

CREATIVE APPROACHES TO RECONCILIATION

Creative Approaches to Reconciliation

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## Overview

*Why, in rebuilding war-torn communities, should precious and scarce resources be invested in the arts and cultural programs?*

In the aftermath of violent conflict, investing in artistic and cultural renewal is not likely to be at the top of the agendas of negotiators or administrators who plan for reconstruction. More likely, the arts will be seen as luxuries that must be sacrificed until basic needs for food, clothing, shelter and security are met. In addressing painful historical legacies, trials and tribunals are likely to claim far more resources than theater, poetry or exchange programs for artists.

However, recent studies in cognitive psychology suggest that rational deliberations alone are unlikely to be sufficient to rebuild inter-communal relations in the aftermath of ethnic violence. After extensive empirical research, the psychologists William Longe and Peter Brecke (2003) conclude that, at least in the case of reconciliation following civil wars, an evolutionarily determined, emotionally driven pattern, not purposeful rationality, transforms aggression into empathy and desire for revenge into desire for affiliation (p. 28).

If purposeful rationality is inadequate to the task of reconciliation, how should peacebuilding practitioners facilitate the kinds of understanding that will allow communities to rebuild relationships in the aftermath of ethnic violence? Years ago, the anthropologist, cybernetic theorist and family therapist Gregory Bateson (1972) proposed an answer to this question. In contrast to the goal-driven conscious decision-making needed for the survival of individuals, he asserted that the “knowledge” required for the survival of the group is held in the non-conscious realms of the human mind. This wisdom can be tapped through processes such as ritual and art (p. 147).

This chapter explains why the arts and cultural work are critical to promoting coexistence and reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict. It lays out theoretical frameworks for reconciliation and for the nature of aesthetic engagement that explain why the arts and cultural work should be effective resources for peace-builders. Then it offers examples of how the arts and cultural work are already being used to facilitate seven different educational tasks crucial to reconciliation, including assisting former adversaries to appreciate each other's humanity, to empathize with each other's suffering, to address injustice, and to imagine a new future.

With assistance from artists and cultural workers, many people who have survived the trauma of war are finding ways to express their suffering and give shape to experiences too horrible for words. Former enemies are rediscovering each other's humanity. Supported by the structures of rituals and the arts, they are addressing painful history and grappling with conflicting narratives in ways that help them, gradually, to build the trust they need to cooperate in the reconstruction of their societies.

As promising as these cultural and artistic initiatives are, their effectiveness could be multiplied if they were better coordinated with other civil society and governmental efforts and if resources were available to assess their efficacy and ensure their sustainability. Artists who contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilders who incorporate cultural work in their practice could benefit from opportunities to share their learning with colleagues and to reflect on the ethical questions that inevitably arise in their work. This chapter concludes with a set of policy recommendations about how the conciliatory potential of the arts can be realized more fully.

In order to understand the central role that cultural work and the arts can play in promoting coexistence and reconciliation, it is necessary to understand the overlap between the kinds of capacities that are nourished through aesthetic engagement and those that are required

for coexistence and reconciliation. In the next section, then, we will consider the nature of aesthetic engagement as well as the distinct qualities of learning it can facilitate. Following that, we will explore reconciliation through educational and psychological lenses, highlighting what learning must be accomplished and what capacities need to be restored by those who have suffered in and survived violent conflicts.

### Distinctive Qualities of Aesthetic Engagement

The range of activities indicated by the phrase ‘the arts and cultural work’ is very broad. The arts include both oral and written literary forms, narrative and poetry, fiction and non-fiction. They include vocal and instrumental musical works, both composed and improvised, solo and ensemble. The domain of ‘the arts’ embraces drawing and painting, photography, movies and three-dimensional works as well as performative modes such as scripted and improvisational theater and dance. Cultural work cultivates and harvests the knowledge embedded within collective folk expressions like embroidery patterns, lullabies, and folk architecture. These collective expressive forms are densely packed with meaning, having been “polished” by centuries of transmission from one generation to the next.

The art forms we wish to consider as resources for coexistence and reconciliation, therefore, include both paintings to be viewed by solitary museum-goers and the participatory rituals of dance, drumming and masks; mass market movies and booklets of poems written by children in refugee camps; staged theatrical productions and improvised scenes acted out in a dialogue group. People engage in these forms as creators, performers, audience members, producers and critics. In some cases art and cultural projects focus on the process of creating,

with minimal concern for the product. In other cases, it is the beauty and power of the produced works that make them effective resources for peace.

Engaging with the arts can generate, for both individuals and collectivities, for creators and spectators, special qualities of attention and response -- such as disinterestedness, committed participation, meta-cognitive alertness, receptivity, and blissful serenity. These qualities of attention and response afford unique opportunities for learning, empathy, reflexivity, creativity, innovation and experimentation. The engagement with a work of art or cultural form that gives rise to these special qualities of attention and response can best be understood within the framework of aesthetic experience.

*What is unique about aesthetic experience that allows it to become such a fertile ground for learning and for creativity?* There are several factors, each of which has important implications for the educational work associated with coexistence and reconciliation.

First, aesthetic experiences engage us on both sensory and cognitive levels. Rituals, for instance, involve people bodily in seeing colors and images, hearing sounds, tasting spices, feeling textures and temperatures – all within formal structures that are imbued with narrative references and cultural meanings. In the visual arts, symbols convey meaning on many levels simultaneously, in part through literal representation, but also through color, texture, shape and composition. Even forms such as abstract paintings and instrumental music link our senses with our rational faculties as we become aware of the ways in which we perceive. In other words, we see ourselves seeing, notice ourselves hearing, and become aware of ourselves as makers of meaning.

Human beings tend to find the inter-animation of our sensory and rational faculties especially enlivening, causing states of alertness and awareness that are infused with feeling. These qualities of presence can be harnessed to address some of the key educational tasks and challenges of coexistence and reconciliation. For instance, to understand meaningfully our own or another's suffering requires knowledge that is both cognitive and heartfelt. We must be simultaneously engaged, but detached enough not to be overwhelmed by the intensity of our own responses. The arts can be crafted to invite just such responses: alert calmness, engaged detachment, and awareness that is laden with feeling. In addition, the arts can help us become critically aware of the symbolic structures through which we compose meaning. This level of meta-cognition is often necessary also in the processes of reconciliation, as former enemies reassess the symbols embedded within enmity discourses.

A second defining feature of aesthetic transactions is that they involve us with forms that are bounded in space and/or time. A framed picture, for instance, and a theatrical event with a clear beginning and end, each provides boundaries within which viewers can focus intensively. The formal qualities of works of art both invite us and support us to open ourselves to depths of feelings, in ways that are much more difficult in the unframed, on-going flow of life. The bounded quality and formal structures of artworks and ritual can provide support for survivors of violence to confront and work through painful history that might otherwise be too overwhelming to face.

In addition to simultaneously engaging us rationally and sensually with forms bounded in space and time, aesthetic forms acknowledge and mediate certain tensions – for instance between innovation and tradition. Human beings seem to appreciate both

exemplary forms of a type or genre, and also a certain amount of innovation. Most works that engage us aesthetically follow the conventions of a genre or tradition, but with some new element, an original turn. In some cases, artists defy such conventions – but grasping their meaning nevertheless depends on awareness of rules even as they are broken. The degree to which innovation is embraced, or to which tradition is upheld, is one of the ways in which different cultural groups express their distinct aesthetics.

However, neither random idiosyncratic expression, with no reference to any tradition, nor completely uniform expression, with no room for interpretation or originality is likely to evoke the qualities of response known as aesthetic. Artists can work with the tension of innovation and tradition – as well as other tensions, such as randomness and rigidity, and the impulses of the individual and the imperatives of collectives -- to construct forms that enliven but do not overwhelm the perceptual capacities of their audiences. In contexts of oppression and violence, when people's perceptual capacities may have been blunted, forms of expression that are in themselves enlivening can create conditions for learning and communication. In the aftermath of violence, when people face the challenge of reconstructing their lives and adapting to change, the arts can provide support by integrating new ideas into forms that are familiar, or by exemplifying how even innovative forms can express longstanding values.

So aesthetic experiences arise in the interface between human beings and expressive forms because of the simultaneous engagement of rational and sensual faculties; because of the intensity of engagement made possible by the bounded nature of formal structures; and because the forms themselves avoid certain extremes, such as utter disregard for, or utter

allegiance to, conventions. Taken together, these defining features of aesthetic experience allow for a kind of reciprocity between the sensibilities of perceivers, on the one hand, and the objects of their perception. This reciprocity can most readily be understood as a midway point between two other kinds of transactions between perceivers and objects of perception: analysis and propaganda. In analysis, the perceiver "controls" the object by investigating it in relation to pre-existing categories, or by breaking it down to be examined. In propaganda, the expressive form has been designed to manipulate, seduce or coerce the perceiver.

By contrast, in the case of aesthetic apprehension, the perceiver and perceived are equally weighted. Expressive forms are designed with perceivers' sensibilities in mind; and the perceiver opens him- or her-self to the resonances and reverberations evoked by the object or event. In other words, when a work of art works, *as art*, it is because the sensibilities of the viewer or listener are anticipated in the expression itself. It is this calibration of the form of expression with the sensibilities of the viewer that gives rise to the perception of beauty; and it is through beauty that a work of art issues its invitation.

