, to impress upon a listener, to *appeal* to a community.”⁹ This formulation of the purpose of trauma testimonies gives power to the listener as the one to bestow recognition on survivors and their suffering. If, however, we think of trauma testimonies as victims’ assertion of agency and of the dignity of the communities to which they belong, trauma testimonies can be viewed as an important starting point seeking—perhaps even *demanding*—an ethical response from listeners. The purpose is in order to rid oneself and the collective memory of one’s community of the subject position of the dehumanised other, and to wrest away from perpetrators and from the dominant culture the fiat power to destroy one’s human spirit. Understood in this way, testimonies seek accountability. Archbishop Tutu aptly called the TRC public hearings process “the third way.” It lifted the veil of lies perpetuated under apartheid, offering victims, perpetrators and “implicated others”—to borrow Michael Rothberg’s term¹⁰—a language to speak about the horrific past.

Confronting perpetrators at TRC hearings created horizon moments that oriented the country toward a future in which, it was hoped, there would no longer be denial or justification of the past. The truths that emerged were sometimes dramatically revealing, and sometimes impossible to translate into objective and corroborative evidence that could survive the rigours of the law. These dramatic representations of victims’ experiences on the stage of the TRC was an invitation for audiences to reflect on perpetrators’ depravity and the self-dehumanising aspects of their actions. In other words, these dramatic and performative testimonial presentations shifted the focus of the testimony from the victim to the perpetrator. These were testimonies in which victims held up a mirror of dehumanisation for the perpetrator to bear witness

to his own crime. The irony of these moments is that on the one hand, the dramatic pointing of the finger at the perpetrators' evil portrayed the victim as the aggressor, trading places and standing in the shoes of the perpetrator. On the other hand, however, the scenes of drama could be interpreted as a call for the perpetrator's ethical response, one that should inspire remorse, because the confrontation with his crime through a "staging" of a victim's testimony, with the perpetrator himself acting the protagonist's part, not only gave public visibility of the violation. It also shone the spotlight on the perpetrator as the architect of the violence.

Confrontation of the perpetrator with the mirror of dehumanisation

The public hearing of the most feared torturer in the Western Cape, Jeffrey Benzien, is another iconic moment of the TRC. It was one of the most dramatic moments on the TRC: Tony Yengeni, antiapartheid activist who suffered severe torture and detention faced Jeffrey Benzien and asked him to demonstrate how he used the "wet bag" method to torture his victims. Yengeni was ready to direct the performance. He brought a friend to act the part of victim, and a black pillow for Benzien to use as the "wet bag"—all the right "props" for the theatrical representation of the crime of torture. Stunned commissioners, judges and the audience watched as the "victim" lay prostrate on the floor in the centre of the TRC hearings space, hands locked behind his back. The former torturer, Benzien sat astride on him, demonstrating how he tortured his victims. Tony Yengeni, his former victim, sat across from Benzien, urging him to show how he did it. As Benzien performed the re-enactment, describing what he did, Yengeni wanted some answers:

What kind of human being does that to another? What kind of man are you? What kind of man uses a method like this one of the wet bag on other human beings, repeatedly listening to those moans and cries and groans, and taking each of those people very near to their deaths?

Facing the visual evidence of his deeds in public, Benzien admitted that he could not recognise himself in this crime. "What kind of a person am I" is a question that he said he was forced to ask himself in the face of such dramatic exposure at the TRC. "With hindsight, sir," Benzien told Yengeni, "I realise that it was wrong, and for that I apologise. I must also admit at this stage, with the way the country is being run by a new set of ministers, and especially the honourable state president [Nelson

Mandela] I can only say I am extremely amazed and very happy to still be in South Africa today—and I am still a patriot of the country.”

