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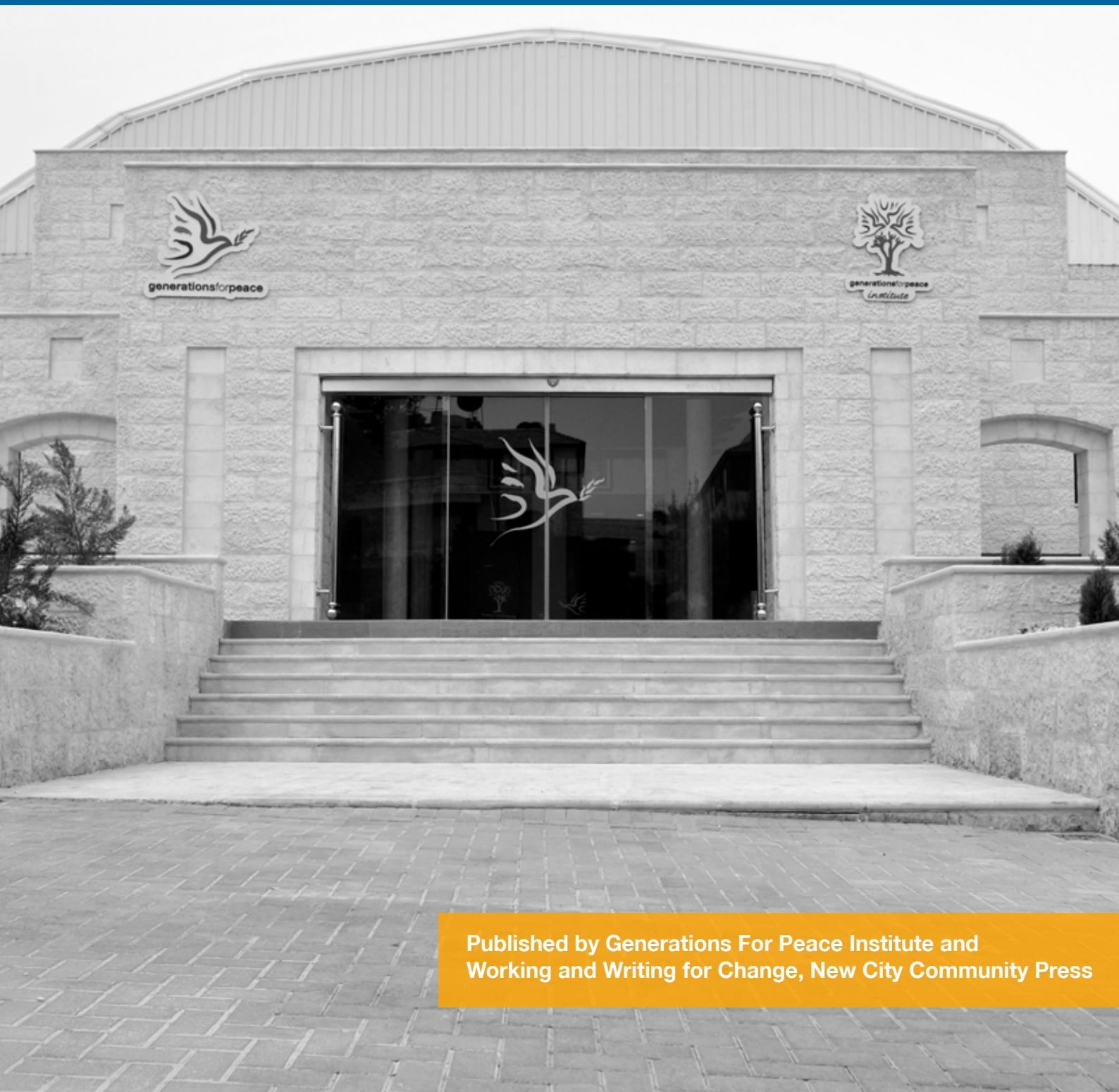
INITIATING TRANSFORMATION



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Transformations

Special Issue: Initiating Transformation

Transformations works from the premise that everyone is an intellectual, possessing valuable insights and strategies on the most pressing global issues. As such, the journal intends to amplify the too often unheard voices of local change makers who are using non-violent strategies to reinvent public spheres, marked by conflict, into peaceful civic spaces premised on tolerance and inclusion. To this end, the journal will feature the insights of advocates, peacemakers, organizational leaders, and community members who will discuss the implications of their public work. Beyond supporting the work of these communities, these insights will also be used to expand academic scholarship which, by too often dismissing the pragmatic work of change, fails to recognize how central concepts such as peace, human rights, and community are being reinvented locally to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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TRANSFORMATIONS
GFPI JOURNAL

Contents

Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring 2023

7 **Editor's Introduction**
Steve Parks and Lori Shorr

Section 1:
Initiating Peace and Reconciliation

24 **Ukraine: When Dreams of Peace are Surrounded by War**
Paul Alehanov

32 **"I want to show a different face of Russians"**
An Interview with Yevgeniya Chirikova, Russian Peace Advocate
Interview by Lori Shorr, Temple University

Section 2:
Individual Articles

48 **Gukurahundi's Ghosts:**
A Cautionary Tale of Failed Justice and Reconciliation & the Rise of Separatism in Matabeleland from 1982 to the Present
Naseemah Mohammed, University of Virginia

89 **Sport as a Strategic Tool for Deploying Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Zimbabwe**
Edson Chirowodza, Generations For Peace and David Makwerere, Bindura University of Science Education

TRANSFORMATIONS
GFPI JOURNAL

117 **Six Principles of Writing for Peace: Lessons from EncantaPalabras in Colombia**
Seis Principios de Escribir para la Paz: Aprendizajes de EncantaPalabras en Colombia
Juana Maria Echeverri, Rodrigo Rojas Ospina, and Kate Vieira, EncantaPalabras

165 **Sustainable Peace: Learning to Unlearn**
Safiya Ibn Garba, Generations For Peace

Section 3:
Featured Reports and Policy Papers

William Zartman (2001) The timing of peace initiatives: Hurting stalemates and ripe moments.

National Dialogues in Peacebuilding and Transitions: Creativity and Adaptive Thinking
United States Institute of Peace

National Dialogues in Peacebuilding and Transitions Learned from Six National Dialogues in Africa and the Middle East.

How is Violence Against Women Written into Syrian Laws and Society?
Syrians for Truth and Justice

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Editors' Introduction

Steve Parks & Lori Shorr

… In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guild struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that the vast map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of the Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other such Relic of the Disciplines of Geography. - - Suarez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658

Jorge Luis Borges, On Exactitude in Science, Museo

Los Anales de Buenos Aires, año 1, no. 3, 1946

Gaps are conceptual spaces and real places into which powerful demarcations do not travel well. (175)

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections

TRANSFORMATIONS
GFPI JOURNAL

Transformative Dialogue

To listen to political pundits on global news channels is to learn about a word divided into opposites: West vs. East, North vs. South, Developed vs. Undeveloped, Peaceful vs. Civil War, Democratic vs. Authoritarian. Indeed, these same categories filter through much of the public policy debates, academic research articles, and non-profit initiatives being produced. And on one level, the reason is clear. Speaking in broad categories helps people to make sense of the world and to give it coherence. These categories allow us to tell a story that seems to have a beginning, middle, and end. In that story, the world moves from undeveloped to developed, from authoritarian to democratic governments. That story also predicts that under the banner of progress, East, West, North, and South will merge into a global entity united under a common framework. And peace, it seems, will surely follow.

The historical power (and danger) of these stories is evident.

Think colonialism.

Think the march of capitalism.

Yet for those actively working to establish peace, create democracy, and foster community development, such stories act differently. Like the cartographer's map delineating every element of the "Empire", such stories act to demarcate a reality that seems to deny our ability to create our own future according to our own moral imperatives. It is all mapped out for us. We only need to fit into our predetermined roles within this narrative of progress. As such, these stories act as conceptual and practical limitations on those movements which draw from their local or indigenous traditions to actively work for a better, peaceful future. It is not surprising then, that today, across the globe, advocates, academics, and policy makers are attempting to chart out new pathways moving towards peace, democracy, and human rights that were never imagined on the "vast map" and do not follow the storyline of the "grand narratives of

progress". But imagining is never really taught as the work of researchers. Scholars rarely get tenure by imagining. So how do those in the university play a role in this imagining of a peaceful future? How do they support it?

Transformations understands its mission as providing a platform to these new "cartographers", who are premising their work not in the categories of past mappings of the world, but by identifying those uncharted gaps – the places where the map has been weathered – as the site of engagement as the world continues to move past "Empire". As Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes, "Gaps are conceptual spaces and real places into which powerful demarcations do not travel well" (Tsing 2005). And it is in such gaps, that unrecognized (or suppressed) knowledges and communal traditions might emerge to become new frameworks for collective responsibility towards each other. Or to put it another way, we understand those local moments of reinvention of community bonds, emerging from local experience, as existing in an adjacent position to traditional categories of North/South, East/West, Developed/Undeveloped. Such gaps are often unrecognized in their importance by traditional "cartographers". But for Transformations, such gaps, such local moments of invention, held in tension to traditional categories of knowledge, are the places where the possibility of a better future is being created.

And to put it most concretely, Transformations seeks to publish works that can share the expertise of human rights activists, community builders, and university researchers on the subject of peace and the advancement of human rights.

To bring these voices together and to focus on local moments of invention located in these sites of engagement, requires a different understanding of how knowledge is produced. It requires a different story and a different type of storyteller. We have a good friend, who is also a globally recognized democratic advocate. He has a running joke, which also hits upon a key reality. He notes that "if he just had more footnotes", he could be a university professor. In this, he is probably not wrong. As a global system, universities are recognized for their role in supporting research that transforms existing

theories. This is true from humanities-base studies, such as those on famous literary figures, to social science studies of bureaucratic systems, such as schools. And it is certainly true of research related to issues of peace and human rights. Yet, it is also true that such research does not often interact with the knowledge gained by actively and publicly working on these issues in real local, regional, and national contexts. It does not often focus on grassroots efforts that develop volunteer leaders of young people to promote tolerance and responsible citizenship in communities experiencing conflict and violence. This disjunction between university-valued knowledge and the knowledge produced on-the-ground, was never more apparent than when we once sponsored a meeting between an advocate from the global south and a university professor. Despite the advocate possessing contradicting knowledge gained from sustained involvement in local advocacy, the university professor insisted his universal theory of change was the correct lens through which to understand the situation. His map was not to be questioned.

We would argue that many university/universal theories of peace, democracy, and human rights might have originated within a deep understanding of the needs of a particular historical moment, within a particular material reality. Over time, however, these same theories begin to spin within their own orbit and respond increasingly to generalized context valued by university contexts, and thus they lose their value as guideposts for deliberative, effective actions. As a result, theory becomes divorced from practice; democratic theory becomes unrelated to the needs of democratic practitioners. This need not be the case. In his Prison Notebooks, Antonio Gramsci presents us with an alternative model:

If the problem of producing the identity of theory and practice is posed, it is posed in this sense: to construct, on the basis of a determinate practice, a theory that, coinciding and identifying itself with the decisive elements of the same practice, may accelerate the historical process taking place, rendering practice more homogenous, coherent, efficient in all of its elements, strengthening it to the maximum; or, given a certain theoretical position, to organize the indispensable practical element for setting it to

work. The identity of theory and praxis is a critical act, by means of which practice is demonstrated to be rational and necessary or theory to be realistic and rational (Thomas 2009).

Under this model, the work of advocates becomes a central element in the production of theory. Here the insights of the coordinator of a local effort to sustain peaceful relations in a community and its material reality become a bedrock from which a theoretical perspective can be derived. And by doing so, theory becomes not a concept to be circulated within the narrow confines of "recognized experts", but deeply enmeshed in the efforts to take the potential emerging from the reality of the moment and produce actual change. Theory and practice merge into a mutually informing "praxis" to create a better reality for those too often on the wrong side of privilege.