It is by virtue of this reciprocity that aesthetic transactions are inherently other-regarding. They involve an awareness of the other, a sensitivity akin to respect. This quality of aesthetic experience alone makes cultural work and the arts especially valuable in situations of enmity in when groups act with utter disregard for the well-being of each other. When individuals have been tortured, when homes and centers of community life have been destroyed by war, when the dignity of an ethnic group has been assaulted through longstanding oppression, the arts can remind people of what it is like to be acknowledged and respected, and, in time, to acknowledge and respect. As aesthetic



engagement enlivens perceptive capacities, it can support people in confronting painful history, assist communities in grappling with change, and infuse the sensibilities of respect into relationships that have been defined by violence and oppression.

### Coexistence and Reconciliation: Educational and Psychological Perspectives

‘Coexistence’ and ‘reconciliation’ are two concepts still in the process of being defined. They are frameworks for addressing violent conflict that emphasize the qualities of relationships between former adversaries. While structural and institutional changes are recognized as critical, they are understood both to contribute to and emerge from changes in relationships.

Imagine a continuum that displays interpersonal and intercommunal relationships according to the degree to which the parties to a conflict acknowledge and act upon their interdependence. On one end we might find complete disregard for the other and thorough denial of interdependence as in intercommunal relationships of war, apartheid and slavery, and interpersonal relationships of deceit, manipulation and violence. On the other end of the spectrum we find not a conflict-free utopia, but rather cooperative intercommunal relationships, where decisions are made through democratic or consensual processes, and where conflicts are addressed proactively through agreed-upon procedures and structures. On the interpersonal level, this end of the spectrum is home to functional families, friendships, and fellowships – relationships in which the well-being of each member is understood to depend upon the well-being of all. It is not devoid of conflict, but conflicts are engaged proactively and productively.

Coexistence, as the term is used in this chapter, refers to a threshold point on this continuum where individuals or groups shift from reciprocal hatred and injury to rudimentary, even grudging respect. It also reaches across the spectrum to circumstances where individuals

welcome cooperation, understanding and interdependence. Because inter-group relations can cascade backward in the direction of intolerance and violence, sustainable coexistence requires ongoing work to nourish the attitudes, values and capacities people need to strengthen respect, understanding and cooperation over time.

Reconciliation can be understood in relation to the same continuum. It refers to a set of deep processes designed to transform relationships of hatred and mistrust into relationships of trust and trustworthiness. These processes involve former enemies acknowledging each other's humanity, empathizing with each other's suffering, addressing and redressing past injustice, and sometimes expressing remorse, granting forgiveness, and offering reparations. Reconciliation reflects a shift in attention from blaming the other to taking responsibility for the attitudes and actions of one's self and one's own community.

The precise activities that comprise coexistence and reconciliation work, and the order in which they are undertaken, must be developed in particular contexts, taking into account the nature of the preceding alienation or violence, the trajectory and stage of the conflict, the individuals and cultures to be brought into relationship, the leadership resources available, and the larger systems within which the conflict and peacebuilding processes are embedded. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that processes of coexistence and reconciliation almost always involve former adversaries in culturally-inflected versions of at least some of the following tasks, not necessarily undertaken in this order:

- 1) Appreciating each other's humanity and respecting each other's culture;
- 2) Telling and listening to each other's stories, and developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understandings of identity
- 3) Acknowledging harms, telling truths and mourning losses

- 4) Empathizing with each other's suffering
- 5) Acknowledging and redressing injustices
- 6) Expressing remorse, repenting, apologizing; letting go of bitterness, forgiving
- 7) Imagining and substantiating a new future, including agreements about how future conflicts will be engaged constructively.

All of these processes involve learning about one's own community and the other. They involve learning new skills and expanding the meaning of concepts, often "un-learning" what was formerly believed to be true. Taken together, they represent a daunting array of tasks and challenges, especially considering that they must be undertaken in ways that reach deeply into the person and broadly throughout society.

Furthermore, in many instances, widespread ethnic violence and long-standing oppressions can leave people and communities with insufficient capacities to undertake this work. People are likely to be disoriented and confused, often having lost loved ones, the places that sheltered them, and the webs of relationships that gave meaning, texture and ethical anchoring to their lives. People's abilities both to listen and to express themselves so others can understand are often impaired. Along with bombed-out villages and desecrated shrines, capacities to discern when trust is warranted, to respond to problems creatively and to imagine a different future have often been destroyed. Those who have perpetrated abuses or are implicated in other's suffering (even through omissions) may be straight-jacketed by inexpressible shame, fear and self-loathing.

Each of the seven sections that follow illustrates how art and cultural work projects can be crafted to overcome the after effects of violence, facilitating necessary learning while

nourishing and restoring capacities required for coexistence and reconciliation.

“Art for Life’s Sake<sup>1</sup>”: Finding Common Humanity

Violent conflict is almost always associated with enemies’ demonization and dehumanization of each other. The intensity of enemies’ resistance to perceiving each other’s full humanity can be explained, in part, by the developmental processes through which children come to identify with ethnic symbols. According to Vamik Volkan (1990), at a very early age, children learn to externalize wholly good feelings onto the symbols of their own ethnic, cultural and/or national groups; and wholly bad feelings onto the symbols of the groups that are adversaries or enemies. To some degree, therefore, re-assessing the humanity of one’s enemy involves acknowledging the shadow sides and complexities of one’s own community as well. (p. 33)

The coexistence field increasingly acknowledges that to be sustainable, especially in contexts of power asymmetry, coexistence work cannot be limited to helping adversaries appreciate their common humanity; they must also grapple with questions of justice, inequities and historical grievances. (Abu-Nimer, 2001, p. 235). We will explore how the arts and cultural work contribute to these aspects of conciliation in subsequent sections of the chapter. Here, we focus on projects that assist former enemies to appreciate each other’s humanity. This can be a critical step. It can convince people to pursue their grievances without descending into cycles of violence; it can also be the first step in acknowledging that a former enemy is as deserving of justice and security as are members of one’s own community.

Folk arts, in particular, often embody the spirit and the aspirations of groups in terms other than national and political allegiances . For the most part, folk expressions are accessible

across cultural differences. There are many powerful examples of how the arts and cultural work can be crafted to remind people of the humanity of their adversaries. In the Middle East, for instance, folklorist Simon Lichman encourages Palestinian and Israeli children, teachers, parents and grandparents to discover their shared humanity through folklore projects structured around intergenerational and cross-cultural sharing of children's games (like hopscotch) and foodways (like pickle-making ) (Cohen, 2003, p. 276). In the former Yugoslavia, Bosnians, Croatians and Serbs are learning each other's folkdances (Burns, Cynthia, Laura McGrew, and Ilija Todorovic 2003), and projects in other regions have focused on folk arts such as needlework. (Cohen 1994; Allara, Martin and Mtshiza, 2003.)

In Burundi, where hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives in decades-long ethnic violence, Search for Common Ground uses music, dance and the production of radio programs of all sorts to counteract dehumanizing stereotypes and to strengthen relationships among Hutu, Tutsi and Twa people. In July of 2002, Search organized the Sangwe Festival, building on the success of a cultural radio production of the same name. The four-day event featured five hundred musicians, two hundred fifty dancers, fifty actors and six poets, who came from all corners of Burundi, as well as from Burundian communities in Congo, Rwanda and beyond. They performed in every section of the city, and on the final day more than 10,000 Burundians of all ages and from all walks of life crowded into the football stadium to hear music groups, comedy troupes and other performance artists (*The Spirit of Sangwe*).

Among the highlights of the Sangwe festival was a workshop series led by the Ghanaian master drummer, choreographer and teacher, Nicholas Djanie, fondly known as 'Africa'. He led several sessions of a drumming workshop for Hutu and Tutsi youth – ranging in age from twelve to twenty years old. “Within two days the group was transformed – from individual boys playing

on individual drums to their own internal rhythms... to a drum 'orchestra' who played to one common rhythm. Along the way, they learned to listen to each other; to respect each other's various levels of drumming skills; and to respond to each other using the language of music. The metaphor was clear" (S. Koscis, personal communication, May 28, 2003.)<sup>2</sup>

Djanie describes the power of the drum in this way: "Mostly, we spend our lives in two places, in the past and in the future, and we forget about the present. When you drum and sing together, you are only in the present, where the person standing in front of you is the only thing you have in mind." (Marlin-Curiel and Cohen, 2004.)

In African contexts, the use of the drum to assist former enemies to discover their common humanity draws its power in part from the role of the drum in African cosmology. According to Dona Marimba Richards (1993), a scholar of African aesthetic theory, dancing and drumming, "inseparable modalities," are the media through which African people express and experience the most complex, the deepest aspects of African philosophy. ...The power of the African drum is inescapable. In unison the drums become compelling, forceful. This is no academic, cerebral exercise; neither is it peripheral or detached. It is rather visceral and involved...The drum translates to us the rhythm of the universe and the dance transports us to a phenomenal dimension in which we become a part of the connecting thread that binds all being, thereby making the universe whole (p. 68)<sup>3</sup>.

The Sangwe Festival of Burundi illustrates several principles useful in crafting cultural and artistic initiatives to promote coexistence and reconciliation: 1) local cultural traditions contain powerful resources for coexistence and reconciliation efforts; 2) in cases where communities' discourses have become infused with the dynamics of the conflict, non-linguistic

forms can facilitate communication more readily than dialogue alone; 3) large audiences can be reached when different organizations collaborate on major events, and when performances are broadcast over radio and television.