These scenes at TRC hearings, when perpetrators were forced to face their own loss of humanity led me to think about these moments as “the mirror of dehumanisation” reflected back at them. They had dehumanised their victims. Facing the evidence of the evil of their deeds, however, the testimony shining the light on their depravity, forced them to look into the mirror, their dehumanisation staring back at them. Who are these people today in post-apartheid South Africa, we should ask. What stories do they tell their children about this shameful history? How are the memories of this shame passed down? Through reflective engagement with it, or through silencing and denial? These are some of the most urgent questions of our time. Few topics stake a more compelling claim on humanities research than the legacies of historical trauma. Apartheid, colonialism, slavery and other watershed moments of crimes against humanity in the 20th century are not events in “the past.” They are a history whose traumatic repercussions reverberates across multiple generations. Therefore, this history has to be faced in order to be transcended. James Baldwin reminds us, however, that not everything that is faced can be changed, “but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”¹¹

We found out, too, that not all perpetrators rose to the challenge of truth telling. For example, the apartheid-era politician Clive Derby-Lewis, who was responsible for the assassination of the much-loved Chris Hani, the former head of the ANC military wing, invoked his Christian faith at his TRC public hearing as justification for the killing: “we as Christians are told that it is our duty to fight the anti-Christ in whichever way we can.” In this narrative strategy, expressions of accountability are inverted by simultaneously shifting blame away from the self in order to project it externally, often onto the victim or survivor. Remorse is unlikely to emerge under these conditions. This kind of splitting—a common psychological defence mechanism that “hides” unwanted parts of the self from awareness—has been observed frequently among white South Africans. Acknowledgment of complicity with apartheid is rare. Even when a window opens to acknowledge complicity, another may close, shutting out the rising tide of shame and guilt that threatens to engulf the subject. Constant confrontation with one’s complicity—through the daily exposure to the legacies of apartheid in the lives of black South Africans and the reality of inherited privilege—exerts an intolerable toll at a deep psychological level. To deal with the force of these uncomfortable emotions, a more subtle form of denial emerges. Speech acts like those performed by Derby-Lewis’s “we Christians” statement are deployed to “efface”

the feeling of personal responsibility. This is dramatically illustrated in the statement heard repeatedly from white South Africans: “The ANC government’s policies of affirmative action are more *racist* than apartheid was.” This perversion of the term *racist* is encountered frequently in post-apartheid South Africa. I have referred to this rhetorical strategy as “reformatory narratives,” narratives that are used to hide from the reality of one’s past and to soften the intrapsychic blow occasioned by feelings of shame and guilt.¹² Overwhelmed by shame because of their association with apartheid oppression as beneficiaries of apartheid privilege, some whites find facing the past too much to bear. This leaves little room for acknowledging the pain of others and empathic concern for the continuities of apartheid oppression in the contemporary life of its victims and survivors. “White denial” of apartheid hinders the necessary process of redress and repairing the past.

Yet the dialogic space of the TRC would often engender affective attunement with the victims’ pain and suffering and the continuing impact of historical trauma. Instead of a foreboding feeling of disintegration in those who carry the burden of guilt and shame about the past, a feeling of containment sometimes engenders deeper awareness of the legacies of historical violence and enables acknowledgement and a sense of accountability that opens up the possibility of connecting with the plight of victims of historical trauma. A key factor in the emergence of this awareness on the part of beneficiaries of apartheid privilege and of perpetrators is the willingness of victims to maintain an invitational stance of openness, reaching out to the perpetrator with a gesture of promise that the process of facing the past is about building community. Thus, the victim holds the space of promise, inviting the perpetrator not as the “monster” marked by his evil, but rather as a human being who has the capacity for expressing acknowledgment for the pain he has caused, based on a clear sense of appreciation and understanding of what the victim has gone through. This enables perpetrators genuinely to confront their guilt. Remorse emerges in this reparative state of mind.