It is for that reason, then, that Transformations will be a journal which features the stories and insights of advocates and practitioners for peace, democracy, and human rights. We intend to focus on those individuals and communities developing peace processes premised on active listening and positive engagement; on efforts led by those seeking to transform communities in tolerant and peaceful societies; and on moments which produce more inclusive and democratic societies. And here we align ourselves with organizations, such as Generations For Peace, in which "changemakers address issues of cultural and structural violence in their communities, where contexts include inter-tribal, inter-ethnic, inter-religious violence; gender inequality; exclusion of marginalized minorities (internally displaced persons, refugees, persons with disabilities); post-conflict trauma response; and reconciliation and reintegration". But we believe Transformations must do more than simply feature such stories.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her amazingly insightful book "Decolonizing Methodologies" asks that as researchers we do not just share "travelers' stories" but that we work in tandem with people in communities in a "continuing knowledge-sharing process" (Smith 2012, 16). She also exhorts us to "not simply share surface information

(pamphlet knowledge) but to share the theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented" (Smith 2012, 17). In our experience, activist knowledge tends to be restricted to their local context or, at best, circulate within a small network of individuals working within a region. Activist's knowledge is seemingly unable, at times, to move across larger terrains in order to create additional spaces for change. If they could, we might see a new tapestry of potentiality and new conceptual networks based on equality, strong enough to interrupt or displace existing definitions of "democracy" and "peace" which seem to authorize inequality and conquest. Tsing writes, "The knowledge that makes a difference in changing the world is knowledge that travels and mobilizes, shifting and creating new forces and agents of history in its path" (Smith 2012, 8). Transformations intends to initiate a network which allows this emergent knowledge of peace, democratic, and human rights practices being created at a local level to travel across advocate, academic, and non-profit communities. Or to invoke Tsing again, "Knowledge gained from particular experience percolates into these channels, widening rather interrupting them" (Smith 2012, 7).

And how might these emergent knowledges be characterized? In our experience, advocates and practitioners are located at the nexus of dominant narratives and local traditions (or to return to Borges' story which opened this Introduction, the historical impact of colonialism has enabled the "West" and its vision of democracy, peace, and human rights to act like a "map of Empire," overlaying those local traditions which inform the daily lives of individuals and communities across the globe). And while the imposition of these categories was a historically brutal act, local populations' historical resistance has opened space within these "universal" concepts into which to inject their own communal traditions. Indeed, it is this ability to pierce the map of "Empire" which allows alternative concepts to become tools through which to organize new visions of society. For instance, we have worked with one advocate who is interviewing rural communities to explore what local or indigenous traditions residents might call upon to organize participatory decision-making practices in their community. They are hoping to draw upon such traditions to respond to the recent authoritarian actions from the

elected national leader. Another advocate is exploring how traditional tribal judicial processes represent a more progressive definition of justice than authorized by their military-dominated government. Such moments, we argue, if allowed to circulate and interact might provide opportunities to create a new “universal” truth about the meaning and practice of democracy, peace, and human rights. With Tsing, we believe these gaps, these interruptions are “‘worth taking seriously as critical spaces and sites for emergent voices and dreams” (Tsing 2005, 196).

It would be a mistake, however, to understand the work of Transformations as somehow opposed to “academic knowledge”. If Transformations values the advocate, what Gramsci might frame as the “organic intellectual”, we equally value the academic, the Gramscian “traditional intellectual”. What we are proposing is a different relationship between these intellectual communities. There is no doubt that academic theory, research protocols, and peer review structures create a system which ensures published work is thorough and that it can be trusted. Indeed, when working with an advocate facing constant disinformation campaigns from an authoritarian government, the advocate directly appealed for our university communities to produce such research as a refutation (which we did). What we are suggesting, then, is that academic research needs to resituate itself, shifting its position from a strict disciplinary stance (think Borges map), which often grows deaf to the voices of those outside, to a disciplinary-public stance. Such a stance would reconsider on-going research areas and questions, developed over decades of internal conversations within the field. While valuing such knowledge, we would also stress the value of knowledge created in relationship to the material exigencies of the moment – those moments on the ground, those multiple moments that are happening on many very specific grounds all over the globe. As Tsing state, the “rapidity of change reminds me that every confluence of knowledge is tentative and ephemeral” (Tsing 2005, 120). The only pathway to the “universal” is to remain in constant dialogue with the material needs on the ground, widely circulating the results of such moments. In this way, the actual universality of academic theory only exists when there is continual relationship to those who are on the ground moving democracy, human rights, and peace forward. It is hard to imagine

many scholars arguing against this understanding of the importance of real-time influences on academic research and writings. Why then is it so rare? We would argue that the institutional practices (e.g., peer-reviewed journals, tenure-worthy research, allowable uses of research funds, valuing only traditionally-recognized expertise) keeps dialogue between university researchers and practicing democratic activists to a minimum. It is this situation that Transformations seeks to change.

Transformative Writing

To create a space that draws together diverse communities, knowledges, and insights requires a different type of writing not typical of academic or professional journals, publications which often only speak in the nuanced and specific terms of their peers. Nor, in our experience, are the logics and frameworks of committed advocates necessarily accessible to those outside their domain of influence. If Transformations is to be successful, then, we must actively work to create a space which does more than simply place these voices next to each other. Such a strategy might appear to be progress, a model of inclusion and diversity. It would, however, just be the appearance of progress. It would not do the actual work of crafting a new way of speaking which crosses over these different communities, allowing them to understand and benefit from the insights of others. In many ways, it would simply recognize that there is no common language.

Over the course of Transformations existence, then, we hope to actively work to create new forms of writing which transgress these borders. This type of writing will need to push against the limits of specific genres – the research essay, the personal narrative, the policy paper – while still deploying the traditional protocols which ensure the knowledge presented has been properly documented. And this writing will need to recognize how communities, drawing upon indigenous or heritage traditions, will structure the production of knowledge differently. The story itself is in this way, a form of research. In this way, Transformations readers will have to be attuned to those seemingly small rhetorical shifts, idiomatic expressions, and non-traditional citation

practices that mark not just a different “style”, but a different way of transmitting knowledge that broadens the channels of dialogue, expands the possibility of peace, democracy, and human rights. We will all have to learn to recognize the transformation of knowledge at the level of the sentence.

And here, we want to be very explicit in our commitments. Transformations operates with the belief, to paraphrase Gramsci, that “everyone is an intellectual”. As such, we actively encourage anyone who has a story to tell, an insight to share, to publish with us. We will work with you, in whatever genre best suits your needs, to produce writing that fully expresses your argument. And we will welcome academic articles, personal narratives, photo-essays, and audio documentaries. We will support submissions which speak in different languages and dialects, utilizing different regional terms and phrases. Indeed, we would argue that a commitment to learning from local knowledges and traditions requires Transformations to seek out as well as publish the diverse forms in which knowledge is created and expressed. With our first issue, we have initiated this work by highlighting writing which demonstrates how local moments of organizing for peace, democracy, and human rights facilitate political and cultural changes. And we have also worked to include writing which represents the variety of ways in which important work can be represented. We understand, however, that future issues must continue to strive to enact our full vision. It is work that must be done.

Transformations: Issue 1, Volume 1

In its inaugural issue, Transformations explores the concept of “beginnings”. This issue rests upon the understanding that public actors working for peace must exist simultaneously within the history of a conflict’s beginning and the imagined future reconciliation. As such, these actors exist in a liminal state, endlessly having to move back and forth across past and future events with the hope that forward progress can be achieved. The featured individuals and writers in this issue reflect the possibility and difficulties of such work through highlighting current work occurring in Ukraine,

Russia, Estonia, Zimbabwe, Columbia, and Nigeria. When understood collectively, we hope to have initiated the research and writing goals discussed above.

Transformations opens with a dedicated section, Initiating Peace and Reconciliation. We begin this section with a series of photos, taken by Ukrainian photographer Paul Alehanov, which document how the mundane aspects of daily life and disruptive military events interact on the streets of Ukraine. Through these photos, we can begin to see the subtle ways in which the drama of war begins to impact and mutate a culture. These photos pose the question of what the lingering effects of a military invasion might be on the families, communities, and regions within Ukraine. We then expand the focus on Ukraine with an interview by Russian democracy and peace advocate Yevgeniya Chirikova, a Russian environmental activist now living in exile in Estonia. Chirikova's advocacy began in defense of the Khimki Forest, which was under threat from a development plan designed to financially benefit Putin's oligarchs. She then played a key role in the protests of Russia's parliamentary elections in 2011 and 2013. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Chirikova has been actively developing strategies for Russians to support Ukrainians. She understands such work as an initial step towards reconciliation, towards creating a peaceful future, to mending the wounds caused to Ukrainian culture. We end this section, then, by documenting what it means to work towards a better future.

We follow with a section of individual articles that collectively build upon the theme of moving between past and present, articles that continue to meditate on how each influences the possibilities of the future. Naseemah Mohamed presents the history of Gukurahundi, the name given by survivors of an attempted genocide, involving a systematic targeting of civilians, liberation war veterans, and dissidents in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of Zimbabwe by a North Korean-trained unit of the Zimbabwean army, the 5th Brigade. Through interviews with survivors, Mohamed details how the concerted effort by the Zimbabwean national government (past and present) to deny the reality of Gukurahundi has led to the impoverishment of these

regions and an inability of families to receive justice. Gukurahundi, then, represents an inability to move forward, to find peace.

The struggle to find reconciliation in Zimbabwe is further developed through the work of David Makwerere and Edson Chirowodza. In their essay, they detail how different elements of Zimbabwe's political and non-profit organizations have attempted to use sports, as both athletic competition and public event, to draw together communities separated by ethnic division, political polarization, as well as an abusive drug culture among the nation's youths. They test the theoretical power of sports within the context of such realities. And in doing so, they highlight that without a more concerted effort at national and community reconciliation, sports becomes yet another casualty to the conflicts existing in society.

If the obstacles to peace and reconciliation reside deep within the history of a community, a nation, the next set of essays argue that advocates and academics need to design programs which call that history forth – allowing it to surface, be recognized, then overcome. Repressing the painful reality of events, such as Gukurahundi, might give a veneer of peace, but it does not produce peace. Through the work of Juana Maria Echeverri, Rodrigo Ospina Rojas, and Kate Viera, we learn about a writing project emerging from Colombia's indigenous communities which deploy writing to begin a process of reconciliation and healing, a process required after the extended drug wars which marked that nation.

Our final essay points to a fundamental truth about working for peace and reconciliation. To create the future, we must unlearn the harmful lessons of the past; lessons which might have legitimated violence, discrimination, and hatred; lessons which distort our own self-worth and sense of personal agency. In her essay, Safiya Ibn Garba takes on this issue through a discussion of the lack of power and agency accorded to women in Nigeria. Deploying models of how to "unlearn" harmful beliefs and attitudes, Garba discusses a program which has enabled Nigerian women to claim

greater control of their lives and futures. It is on this positive note that this section concludes.

In our final section, we feature a series of reports and policy papers related to many of the issues discussed in the previous sections. Here the goal is twofold. As discussed above, this journal operates with the mission to draw together the knowledge being produced in social movements, universities, and non-profit organizations. It is only by integrating these domains that theories and practice will be conjoined into an effective plan of action. We include these policy papers, then, to allow the Transformations reader to move among advocate voices, university scholars, and policy analysts as they consider what it means to initiate peace, democracy, and human rights. We also include these policy reports because no publication or institution has a monopoly on important insights. By including these reports, then, we also hope to introduce Transformations readers to other sites, locations, from which to learn, gain insight, and support for their work. Which is to say, real change requires collaboration.

In future issues, we will continue to add sections to Transformations. We intend to provide reviews of newly published books which might be of use to our readers. We will circulate key questions facing those working for peace, democracy, and human rights, asking our readers to provide short responses. That is, we will consistently seek the collective wisdom of our readers. Our hope is that Transformations will be more than just a series of articles. We hope to become a community of shared values and goals. We hope, that is, to make Transformations not just a title of a journal, but a statement of what we collectively can achieve.

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Dr Steve Parks is Professor of English and Chair of the Democratic Futures Working Group at the University of Virginia. For the past decade, he has been actively working at the intersection of democratic advocacy and academic research, with a specific focus on the Middle East/North Africa. As part of this work, Parks has co-founded Syrians for Truth and Justice, a non-profit based in Paris and Istanbul dedicated to documenting human rights abuses in the Syrian Conflict. Parks co-founded The Twiza Project, an alliance of Middle Eastern, North African, and North American professors dedicated to sponsoring international dialogues on peace, justice, and democracy. He is also the founder of New City Community Press, a publishing project dedicated to supporting oppressed communities having a platform to speak and organize in their own interests. Parks has authored three books, and over 30 articles and chapters. He has created academic research series, such as Working and Writing for Change, served as an editor of academic journals, such as Reflections, and been appointed to leading academic monographs series, such as Studies in Writing and Rhetoric.