### Stories: The Importance of Telling, Listening and Narrative Complexity

In this section, we will explore a second set of educational tasks central to restoring construction relationships between former adversaries: the telling, listening to and revising of stories. Through sharing stories, former enemies come to understand each other's experiences, the meaning each community attaches to historical events, and their moral sensibilities. Revising stories is critical to coexistence work because collective narratives are closely linked with social identities. To change identities we must revise our stories, and revising stories can create social, emotional and intellectual spaces for more nuanced understandings of identity. Violence and oppression, however, can strip people of their capacities to listen and to express.

#### *Capacities for expression*

Life-shattering traumas – the uprooting of communities, the brutal death of loved ones, sexual assault -- can defy language. Traumatic events, though real, take place outside of the normal categories that allow them to be linked with other experiences, comprehended, and recounted. Dori Laub (1992), a psychologist who works with survivors of the Holocaust, explains the ambivalence they often feel about bearing witness:

[The trauma survivor] profoundly fears such knowledge, shrinks away from it and is apt to close off at any moment...Such knowledge dissolves all barriers, breaks all boundaries of time and place, of self and subjectivity. ..Speakers about trauma on

some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to--and of listening to themselves... While silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath. To *not* return from this silence is the rule rather than the exception (p. 58).

Limits on verbal expression are frequently imposed also by situations of oppression. Whether exploitation is based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation or other category of difference, oppressive structures can be sustained with minimal overt violence precisely because the suppressed groups often adopt the language (and the ideology) of the dominant group. The oppressed group comes to perceive the world, including their images of themselves, through the linguistic categories of the oppressor (Bartky, 1975).

“To exist, humanly,” writes the liberatory educator Paulo Freire (1995 [1970]) “is to name the world, to change it.” (p. 69). Very often, when promoting coexistence and reconciliation in contexts of long-standing oppression, those in the subordinate group must be supported to define their own experiences and re-name themselves.

Many cultural and art projects are devoted to amplifying the voices of those who are unheard. In the United States, for instance, the noted cultural worker and community educator Jane Sapp supports African-American teenagers in telling their stories and articulating their visions for the future. She uses the community chorus as a format where young people can learn the history and culture of their people, feel a sense of pride in culture, and compose songs about their lives (Cohen, 2003, p. 278). In Sri Lanka, Dr. Kandasamy Sithamparanathan’s Theater Arts Group stages extended rituals to support Tamil people traumatized by ethnic violence. They



dance and act out their terrors and in order to reclaim their voices and engage in political dialogue about their future (p. 272).

### *Capacities to listen*

The sharing of stories requires capacities to listen as well as to speak. Attentive listening is one way in which former enemies can begin to communicate their respect for each other. The impact of listening, however, depends in large measure on the quality of presence of a listener: one can listen with trust or skepticism, with reluctance or enthusiasm, with hostility or reverence, with superficiality or genuine curiosity. It is possible to listen merely for information, or more keenly, seeking to understand the feelings that surround words and infuse them with meaning. Receptiveness that is active but not intrusive can be the key to helping those who suffer begin to heal.

Listening in the aftermath of violence and in contexts of oppression involves receptivity to silences, to what has been left unspoken, as well as attention to what is expressed overtly. After periods of violence, receptive capacities unfortunately are all too often undermined by fear and guilt. The capacity to listen sensitively, manifested unevenly across communities even under the best of circumstances, almost always needs to be restored or enhanced.

A whole variety of artistic forms and processes can be mobilized to supplement or restore these diminished capacities. For instance, the defenses that former enemies have against hearing each other's stories can be mitigated to some degree when those stories are mediated through poems, novels, films, and exhibition, all forms that are designed to invite receptivity. Oral history projects are a particular kind of cultural work that can be crafted to enhance people's capacities to listen. As community members learn to conduct oral history interviews, they can be invited to become more aware of themselves as listeners. The interview itself can become an

opportunity to practice suspending judgments, or at least focusing on the other. In my own practice in the United States and in the Middle East, I have noticed that both teenagers and adults report enjoying a greater degree of choice about the quality of listening they bring to an encounter as a result of training in oral history methods (Cohen, 1983; 1994).

*The importance of narrative complexity:*

When stories from enemy communities are presented in juxtaposition to each other in an exhibit, a play, a quilt, a mural, former adversaries can be inspired to re-think their own stories in more nuanced and subtle ways. Explaining the importance of the capacity to tolerate ‘narrative complexity’ Sara Cobb (2003), argues that especially in situations of reciprocal ethnic violence, adversaries become trapped in the internal integrity of their stories.

Unless these stories are transformed or evolved, they retain their coherence, collecting ‘data’ that confirm the myths as events unfold. If there is to be an end to the cycle of violence, if there is to be an opening for building new relationships, if there is to be an opportunity to anchor a new civil society...these myths must lose their totalitarian grip; they must be opened to new information, new plots, new character roles, and new themes. Yet it is precisely because narrative in the form of origin myth provides the basis for identity that these myths are so resistant to change and hence to conflict resolution.... Personal identities flourish where multiple kinds of narrative performance are permitted – specifically movements between narrative positions as characters, as narrators and as listeners (pp. 295-297).

*Playback Theatre and the communicative capacities required for coexistence:*

All of these communicative capacities – telling stories, listening, revising narratives, and

embracing complexity – are nourished by Playback Theatre (PT), an improvisational form that incorporates the ritual, aesthetic and social dimensions of performance. Founded in 1975 by Jonathan Fox, PT is now practiced in over 50 countries, including in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands and Japan, and North and South America.

PT aims to provide public spaces for the creative communication of private experience, thereby lessening silence and (re)building a cooperative community. A trained ensemble of actors and musicians invites audience members to share a story, feeling or hope. Their responses are enacted on the spot, allowing tellers to feel heard and respected as the essence of their stories are performed for the audience. The process invites intensive listening. Its keen sense of ritual enables people to tell and receive stories, including those that might otherwise remain locked up in silent cages of shame, confusion or fear.

PT provides precisely the sort of movement that Sara Cobb calls for in her theory of narrative complexity. Audience members become tellers, then watch as their story is re-enacted, and then become listeners to others' stories. Actors first are listeners, then performers, and sometimes, themselves, sit in the teller's chair. As one Playback practitioner put it, "To tell is one step, involving their own use of the language available to them. Then to see the narrative expanded, through a deepened use of language, characterization, sound and movement, allows them to gain another kind of understanding, as they apprehend elements and aspects of the story which they have not seen before" (as cited in Good, 2003).

Lesley Yalen, a writer and peace-builder formerly with Search for Common Ground, described her first encounter with PT during a training workshop for SFCG staff:

*Our group consisted of about fifty conflict resolution and coexistence practitioners from*

*around the world – Burundi, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Macedonia, Ukraine, the Middle East, the United States. The theater troupe consisted of five actors. The actors asked if anyone had a story to share. A young man from Burundi who did coexistence and reconciliation work with youth in Bujumbura raised his hand. He came up and sat in the “storyteller’s seat” next to one of the members of the troupe. The conductor asked him, “How does your story begin?”*

*He told us about the work he had done to bring peace and reconciliation to his country. He talked about the delicate and tenuous nature of the relationships that had been built between Hutu and Tutsi. He told us about the day when there were rumors that the market in Bujumbura had been set on fire and that it was an ethnically motivated act and another round of conflict was likely to break out. He said that he wanted to check it out for himself; he was afraid that all of his hard work was collapsing before his eyes. Almost breathless, he described how getting to the market was very difficult because parts of the city were blocked off. When he arrived at the market, it was in flames. His mother called him on his cellular phone and cried, “The market is burning, the market is burning. Come home! There will be trouble!”*

*However, he was determined to learn what was really going on and eventually discovered that the fire was not set as an act of ethnic hatred: some thugs with no political agenda had set it. Immediately he began calling the network of Hutu and Tutsi with whom he had been working. One by one, he spread the word: “The Hutu did not do this. The Tutsi did not do this. This is nothing more than a common crime. Do not retaliate.” To both sides, in a frenzied state of urgency, he did his best to stop the rumors’ dangers of ethnic nationalism.*

*While the young man was telling his story, the conductor from the theatre troupe listened intently, prompting him with only one question: “And how does your story end?” The young man responded: “My group of Hutu and Tutsi youth did not fall apart.” After he finished speaking,*

*without any consultation, the theater troupe began to dramatize his story. The actors portrayed this story with a beautiful blend of literalism and abstraction. It was literal enough that we recognized everything we had just heard – the emotion, tone, pitch and events. We saw the whole process, from the reconciliation work to the news of the fire to the frantic search for truth to the panicked call from the mother to the realization of the truth and finally to the urgent attempt to stem the rising tide of anger and to stop the cycle of violence before it began.*

*The dramatization was also abstract in that it took the man's story to a deeper and more symbolic level. We recognized him in their portrayal, although he was not played by a man for the entire skit. We recognized the market and the city, though they only had five people with which to construct it. They did things symbolically – focusing on the essences of characters and events – but were true to the emotions he expressed. The audience was brought into the scene as the fire. On cue, we raised our arms and made whooshing and crackling noises as one of the actor ran among us in fear and despair.*

*I am sure that everyone in the room was deeply moved. The most powerful part of this experience was observing my Burundian colleague as he watched the actors depict his story. He sat on the edge of his chair the entire time. His eyes were wide open and his mouth agape. He looked completely in awe. Afterward, when they asked him how it had been for him to watch their performance, he nodded his head and said: "You got it, exactly."*

*It was amazing that by listening, these actors were able to symbolize and artistically express his experience for him. They were able to dramatize it in a way that did not retraumatize him or call his decisions into question. Rather, they validated his experience and allowed the rest of us to experience a day in the life of a peacemaker in Burundi. . (Lesley Yalen, personal communication, 2002.)*