Such openness brings people from these “sides” of history into step with each other, into the spiral movement of a new intersubjective context that edges them toward the centre of possibility, and then upward toward the apex of transformation. The new intersubjective context that emerges allows for acknowledgment that bears the kind of responsibility that conveys compassion and care, a responsibility for the other that is prepared to enter the pain of the other. The capacity to place ourselves in the position of an Other who wants to re-enter the world of moral humanity is an act of solidarity that invites the Other’s sense of responsibility. It is the only way out

of the denial of history's violence. For, while we are separated by our pasts, our pasts also connect us, opening up a space for the potential emergence of unexpected human moments.

Beyond forgiveness: reparative humanism

In restorative dialogue encounters in Rwanda and South Africa in the aftermath of genocide and apartheid era crimes against humanity, victims have sometimes been moved to express forgiveness for perpetrators. As I have pointed out in the earlier section of my presentation, when victims and perpetrators live together in the same country—and sometimes as neighbours as they do in Rwanda—the transformative possibilities that play out in victim-perpetrator dialogue processes emerge in part because of victims' openness to a conciliatory stance for the sake of a transformed moral community. This means that victims themselves sometimes open the path towards perpetrators' remorse, and that this may be inspired by a sense of moral imagination in the context of dialogue about traumatic pasts. The dialogic context that is established thus becomes a facilitative environment in which a perpetrator feels less threatened, inspiring in him an ethical impulse that may obviate the need to hide from his shame and guilt. This is the "paradox of remorse," because while the perpetrator's actions create a chasm between him and the world of victims, his expression of remorse changes the intersubjective context, bringing closeness between victim and perpetrator by virtue of his readiness for readmission to a shared moral community.

In this context, forgiving develops as a transformative lament that goes beyond the expression of words of forgiveness as a response to an apology in an interpersonal encounter. What lies "beyond" the forgiveness is a certain level of care for the perpetrator, an *investment* in the hope that the perpetrator may become a better human being. In my earlier research on expressions of forgiveness, I encountered this demonstration of a wish to care for the perpetrator, as if the forgiver were responsible for the perpetrator's new life away from violence. One of these case studies is that of a widow whose husband was murdered by Eugene de Kock, an apartheid security police nicknamed "Prime Evil." She broke down and cried when de Kock expressed a remorseful apology. Describing her tears as "not only tears for our husbands, but tears for [de Kock] as well," she expressed a wish "to hold him by the hand, and to show him that there is a future, and that he can still change."¹³ I found this to be a unique expression what seems to me to be a desire-to-care-for-the-other aspect of

empathy. The empathic response of the victim is imbued with a quality of wishing to “rescue” the remorseful perpetrator, as if to affirm his identity as a member of the human community (instead of a “monster” or “evil one”). This desire to rescue the perpetrator, I argue, constitutes the fundamental moment, a pivotal point in the intersubjective context in which forgiving feelings emerge.

The word forgiveness, I argue further, is the wrong word for describing what unfolds in these victim-perpetrator encounters. Forgiveness seems to suggest a fixed position, or a coming to an end—“I offer you forgiveness so that I can have closure and move on.” A subtext here seems to signify an act of leaving something behind, moving on without looking back. However, I think that the act of forgiving in these post-conflict contexts is the opening of a new chapter, rather than closure as such. It involves a complex matrix of emotional and reflective dynamics that interact in a relational process that engages reciprocal recognition of the other’s humanity, acknowledging the reality of the other’s emotional condition in a way that creates pathways to caring for the other as a fellow human being. The obvious observation I am making here is that engaging in dialogue about the past is a multifaceted terrain. In considering encounters between victims/survivors and perpetrators of gross human rights violations, what is perhaps necessary is shifting the lens from a focus on forgiveness and reconciliation (concepts that imply a goal), to “experience” (complicated, enigmatic, muddy, elusive, and unpredictable). The reason for this is that much of what happens in these encounters remains implicit, and the word “forgiveness” falls short of adequately capturing this complexity.