Dr Lori Shorr is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Temple University. Her doctoral research emerged from an interest in Critical and Cultural Studies, with an emphasis on how social changes are connected to, and influenced by, narratives, be they political, historical, social, or personal. She dedicated over 20 years to public policy work on issues of equity and education. Shorr served as Special Assistant to three Pennsylvania Secretaries of Education, and as the Chief Education Officer for the City of Philadelphia set the mayor's policy agenda in K-12 and higher education. Shorr has been developing university courses centred around the theories which help to explain how power, representation, constructions of social justice, and community interact with the "lived experiences" and policy realities in specific historical junctions.

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SECTION 1:

Initiating Peace and Reconciliation

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When Dreams of Peace are Surrounded by War

Paul Alehanov

These photos were taken in Lviv during the first summer of the full-scaled Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Lviv is the major city of the western part of Ukraine. It is close to the Polish border. Many people from the Eastern, Northern, and Southern regions, like Kyiv, Kharkly, and Odessa, had moved there looking for a safe place inside the country.

The situation on the frontline had started to change: Ukrainian Armed Forces were starting to push Russians back to the border in some areas. It gave people hope that the war will end sooner than expected. All of them have been dreaming of good news from the frontlines.

It was before massive missile attacks were started, before the major power outages.

The war had been ongoing for almost four months, but the summer was still beautiful and warm.

WAR, UKRAINE, RUSSIA, LVIV

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I want to show a different face of Russians

An interview with Yevgeniya Chirkova, Russian Peace Advocate

Interview by Lori Shorr, Temple University

Abstract

The present article features an interview with the Russian peace advocate, Yevgeniya Chirkova. In the interview, Chirkova reflects on her leadership in founding the grassroots group “defend Khimki Forest” and organizing extensive advocacy campaigns in response to logging plans of the Russian state. Chirkova also led protests against Russian Parliamentary elections. Her activism resulted in her receiving the Women of Courage Award by then Vice-President Joe Biden.

Chirkova also shares insights on civic activism based on her work in 20 countries. In the interview, she emphasizes the healing power that resulted from supporting Ukrainian refugees. She discusses her approach, motivation, and intentional efforts in showing “a different face of Russians” through sharing stories about Russian activists’ work worldwide and their attempts to provide support for refugees.

WAR, RUSSIA, UKRAINE, CLIMATE CHANGE, ACTIVISM, REFUGEES, ADVOCACY

Yevgeniya Chirkova is a Russian peace advocate.

In 2007, Chirikova created the grassroots group, Defend Khimki Forest, in response to noticing a red "X" painted on many trees. She soon discovered there were plans to build a motorway through forests. The "X" was marking which trees would be cut down. Defend Khimki Forest soon discovered the funds for the motorway would benefit a Putin-aligned oligarch. A national and international pressure campaign to block the motorway followed, exposing Chirikova and her family to great personal risk. It was during this period, Chirikova helped to create Activatica.org, a Russian "non-profit organized by activists and journalists", which works in over 20 countries to provide information on civic activism.

In 2011, Chirikova became a leading figure in the mass protests against Russian Parliamentary elections, for which she became the target of the state-controlled media. That same year, then Vice-President Joe Biden awarded Chirikova the Women of Courage Award. One year later, Chirikova was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize.

In 2012, Foreign Policy named her one of the top "Global Thinkers". Despite this public profile, Chirikova still faced targeting within Russia, and has moved to Estonia.

Since the Russian attack on Ukraine, Chirikova has worked to provide support to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. As she notes in this interview, "I want to show a different face of Russians".

Lori Shorr: Transformations is a journal dedicated to connecting individuals and communities working to resolve conflict, create peace, and expand democracy. For our first issue, we wanted to talk to someone who has been actively working on all these issues, specifically in a context that is the focus of global attention. We were hoping to learn from such individuals about what is happening on the ground as they try to organize, to make daily life better, and to create communities and nations where peace exists. Given your extensive work in across all these concerns, beginning in Russia and now focused on the Ukrainian conflict, we immediately thought of you. We are very grateful that you are taking time from your important work to talk with me today.

Perhaps the best way to begin is start at the beginning. Can you share story of what motivated you to begin your advocacy work? What was that moment where you decided you had to become publicly involved? That you had to act on an issue?

Yevgeniya Chirikova: That is a very good question. My current work started approximately one year ago, after this disgusting war against Ukraine began. It's really changed my life. Before that, of course I was an environmental activist with my husband. Sixteen years ago, around 2007, we had organized one of the first grassroots movements in Russia to defend the Khimki Forest. After the Khimki Forest campaign, we then organized an effort with other Russian activists against the unfair Russian Parliamentary elections in 2011 and 2012. It was a huge campaign within Russia. This led to the Russian Duma adopting the disgusting Russian Foreign Agent Law in 2012, which required any organization receiving outside funding to register as a “foreign agent”. When in 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, we had to register our non-governmental agency, Activatica. Soon after, my husband and I decided to move our family to Estonia because it was becoming impossible to organize within Russia. We continued to help for dozens of grassroots groups, organize independent media, and disseminate information about grassroots activities within Russia. When the Russian war against Ukraine began, we had useful skills. We had knowledge how it's possible

to attract money for the needs faced by Ukrainians. We knew it was possible to organize a campaign because, if you are activist, you can organize what you need.

The Russian invasion has led to thousands of Ukraine refugees being deported from occupied territory in Ukraine to Russia. We were in a unique situation because our anti-war network was located in different parts across the globe. We had locations in the U.S.A., Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, Georgia, Armenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Kazakhstan, and, of course, Estonia. And we had activists who were still in Russia. Thanks to these collaborations, this network, we were able to help people who had been deported to Russia without any support or money. We were able to help them escape and find refuge in safer countries. We also organized different kinds of support. For instance, we have seven shelters across the world, in places such as Poland, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Bulgaria. We help refugees with staff, food, and medical support. We also support some on-line schools for the children of Ukrainian refugees. And, we also try to help Ukraine directly. We send cars carrying special generators to ensure their heating systems will work and devices for cooking in case their family don't have electricity. Through these programs, we have helped thousands and thousands of Ukraine refugees.

And for me, at this moment, such work is my opportunity to survive. After this war began, it was a very depressing moment for me. My roots are in Ukraine. My grandfather was from Ukraine, from the Shostka in the north-east of Ukraine. There is a huge sense of shame for me, for my husband, because it's our “Motherland” that is destroying Ukraine every day and killing Ukrainian children every day, and raping women and young girls. It caused us immense pain. For us, it was an absolutely a form of therapy activity to provide help for Ukraine refugees. It helps us to survive.

Shorr: This is an incredible story of commitment and courage. I’m sure others will be intimidated by all you have accomplished as they think about their own possible contributions. So, let’s step back just a bit. Many people see injustice in the world. They read it in the newspaper. They see it online. They think this isn't right. Something

should be done. But not everybody mobilizes people to address injustice. If you look back, what do you think it was that led you to actually do this work? Where do you think it came from? Why did you say to yourself, "No, it's not okay for me just to disagree, I have to do something?".

Chirikova: This is a very good question because I'm from Soviet Union originally. I'm 46. I was a Young Pioneer, which was a program for young children similar to the U.S. Scouts programs. I remember the Soviet Union very well. I remember Cold War. And I remember that during this time it was absolutely unusual for anyone to decide to say "no" out of disgust for a decision by the authorities. When 16 years ago, I decided to organize one of the first grassroots environmentalist groups in Russia, to my relatives, it was absolutely crazy decision. My brother invited me to café, and he asked me many times, "What has happened to me?". He thought I might have some mental problems. "Why did I decide to protect the forest"? It's so unusual, it's so strange. He was really concerned about me because my relatives decided that I'm really crazy. It was absolutely unusual situation for normal Russians.

But step by step, we were able to show a new pattern of behaviour for other Russians. We showed that it's possible to say "no". In the past, our mentality had been to think it was really strange to say "no" to authorities because it's extremely dangerous in Russia. The Soviet totalitarian regime had absolutely changed the behaviour of normal people. I think that our normal human behaviour is to protect our rights. It's our biology. It's normal. Animals protect their rights, their territory. It's normal. Then the Soviet Union collapsed. I'm the generation who observed the change of political systems. I remember Perestroika. I remember how my childhood values changed. And maybe because of this experience, I realized that it's possible to say "no". Of course, we still have authorities, but they are not Gods. We have Putin, but he's not Tsar. He is only a manager. He's a disgusting manager. He's a crazy man. But he is not Tsar. So, I believed it was possible to organize a campaign against him. It's possible to object any disgusting decision by Putin's regime as well as any disgusting decision of North Korea's disgusting regime, and any other regime.

Shorr: You began your work in Russia, but now live in Estonia. You have suffered real life consequences for your work. I'm wondering if you would share some of the difficulties you faced in taking public stands in Russia. How has your work changed since your move to Estonia?

Chirikova: Of course, in Russia it is very dangerous for us. I have two girls, 21 and 16 years old. It was when I was pregnant with my second girl, I found strange marks on my lovely Khimki Forest. At the time, I was very busy businesswoman. My husband and I have an engineering business in Moscow. I was having a difficult pregnancy. But I had a time to walk in the forest where I observed the strange marks. We then found out about a strange plan to destroy Khimki Forest for building a new motorway and infrastructure and development on our forest.

But as an act of revenge, the Federal Security Service (FSB) tried to take my kids away. It started after the FSB knocked my door. My babysitter had to hide my small children under bed, where they had to stay for several hours. After that, she observed FSB guy under our windows on the street and how they followed me with my children. It was a huge shock for my girls. But, thanks to my sharing broadly this information with the public, I was able to protect my children. It was at that point, we decided to organize media to support activists and grassroots organizations. We realized that it's a very good opportunity to save our lives and their lives. That is why Activatica.org. was created. And our mission was to organize services for grassroots groups in Russia. I think, though, that my daughters have continued to pay a price with their mental health. After the FSB incident, my older daughter had a big problem with depression. We organized for her to receive therapy in Estonia, to send her to a psychiatry hospital, to have medication for a year. Even now, at this point, she is still recovering. I'm very concerned about her all the time. I think it's really very high price for me, like, for mum.

And then there is the story of my good friend journalist, Mikhail Beketov. He decided to share information about our activity. He lived in my town in Khimki, near the Khimki

Forest as well. When I shared information with him, he started to publish different articles about our activity. One day, authorities decided to take revenge and organize a huge physical attack against him. He became an absolutely disabled person. I remember the first time I found Mikhail in the hospital. He had lost 50 kilos because doctors had to amputate parts of his legs and fingers. I could not stand. I fell down on the floor. It was a shock for me because it was my friend. He was a tall man and very tough. A tall, big man. And he became an absolutely disabled person. He could not speak normally. And he never returned to his normal life. He died five years later at the age of 55. He paid a very high price for his support of independent media. He was the first reporter who explained that the authorities had decided to cut down forest for building motorway and infrastructure. That it was a case of corruption. He shared true information about our activity. He disseminated this information very loudly and authorities took revenge him. I realized that it's extremely dangerous to be activists in Russia.

Maybe because I have this experience, I understand other Russian people who are really afraid to say no to authorities. I'm very concerned about other people, those who live on North Korea, for example, and other countries where people organize struggle against their regimes. I understand that sometimes it's extremely dangerous. And it’s interesting where we had experience in Russia where we worked so hard and sometimes forgot about our conditions and conditions of people on our team because for us, it’s very important to do our activity. But we don't concern ourselves about psychological condition of our team. And I think it's a huge mistake because in Europe, people are very concerned about their teams and about the people on their teams. And, of course, in Estonia, it is a very safe and very calm country. And thanks to these very good conditions, we were able to organize a lot of programs for support to Ukraine and Ukraine refugees. Because we're never concerned about police who knock at our doors.

Shorr: That makes a big difference in your life, right?

Chirikova: In Russia, I was seen as an enemy of the country by Putin and his government. I remember after Joe Biden, who was then Vice-President, gave me an award for courage, I became enemy of Russia immediately. I remember the hate campaign that followed on television. I remember when some Kremlin people followed me, shouting horrible things at me. It was very uncomfortable to feel that I was very good at work, but, in reality, the authorities and society was reacting so negatively. But in Estonia, I feel support of people. For example, a couple days ago I published on my Facebook page a post about a man from Mariupol. He had a huge problem with his health. He had a piece of bomb shrapnel hit him in his head. He can't see or hear well. I ask help of people to send money to our NGO so we could support his surgery in Turkey. Over two weeks, we got USD 4,000, which we then supplemented with a USD 10,000 mini-grant.