Many members of the international PT community, some of whom are trained in psychodrama, help survivors of violence constructively shape their experiences into stories. Jonathan Fox, for instance, has written movingly about his work on the ground in Burundi, where he coached a mixed group of Hutu and Tutsi Playback students to stay present to the tragic story of one of their own members. (Jonathan Fox, 2003) In workshops he leads in countries around the world, he is attuned to the importance of ritual in enhancing the complexity with which communities hold their own stories. For instance, one story, told in a workshop in Israel, allowed its audience to “regard the pressing social issue of terrorist violence from a fresh perspective, that of the terrorist himself.” (Jonathan Fox, 1999, p. 124):

*At Ben Gurion University in Ber Sheva, in a class for community workers, I led a PT demonstration for about 40 Jewish Israelis. The second teller told about blowing up a police barracks in Argentina during the time of fascism there. She had to escape that night, and came to Israel. The ostensible focus for her story was not the bombing per se, but that she was not able to say good-bye to her mother. When I asked her if anyone had died, she said "ten."*

*The audience actors enacted the story quite fully, including the teller sneaking out of her parents' house for the last time, placing and detonating the bomb, and getting on a plane. Afterwards, emotions were very strong, especially since there had been a recent bus bombing in Jerusalem, in which a number of children had been killed. I invited members of the audience to share their feelings about the story. Fortunately, three experienced*

*Playback practitioners had come from Tel Aviv to observe the workshop. With their help we were able to represent and honor the audience members' responses through brief enactments called fluid sculptures. (Jonathan Fox, personal communication, April, 2004.)*

Playback practitioners in several regions are currently in the process of exploring and assessing the potential of the form to support people from opposite sides of an ethnic conflict to tell their stories, to listen to each other, and to expand the narrative repertoire that has come to define relations between communities. In the United States, for instance, a Philadelphia-based company Playback for Change has been working to bring the resources of PT to activist efforts to transform racism and other forms of domination. Pamela Freeman, one of the leaders of Playback for Change, suggests that PT can be useful in anti-racist work precisely because the form resonates with the oral traditions prevalent in many communities of color and because the embodied nature of the learning makes PT's impact more lasting than many other forms of community organizing and education.

According to its founding document, Playback for Change is animated by a democratic and conciliatory vision:

*We in Playback Theatre invite all people to tell their stories, and believe that all stories are meaningful and important. We in Playback for Change recognize that some individuals and communities are heard more than others, both in mainstream U.S. culture, and in our Playback work so far. Our vision therefore, is to live up to the dream of Playback Theatre by creating a multiracial, multicultural, and intergenerational*

*company of performers who are committed to doing the work necessary to be able to fully hear and respectfully honor all stories, and to making the teller's chair truly accessible to all tellers...*

*We call to mind the Truth and Reconciliation Process that South Africa undertook when dismantling Apartheid, and the healing power that came from telling and witnessing the truth of the atrocities that happened in that country during its racist past. How for example, might the U.S. be different if we, as a nation, could have stopped for such a process, in the 1860's? And not only have the horrific stories of our collective past been watered down, but so have the stories of resistance and rebellion, the stories that help us to remain hopeful and empowered to make change. We know, for example, about Harriet Tubman and her part in resisting slavery, but can we name any of the white people who also struggled against slavery, and do we know what the consequences were for them if they were caught? Our belief is that our collective dream of "liberty and justice for all" cannot be realized until we, as a nation, confront and heal our past, and that Playback Theatre has an integral part to play in that process. (Cocks, Freeman and Halley, 2003.)*

Playback for Change is bringing its vision to life by composing a multi-racial company to facilitate the sharing of stories of privilege, internalized racism, alliance-building and racial dynamics of all kinds. After preparing themselves through trainings and by sharing sensitive stories with each other, members of the troupe presented a series that began with performances first for whites only, and then for people of color only, and culminated with a show “People of Color and White People Working With Each Other,” attended by over 250 people. The



performances created opportunities for rarely told stories to be articulated and heard. For instance, in a story about internalized racism, an African-American woman told about a Black waitress who refused to wait on her. In a social context in which the prevailing narrative of Korean-Black relations is one of mistrust and fear, an Asian man told a story about how he intervened on a subway to help a Black woman who was being harassed by a Korean man. “You could see people being moved by the story,” Freeman reported. Earlier in that same performance, when an Asian woman troupe member introduced herself, she said, “When I arrived in the United States, I was Japanese. Once here, I became a person of color.” In keeping with supportive African-American styles of interactive participation, audience members “spoke back” to her, Freeman said. And “when she played parts as a Black woman, people gave her a standing ovation.” (Freeman, personal communication, April 2004).

PT holds great promise for the work of coexistence and reconciliation because both its formal structures and the educational processes through which its practitioners are mentored allow painful stories to be both told and received in their full complexity. Oppressive dynamics can be acknowledged, but within a framework that focuses more on the potential for transformation than on blame. The form itself engages the capacities and embodies the ethical sensibilities required for coexistence and reconciliation. PT is creating spaces where the conflicts, paradoxes and possibilities of community life can be acknowledged and apprehended in a new light.

PT practitioners in several regions of the world are in the early stages of adapting their form to intentional social change efforts, and, to their credit, they are grappling with ethical questions that emerge from PT’s power. (Dennis, 2003.) Playback Theatre, in its various forms, illustrates several principles that can be useful in designing conciliatory interventions: 1) the

rituals aspect of events can be crafted to create spaces that invite deep listening and transformations in interpretation; 2) processes can be constructed that facilitate people's ability to experience the same narrative from a variety of perspectives and to become meta-cognitively aware of the interpretive process; and 3) artist-peacebuilders benefit from training that allows them to constructively facilitate the sharing of potentially explosive stories.

### Mourning Losses

Understanding the suffering of one's own group--and mourning its losses--can be a critical step toward coexistence and reconciliation. As Joseph Montville (1989) points out, "the psychological work of grieving is often required before victims can look to the future rather than try to recoup past losses" (p.305). If groups or individuals fail to mourn, their self-esteem is bound up with images of what has been lost; circumstances which they then try to recoup, often through violent aggression. If the circumstances of the losses generate intensive anger, rage can interfere with the ability to complete the cycle of mourning, in turn leading to more violence. In addition, losses that haven't been mourned may also be passed on to future generations – part of the intergenerational transmission of trauma (Bar-On, 1996).

Who is to engage in this mourning, and how? To some extent, each loss requires its own unique response, taking into account the cultures involved, the scope and outcome of the violence, the proximity in time to the traumatic events, and whether the inequities persist. Reconciliation requires mourning not only from victims and survivors, but perpetrators as well. Drawing on the work of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (*The inability to mourn: principles of collective behavior*, 1975), for instance, the German theologian Bjorn Krondorfer (1995) writes that:

In their hurry to rebuild, Germans forgot to address their own moral and human failures and to mourn their victims... The German inability to mourn may have been the main source of the continuous presence of anti-Jewish sentiments in postwar Germany. A process of mourning is essential for gaining a realistic understanding of one's family history and a nation's past and for establishing a reasonably healthy identity. It may also help to build up caring relationships with the descendants of the victims of the Holocaust... (p. 32)

Resistances to remembering and to mourning are completely understandable. In different ways, memories of trauma can be shattering both for those who were victims/survivors and for those who committed acts of violation themselves. These resistances also affect those who bear the legacy of victims or perpetrators, or both, as Krondorfer (1995) suggests in his work. *How can such memories serve healing rather than exacerbate trauma? How can people in mourning confront issues of accountability without becoming locked in the narrow constraints of victim/victimizer discourses?*

As they address losses experienced in many regions of the world in the aftermath of war, genocide, ethnic conflict and displacement, artists wrestle with these questions. A recent initiative called 'The Legacy Project' was created to foster a global dialogue about past tragedies through exhibitions, publications, programs, and an extensive website. The organization's website welcomes a general audience to view virtual exhibits from some twenty-two 'legacy events' including African Conflicts, the Armenian Genocide, the India-Pakistan Partition, September 11, Sri Lanka, the Irish Troubles and the Vietnamese-American War. (The Legacy Project, n.d.) As a part of the international Legacy Project initiative, a Phnom Penh cultural organization called 'Reyum' invited artists throughout Cambodia to consider the inheritance of the absences left in society as a result of the genocide during the Khmer Rouge period. "How do

these missing generations affect the living? What traces of the dead come to haunt the present? How can the reasons for their absence be understood and set to some kind of rest by those who come after? As time goes on, how is their absence and its causes remembered or forgotten, repressed or made into myth?" (Muan and Ly, 2000).

The curators of the exhibition, Reyum's co-founders Ly Daravuth and Ingrid Muan (2000), first assessed images that were already being produced in the country. They discovered "an overwhelming number of paintings of the 'pretty' and the famous. Repeated Angkor Vats hang next to idyllic tropical landscapes and pictures of scantily clad young girls." Ly and Muan (2000) wondered whether the trauma was too close for its representation to be possible:

In the period of stunned numbness which follows a terrible shock, repetitions of the most obvious beauties (monuments and maidens) crowd out the space of thoughts. Through a kind of mechanical blankness, the present is filled with a 'beauty' that is surface deep, covering over all that one supposes is still felt and remembered by those who paint such idyllic scenes.....

Hoping to give a better legacy to their own children, they make a common and concerted effort to edit out horror in favor of the future. Such an approach is understandable as it remains questionable when we consider that trauma lingers in less obvious places. One cannot simply erase a legacy which permeates the present at so many levels and in so many ways. Current society is steeped in behaviors and practices which speak to all that runs beneath its newly reconstructed surface. Violence, sudden anger, resentment, self-interest, the standardization of cruelty and disdain towards others, all these habits of the present speak to something 'unsettled.' (Introduction, exhibition catalogue, pages unnumbered).