I have suggested that “empathic repair”¹⁴ captures more effectively the complexity of this dialogic process. The significance of the notion of “the reparative” lies in the fact that the work of healing after historical trauma must necessarily be an on-going process. “Reparative” suggests movement, an engagement in a constant search for the emergence of human moments that can create a sense of solidarity and transcend old dividing lines that promote othering. The quest for reparative humanism gestures toward transformative moments and new relational experiences. The goal is to recognise the humanity of victims and perpetrators alike for the sake of a transformed conception of society in order to help heal historical ruptures. Let me then offer examples of acts of connection between former enemies, which illustrate something more than forgiveness in the way I have suggested here.

First, I start with a story that involves Nelson Mandela. It should be noted that although Mandela is associated with “forgiving his enemies,” it was through his actions, rather than the forgiveness word that Mandela demonstrated his commitment to repairing the brokenness of our past. In her memoir, *Good Morning Mr Mandela*, Nelson Mandela’s former private secretary, Zelda Le Grange, recounts a scene that took place shortly after Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa’s first democratically elected president.¹⁵ Zelda was working in Parliament as a typist, and was unexpectedly moved to the presidency to help prepare Nelson Mandela’s schedules and related tasks. She approached her first encounter with Mandela with trepidation, not only because of being a nervous 23 year old, but probably also because as a young Afrikaner, she did not know how to relate to a man who, in the collective consciousness of most Afrikaners—and perhaps, most crucially, in their collective *unconscious*—was still a “terrorist.” Her fears and uncertainty were quickly replaced with tears when Mandela greeted her warmly, and spoke to her in Afrikaans. Hearing him speak to her in her language, she broke down and cried. As she wept—tears of shame, she tells readers of her memoir—Mandela comforted her, and she left his office feeling calmer. Le Grange writes about this encounter as a “turning point” moment that led her on a journey of self-reflection on her fervent racism, and eventually bringing her on a path of change and transformation. She would later serve as Nelson Mandela’s loyal and most trusted private secretary, from his years as president and throughout his retirement and illness for 19 years until his passing.

This example shows that Nelson Mandela embodied the reparative ethical consciousness. It was a principled commitment to an ethic of care for the Other based on values with foundations in the relational framework of *Ubuntu*, which I will return to later. Such a framework requires commitment to a stance of moral imagination, to a certain intentional openness that reaches out beyond the self and towards the Other. Mandela’s name became a symbol of this ethical vision of the self-transcendent position—a metaphor pointing to a more general horizon of an ethics of care and responsibility for the Other in the context of South Africa’s “dealing with the past.” There are other examples from Rwanda and South Africa that demonstrate this self-transcendent position of embracing one’s former enemies.

I should point out here that experts had deemed these acts of embrace an “impossibility.” Hannah Arendt, for instance, argued that gross human rights violations, which she termed “radical evil,” are unpunishable because no amount of punishment can restore a sense of symmetry that would balance what they have done. Furthermore, these acts lie beyond the purview of forgiveness because no yardstick exists by which we can measure what it means to forgive them, and there is no mental disposition we can adopt toward them that would correct the sense of injustice that these acts have injected into our world.

The experts were wrong. Here is an example from the many victim-perpetrator community dialogue processes that are part of efforts to rebuild peaceful communities in Rwanda: a woman who survived a mass shooting and bombing in a church faced the man responsible for the carnage in which her loved ones were killed. As the man crawled on his knees, weeping and begging for her forgiveness, she recounted the memory of the man’s killing spree to the members of her community gathered to engage in dialogue about the past. “His hands are full of the blood of an incredible number of the Tutsi he killed in the church,” the woman said. “He was like a killing machine ... and I am sure he honestly does not know how many Tutsi he killed.” She stood tall as the man was on his knees in front of her, expressing his remorseful apology and begging for her forgiveness. Extending her hand to help the man to get up, she told him that she did not want to think of him as a killing machine, but “as a fellow human being and brother.” According to Hyppolite Ntigurirwa, a young researcher who was sharing this story at a research workshop I attended in Kigali, the woman reached out to embrace the man, and the two of them “stood in an embrace with arms folded tight across each other’s backs.”