Shorr: You had this experience where you see something that you think is an injustice. You start to organize one of the first grassroots campaigns in Russia in response. Now 16 years later, you're organizing around the globe to support Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. What do you see as being a difference between when you organized 16 years ago and what you're doing now? What's changed in the world of organizing in your sense of things?

Chirikova: Of course, even today, I still use my skills as a business manager, skills learned earning my MBA, because it's the same skills when you organize something. I use skills from my business school, from my MBA. My husband, he has a PhD in math. He has the skills of a researcher and scientist. And he has managerial skills because he was also head of our engineering company in Moscow. We used these skills for our activist work in Russia. Now we use these organizational skills in Estonia, where we opened a non-governmental organization. We are learning every day something from our Estonia organization because it's really, very great when you have this opportunity to learn something new about organizing in Europe.

But, since our first campaign, we have also moved to incorporate the possibilities of social media. I use Activatica, our social media information network, to disseminate information. And, of course, I use our network, anti-war network where I ask different activists to share information. And together, we collected this money. At this moment, we are sending this money to the hospital in Turkey. It was absolutely amazing. But in Russia, such activity is very dangerous because the authorities can come after people in Russia who supported us. They can come to organizations in Russia that protect Ukrainian refugees. It's extremely dangerous. It's impossible within Russia. But in Estonia, it's absolutely normal. I feel that in Estonia I can organize any campaign for support to Ukraine and Ukraine refugees. It's absolutely exciting.

Shorr: Many advocates who have had to leave their home countries still want to support people back home. Given how powerful social media is, in general, and the possibilities of certain technologies, such as Zoom, they can continue to have an impact as well as maintain connections with the people back in your country. Do you find that to be the case? How have different social media platforms informed your work?

Chirikova: We use independent media and different social media networks. And through our network, we disseminate information about anti-war campaigns. At this moment we are seen in Russia and outside Russia. We have collected a million views together on Instagram, on TikTok. In fact, my older daughter helped me by organizing the Tik Tok channel, where she disseminates true information about our anti-war campaign within Russia as well as other important news. She has garnered over a million views at this point. I think that at this moment activists have a lot of opportunities to share information through social media. It's helped activists to survive in any places thanks to the internet. It's possible to share any information and it's extremely important for us.

And at this moment, for example, we decided to organize a new project, an anti-propaganda project. We decided to organize information about Putin within Russia on

different Russian social media platforms. In Russia we have a special social media and special website, so we want to push this information to the people. And at this moment we are trying to find money for our ambitious plans. And I would be very grateful if, through this journal, donors might learn about and support this campaign, about our efforts to support Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. And, of course, through this effort we will be able to give jobs to activists and journalists who were able to escape from Russia, who came without money to Europe, to Georgia, to Armenia. We give them a job, a salary. And, of course, it's a win-win strategy because we work against Putin's regime and help for people to survive, help activists to survive.

Shorr: Through Transformations and Generations For Peace, we will be able to reach young people who are starting to consider being civically engaged in their communities, working for peace and reconciliation. Young people who strive to be somebody who makes a difference in this world. What advice would you give them?

Chirikova: I very much like this young generation. It's a lovely generation because it is the same age as my kids. They are amazing people, very empathetic, and very concerned about the conditions in the world. I think that my advice to them is to care for themselves. It's the first step. If you feel good yourself, then you can share your good emotion with other people. It's a big problem for activists who too often burn out because they don’t take care of themselves. I notice a lot of activists with this problem. It's a very important resource to have energy. And sometimes activists absolutely forgot about sleeping, food, and exercise. I think that that would be my advice. Be concerned about you condition, because if you have an energy, you have energy for sharing with other people. My second piece of advice is to learn the new technologies. Thanks to technology, it's possible to change the world. But they're very smart children, a very smart young generation. They know that it's possible to change the world. They know it without me telling them. Unfortunately, though, they not concerned about themself and forgot about their health which is a key resource. And when you're so young, you are not concerned about health because you think it's a normal, I can work without sleeping. But after 40 years old, you realize it's impossible.

Shorr: I am sure young people would wonder how you have managed to continue to do this work, given the emotional costs you have talked about in this interview. The impact on your children. Or seeing your friend in the hospital, where you fell on the ground with grief. I can imagine someone might think, “I’m not going to do this work anymore because look what's happened". But that wasn't the reaction you had. That moment, did it catalyze you? How were you able to continue?

Chirikova: Of course, I am concerned about safety. I live in a safe country now. So, for me, personally, I don't have any risk and I realize it. But I am very concerned about refugees from Ukraine. I remember one case this past summer, I bought tickets for a family from Ukraine, one of whom was young girl, five years old. She had lost her leg in a Russian bombing attack. Her mother was pregnant, but lost her baby. I bought tickets for this family and organized our network to provide medical support. My task was to buy the tickets for them. And when I was doing it, I cried because it was impossible to do so with the normal feeling of buying tickets. I remember that afterwards, I could not sleep. And I had a similar moment after Bucha in May, when we received information about torture, about the crimes of Putin’s army. For me and for my husband, it was so painful. We could not breathe normally. It was so impossible. It was so disgusting. I don't have the words for this crime. We decided to give our Jeep to Ukraine army. We sent our car to the Ukraine army. And only after that could we breathe normally because, I feel, by doing this we were supporting Ukrainians. We are doing something against this disgusting regime. Such actions help us to survive. For us it's like therapy. It's the best therapy to organize some activity to help Ukraine and to help other people. For us, our NGO activity is not just a job. For us, it's like a therapy and we are really happy people, because we can realize our dreams on our job. And I'm absolutely happy woman at this moment, because I have very good family, a very good work helping others, and live in a village in a forest. It was my dream.

Shorr: I think it is important for young people to hear that deciding to be engaged and to organize against injustice and for peace doesn't mean you have to be an unhappy person for your whole life. In fact, you're saying it's just the opposite, that you can find

happiness in doing something that is for sure very, very difficult and very, very, brave work, but work also can bring happiness.

Chirikova: Absolutely. And it's a great opportunity to know and learn from exciting and very interesting people. At this moment, I'm so happy because I had an absolutely excellent opportunity to speak every day with such interesting and good people. For example, today I had an interview with a very interesting person. He's a journalist from Russia. He escaped from Russia because he was not allowed to write about the "special operation". It was impossible to write the truth about the war, so he escaped. He's really a hero. We talked for an hour. It was so exciting for me. I have this privilege to speak with interesting people and to invite interesting people into conversation every day. So, it's so good, because it changed the condition of my life. Absolutely. It's changed condition of my life. Gave me and my husband new opportunities.

Shorr: You've been so generous with your time, but one more question. As a Russian citizen, you're working to help Ukrainians as they are being victimized by this war. What's the message about reconciliation that's part of this work? Do you think of your work as part of peacemaking and reconciliation as well as just being triage for people who are in such pain? Do you also think longer term about it in that way?

Chirikova: Yes. I think that as this moment for any Russian activist, it's like therapy to organize campaigns for support Ukraine refugees and to support Ukraine. For us, it's really therapy. I realize that for me, it's like survival method. I think it is the same story with other activists. It helps you and, because of this work, we keep our activist skills. And I believe, I really believe, that in case Putin regime collapses, destroys itself, thanks to our activity, Russian activist activity, we will be able to return and organize a normal democracy country. So, it is really very important to keep our activist skills.

And, of course, we have demand for democracy. It's very important point because thanks to this demanding for democracy, we have other values. We want to change the situation. We want to organize a normal country. And for many activists who escape

from Russia, Russian activists who escaped to other country, we have a unique situation because we can learn how it's possible to organize a democratic society. It's unique experience and we can share this experience in the future with Russian society because people in Russia don't have any experience of democracy. We never had in our story democracy in a life, never.

Shorr: Anything else you'd want to share with either people who are doing research on this, so the professors or the students and those who are thinking about getting involved? Any last things you'd want to mention?

Chirikova: I want to say thank you for your attention and I kindly ask to share information about our anti-war network because I think it's extremely important to share information to the world that Russians activists are working to provide a lot of support for Ukraine refugees and for Ukraine. And I think we show another face of Russia. And I want to explain that Russia is not represented by Putin's face. I want to show a different face of Russians. And I want to highlight that I am only one through the many, many activists who every day organize activity for support Ukraine and Ukraine refugees. And for me, it's extremely important to share this information through journal. And thank you a lot for your interview. For me, it's very, very important.

Shorr: It's a privilege for me to talk to you. You're a brave and wonderful woman.

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SECTION 2:

Individual Articles

TRANSFORMATIONS
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Gukurahundi's Ghosts: A Cautionary Tale of Failed Justice and Reconciliation & the Rise of Separatism in Matabeleland from 1982 to the Present

Naseemah Mohammed, University of Virginia

Abstract

This article highlights the atrocities committed by the North Korean-trained 5th Brigade of the Zimbabwean army that include killing thousands of civilians and dissidents in the Matabeleland and Midlands between 1983 and 1987. It analyzes the politicized nature of post-conflict reconciliation through tracing the Zimbabwean government's attempts to control the narratives of victims, citizens, and even intellectuals. This control is embodied in firm silencing practiced through legal censorship, outright suppression, and official commissions for truth and reconciliation. The article features testimonials from survivors, leaders of

the civil society groups, ministry officials, and military veterans from the most affected regions. The author argues that the failure to reconcile embodied in incessant suppression of affected population voices continuously feed ongoing social, political, and ethnolinguistic chasms in the country. The article concludes by highlighting the role of collective and creative efforts in establishing new political possibilities through truth-telling, a process primordial to heal historical wounds and hold perpetrators accountable.

GENOCIDE, ZIMBABWE, UNITY ACCORD, SHONA, NDEBELE, KALANGA

Gukurahundi, which in the Shona language means the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains, and to which survivors refer to as an attempted genocide, involved a systematic targeting of civilians, liberation war veterans, and dissidents in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of Zimbabwe by a North Korean-trained unit of the Zimbabwean army, the 5th Brigade. Between 1983, just two years after Zimbabwe gained independence, and 1987, the 5th Brigade killed thousands of people in the region and tortured and brutalized countless others, leaving them in life-altering economic and social circumstances.

The Zimbabwean state has since brutally censored all citizen discussion and memorialization of the atrocities, while simultaneously supporting various National Truth and Reconciliation Commissions which have yet to publicly release an official account or hold any individual accountable. That the country's current leadership oversaw the atrocities is significant in that any account of the atrocities invites contestation, lest the leadership be implicated in war crimes.

This essay foremostly highlights the politicized nature of post-conflict reconciliation through tracing the Zimbabwean government's attempts to control the narratives of victims, citizens, and even intellectuals such as journalists through legal censorship, outright suppression, and through official commissions of truth and reconciliation.

This government silence and silencing is then juxtaposed with personal interviews, quoted anonymously here for the safety of the interviewees, with civil society organization leaders, teachers, ministry officials, military veterans, and survivors of the Gukurahundi massacres; these interviews not only fill in the narrative gaps, but highlight the ongoing personal, communal, and national effects of Gukurahundi, including generational trauma, regional ethn0-linguistic divisions, and regional financial marginalization. This article argues that the failure to reconcile and the continued suppression and marginalization of the affected population has strongly contributed to ongoing social, political, and ethn0-linguistic divisions in the country.

Given what is at stake for the government in power, all outright discussions of Gukurahundi, including this article, put authors and interviewees at risk. The interviews contained herein were conducted in 2014 for a study on the long-term effects of Gukurahundi on the education system in the affected regions of Matabeleland and the Midlands. Being from the region, individuals were willing to speak with me, albeit in private and in the absence of family members. The interviews abruptly ended when I attended a community gathering in Matopos, one of the most affected regions, and was slipped a note by one attendant who knew of my questions that noted, “plain-clothed policemen were in attendance”, meaning that the communities remain surveilled and that I may be a person of interest. I promptly excused myself for the bathroom and sped off, knowing that if I were searched, my notebook and tape recorder might put the lives of the 42 individuals I had interviewed at risk. I held on to the interviews for nine years, with this being the first publication of portions of the interviews, lest I put my family at risk or be barred from entering the country and not be able to conduct further research for my doctoral degree.