The intention of these curators was to create a “non-threatening arena” in which images of the painful past could begin to come to light in productive ways. Cambodian artists responded to their invitation with artwork Ly and Muan (2000) helpfully categorize as: 1) testimony, 2) the refusal to testify; 3) documents of the present; 4) symbols of detachment; and 5) doubt and the refusal of reverence. Each category of representation offered a possible approach to the exhibit’s theme, but also raised dilemmas and questions.

Ly Daravuth himself contributed to the exhibition. His installation is called ‘The Messengers’ and consists in part of images of children, who at first might appear to be victims of the Khmer Rouge. In the small room dedicated to the installation, a visitor can also hear recordings of Khmer Rouge songs. At the end, the viewer comes to realize that the faces are actually young cadres, recruited into the Khmer Rouge army, and images of contemporary children, distressed to appear as though they emerge from the same era as the photographs of the young cadres. Ly and Muan (2000) comment: “Such works interrogate our own process of interpretation as much as they do the content of what is presented, making evident how much of what we believe depends on the context of presentation, the visual styles mobilized, and the pre-conceptions we bring to our viewing” (Introduction, exhibition catalogue, pages unnumbered).

In reflecting back on the exhibit, Muan and Ly wrote:

Given the fragmented and scared state of life in Cambodia today – and the repression of so much that needs to be worked through – we have become interested in a kind of open indirectness as a tactic. For example, Daravuth’s piece in the Legacy of Absence exhibition included standardized versions of what happened to every Cambodian during the Khmer Rouge regime. Local visitors to Reyum however repeatedly asked us if we

could make CDs of the songs for them to take home. Some of these furtive requests seemed tinged with a nostalgia for that time. Open, non-dogmatic, filled with various interpretations and standpoints of the Khmer Rouge era, the very ambiguity of the exhibition and its refusal to judge these multiple views seemed to allow these visitors to begin to dare to recast themselves, as, perhaps, former Khmer Rouge. For who were the Khmer Rouge if everyone in Cambodia today publicly claims to have been their victim? (I. Maun and Ly, D., unpublished application to the Brandeis International Fellowship Program, May 30, 2003).

Ingrid Muan and Ly Daravuth acknowledge that “a terrible legacy is tricky to present:”

Images that seem documentary can slide into scenes of obscene exhibition for the benefit of distant visitor voyeurs. Pictures and memories can be taken up for other purposes, tinted by other contexts, removed from the sites in which their testimony had meaning. Events which might seem necessary to picture from afar can simply re-traumatize those who view them from too recent a perspective. For the young who come after and have no direct connection to such terrible events, the images of what happened can become the vocabulary by which to construct that seductive position of ‘I am Cambodian and therefore a victim’. We hope that the images presented in our exhibition do none of the above, but rather open a space for reflection that will perhaps be one small step in coming to terms with the terrible events of Cambodia’s recent past. What it means for Cambodia to mourn can only be determined when what has happened is taken on as the individual responsibility of everyone. (I. Maun and Ly, D.,2000).

Memories of trauma, especially in contexts like Cambodia where many of those who survived did so by serving or joining the tyrannical regime, are ethically and psychologically

complex. The Legacy of Absence exhibition at Reyum illustrates how the arts can provide an opening for people to begin to face such a past – to express themselves, to grapple with their feelings, to acknowledge that which has been unbearable to name. Unlike the language of everyday discourse, or the conclusions of a tribunal or commission, art symbols function on many levels at the same time, matching the ambiguity of people’s memories. Within the boundaries of a painting’s frame or the walls of the gallery, people can find some support to begin to confront the feelings, issues and questions that comprise their responses to the painful past. An exhibition can invite people to become aware of themselves not only as bearers of untold stories, but as potential witnesses. A community can be encouraged to question the assumptions that previously have constrained conversation.

The curators of ‘Legacy of Absence’ remind us of the many pitfalls and risks that accompany projects that engage survivors of mass violence in revisiting their past. At the same time, it is heartening to recognize that art projects can be crafted to invite those who bear the legacies of trauma to begin a journey from denial to acknowledgement, to negotiate a path from suppression to responsibility.

#### Empathy with the Suffering of the Other

Empathy with the suffering of the other is at the core of the Buddhist conception of reconciliation. This idea is encapsulated by Thich Nhat Hanh's (1987) brief definition: "Reconciliation is to understand both sides, to go to one side and describe the suffering being endured by the other side, and then to go to the other side and describe the suffering being endured by the first side" (p. 70). What does it mean to ‘*understand* both sides?’ Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) emphasizes an engaged and bodily awareness, which would require an integration

of the senses with the cognitive, one of the hallmarks of aesthetic experience. "Understanding," he writes, involves

the ability to recognize the physical, material and psychological suffering of others, to put ourselves 'inside the skin' of the other. We 'go inside' their body, feelings, and mental formations, and witness for ourselves their suffering. Shallow observation as an outsider is not enough to see their suffering. We must become one with the object of our observation. When we are in contact with another's suffering, a feeling of compassion is born in us (p. 82).

Empathy with the suffering of one's enemy is a scarce commodity during violent conflicts and in their aftermath. For perpetrators and those who bear their legacies, feelings of guilt and shame, and rigidly held defensive postures usually interfere with flexible thinking and compassionate response (Krondorfer, 1995). After years of facilitating workshops with Israeli, Egyptian and Palestinian antagonists, members of the American Psychiatric Association's Task Force and Committee on Psychiatry and Foreign Affairs underscore what is compellingly obvious about the inclinations of victims. They "have little capacity to grieve for the hurts of other peoples, or to take responsibilities for the new victims created by their warlike actions.... groups that have suffered repeated victimization become seemingly incapable of empathizing with the suffering of another group " (Mack, 1990, p. 125).

So, while the ability of former adversaries to acknowledge each other's suffering can be central to coexistence, in many cases, former enemies' capacities to empathize with each other - especially in the heartfelt way that is necessary for reconciliation - are likely to have been impaired by violence.

The capacity of the arts to overcome these limitations is an idea of long standing in Western



philosophical and literary traditions, probably first theorized by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. The contemporary moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1992) describes how the Greek tragedy *Philoctetes* was constructed precisely to assist audience members to become clear about the meaning of an enemy's suffering:

...the language of the play closely connects the painful experience of pity with a new dimension of ethical responsiveness.... Neoptolemus is good, but capable, as non-omniscient good people are, of making mistakes. Without realizing it, he has diverged from his good character. The sight of [his enemy] Philoctetes' pain removes an impediment (ignorance in this case, rather than forgetfulness or denial), making him clearer about what another's suffering means, about what his good character requires in this situation, about his own possibilities as a human being. The audience, in the midst of wartime, is recalled to awareness of the meaning of bodily pain for another, for themselves. Even good people do need to be reminded--especially in time of war, when military passions run high and awareness of the enemy's similar humanity is easily lost from view in the desire to inflict a punishment (p.267).

Nussbaum (1995) suggests that the empathy for the other's suffering results not only from the content of such a drama, but the "complex cast of mind" that it invites in the viewer. In both Greek tragedies and in contemporary novels,

the very form constructs compassion in readers, positioning them as people who care intensely about the sufferings and bad luck of others, and who identify with them in ways that show possibilities for themselves. Like tragic spectators, novel-readers have both empathy with the plight of the characters, experiencing what happens to them as if from their point of view.... What the ancient pity tradition

claims for epic and tragedy might now be claimed for the novel: that this complex cast of mind is essential in order to take the full measure of the adversity and suffering of others, and that this appraisal is necessary for full social rationality (p. 66).

Artists, writers and cultural workers around the world are exploring ways to use the resources of their particular media to help people from opposite sides of conflicts appreciate each other's suffering. In many cases, such projects combine storytelling or oral history interviewing with some other artform, such as photography, quilt-making, theatre, fiction-writing, installations or film-making. For instance, in the Middle East, 'Peace of Mind' is a film that incorporates video diaries kept by Israel and Palestinian teenagers affiliated with the Seeds of Peace program. It acknowledges suffering on all sides, while taking care not to suggest an equity of power that is belied by imbalances on the ground. (*Peace of Mind: Coexistence*, n.d.).

A particularly moving example of the power of film to help former adversaries appreciate each other's suffering is "Regret to Inform," a documentary of the American-Vietnamese war told through the voices of widows on both sides. It is directed by Barbara Sonneborn, who received word on her 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, in 1968, that her husband had been killed in Khe Sanh by a mortar. Twenty years later, although happy in her personal and professional life, she remained haunted by her husband's memory and by her unanswered questions about the war. She began a journey that involved interviews with over two hundred American war widows, as well as an odyssey to Khe Sanh. Throughout both northern and southern Vietnam she encountered widows who were "surprised and moved" that an American woman wanted to hear their stories. Their stories of the war – filled not only with loss, but also terror, degradation and abuse – are told in their fullness.

‘Regret to Inform’ draws on cinematographic resources to support viewers to stay present to stories of suffering that otherwise might be unbearable to witness. It blends “heartbreaking interviews, devastating archival combat film, hushed music that hovers evocatively between Asian and Western modes, and cinematography that brings out the brilliant electric greens of the mist Vietnamese landscape... [It creates a] subdued howl of grief...the documentary equivalent of a tragic epic poem. Every word and image quivers with anguished resonance.” (Holden, 1999).