In South Africa: A young woman, Marcia Khoza, was five when Eugene de Kock, the apartheid government’s chief assassin, who was nicknamed “Prime Evil,” killed her mother. In search of “inner peace,” Khoza went to meet de Kock, who at the time was still in prison: “I had this deep void of emptiness,” Khoza said, “I carried so much anger to protect myself from falling into the abyss.” February 12, 2012 was the 23rd anniversary of her mother’s murder by de Kock and his men while she was exiled in Swaziland with two of her comrades. Khoza wanted to know how de Kock killed her mother and whether he remembered anything about her final moments. As de Kock emerged from the prison cells to meet Khoza, the resemblance between the woman he killed 28 years before and the daughter he was about to meet caused him to trip, almost falling. For an hour—the standard time for prison visits—Khoza bombarded de Kock with questions. At the end of the visit, she gave him a book on forgiveness

inscribed with her forgiving words. The following year after her meeting with de Kock, I invited Khoza to share her experience of meeting de Kock at a public dialogue event I had organised at the University of the Free State titled “Who is De Kock Today?”¹⁶

Khoza spoke about how meeting de Kock enabled her to empathise with him and his longing for his sons, whom he told her he had not seen for more than twenty years. I asked her what was most memorable about the meeting with de Kock. She described a moment towards the end of the visit when she became conscious of her knees touching de Kock’s under the narrow table across which they sat from each other in the prison. She was drawing closer and closer to him with each response he gave to her many questions, listening to the words, yet also listening to his “inner voice.” At one point, she said, “I realised that our noses were almost touching, and that we were breathing the same air.”

Breathing the same air—an ordinary statement, yet the extraordinary meaning it conveys transcends Marcia Khoza’s story and enters the realm of what’s possible in the human condition. The statement brings into focus the emergent possibilities that are at the heart of these dialogic processes of restorative justice. In societies emerging from violent conflict, like South Africa, where victims, perpetrators, bystanders and beneficiaries of oppressive regimes live in the same country, and sometimes as neighbours, creating the space for such dialogue and rebuilding communities in which the Other matters is an imperative.

As a metaphor, the notion of “breathing the same air” challenges the very concept of forgiveness. Such a framework emerges from concern about the broader societal goals of national healing, which advocate care and what Emmanuel Levinas terms “responsibility for the Other”¹⁷ as well as for the wider community. I would like to suggest that the legacy of Nelson Mandela, and the work of the TRC that he inspired, enabled the possibility to imagine these moments of empathic repair. “Imagination is indispensable to ethics,” Richard Kearney informs us, a claim resting on what he regards, in echoing a Levinasian position, as imagination’s “empathic powers of receptivity to the other.”¹⁸

I consider the reciprocity that unfolds in these encounters between individuals or groups from different sides of historical violence as “the emergence of the unexpected.” The process involves staying open in the encounter with the Other’s story and being witness to each other’s stories—stories of pain and stories of shame and guilt. What unfolds exemplifies the kind of *Ubuntu* referred to in the story about Nelson Mandela’s first encounter with the woman who became his personal

assistant. It is worth noting that *Ubuntu* was foundational in the legal framework that provided guidelines for the establishment of the TRC. The granting of amnesty was outlined in the post-amble of the Interim of the South African Constitution of 1993 in the section “National Unity and Reconciliation.” Past violations of human rights should be “addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *Ubuntu* but not for victimisation. In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offenses associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past.”