There has, however, been much written about Gukurahundi from the periphery of an official national narrative; journal articles, memoirs, creative fictional stories, and art installations have addressed the aftermath and trauma of Gukurahundi. Jocelyn Alexander refers to this phenomenon of official suppression and unofficial discussion as “noisy silence” which “occupied a productive middle ground where collective,

creative efforts delineated and demanded new political possibilities and terms of belonging through truth-telling, re-imagined and mourned nations and cross-generational attempts to heal and hold perpetrators to account" (Alexander, 2021). These divergent, collective accounts have become crucial given the renewed interest of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the rise of a secessionist movement from the affected regions; the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) is a political movement aimed at re-establishing a pre-colonial majority Ndebele state in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of the county (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011).

One might also trace the history of the government's role in the atrocities and its continued oppressive censorship through the lens of international organizations which have since petitioned the government to cease human rights abuses regarding Gukurahundi. On 23rd May 1997, the Secretary General of Amnesty International, Pierre Sané, penned an open letter to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in advance of his acceptance of Chair of the Organization of African Unity to "…urge Your Excellency to commit yourself and your government to resolving Zimbabwe's need for greater openness and public discussion of the massive human rights violations that took place in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the 1980s violations that were occurring in Matabeleland" (Amnesty International, 1997). The calls went unheeded and the massacres and disappearing of citizens continued through 1987, when Robert Mugabe signed the Unity Accords agreement to cease the campaign officially. Since then, leaders who oversaw the atrocities have assumed higher leadership positions in the country, and not a single perpetrator has been called to justice.

Gukurahundi provides an example of the intensifying dynamics of repression of and threats to journalists and scholars working on controversial or taboo topics. The political and politicized nature of these topics reveal the political nature of scholarly "objectivity"—what is "neutral and objective" scholarship in one time and milieu can become "subversive, activist agitation" in another. As a result of the so-called "post-truth" era and the profusion of "reality bubbles" made possible by social media, such work by journalists, scholars, and activists committed to uncovering, understanding,

and articulating truth in the face of state, corporate, and other oppressive powers has become ever more important.[i]

Historical Origins of Gukurahundi

To understand the events which culminated in Gukurahundi, one must first understand the history of violence within the ruling party, in addition to the historical antagonism and mistrust between the two parties (ZANU and ZAPU) of the independence movement and the regional instability cultivated by the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Gukurahundi means the physical winnowing and separation of the wheat from the chaff by the early rains. The phrase was first used to describe the control and elimination of enemies and perceived "sellouts" in the 1970s within the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU), one of the two political parties and militias that led the fight for Zimbabwean independence. It was from this political party that Robert Mugabe became the first president-elect of the newly independent nation in 1980 (Alexander, 2021). The phrase was again employed just three years into his tenure, when Robert Mugabe sent a force to decimate the Matabeleland and Midlands regions, which were the traditional base of support for the rival ZAPU political party (the other main independence political party and militia). In crippling ZAPU's base, Mugabe hoped to complete his consolidation of power over the new nation of Zimbabwe by eliminating any viable political opposition to his rule.

Before 1963, the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU), was the foremost political party aiming to secure Zimbabwe's independence from the white-ruled Rhodesian state. The new Maoist ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) party split from ZAPU to create two separate parties working towards the same goal of national independence. Each party had its own military wing: ZAPU's military wing was ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) and was Cuban and Russian-trained, and ZANU's military wing was the Chinese-trained ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army). Given the Cold War politics of the time, historians such as Patisa Nyathi, have suggested that these alliances with Communist states discouraged the

British from intervening to stop the massacres that occurred during Gukurahundi (Scarnecchia, 2011).

Although the initial split of ZAPU into two parties did not follow ethnic lines, separate regional recruitment and mutual antagonism "led to a growing association between ZAPU and Ndebele-speakers" (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe & Legal Resources Foundation, 2008). By independence in April 1980, ZAPU was almost exclusively associated with Ndebele-speakers and ZANU with Shona-speakers. It is important here to add that there are several ethno-linguistic groups in Zimbabwe, the Ndebele and Shona groups are the most populous and dominant, leading to an unfortunate subsuming of other tribes under these two dominant groupings, despite their distinct histories and identities.

Despite both forces fighting for independence, there was fierce conflict and competition between the two. After independence, during the disarmament and attempted incorporation of troops from both liberation movements into the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), the antagonism and mistrust between the two forces led both militias to stockpile weapons. ZANU won the elections, and a number of ZIPRA soldiers deserted the national army, refused to enter the disarmament zones, and some even actively took up arms against the government. These former ZIPRA fighters refused to disarm for a number of reasons, but the most common reason given was fear of being killed by former ZANLA soldiers in the army, which was not infrequent (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000).

Political relations between ZAPU and ZANU eventually broke down after two major clashes between guerrillas in two of the disarmament camps, which were meant to house soldiers until they could be integrated into the army. Mugabe then demoted ZAPU's Joshua Nkomo from Minister of Home Affairs to Minister without portfolio.

More ominous, however, were the rumors of the arrival, in 1981, of "106 North Korean instructors and quantities of equipment and arms intended for training a special Fifth

Brigade which, according to press reports, would be used to 'wipe out dissidents and criminals', including those 'found in the army'" (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000). ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo questioned the necessity of this separate armed group, presciently fearing that it would be used "for the possible imposition of a one-party state" (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe & Legal Resources Foundation, 2008). The final political rift occurred when the government announced that it found large caches of weapons in the compound of the ZAPU-affiliated company Nitram and outside of ZIPRA assembly points (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe & Legal Resources Foundation, 2008). Despite the questionable nature of the evidence, Mugabe argued that the arms caches were part of a conspiracy to overthrow his government. Although the ZAPU leaders were exonerated in a High Court, proving that they were storing and passing on weapons for the African National Congress (ANC) fighting the Apartheid government in South Africa, Mugabe used this as a pretext to have the ZAPU leadership thrown in jail until 1986.

Mugabe then deployed the special 5th Brigade in January 1983 to track down and eliminate "dissidents", a category which included deserters of the army and any who were opposed to the outcome of the elections and Mugabe's rule. The 1997 report of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation Report (CCJP), states that although there were no more than 200 dissidents in Matabeleland North, and 400 altogether countrywide, the 5th Brigade, together with Police Support Units and auxiliary army units totaled more than 5,000. "In other words, the ratio of government troops to dissidents in Matabeleland North was at least 25:1" (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, 2008). There is also evidence which points to the fact that many of the "so called" dissidents were planted by South Africa's Apartheid regime in attempt to fuel conflict between the ZIPRA, Joshua Nkomo's party's military wing, and Mugabe's ZANLA militia, fearing ZIPRA's alliance with Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military arm of the African National Congress (ANC), which was fighting the Apartheid government in South Africa. In addition to attempts to kill ZANU leadership, the

Apartheid government launched “Operation Drama”, which recruited and armed a fake Zimbabwean insurgent group, dubbed “Super ZAPU”, which posed as a ZIPRA dissident force (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000). “Super ZAPU” dissidents were however, distinct from the ex-ZIPRA dissidents, and the latter made sure to distance themselves from this South African-sponsored group. Nonetheless, “Operation Drama” successfully contributed to the instability of the region and provided Mugabe with a useful pretext for the operations of the 5th Brigade.

While uncorroborated by external sources, many interviewees were of the opinion that many of the so-called “dissidents” were also planted by ZANU-PF as justification for the atrocities. Senior ZAPU members interviewed for this project outright accused Mugabe of planting dissidents. David Coltart, a former Minister of Education and co-author of the CCJP report, pointed out that all dissident activity ceased immediately after the Unity Accord agreement, which many recognized as ZANU-PF subsuming, and therefore eliminating the opposition party entirely. All of this indicates that the dissident threat which the 5th Brigade was trained and deployed to eliminate, was, at least, in part, a creation of outside political forces in order to create and justify violence against the people of Matebeleland and the Midlands, and consolidate the political power of ZANU. Under the cover of targeting dissidents, the Gukurahundi soldiers were trained to target civilians and punish perceived political/ethnic differences. As Eppel notes, “the 5th Brigade told victims that they were being punished because they were Ndebele – that all Ndebeles supported ZAPU and all ZAPU supporters were dissidents” (Eppel, 2005). Moreover, all evidence, including interviews carried out with ZAPU soldiers for a different project, highlights the targeting of all former ZAPU fighters, affiliates, and communities. Between the deployment of the 5th Brigade in 1983, and the Unity agreement between ZAPU and ZANU in 1987, over an estimated 10,000 civilians were killed or “disappeared”, and many more were tortured and raped.

Government Repression and Control of the Narrative

After an outcry from international bodies and effectively dismantling the opposition ZAPU party, Robert Mugabe extended a “Unity Accord” agreement to the ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo, who was released from jail in 1986 after serving 36 months. The government then disbanded the 5th Brigade in 1987, when Nkomo signed the Unity Accord and was named Vice President, by all accounts marking the elimination of any significant political opposition to ZANU. Robert Mugabe therefore became the leader of a de facto single party state and remained in power until 2017 when his own party, led by Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, ousted him. Given that Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, widely believed to have ordered many of the killings and atrocities of Gukurahundi during his tenure as Head of Intelligence, became the Minister of Justice after the events of Gukurahundi, and is the current head of state, it is no surprise that the government refuses to revisit the events of Gukurahundi. The events of the massacres directly implicate him in the killings, which has resulted in the stifling of alternative narratives about the killings and the role of Mnagnagwa and the state. In addition to endorsing biased accounts of the independence history in the school curriculum (Barnes, 2007) which overlook the critical role of ZAPU, the Mugabe regime, and subsequently Mnangagwa’s government, has actively attempted to prevent individuals and communities from speaking about Gukurahundi (Scarnecchia, 2011).

Almost three decades since the first call for accountability, on 22nd December 2022, Amnesty International published an article damning the arrest of three activists by Zimbabwean security forces who were calling on “national peace and sought to honour the victims of the Gukurahundi Massacres” (Amnesty International, 2022). Of the arrests, Flavia Mwangovya, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, is quoted stating, “‘The Zimbabwean authorities have previously destroyed memorial plaques put in place by local activists, in a clear sign that they wish to permanently censor any discussion or remembrance of the Gukurahundi massacres’” (Amnesty International, 2022). While the ruling party, ZANU-PF has long been condemned for its brutal responses to criticism and opposition, these recent arrests are significant in that they violate the recent recommendations by the National

Truth and Reconciliation Commission that a process of truth and reconciliation should take place in affected communities.

Given that the only systematic report on the atrocities was published in 1997 by the CCJP, communities continue to call upon the government to acknowledge the atrocities and release government-commissioned reports carried out in the 1980s, which were never published. The first report, which was chaired by late former Chief Justice Enoch Dumbutshena, supposedly reviewed the Gukurahundi massacres, and the second report, overseen by Justice Simplisius Chihambakwe, was believed to have investigated the fighting between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces, the military forces of ZANU and ZAPU in the town of Entumbane and within the demobilization camps (Zimbabwe Situation, 2022). Both reports were never published after being presented to then-Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and have since been described as lost.

The misplacement or attempts to withhold the reports, in addition to the failed commissions offer proof of the government's knowledge of the events of Gukurahundi and its calculated attempts to obfuscate this history. Further acknowledgment of the severity of the massacres in the region can be discerned in the government's attempts to leverage the calls for peace and reconciliation for political gain. An interviewee who worked within a civil society organization, that is a non-state actor organization that works with and advocates for communities, noted that he was part of a government-sponsored committee in 1999 which aimed to document the grievances and draw up compensatory packages as part of a truth and reconciliation mission. Well into the process, the interviewee recognized the commission as a mere campaign strategy by Robert Mugabe at a time in which the Prime Minister's popularity was waning. The committee carried out their investigations and listened to as well as documented survivor testimonies. On the day that committee was scheduled to meet with and present their findings to Robert Mugabe, they were informed that there was no allotted money for the truth and reconciliation process, let alone compensation for the victims. The interviewee recalled his frustration,

> "[A government official] said, 'I'm from the President's office, there is no money'. So, the government wanted to use… the issue of compensation as a campaign strategy because really the drive was… to compensate people" (Mthwakazi National Party, 2014).