The documentary has become the basis for on-going initiatives, including a curriculum guide, a peace tour of American and Vietnamese widows, and *Widows of War: a Living Memorial*, a website telling stories of widows from many different conflicts. “Women can be a force for peace,” declares Sonneborn, the filmmaker (Gregory, interview, 2004). “With every widow of war who joins us to stand shoulder to shoulder for peace, we take one step further away from war.” (cited in Grisso, et. al., 2000)

All coexistence and reconciliation work gives rise to ethical questions and dilemmas. Helping enemies from all sides of a conflict appreciate each other’s suffering is perhaps, in ethical terms, the most delicate. Should oppressed people empathize with the suffering of their oppressors? Is it fair to ask the victims to empathize with perpetrators? How ought one to address imbalances in power and moral righteousness? (Cohen, 2001). These are challenging questions, and any artist who takes on such a project should be prepared to grapple with them in designing the project and composing the work.

Xuan Ngoc Nguyen, a war widow herself who worked as a translator on *Regret to Inform*, tells her own story about a day she had taken refuge in a bunker with her young cousin – who complained of being thirsty and asked her to get some water.

I told him it was too dangerous and he said, 'I'll do it.' I followed behind him, and when he gets to the surface he falls down, trips on something, something crazy like that, and they start to shoot. This American who kills my cousin, he has the same look in his eye that I have. I feel guilty, you know, letting my cousin go outside, and he feels guilty, too. . . I know he doesn't mean it. . . I want to hug the soldier, to make him understand. Who is hurt? Is it my cousin? Is it me? Is it the soldier who pulls the trigger? All of us are victims (*Regret to Inform*, Motion Picture, 2000).

The film 'Regret to Inform' illustrates again how the formal qualities of works of art – the sequence and pacing of images and the music that accompanies them, for instance – can support former enemies to face painful history that many would find unbearable and might otherwise seek to avoid. The work also shows how media can be crafted to fully honor the experiences of people on all sides of a conflict without presuming an equality of suffering or responsibility. It exemplifies how a creative production can nourish relationships that evolve into educational and activist campaigns. A true reconciliation between the people of the United States and Vietnam will be an arduous and lengthy journey; the first steps have barely begun. Sensitive works of art such as 'Regret to Inform' will be of use to others who follow on this path.

#### Acknowledging and Addressing Injustice

As Xuan Ngoc Nguyen's story generously acknowledges, in some sense all of those caught up in wars can be seen as victims. However, processes of reconciliation, since they seek to re-establish relationships of trust, cannot ignore questions of responsibility and accountability. Any attempt at restoration after a period of alienation that ignores questions of justice could not be considered true reconciliation and would not be sustainable.

When people on opposite sides of a conflict demand justice, however, they are rarely using the word to refer to the same outcome. ‘Justice’ can refer to a sense of fairness in many different arenas, including economic equity (distributive justice), access to power (political and social justice), and legal processes (procedural justice). Truth commissions aim to produce historical justice, where as reparations policies aim for compensatory justice. Adversaries are likely to bring to the processes of conflict resolution different sensibilities about which arena of injustice requires more attention; and their cultures may differ in norms for achieving justice.

Judicial processes that focus on prosecutions and punishment seek retributive justice. Conciliatory processes can include punishment for perpetrators, but in general, they emphasize restorative justice, which encourages people and groups to acknowledge and take responsibility for the injuries they have caused, and seek to restore or create an agreed-upon moral framework for moving into the future.

Regardless of the sense of justice invoked by those who seek reconciliation, no kind of punishment or scheme of reparations can ever return the loved ones who have been lost, the children who were abducted, or the limbs that were severed. However, through processes of truth telling, acknowledgement and memorializing, societies can go some measure in restoring dignity to those whose rights have been violated. Monuments, museums, installations and dramatic works can contribute to the overall sense of justice – and least in its historical and restorative dimensions. They can prevent the additional assault to victims’ dignity when injuries remain unacknowledged and atrocities are hidden under a carpet of silence.

In Senegal, the *Maison Des Esclaves* commemorates the brutality with which African people were captured, held and sold into slavery. Argentina’s *Memoria Abierta* is an alliance of

eight human rights organizations “dedicated to preserving the memory of what happened during the period of state terrorism and creating a place where Argentines can come to reflect on the past in order to insure it will not repeat itself” (*International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, n.d.*). In Russia, the Gulag Museum at Perm 36 is dedicated to preserving the “last Soviet political camp as a vivid reminder of repression, and an important historical and cultural monument” (*International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, n.d.*). The National Civil Rights Museum in the United States “traces the African American Civil Rights Movement from the earliest days of slavery, examines the effects of racism in American society, and considers issues of poverty and economic and social justice” (*International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, n.d.*).

These four organizations are part of The International Coalition of Historic Sites of Conscience, a consortium of museums committed to restoring a measure of dignity to those who have suffered human rights abuses of the most extreme kind. They incorporate a variety of different artistic and cultural forms -- photographs, installations, sculptures, oral histories, children’s art, media – to document history, keep memory alive, restore a sense of dignity to many who suffered human rights abuses, and to invite viewers to consider the contemporary implications of the history they witness in these sites.

At least one of Coalition’s member institutions, The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa, has played a direct role in redressing the grievances of some of the victims of apartheid’s brutal programs of forced removal. The International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience 2003 Conference Report highlights the link between their work to preserve local history and culture with their capacity to effectively support claims for reparations:

The District Six Museum is dedicated to ensuring that the history and memory of forced removals in South Africa will endure, and that the process of remembering will challenge all forms of social oppression. It aims to foster understanding between people, isolated by segregation, by focusing on the cosmopolitan nature of District Six. Central to its mission is the documentation and imaginative reconstruction of the history, labouring life and cultural heritage of District Six.

In 1966, as a result of the Group Areas Act, the racially integrated neighborhood of District Six in Cape Town was razed to the ground to make way for a new “whites only” development. The only buildings left were houses of worship. The District Six Museum was founded to create an ongoing community-based center for remembering and recovery that served as the basis for material compensation for victims of apartheid.

A group of former residents covered the floor of a Methodist church with a detailed map of their destroyed neighborhood, and invited their neighbors to place their homes, streets, stores and community spaces on it. This memory-mapping project became the foundation for land reclamation claims. The Museum organized and hosted one of the Land Courts on its site. Former residents sat in chairs directly on the map of their old neighborhood, as the court granted them, in the words of one, “our land back, our homes back, our dignity back.” (*International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience*. 2003 Conference Report)

The District Six Museum’s programs include oral documentation of life stories in order to strengthen the public memory of racial integration and community cooperation previously

found in its neighborhood, as well as the human rights violations that destroyed the coexistence that had thrived there. In addition, the museum is developing street theater programs to reach out, in particular, to the community's poorest residents and to youth, two groups that otherwise might not participate in the museum's activities. According to its own description, "the District Six Museum seeks to provide a sustained process of personal healing and reconciliation, as well as to promote a lasting democratic and human rights culture in the neighborhood" (*International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience. 2003 Conference Report*).

All of the museums that are members of the International Coalition of Historic Sites of Conscience illustrate how monuments and memorials can help societies accord ethical significance to their historical memories. The Coalition itself highlights the benefits of linking together cultural projects across regions, providing opportunities for reflection, comparison and the sharing of expertise. Its dialogue project demonstrates how memorials can become a force into the future – linking people's engagement with the past with contemporary questions of justice, human rights and tolerance.

#### Remorse and Apology; Forgiveness and Letting Go of Bitterness

"Reconciliation is impossible without forgiveness." (Tutu, 1997). So states Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the spiritual leader of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Different religious traditions, however, emphasize different aspects of the apology-forgiveness ritual. For instance, both Islam and Judaism place more emphasis on the repentance of the wrong-doer rather than forgiveness of the injured (Schimmel, 2002).

There can be no doubt that, when it is feasible and sincere, the ritual of apology and forgiveness is an efficient path to reconciliation. An apology entails an accurate assessment of



the morality of one's actions, an understanding of the relevant moral norms, and a heartfelt expression of sorrow. In choosing to forgive, the offended party in essence agrees with the offender's assessment of the nature of the breach and the damage that was done. Forgiveness acknowledges the breach, and invites the offender to return to moral community.

However, in many situations, apology and forgiveness may not be possible. For instance, in facilitating reconciliation between third generation non-Jewish Germans and young American Jews, the educator Bjorn Krondorfer (1995) argues that forgiveness in this context would be inappropriate--in part because the young people themselves were neither the perpetrators nor immediate victims of the crime. Even more important, Krondorfer says, the Holocaust was an evil that defies both the language and the comprehension that are required for apology and forgiveness to be meaningful. Reconciliation – in this instance and perhaps for many survivors of other brutalities, such as the genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia -- requires an understanding of the impossibility of forgiveness. In such cases alienation in current and future relationships might still be overcome through the letting go of bitterness.