The concept of *Ubuntu* is an ethic based on the understanding that one’s subjectivity is inextricably intertwined with that of others in one’s community. From the perspective of *Ubuntu*, all people are valued as part of the human community and worthy of being so recognised. This does not entail blind acceptance of others, no matter what they do. Rather, it is an orientation of openness to others and a reciprocal caring that fosters a sense of solidarity. *Ubuntu* is often associated with the concept of self “I am because we are,” which stands in contrast to the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am.”¹⁹ While recognising the role of the individual, *Ubuntu* values a sense of solidarity with others—the individual always in relation—rather than individual autonomy.

It seems to me, however, that the meaning of *Ubuntu* is best captured in the isiXhosa²⁰ expression *Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu* (which, loosely translated, means “a person is a person through other people”). This implies an ethic based on the understanding that one’s subjectivity is inextricably intertwined with that of others in one’s community through reciprocal mutual recognition of the other’s human dignity. In other words, a person is a person through being witnessed by, and engaging in reciprocal witnessing of other persons. Alternatively, human subjectivity is defined by the multiplicity of relationships with others. The meaning conveyed by the expression is twofold. First, human subjectivity depends on being witnessed; the richness of subjectivity flows from interconnectedness with the wider community, and from the reciprocal caring and complementarity of human relationships. Second, the phrase conveys the kind of reciprocity that calls on people to be ethical subjects. Mutual recognition inspired by *Ubuntu* is fundamental to being a fellow human being, a relational subject in the context of community. A person with *Ubuntu* “is open and available to others, is affirming to others. . . . My humanity caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.”²¹

Ubuntu allows entry into the other's life in a way that makes it possible to reconstitute the other's experience within the self. In this sense then, recognition is not simply recognition of the physical face of the other—it may not even be about the other's physical presence. Rather, it is about something more subtle, and less visible than the physical aspects of the encounter. In contrast to the “I think therefore I am” philosophy that positions the self at a distance from the Other, this stance allows the self to feel the Other, and to stand within the Other's historical circumstances in order to connect with the Other through a shared humanity across time and place. While forgiveness may operate from a distance—it is “given to”—reparative humanism engages *with* an Other. Thus, reparative humanism is grounded in mutual recognition and the shared experience of humanity. Reparative humanism allows for points of identification, entryways into the experience of others, which enable comparison across critical registers of difference. Animosity, hatred and anger at perpetrators for the destruction and pain they have caused arise out of love for one's loved ones against whom gross human rights violations were committed. The same factors that can ignite and perpetuate animosity and vengeance—the love for those killed or maimed by the perpetrator—might also suspend those negative sentiments by refusing to give in to destructive feelings in their name. By providing a way into the experience of the “enemy,” reparative humanism provides a way out of violence. Ultimately, the reciprocal mutuality of reparative humanism enables healing that constantly opens up new possibilities in the aftermath of violence.

Conclusion

In much of the world's great literature, and much of its past and current history as well, the idea of vengeance has carried with it a certain noble air, as if motivated by a force of good that somehow enables it to transcend the very violence that gave birth to it. Vengeance, sometimes thinly cloaked under the euphemism of “justice-seeking,” “defending human rights,” or righteous indignation, has an attraction, a logic that has come to hold a central position in the thinking and values of powerful states, and of the mainstream legal and moral culture. Yet the roots of the revenge response lie closer to primal feelings engendered by the trauma of violence. Violence shatters the integrity of the self, and those victimised by it often struggle to address the trauma to the self that violence brings. The desire for revenge is sometimes mobilised as a way of dealing with the wordlessness of traumatic pasts.