Owing to this history of failed promises and the banning of any memorialization, the more recent promises by the government have been viewed with skepticism. When Emmerson Mnangagwa, who at the time of Gukurahundi was Head of Intelligence and was rumored to have overseen the atrocities, became President in 2017, he began to address the history of Gukurahundi under renewed calls by local civil society and international organizations. According to the National Transitional Justice Working Group Zimbabwe (NTJWGZ), President Mnangagwa met with civil society organizations in 2019, and in 2021 with local chiefs from Matabeleland. According to a member of the NTJWGZ, citizens and civil society organizations are concerned that the chiefs are loyal to the President and that they have been asked to preside over the truth hearings instead of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), an independent commission which falls within section 251 of Zimbabwe's constitution (Muyendesi, n.d.).

The government's steps in 2019 and 2021 toward a national truth and reconciliation commission while using legal and violent censorship of any discussions of Gukurahundi raises a concern related to the very nature of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and that is whether the Commission would be used as an attempt to control the historical narrative, and more sinisterly, to exonerate the Zimbabwean government of the atrocities committed. The Zimbabwean government has, for example, passed and leveraged several laws under which any discussion of Gukurahundi has been banned, including the Criminal Law Codification Act and the Access to Information Privacy Act. The aforementioned three organizers who were arrested on 22nd December 2022, for organizing a Gukurahundi memorialization on National Unity Day (the day that ZANU-PF and ZAPU merged, and the atrocities

ceased in 1987) were charged with contravening section 37 (1)(a)(ii) of the Criminal Codification Act: “Participating in gathering with intent to promote public violence, breaches of the peace or bigotry” (Moyo, 2022). Other laws which have been used to limit information and discussion of Gukurahundi include the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Official Secrets Act, the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act, and laws relating to the protection of information relating to personal or public safety, publishing or communicating false statements harmful to the state, and undermining the authority of the president (Zinyengere, 2012). The legal frameworks used to censor survivors and citizens contradict the government’s calls for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which ostensibly would rely on the very same testimonies of survivors in order to establish fault and promote reconciliation.

The use of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a tool for government exoneration, in addition to coercive control of a contested narrative, is not unprecedented. When violent protests broke out in Harare during the 2018 elections, soldiers were deployed and subsequently shot live ammunition into the crowds, killing six civilians. The incident was recorded by local and international observers. Given that the army cannot be deployed without authorization of the President, and the head of Zimbabwean Defense forces, his ally, Constantino Chiwenga, who led the ‘soft coup’ which overthrew Mugabe and placed Emmerson Mnangagwa as President, Mnangagwa obfuscated the direct question of his knowledge of the soldiers’ deployment and set up a seven-person commission, led by South African President Motlanthe. Despite the video evidence and the legal chain of command for army deployment, the Motlanthe Commission exonerated the President while highlighting the violence of the opposition protestors. To date, no arrests have been made and even the recommendations by the Commission to compensate victim families have gone unheeded (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 2019). Additionally, survivor’s and witness’ testimonies, upon which all Truth and Reconciliation Commissions rely, carry a significant risk of government retribution and backlash, particularly within a country ruled by a violently brutal regime. A report on the failed Chihambakwe mission highlights the example of Edward Moyo

and his brother Shadreck Denga Moyo who were arrested a few days after Edward Moyo testified before the Chihambakwe commission. Both were arrested and, to date, their whereabouts remain unknown (Carver, 2000).

Legacies of Gukurahundi: Trauma and Violence

Yet, in spite of the risks and the skepticism therein of a government overseeing a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission that is investigating itself, survivors, journalists, and all who participate in the "noisy silence" continue to demand their narratives be told and offer them up in diverse forms. For the survivors of Gukurahundi, the individual, communal, and regional vestiges of what they describe as a genocide are significant enough that are willing to bear the risks by telling their stories and requesting restitution. The following sections recount a few of these testimonies. Interviewee grievances of their experiences during and after Gukruahundi, fell into seven categories which I highlight below, namely, being a victim of physical violence; witnessing physical violence; loss of family members; the deliberate erosion of trust within their communities; loss of economic and educational opportunities; continued regional and ethnic marginalization; and the lack of government acknowledgment and subsequent government suppression.

The extent of the violence, torture, and trauma in Matabeleland during Gukurahundi is, in many ways, incomprehensible, partly owing to government suppression of all information out of the region as well as the change in tactics of the 5th Brigade military unit of over time. The "red berets"—as the 5th Brigade were dubbed due to their distinctive headgear—were most publicly violent between 1983 and 1985. When the force was deployed in February 1983, they killed and tortured citizens en masse, often in public spectacles, such as schools and meeting halls. Two of the most affected regions were the Tsholotsho and Lupane districts, which were the first districts where the armed forces were deployed. After the CCJP described and decried their public violence, the soldiers were withdrawn and ostensibly retrained before being re-deployed in August 1983.

Owing to the pressure from outside groups, including the CCJP, by 1985, the 5th Brigade began limiting public killings and violence, resorting to "disappearing people", or taking them to large camps called Bhalagwe and Sun Yat Sen, where they were tortured and/or killed, and where mass graves and human remains in mineshafts have since been discovered. However, there were exceptions to this general pattern. In one of my interviews, a headmaster from Matopos, a mountainous region where a number of dissidents were hiding, recalled that the 5th Brigade were still actively beating and torturing people in public in the area in 1985. While some of these trends were generalizable across Matebeleland and the Midlands regions, the local 5th Brigade commanders and the location determined the degree of community atrocities; for example, previous research on schools revealed that the least targeted schools were boarding schools run by senior clergy or white missionaries, both assumed to have ties to the international community. The surrounding communities that did not have such international connections were not spared.

The Gukurahundi's initial extent of murder has been decried as genocide insofar as it targeted a specific ethnic group under the alleged suspicions that the dissidents were of the same ethnicity. David Coltart, then a lawyer who helped the CCJP record affidavit statements from hundreds of victims and then thereafter legally represented accused dissidents and ZAPU veterans, noted in an interview,

> "I realized then (after interviewing women in Tsholotsho), that this was, you know, getting close… to genocide because basically, it became apparent to me that if you were male in between the age of 16 and 40, you were just wiped out [killed]" (Coltart, 2014).

When asked about the origins of the massacres, one interviewee, who is senior director of a community and peacebuilding non-governmental organization in the region, made references to genocidal language later used in the Rwandan genocide

and attributed it to Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was, at the time of the interview, Minister of Defense. He noted,

> "But the 5th Brigade came to harass and to maim, to rape, to murder the civilians… Minister Mnangagwa had said he was going to come to fumigate and deal with the cockroaches. So, the notion of a cockroach is not peculiar to Rwanda. In fact, that term was first used in Zimbabwe. When these people wanted to unleash a genocide, so that is when that term was used, then of course, it became popularized in Rwanda in 1994" (AS, 2014).

Although the phrases attributed to Mnangagwa have not been documented elsewhere and discussions of the definitions of genocide lie beyond the purview of this paper, what is significant is that the witnesses and victims of the atrocities view the acts as genocidal and that the quotes attributed to Mnangagwa, whether factual or folkloric, are widely perceived to be true. In light of the present Mthwakazi movement and within the Matabeleland region, that the current President, Emmerson Mnangagwa oversaw the atrocities is significant. As Minister of State Security and head of the CIO (Central Intelligence Organization) during Gukurahundi, he was quoted in the official CCJP report as having stated, "burn down all the villages infested with dissidents". He added, "the campaign against dissidents can only succeed if the structure that nurtures them is destroyed" (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, 2008). Those "structures" were the families and communities within Matabeleland; the level of violence against them recounted in detail in the CCJP report highlights the extent of the atrocities committed by the 5th Brigade.

It is important to note that families were afraid to keep their children at home for fear that if the 5th Brigade found them, that they would be considered dissidents or errand boys for dissidents, and not being in school, would be killed. When asked about violence within school grounds, which was the impetus for my interviews in 2014, interviewees shared harrowing stories of mass killings, beatings, and torture. Given that schools served as community centers, teachers were viewed as community

leaders, and schools were important networks that connected families, particularly across sparsely populated rural areas, the vicious targeting of students and teachers by the 5th Brigade was an efficient means of eroding these communities.

One teacher shared how he had been sent to town to collect teacher salaries and when he had returned, he had discovered seven of his colleagues were shot in front of the entire school assembly and their bodies placed in the pit latrines. Another interviewee, who was seven years old at the time, shared how he watched the soldiers beat female teachers in their private parts, which the soldiers called “food for dissidents” and made the male teachers fight one another. Yet another described how the 5th Brigade brought three elderly community members, including his grandfather, and paraded them as “dissidents” to the assembled students and teachers before shooting them. Corpses of community members were brought to schools as warnings of “what happens to dissidents” while soldiers tortured and ridiculed teachers and violently questioned students and teachers alike about the whereabouts of the dissidents. Across Matabeleland, stories of torture and rape of students were almost universal among interviewees, and often told with details that interviewees admit that they wished they could forget, with one interviewee noting with dismay at the sheer detail with which he remembers the events that happened when he was younger than 10 years old. Students and community members alike were made to sing songs and chant in Shona and in some regions, were made to attend “pungwes”, night-time rallies around fires, a signature ritual of ZANU’s military wing, except this time, at the expense of the villagers who were being tortured and killed.

In the few regions where the few dissidents (plants or not) were present, villagers were doubly targeted. One interviewee who went to school in the Matopos region highlighted the fact that while the Gukurahundi soldiers harassed them during the day, the dissidents, two of which he remembered went by the nicknames “Danger” and “Fidel Castro,” would torment them at night. They would visit the villagers and demand food, rape women, and make the young boys keep watch. Mr. N, a headmaster in the Matopos region noted that the 5th Brigade would send a few soldiers to pretend to be

dissidents in order to test the villagers to see if they would inform on the dissidents. The community was put in an impossible situation, since they were never sure whether the dissidents were genuine or not, and whether informing the 5th Brigade would either secure their torture by the dissidents, or not informing on them would ensure their death by the 5th Brigade.

Legacies of Gukurahudi: Mistrust, Regional Marginalization, and Ethno-Linguistic Rifts

Of the more cruel and subtle tactics employed by the 5th Brigade was the cultivation of shame and mistrust within communities. They forced community members to commit acts of violence and humiliation with and in front of one another, just as they had with teachers in front of their students. Interviewees witnessed teachers being told to climb trees, swim in mud, and were beaten in front of their students in order to undermine their authority within the community. Likewise, interviewees mentioned of the soldiers orchestrating similar acts within communities, leaving neighbours either too ashamed to interact with one another with respect or sowing seeds of mistrust, especially if some children or neighbours were spared the 5th Brigade's wrath; the "sell out" label, which was a remnant of the guerrilla war in which community members were viewed as traitors aiding the enemy, was revived as communities disintegrated.

Dr Reverend Ray Motsi, a pastor and founder of the "Grace to Heal Project" which works within communities affected by Gukurahundi, carried out dissertation research in the Tsholotsho district, one of the most affected areas, and argues that the creation of mistrust within communities was deliberate. In an interview, he noted that the soldiers went so far as to force neighbours to kill one another.

> "To make things worse, most of the killing was not actually done by the Gukurahundi themselves. They forced neighbours to kill neighbours. The reason why that was so it was because they wanted to bring about mistrust and discontent within the communities, so much so that they will not be able to trust each other from an African social perspective. The community and extended family is the surface net on which, if there's a crisis in the family, that will actually hold. Now if that is attacked and destroyed, it means there was nothing else they could do in order to actually hold them. And that was deliberate. And it was designed so" (Dr Rev. Motsi, 2014).

The mistrust that the Gukurahundi soldiers' tactics created within communities negatively impacted community development projects, including community involvement in creating and supporting schools. Shari Eppel notes,

> "And um, so, you also, almost everywhere we go we hear about sell-outs. Where people say my son was killed, my neighbour's son wasn't killed, that means they must have sold out and as a reward their son wasn't killed and mine was. So, if you think your neighbour got your son killed, are you going to be on a goat-fattening project with that family? You know, so there is no social trust. So social trust is seriously undermined. And then how can development succeed in a situation where people don't trust one another, people are afraid, people are depressed; people have low self-esteem" (Eppel, 2005).

After the soldiers descended upon his village and school, one interviewee, who is presently a pastor and counsellor in Bulawayo, was sent to live with his family in the city. He noted that when he eventually returned to his village, the social fabric had eroded. Community members were no longer working together, and many had shirked their traditional communal responsibilities, including towards schools, "People don't want to take responsibility even paying school fees. People are poor, they are no longer a normal society, and there is no cohesion. Instead, put them into finger-pointing

and they excel". Young men lucky enough to escape Gukurahundi were sent to overcrowded schools in the city or to neighbouring South Africa, often without documentation and with limited opportunities for upward mobility.