The South African artist-activist and print-maker Kim Berman recently described her own efforts to search for the humanity of the perpetrators of apartheid through creating art. In response to the horrors that emerged during the TRC hearings, she created “Playing Cards of the Truth Commission: A series of twelve portraits, (black of spades)”:

*At the time when they were broadcasting from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we were flooded with stories from victims of apartheid. There was an overwhelming sense of pain in the country and I was trying to grapple with how to make sense of it. I was struck by people’s willingness to find reconciliation within*

*themselves and towards their perpetrators. During the struggle against apartheid, it was easy to define things in black and white, good and evil, right and wrong. In fact, my art in the 80's took on the role of bearing witness to atrocities, and reflected those polarities.*

*In the midst of the TRC hearings, I had the opportunity to go to an art colony in Belgium. There, I chose to do a series of portraits of the apartheid perpetrators, all monsters of evil. I started with a black plate, and began carving and scraping the image out of the surface. This technique became a metaphor of finding the light from the darkness, a search for discovering their humanity. I was also feeling my own rage. I was very angry, and struggled to reconcile the brutality in the testimonies of the victims with the denial of their perpetrators. I added layers onto the images, first tinting them with a toxic color, and then aggressively scratching and scribbling over the finely worked surfaces with a sharp tool. The effect was therapeutic and another layer was added to the sensitively worked portraits with fragments of texts from their victims. The process represented an attempt to seek my own reconciliation with the TRC. I was not able to forgive them, but the making of these portraits was a process of letting go of bitterness.*

(Kim Berman, personal communication, March 20, 2004)

The capacity of visual symbols to embody layers of meaning also served Wen-ti Tsen, an artist who worked to facilitate reconciliation at the inter-group level in the United States. On the occasion of the millennium, Tsen, a Chinese American visual artist, was invited by the Allied Arts Council of Yakima Valley, in Washington state, to create an installation that would bring together all segments of the community to “reflect on the last thousand years and to view the next thousand.” (Tsen, “Artist’s Report”, p.1) The cultural groups of the region had become quite

alienated from each other. For instance, latent conflict between the European American orchard owners and Mexican American laborers resulted in ethnically segregated neighborhoods.

Members of the Native American community live at some distance from the city, on a reservation that represents one-tenth of their original land, as established in a treaty signed in the 1830s. The local Japanese community was uprooted to internment camps during World War II; a few Japanese people have returned to work as truck farmers. A small black community was attracted to the region by coal mines. (Cohen, 2003, pp. 281-284)

During early conversations between the artist and his local counterparts, the idea emerged for a “sculptural plaza” that would incorporate the historical narratives, grievances, and contributions of the region’s various cultural communities. Both the process of creating the plaza and its ultimate design illustrate the potential of the arts to acknowledge historical grievances in ways that facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation. Throughout the project, Tsen understood his role to include a large measure of listening. He created preliminary murals in order to develop relationships with members of the various communities. When particular groups didn’t respond to general requests for participation, special dialogue sessions were convened in places where people could feel at home. Tsen visited incarcerated teens, and, at a nearby waste facility, nuclear scientists. “The artist must subsume himself to what others want to say,” Tsen explained. “The artist becomes others’ tongues.” (Cohen, 2003, p.283)

The original planners of the project envisioned the installation as celebrating water. From a white European perspective, they saw water as an economic resource. Through the development of irrigation systems, they had transformed water into wealth. The Native American community, however, referred to water in spiritual terms, as a God-given blessing, to be ritually sipped before meals. Tsen described his role as artist-mediator:

*As an artist, I came with no dogma. I always sought to incorporate each new perspective, layering meaning upon meaning and representing the ambiguity of things.... While being true to the original planners' desire for a public art installation of the highest quality, and celebrating water as a resource, we could create something cohesive around the idea of the circular movement of water. We could honor the Mexican community's contributions by focusing on labor, on actions, rather than on the products of labor. And we could honor the Native American sensibilities by emphasizing nature itself. (Cohen, 2003, p.284)*

The plaza itself includes large basalt blocks, a sheet of water flowing over each one. Another sculptural element echoes the profile of the Cascade Mountains, which are visible from the site. The open space in the middle is punctuated by eight basalt columns, each serving as a pedestal for a bronze casting of actual tools used in the valley: a sewing machine, a Yakama Indian berry basket, a GI helmet, an irrigation crank, an apple-harvesting bag, a saddle and a farmworker's short-handled hoe. At the front of the plaza sits a bronze sculpture of an apple orchard, with a three-spout water fountain, emptying into a small pool scaled appropriately for small children to wade in. Along the sides of the space zig-zag two sloping concrete walls, containing thirty-six windows, each containing objects – photographs, carvings, poems, etc. – contributed by members of local communities. People from the region's various cultural communities came together in “congenial but provocative” discussions to choose these elements.

According to Wen-ti Tsen, “the possibility of reconciliation is something the artist must imagine.” (Cohen, 2003, 284) With that vision in mind, the conversations that led to the design of the plaza were structured to facilitate understanding and relationships across differences.

Because of the capacity of the work to embrace layers of meaning, the form of the artwork itself could

*hold all of the elements in relation...The work conveys a quality of acceptance and fullness..... Because of the spirit of the piece, barriers are opened up...The flowing water [in the plaza] can be taken as a cleansing agent that could salve the splits and disdain the hurt that has inscribed the relationships among the communities of the region. In this sense, it is a symbol of reconciliation...\_Each person's and each community's feelings were accepted and valued. Each element is viewed differently because it is in the context of the others. In this sense, there is a quality of forgiveness in the piece (Tsen, personal communication, April 2002.)*

The arts can work in subtle ways, and it is often difficult to measure their impact or to determine whether intentions have been realized. One indication of the effectiveness of this particular project is that on the evening of September 11, 2001, when members of the various communities of Yakima Valley looked for a place to gather to mourn and to grapple with the meaning of the day's events, they found common ground on this plaza, where their own painful history was acknowledged --and soothed-- by the "Waters of Life."

#### Nourishing the Capacity to Imagine and to Substantiate a New Future

Reconciliation requires imagination. Former enemies must work first to imagine each other's experiences, and then together to imagine a few future. In the aftermath of violence, when people's faith in the goodness of human creativity might be at its nadir, the capacity to imagine is likely to need to be nourished and restored.

Both artists and philosophers have theorized about the connections between aesthetic engagement and the development of capacities for moral imagination. While all artistic forms animate the imagination,<sup>4</sup> the connection between poetry and imagination can be seen as paradigmatic. The French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard (1994 [1958]) describes how poetic images work within people who hear or see them. The poetic act is the sudden image, the “flare-up of being” in the imagination (xviii). In poetic reverie,

the mind is able to relax, but... the soul keeps watch, with no tension, calmed and active....[In this way] forces are manifested in the poem that do not pass through the circuits of knowledge...[T]he image comes before thought [bringing about a] veritable awakening of poetic creation, even in the soul of the reader, through the reverberations of a single poetic image....Through this reverberation, by going *immediately* beyond all psychology or psychoanalysis, we feel a poetic power rising naively within us....The reverberations bring about a change of being. It is as though the poet's being were our being (pp. xxiii, xxii).

Poetry creates its impact in part through metaphor,<sup>5</sup> a form of meaning-making that has both aesthetic and ethical significance. The poet Adrienne Rich (1993) illustrates the moral implications of metaphoric thinking by describing her own response to the folk names of animals and flowers that populate the Pacific coastline where she makes her home:

*I found myself pulled by the names: Dire Whelk, Dusky Tegula, Fingered Limpet, Hooded Puncturella, Veiled Chiton, Bat Star, By-the-Wind Sailor, Crumb-of-Bread Sponge, Eye Fringed Worm, Sugar Wrack, Frilled Anemone, Bull Kelp, Ghost Shrimp,*

*Sanderling...Stiff-footed Cucumber, Leather Star, Innkeeper Worm, Lug Worm. And I felt the names drawing me into a state of piercing awareness, a state I associate with reading and writing poems....Who saw the bird named Sanderling and gave it that caressive, diminutive name? ....Human eyes gazed at each of all these forms of life and saw resemblance in difference – the core of metaphor, that which lies close to the core of poetry itself, the only hope for a humane civil life. The eye for likeness in the midst of contrast, the appeal to recognition, the association of thing to thing, spiritual fact with embodied form, begins here. And so begins the suggestion of multiple, many-layered, rather than singular, meanings, wherever we look, in the ordinary world.*

*...Today I returned from an errand, parked the car behind the house. Opening the car door I saw and heard the beating of enormous wings taking off from the deck. At first I thought: a very big gull, or even a raven. Then it alighted on the low roof of the house next door, stretched its long body, and stood in profile to me. It was a Great Blue Heron..... I made no claim upon the heron as my personal instructor. But our trajectories crossed at a time when I was ready to begin something new, the nature of which I did not clearly see. And poetry, too, begins this way: the crossing of trajectories of two (or more) elements that might not otherwise have known simultaneity. When this happens, a piece of the universe is revealed as if for the first time. (p. 4 - 8.)*

### Imagining others

One poet who has intentionally engaged poetic imagination in the context of violence is the Palestinian-American Naomi Shihab Nye. In addition to being a poet and novelist herself, she has edited anthologies of poetry and paintings from the Middle East, amplifying voices rarely heard outside their own communities, and bringing the everyday realities of Israeli and Arab

people into quiet juxtaposition. Nye describes how poetry invites people to imagine the lives even of those they might consider their enemies.