The tragic outcome of this is the transformation of victims into perpetrators, and the continuing cycles of violence that it breeds. Processes like the TRC can help break these cycles of violence and trauma that so often repeat themselves historically. The principle of restorative justice, though not a panacea for all the problems facing post-conflict societies, or countries in the throes of ongoing violence, when strategically implemented can help build social solidarity and establish a foundation for a shared humanity. In societies where survivors and perpetrators live in the same country, and often sometimes as neighbours, expression of remorse by perpetrators matters, and forgiving matters as an important starting point for strengthening the dialogue about restoration of human bonds and repairing the ruptures caused by past violence.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Hannah Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations' [1971], in Jerome Kohn (ed.), *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), pp. 159-89, at p. 159. It was Arendt's detection of 'thoughtlessness' in Eichmann that resulted in her decision to replace the notion of 'radical evil' with that of the 'banality of evil', which for her denotes 'the phenomenon' of evil committed by a person with no extraordinary characteristic features except 'perhaps extraordinary shallowness.... [and an] authentic inability to think'.
- 2 In a well-known passage in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt (1994) writes about the Nazi mass killer Eichmann, who was captured in Buenos Aires and tried for his Nazi crimes in Jerusalem: "That such ... thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together ... was the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem" (Arendt, 1994: 287-288). In an earlier article, I suggest that what Arendt might have picked up about Eichmann should perhaps be described as a total lack of remorseful reflection, such as when he cannot quite relate to his capturer Peter Malkin's challenge that two of Malkin's cousins were brutally killed in Auschwitz. This, to Eichmann, seems to have been quite in order since: 'They were Jews, weren't they?' See Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, 'Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization: Stories from South Africa' (2002), p. 25, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 42(1), 7-32.
- 3 Nelson Mandela, *A Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1994), p. 542.
- 4 Nomonde Calata's husband was one of four anti-apartheid activists from Cradock in the Eastern Cape of South Africa ("the Cradock Four"). They were murdered by apartheid security police and their charred bodies found in the outskirts of Cradock.
- 5 Philip Miller, *Rewind: A Cantata for Voice, Tape and Testimony*. World Premier on "Reconciliation Day" at St. Georges Cathedral in Cape Town (December 2006), and performed internationally at the following venues: US Premier at the "Celebrate Brooklyn Festival" in Prospect Park, New York (June 2007); '62 Centre for Theatre and Dance at Williams College, Massachusetts (September 2007); European debut at the Royal Festival Hall in London (May 2010); Baxter Theater in Cape Town (April 2011).
- 6 Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (Johannesburg: Random House, 2002), p. 42.
- 7 Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (London: Random House, 2000), p. 114.
- 8 This story is also discussed in a different context in my article Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, 'Remembering the Past: Nostalgia, Traumatic Memory, and the Legacy of Apartheid' (2012), *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18(3), 252-267.
- 9 Shoshana Felman & Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 204.
- 10 Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).
- 11 James Baldwin, *The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), p. 34.
- 12 Ruth Safer & Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, 'Conversation Between Ruth Safer and Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela on "Remembering the Past: Nostalgia, Traumatic Memory, and the Legacy of Apartheid"' (2014), *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 20(1), 95-99.
- 13 This story appears in Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness* (New York & Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).
- 14 See Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, 'Empathetic Repair after Mass Trauma: When Vengeance is Arrested' (2008), *European Journal of Social Theory* 11(3), 331-350.
- 15 Zeldi Le Grange, *Good Morning Mr Mandela: A Memoir* (New York: Plume Books, 2015).
- 16 "Who is Eugene de Kock Today? A Conversation with Ms. Marcia Khoza and Dr. Piet Croucamp." Event was part of the series on "Dialogue between Science & Society" co-hosted by Centre for the Study of Trauma, Forgiveness and Reconciliation and the Public Dialogue held at the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice, University of the Free State, 2 December 2013.

- 17 Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, Edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley & Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 89.
- 18 Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: From Husserl to Lyotard* (London: Routledge, 1993), 224.
- 19 This expression, “I am because we are,” has become parlance for *Ubuntu*. Yet it is impossible to translate the expression in any African language, certainly not in any of the ten of the eleven official languages in South Africa.
- 20 Xhosa is the African language mainly spoken in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape regions of South Africa.
- 21 Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (London: Random House, 2002), 34.



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