Beyond the death of loved ones and breadwinners, Gukurahundi impeded the economic growth and development of the region. Although difficult to quantify, the campaign placed a heavy financial burden on struggling families who were already brutalized. In addition to continuing their tactics of public violence, the 5th Brigade instituted a food embargo in 1984, which coincided with a year of drought in Matabeleland. Food was not allowed in or out of some parts of Matabeleland. A man who was a bus driver at the time described to me how the soldiers would beat him and his passengers and take whatever food they carried with them off the bus in addition to closing grocery stores. Financial insecurity caused by the conflict was also one of the reasons why some students were unable to pay their school fees and return to school.

The educational disruption not only affected the Matabeleland youth at the time, but became generational, owing to the government requiring birth certificates to progress beyond the seventh grade. At the time of the interviews in 2014, non-governmental organizations (NGO) workers decried the fact that children born during Gukurahundi, or whose parents were killed or fled without any paperwork, were unable to obtain birth certificates, and thus were unable to take the national exams required to enrol in secondary school. According to Zimbabwean law, in order to obtain a birth certificate, both parents must be present to sign the certificate. In the absence of a parent, one has to present the parent's death certificate, which must clearly state the cause of death. In addition to the many people who were "disappeared" and whose bodies were never found, it continues to try to prevent individuals from documenting the violence of Gukurahundi by refusing to grant death certificates for the casualties of the Gukurahundi soldiers. Those who have been able to obtain death certificates have had to invent false and less politically sensitive causes of death. Many more people have been unable to obtain death certificates for their parents, and therefore have been

unable to obtain their own birth certificates, preventing them from taking their seventh-grade examinations. One interviewee's organization aided one such man who was told that he would only be granted a death certificate for his father if he declared the cause of death to be a stomach-ache instead of murder by the 5th Brigade soldiers.

Obtaining birth certificates was much more difficult for those who were born as a result of rape or whose parents were taken by Gukurahundi and "disappeared", since there was no proof of paternity in the former case and no proof that the parents had died in the latter. On 25th June 2014, the Bulawayo 24 news agency published an article reporting that most youths from the Silobela area in Matabeleland "failed to proceed beyond Grade 7 as they did not have birth certificates because of Gukurahundi" (Bulawayo24 News, 2014). A recent Amnesty International report notes that the inability to obtain death certificates has hundreds of thousands of descendants of Gukurahundi victims stateless in the country, since proof of birth and death is required to obtain nationality documents (Amnesty International, 2020).

Beyond the immediate effects of the atrocities and the generational lost opportunities, there was consensus among interviewees, even those who had worked within government, that since Gukurahundi, the region has been purposefully marginalized and underdeveloped, with tribal nepotism favouring non-Ndebele applicants in jobs, tertiary education, government positions. When carrying out research in 2014 on the long-term effects of Gukurahundi on education in Matabeleland, I was handed a document titled "The Grand Plan" which has since been published in its entirety (Ngwenya, 2018). Below the title reads, "For Restricted Circulation for The Eyes of the Shona Elite Only, Please Pass To Most Trusted Person!" (Ngwenya, 2018). The document was supposedly written by a ZANU-PF Shona loyalist who laid out the plan for exterminating Ndebele culture and marginalizing the Matabeleland region. The document has significant derogatory terms in reference to Ndebele people and calls for their elimination from the nation. It also references pre-colonial antagonisms between the tribes and the oft-stereotyped narrative that Mzilikazi, a pre-colonial Ndebele ruler, led raids on Shona cattle to build Ndebele wealth. A few portions read,

> "National public addresses at official functions are done in Shona. Being a Shona is now a source of pride, particularly in Shona assimilates who in place of that cultural void, have received a reward to fill in the gap as a result of seeking redemption from Shonas. Marriage partner preferences bear full the testimony to the superiority of Shona. Ndebele girls will without exception opt to marry a Shona man given a choice between men from the two groups. This is not without reason. Ndebele men are often savage and brutal prospective husbands. They are ungiving, unprotective and stingy…
>
> Because the majority of people in Bulawayo are Shonas, the rural areas must now be the target. This can only be done through the resettlement programme. The deployment of Shonas in rural Matebeleland will be the last blow to break the spine of the enemy. Because of this vision on our part, political power cannot be allowed to slip into the hands of tyrants. Zapu was an impediment to the realization of this vision, but we managed to destroy it. In the words of the now maverick and controversial Zvobgo being advice to Zapu, 'there is no less painful way for you than to join Zanu'. Nkomo capitulated in 1987 and we all know that the unity accord was a farce or smokescreen facesaver for Zanu's one-time greatest foe and headache turned tool. Shona supremacy is not a dream but a reality. Should you stand idle and fail to throw your weight behind the leadership? Ask yourself whether you could be where you are, were it not for Mugabe and Zanu—educationally, economically, etc. Land that is still in white hands must all find its way into Shona hands".

Although historians have been unable to authenticate the document and the plans of ethno-genocide stated therein, the significance of the document lies in the fact that many residents in Matabeleland believe the document is authentic and argue that their experiences confirm that the present political party as well as the government in power is actively following "The Grand Plan" to bring Shona domination to fruition (Ndhlovu, 2021). The document has since been used by the "Mthwakazi National Party" for

political rallying and, in 2014, portions of the document were posted on the “Mthwakazi National Party” Facebook page (Mthwakazi National Party, 2014). While only a few interviewees referenced the “Grand Plan” by name, all shared that they felt ethnically targeted and geographically disadvantaged. The lesson the Gukurahundi soldiers “taught” the people of Matabeleland and the Midlands was that they were second-class citizens whose existence is only precariously tolerated by the State. One exclaimed to me, “I am not Zimbabwean, I am Matabele!” (Anonymous, 2014).

Whether or not a concerted intentional effort exists to disenfranchise Matabeleland, evidence does exist that there is a de facto difference in regional development along ethn0-linguistic fault lines. David Coltart, speaking as then Minister of Education noted that, “[Regarding] government appointments, over the last 30 years, it is very clear that there has been, at the very least subconscious or conscious attempt to exclude minorities, not just the Ndebele. If one looks at present, the Chief Justice, the commander of the Army, the president, the chief of police, and a variety—I think the Registrar General—are all [ethno-linguistically] Shona. If you look at the CEOs, companies in the country, and certainly the CEOs of parastatals, you'll find hardly any Ndebeles, virtually all Shona. What results from that is that access to capital then becomes concentrated or rather the decision-making around that is concentrated in the same people. It's been further compounded by the fact that most talented Ndebele leaders have left the country and are running large firms in South Africa and elsewhere. And that's a part of the grand plan. Obviously, perhaps it's a consequence of it, but it certainly fuels it. If there is such a plan, and I suppose what I'm saying, in conclusion, is that whether there's a plan or not, objectively, if you look at leadership in our country, it has happened” (Coltart, 2014).

Coltart’s mention of educated Ndebele leaders leaving the country to go to South Africa highlights the acknowledgment of individuals from the region of their marginalization. Bulawayo, the second largest city and former capital of the country (now capital city of Matabeleland), was once the country’s industrial centre, but industries have since dwindled and little to no infrastructure development has occurred, a notable contrast to the expansion of Harare, the capital city. The lack of government support over the

past three decades has been compounded by the economic crises beginning in 2000 (Clemens and Moss, 2005).

An interviewee who works with the poorest communities in Matabeleland, which happens to have been the worst affected by Gukurahundi three decades prior, mentions the hopelessness felt by community members who recognize themselves as marginalized.

> "If you go to a place called the Bidi, near Kezi… also Gwanda… most of the educational infrastructure is quite deplorable. There isn't much that has been done except by maybe UNESCO, the government seems... unwilling to really do anything for the community…. In Tsholotso, which was among the worst places affected by Gukurahundi,… there's a lot of poverty, a lot of hopelessness. So, people don't really feel like they're part of Zimbabwe. Today, most of them go to South Africa, or they feel like, 'why do I have to go through to secondary education?... They don't care about us. So, what's your point of education in the first place?' Right. So, the average kid, for example, growing up in Matabeleland South, or rural Matabeleland North, they want to go to South Africa, without maybe even getting their full secondary education. So, there's a sense of not belonging to the home nation in that sense—a lot of hopelessness. Yeah, I see that, that sense of hopelessness in communities. But they realize that they, especially the older ones, that maybe if they don't do anything, that nothing will happen so they are doing things on their own, without the support of the government, it will be the support of NGOs, and donor agencies" (Anonymous, 2014).

The lack of faith in the government and hopelessness regarding secondary and tertiary education was mentioned by other interviewees in relation to the tribalism they anticipated and believed would impede their future progress. Numerous interviewees mentioned that tertiary educational institutions in the country favoured Shona candidates over Ndebele, mirroring the tribal nepotism in many economic sectors.

A university professor at NUST, the National University of Science and Technology, noted that even taking into account the fact that Ndebele residents make up just over a quarter of the population, there are fewer applications received from the region owing to disparities in the aforementioned lack of access to secondary education as well as school infrastructure such as labs, which other interviewees mentioned were installed in other parts of the country during Gukurahundi. Dr Fay Chung, who was head of ZIMFEP (Zimbabwe's Foundation for Education with Production) from its formation in 1981 until 1988, when she became Minister of Education, noted in personal written communication that while certain members of the government cabinet aimed to limit funding to the region, she insisted on making educational funding proportionate to the population, though admitting that assessments and developments were slowed down and impeded due to "disturbances"—in other words, the violence and social upheavals of Gukurahundi (Chung, 2014).

As is the case with other long-term effects of the conflict, whether quantifiable or not, this actual and perceived victimization creates an accelerated self-fulfilling prophecy. A Ministry official who oversaw Matabeleland North and South in 2014 noted that the Ministry struggled to find qualified teachers for the region, despite Bulawayo having one of the most well-respected teacher training colleges in the country, Hillside Teachers Training College. Her hypothesis was that in addition to the most educated teachers leaving the country, the ethnic tensions created by Gukurahundi have meant that communities are often hostile towards Shona teachers. During the economic crisis of 2007, thousands of qualified teachers left the country to look for work in South Africa and in Botswana. A disproportionate number of the teachers who left were from Matabeleland because Matabeleland borders South Africa and Botswana. However, a Matabeleland government official, who declined to be named for fear that the government would sanction him, informed me that despite the severe shortage of qualified teachers in Matabeleland, few qualified Shona teachers, or teachers not of Ndebele origin, were able to teach in the rural areas effectively. "Last time I got a call from the community in Lupane district who told me to 'come and take your teachers, they are trying to 'Shonasize' our children" (Ministry Official, 2014).

The education official also recounted how many qualified Shona-speaking teachers refused to teach in Ndebele rural areas because of the hostility that they faced. Moreover, due to the political climate, the official felt unable to address the matter explicitly. “As an official, I can’t talk about the effects of these things... [Gukurahundi], all I can say is that in Matabeleland we have a problem of teacher mobility. That is all I can do” (Ministry Official, 2014). The resulting loss of teachers has created a cycle of low-quality education, as ethnic Ndebele teachers can face greater barriers to accreditation, and those who clear these hurdles often leave for the greener pastures of South Africa and Botswana, while teachers from Mashonaland are not able to settle and invest in the Matabele communities within which they serve. High teacher attrition rates, therefore, affect student academic outcomes and limit the number of professionals from the region who can fill in the need for qualified teachers in these communities.

Outside of the schoolroom, ethno-linguistic and regional divisions impede national unity. The fact that the 5th Brigade soldiers spoke Shona and sometimes singled out their victims by their names and tests of Ndebele pronunciation has transformed linguistic differences into strong political and social divisions. A community organizer who held reconciliatory workshops in Gukurahundi-affected areas noted that victims are offended by being spoken to in Shona.

> “In Zimbabwe, if I am speaking Ndebele and they speak Shona, I feel offended. I feel offended by that, but I should not feel offended, it is their language. But it's also the history… up to now, relationships are affected at a social and professional level, when somebody speaks Shona and I feel like ah, but they're speaking the language of the opre[ssor], it reminds me of Gukurahundi… And so, to speak, people associate Shona… with the oppressor and get angry… up to today ethnic relations are bad” (AS, 2014).