*To me the world of poetry is a house with thousands of glittering windows. Our words and images, land to land, era to era, shed light on one another. Our words dissolve the shadows we imagine fall between. "One night I dreamt of spring," writes Syrian poet Muhammad al-Maghut, "and when I awoke/flowers covered my pillow." Isn't this where empathy begins? ..... If poetry comes out of the deepest places in the human soul and experience, shouldn't it be as important to learn about one another's poetry, country to country, as one another's weather or gross national product?*

*During the Gulf War, I carried poems from writers in Iraq into classrooms I was visiting [in the United States]. It seemed important to remember that there were real people in Iraq, real fears and hopes, real chimneys and children and shoes and bread. A friend warned me, "You won't get away with it," but the exact opposite response occurred. Teachers said, "Where can we get more of these?" Did it matter that a third grader said, "I wonder what those little children in Iraq are thinking about today. I wonder if they slept at all last night." It mattered to me. Did it matter that high school girls ended up discussing the coldness of media euphemisms -- "collateral damage" for innocent people dead, for example -- how the television made everything seem somehow cold and distant, but the poems written in a personal human voice made that so-called enemy feel very close? That was the job of poems, we decided. To give us a sense of others' lives close up. Poems could be a zoom lens in a world of wide-angle sweeps. (Nye, 1995).*



Poetry can enliven and restore the capacity to imagine, to engage the world with a spirit of creativity. It can help people to imagine their enemies, and in the process to re-imagine themselves. In this regard, coming to understand an enemy is uncannily similar to coming to understand a poetic image: we understand ourselves and the other *through* each other.

### Imagining and substantiating a new future

Imagining the other, however, isn't the only kind of imagining required for coexistence and reconciliation. We must also work *with* those others to imagine and create a new future. And here, if we want to create a new order, a new set of relationships between our communities, it is important not just to fantasize, but to convince ourselves and our communities that our dreamed-for world might be realized. The literary scholar Elaine Scarry (1985) uses the word 'substantiation' to refer to this process of convincing ourselves of the real possibility of our imagined but as yet unrealized yearnings.

In war, two or more competing fictions seek to legitimate themselves and delegitimize others. What makes the outcome abiding, according to Scarry, is the quality of pain that is inherent in the injuring of human bodies. (p. 115) The incontestable realness of the pain of the wounded bodies is appropriated to the victor, giving substance to the political fiction over which the battle had been waged. Coexistence and reconciliation require us to find ways that are equally viscerally compelling to give substance to the fiction we call peace.

Consider the following example from the island of Cyprus, that illustrates how peacebuilders used the power of music to invite Cypriots into compelling experiences of the peace they were seeking to create. At several large bi-communal events,

music was the centerpiece of the day. Folk troupes and rock groups from Turkish and

Greek Cypriot communities performed. Most significantly, joint performances, such as by Turkish Cypriot band Grup Net and Greek Cypriot group Klironomia, highlighted the shows with common Cypriot tunes sung in both Greek and Turkish. The communal feeling of celebration was held together by the music and dancing, once even in the pouring rain, a rarity in Cyprus....This tangible spirit of unity is an undeniable shared reality, an unforgettable moment in time when distrust and hatred are overcome. Just as the bi-communal choir continues to rehearse separately, Cypriot melodies and musical memories sustain hope during difficult times such as these, a fertile seed to cultivate peace in a future when people can renew and expand their friendships across the Green Line.<sup>6</sup>

In 2004, the people of Cyprus are still struggling to find a path to sustainable peace. The music shared during rare bi-communal gatherings is giving the Greek and Turkish people of Cyprus sufficiently robust and embodied experiences of coexistence that their vision is persisting despite decades of intransigence of the part of their political leaders.

In different ways, many of the projects highlighted in this chapter have provided opportunities for communities grappling with the aftermath of violence to imagine and give substance to future relationships based on coexistence and reconciliation. In Burundi, Nicholas Djanie's drumming workshop allowed Hutu and Tutsi boys not only to perceive each other's humanity (as important as that was). It also allowed them to viscerally experience a bi-communal relationship of co-operation and shared purpose. The black and white participants in Playback for Change not only listened to each other's stories, they anticipated a future in which Black and white Americans respectfully acknowledge the

painful legacy they share. Memories of the Cambodian genocide is filled with complexities, and Reyum's exhibition gave the citizens of Phnom Penh an opportunity to begin to engage them. It also offered them the felt experience of a future in which different sensibilities can be embraced rather than ruthlessly repressed or avoided out of fear.

The viscerally compelling nature of aesthetic engagement can convince former enemies that the reconciliation they yearn to create is indeed possible. Within the bounded frame of the workshop, performance, exhibition or festival, communities can engage the complexities of a painful past in order shape and affirm the more nuanced moral sensibilities they need to construct their future.

### Conclusions

“In the war against moral obtuseness, the artist is our fellow fighter, frequently our guide.” So writes the contemporary moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1990). “Who could deny that there are some among us

whose visual or auditory acuity is greater than that of others; some who have developed their faculties more finely, who can make discriminations of color and shape (or pitch and timbre) that are unavailable to the rest of us? Who miss less, therefore, of what is to be heard or seen in a landscape, a symphony, a painting? Jamesian moral perception is, I think, like this: a fine development of our human capabilities to see and feel and judge; an ability to miss less, to be responsible to more (p. 164).

The arts and cultural work can be crafted to contribute to coexistence and reconciliation – both by facilitating the necessary learning about self and other, and by

nourishing and restoring the capacities required for perception, expression, receptivity and imagination. Folk expressions, visual art, music, film, poetry, drama, oral history, museum exhibitions – all of these forms can help former enemies come to appreciate each other’s humanity, mourn losses, and empathize with each other’s suffering and navigate the complexities of remorse and repentance, letting go of bitterness and forgiveness. Artistic processes can be crafted to support communities to develop more complex and nuanced understandings of their narratives, to acknowledge and begin to address injustices, and to imagine and give substance to new and more equitable relationships and institutions.

Of course, artistic approaches to coexistence and reconciliation are not without their limitations and ethical complexities. Whenever inviting the survivors of violence to engage with the legacies of the past, those who receive their stories and facilitate these processes must have the skills to avoid additional harm. Partly because of sensitivities of this nature, many projects touch only small segments of the population, never extending broadly enough to affect larger political dynamics. Those initiatives that do seek broader impact often must contend with ethical questions about the re-presentation of narratives of suffering. How can such stories be fully honored if they are being used in an instrumental way, to further pragmatic and even political ends?

However, artists rarely enjoy opportunities to document their work, assess its efficacy, reflect on its ethical dimension, or strategize how to responsibly extend its impact. They often work in relative isolation. They often struggle to generate the resources they need to sustain their efforts at a minimal level. They are rarely educated in the theory and practice of other peace-building modalities.

Policy-makers working to rebuild communities in the aftermath of violence and long-standing oppression would benefit from considering the following implications of this study.

The arts and cultural work are important resources for coexistence and reconciliation; in the aftermath of ethnic violence and long-standing oppression, they warrant investment. Art and cultural programs can help facilitate the learning about self and other that is required; they can help restore necessary capacities that have been repaired; they can support people to acknowledge and grapple with complexity and paradox. As the examples in this chapter illustrate, artistic and cultural projects can be fashioned to support virtually every stage of conciliatory processes, from helping former enemies appreciate each other's humanity, to addressing past injustice, to imagining a new future. Artists and cultural workers are potential influential leaders in divided societies; investing programmatic resources (for dialogues, for instance) in this sector can have a multiplier effect, especially in affecting grassroots opinions.

Officials associated with national and international truth commissions, trials, tribunals and archives should consider inviting artists and cultural workers to interpret testimony into works that are accessible to and sensitive to various constituencies, and to assist in linking efforts at local, regional, national and international levels. Ministers of culture, directors of arts commissions and endowments and other cultural institutions should consider designing grant programs and commissions to invite artists and cultural workers to bring their talents to issues of intergroup relations, questions of contested history, and challenges associated with envisioning a new future. Peacebuilding

practitioners should look for opportunities to incorporate artistic processes in dialogue and to collaborate with local artists and cultural workers.

Create opportunities for artists, cultural workers, and related administrators and educators to strengthen their efforts toward coexistence and reconciliation. Artists and cultural workers from different regions and using different genres need opportunities to exchange ideas and models of work. The field is in need of carefully documented case studies, appropriate models of evaluation and assessment, and venues to address ethical questions. Artists themselves can seek opportunities to connect with peacebuilding practitioners and with artists working in other regions and in other genres to explore and extend the conciliatory potential of their work.

Educate artists, cultural workers, peace-building practitioners and coexistence workers to the range of contributions arts and cultural work can make to coexistence and reconciliation efforts. Educators of peacebuilding practitioners should consider providing courses, modules, presentations that allow practitioners in training to become aware of cultural resources that can be incorporated into peacebuilding processes. Practitioners-in-training will require sufficient hands-on experiences in the arts that they can sensitively design arts programs and enlist the participation of artists. Similarly, students of the arts and cultural work need to understand the possibilities of engaging in communities and bringing their talents to bear on strengthening intergroup relations. They should be exposed to models of artistic and cultural projects that are helping societies recover from violence and oppression.

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<sup>1</sup>D. Jegede (1993). Art for life's sake: African art as a reflection of an Afrocentric cosmology.

<sup>2</sup> 'Africa' has also choreographed unique drum-dance-dramas – one in Burundi, and one for the Rwandan National Olympic Ballet that tells the story of the Rwandan genocide and efforts underway towards reconciliation.

<sup>3</sup> Richards' words reminds us that in many cultures, some instruments and expressive forms are part of the sacred domain. Bringing such elements into new configurations must be done with utmost sensitivity and the involvement of members of the cultures involved.

<sup>4</sup> David Cooper (1996) suggests that “imagination incorporates that peculiar blend of will and receptivity, that oscillation between an imposition of structure or meaning and a readiness to be 'taken over', which is so characteristic...of our best moments in the presence of art (pp. 26-27).

<sup>5</sup> Recent cognitive studies of metaphor suggest that “human moral understanding is fundamentally imaginative [and that] metaphor is one of the principal mechanisms of imaginative cognition.” (Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, p. 33.)