The lingering trauma and effects of Gukurahundi, including the exodus of Ndebele speakers to bordering South Africa, where they face xenophobia, have been compounded by the economic collapse of Zimbabwe and the violence with which ZANU-PF has maintained power. As two interviewees who have studied the atrocities and who are active in community projects pointed out, the violence, censorship, and tactics of "disappearing" political opponents which have been imposed nationwide are the continuations, of the modus operandi of the 5th Brigade.

As a result, for the survivors of the atrocities, the fear of another "cleansing" is ever-present. Even in 2014 when I sat down with Mr N, a retired headmaster from the Matopos region of Matabeleland, he nervously looked about before we started speaking. Mr N was head of a school in the Matopos region which, as previously mentioned, was targeted both by dissidents and the 5th Brigade. Even though I was asking him about events three decades prior, at one point he held my gaze and told me that if the government were to send the Gukurahundi troops again, the wall around the school grounds was not tall enough to keep them out. He was also upset that he presently had no guns, "How will we defend ourselves?", he asked.

From the perspective of the victims of Gukurahundi, the political party and the individual orchestrators of the Gukurahundi, including the current president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, have always been, and continue to be, a threat. They are not only living with the trauma of Gukurahundi, but they have been living in persistent fear because, to them, the 5th Brigade soldiers have merely changed uniforms and dress as militias during voting periods, undercover or "plain clothes" policemen daily and nameless individuals in unmarked, unlicensed vehicles that capture citizens in broad daylight and "disappear" them. The most publicized abduction and disappearance was of a well-known government critic and journalist, Itai Dzamara in 2015. He was grabbed outside a barbershop in broad daylight (Amnesty International, 2020). Essentially, the same tactics of violence and suppression employed by ZANU-PF during Gukurahundi have been unleashed upon all critics of the Zimbabwean government.

The government's response to the rise of secessionist groups calling for Matabeleland's secession or the recreation of the pre-colonial Mthwakazi kingdom has only cemented the fear of victims of Gukurahundi, including those who have nothing to do with these separatist movements. On 22nd March 2022, a video was published of President Mnangagwa giving a chilling speech to "those trying to divide Zimbabwe into smaller states", ostensibly to the Mthwakazi movement. He noted that they would "varikutsvaga mazuva avo kuti atapudzwe panyika", which translates to "find that their days on earth are numbered" (The News Hawks, 2022) (Mpofu, 2022). For the people of Matabeleland, those words eerily echo the pre-Gukurahundi speeches attributed to him.

Present Calls for Reparations

Both the rise of the Mthwakazi movement and the calls for government acknowledgment of the atrocities reveal the deep rifts that began after independence, as well as the squandered opportunities for reconciliation. Implicit in the accounts of the grievances of survivors and communities affected by Gukurahundi, however, are expectations of the ways in which the government should atone and reconcile. Although they differed in their visions of ideal compensation and restitution, when asked how the government might make amends, the majority of interviewees demanded an official apology, an audience for truth-telling, and compensation for Gukurahundi's life-altering trajectory for millions in Matabeleland. Truth-telling, as expressed by survivors, civil society leaders, and war veterans, remains a central tenet of healing owing to the cross-generational effects of the mass atrocities.

In addition to removing the legal impediments or laws under which any discussion of Gukurahundi is criminalized, to allow for discussion and memorialization, interviewees argued that the physical legacy of Gukurahundi be addressed, particularly the mass graves that haunt communities. To date, there are an unknown number of mass graves in schools and communities since no comprehensive study on Gukurahundi and its effects has been allowed, and some communities are too afraid to report these graves

to government officials. For example, in 2011, a mass grave containing the remains of 60 people was discovered by a group of students at St. Paul's school in Lupane (Bulawayo24 News, 2011). Community leader JJM mentioned that he was arrested and accused of trying to "incite an uprising against the government" by working within his organization to remove a pole and build a memorial around a mass grave found near a teacher's cottage inside a school. Among the community organizers I spoke with, JJM's story was not unique; Reverend Motsi's organization, Grace to Heal, helps communities mark graves because it is illegal to exhume the Gukurahundi graves, even when community members know the identities of the victims.

> "We have had to refurbish some shallow graves, because the government does not allow us through my organization to do exhumations, we had to do securing of graves. Because we do believe that as and when the time comes for us to be able to do exhumations. It doesn't matter how old the remains are, more often than not, remains will speak for themselves, in terms of what actually transpired" (Motsi, 2014).

The mass graves scattered throughout the countryside in Matabeleland and the Midlands represent a particularly painful aspect of Gukurahundi's enduring legacy. These graves in schools and other areas have a deep cultural and religious significance for communities. According to Ndebele traditional beliefs in which the dead ancestors play a crucial role in the prosperity of the family, those buried without the proper rituals bring bad luck or "curse" their families. Living near such abodes of aggrieved spirits is considered unsafe and inauspicious. The mass graves in schools have therefore been places of political contestation and of trauma for school children who find them, the teachers who work and live near them, and especially for the families whose loved ones still lie there.

To date, commemoratory community events, including prayer services and attempts to tend to the mass graves have been thwarted. One community organizer recalled that the Roman Catholic priest Nkandla organized a prayer meeting and

commemoration in Isilwane village in 2011 where, out of 100 households, 32 members of the community were killed during Gukurahundi and dumped into a mass grave, and a family of 10 or 11 were killed in a single hut. But this commemoration had serious consequences, as the interviewee recounted:

> "Testimonies were brought from people that were affected by that incident. Afterwards, the priest was arrested and charged for inciting violence, trying to [portray him as being] against the state and so on just under… [the] criminal law codification act so as to discourage any such conversations taking place. What was interesting, though, is that in that meeting, even the Minister of the Organization for National Healing and Reconciliation [was present]" (AS, 2014).

In addition to allowing communities to openly grieve, one of the most important demands of survivors is that the government provide counsellors to help individuals, families, and communities process their trauma. In 2014, TN summed up his organization's work within affected communities as foremostly beginning to offer counselling services, which he argued were unofficial and inadequate.

> "But what we have been pushing for, first of all, is a conversation that leads to truth recovery. And then secondly, compensation that helps the victim as an individual and the victim as a community, so to speak, where we say the victim as an individual will need counselling. Not much has been done. We know the number of organizations that have been doing counselling trying to provide those services but it's spontaneous, it's not official. It's not formal because of the feeling that the state is unwilling to allow such things to take place" (TN, 2014).

The request for counselling services highlights the needs of survivors for public recognition and the lack of closure for a period of life-altering circumstances. Tellingly, several interviewees asked their children and family members to leave the room before

the interviews began, revealing not only the secrecy with which Gukurahundi is discussed, but the generational rifts of that knowledge and acknowledgement.

The final point of contention and demands raised by survivors includes financial restitution, that is, compensation for the personal and communal generational wealth that has been lost during and since the atrocities. TN describes this compensation as "compensatory development". He notes,

> "But the other aspect we have been pushing for is what we call compensatory development, where we're saying it was not just the individual or rights that were violated community rights were violated" (TN, 2014).

His sentiments were echoed by interviewees across the professional spectrum, including the necessity of financially compensating families and building infrastructure. "This is the kind of infrastructure when people do not only memorialize, but they get income as a community" (TN, 2014).

Another head of a civil society organization differentiated the kinds of restitution owed to victims of Gukurahundi. S., an activist and pastor, argued that in addition to acknowledgment of atrocities, transformative justice needs be carried out, as opposed to restorative justice. He notes that the difference is that in addition to compensation for what was taken, survivors be compensated for the lost time and lost opportunities over the past three decades.

> "Some [civil society organizations] were saying, no, there is restorative justice. I am in proponent of transformational justice… transformational justice is opposed to positive justice, then this is opposed to restorative justice. Restorative justice says, you lost your car during the conflict… let's restore the relationship and restore you, your car. But transformative justice goes beyond to say, you lost a car, but and you stayed for many years without a car so instead of giving you back your car, I'm giving you two cars, I'm giving you back a car, and something else, in addition, that will empower you and compensate for the loss that you incurred and the time that you are were without" (S, 2014).

While an analysis of these different reparative proposals is beyond the scope of this paper, the demands and needs of individuals and communities should be paramount when designing policies and processes for reconciliation. The authority to draw equitable solutions post-conflict should be vested in the survivors and aggrieved communities. As highlighted and partially documented within this paper, the first steps should include an understanding of the history of Gukurahundi's mass atrocities and their ongoing legacy, space for personal and communal truth-telling, and an official acknowledgment of the atrocities, as well as compensation in various forms.

Conclusion

On 23rd November 2022, President Mnangagwa's cabinet ratified amendments to the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Amendment Bill, also called the Patriotic Bill, criminalizing any criticism of the government both within and outside of the country, making anyone convicted liable to a fine, imprisonment, and termination of citizenship. The bill targets "any citizen or permanent resident of Zimbabwe who, within or outside Zimbabwe, actively partakes… in any meeting whose object the accused knows or has reasonable grounds for believing involves… military or other armed intervention" or "wilfully damages the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe" (Matimbe, 2022). This law effectively defines critical dissent out of the nation state: to be a citizen is to support the government in power, and supporting the government in power is the

criterion of citizenship. There is little doubt that the consideration for this bill included criticisms of leadership and specifically Mnangagwa, who earned the pejorative nickname “the crocodile” post-Gukurahundi. In the National Assembly debates on the need for the Patriotic Bill, discussions of the need for maintaining the “promotion of the country’s positive brand” (Matimbe, 2022) directly referred to attacks on the President’s record. In debates, Minister Hon. Mpofu was quoted stating, “If you attack the leader of this country, that has an effect when that leader goes out there to source business for this country. Nobody wants to do business with a person who from his country has been called so many names” (Matimbe, 2022).

This law gives the government further control over the narratives on Gukurahundi and over its citizens. What is different about this law, however, is that it highlights the important role that the Zimbabwean diaspora continue to play in articulating critiques and narratives on government atrocities that are more difficult to voice within the country. Gukurahundi is a striking illustration of this strange dynamic, often found in such situations—those affected the most by the crisis/situation tend to be at greatest risk for speaking out, while those at greater remove tend to risk less and have more of a platform. This dynamic can influence scholarship, journalism, and the popularity of narratives skewing them towards those privileged in certain respects. Nonetheless, as the case of Gukurahundi demonstrates, while attempts are made to bury official evidence, such “noisy silences” are leaky: the consequences, voices, feelings, trauma, and narratives of those affected escape like smoke from live embers. In Zimbabwe this can be seen in the numerous “unofficial” reports, artworks, oral histories, international articles, and the fractures in individual, communal, and national fabrics and psyche.

For many post-colonial nation-states, the project of nation-building often involved homogenizing violence as ethno-linguistic and religious identities were transformed under colonial rule into political identities competing in battle royale for state power and resources (Mamdani, 2001). While many arguments might be made for why this need not have been the case, in reality, the post-colonial state’s inability to tolerate or cope with political, ideological, ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity has plunged many new

African nations (such as Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Mozambique, The Central African Republic, etc.) into cycles of violence. With a few notable exceptions, including Rwanda, this cycle of violence is often perpetuated by the proclivity of governments to deal with the trauma of violence through an institutionalized process of forgetting or burying evidence, further marginalizing victims and communities who call for justice. Within the context of this inaugural issue of Transformations, this essay serves as a cautionary tale of the dangers of ignoring restorative justice in a nation that has since continued to splinter along the fault lines of the Gukurahundi massacres. In this way, by highlighting the very voices that continue to be silenced, this essay simultaneously brings their stories and truths to light, and contributes to the chorus of calls for the government to acknowledge its wrongdoings and take steps toward reconciliation.

This article highlights the contested narratives surrounding Gukurahundi and the government's attempts to control these narratives through the penal system, violence, and through National Truth and Reconciliation commissions, despite the significant evidence of the impacts of Gukurahundi on the lived experiences of individuals, communities and the nation at large. By focusing on the narratives of survivors of Gukurahundi, this article adds to those voices calling for restitution. Through interviews with politicians, local NGO leaders, activists, teachers, and regular citizens conducted in 2014, this essay highlights the lingering effects of this trauma on individuals, communities, and the political landscape of Zimbabwe, as well as the hopes of these communities for a more just and peaceful future. But for these fragile seeds of hope to take root in an increasingly unstable political soil, a process of healing and truth-telling must take place, to which this essay aims to contribute.

Given the ratification of the "Patriotic Bill," as the author of this article and a Zimbabwean citizen, I would be remiss if I did not mention my own apprehension in publishing this article. That said, such risks must be taken, and in such cases, the line between scholar and activist must be crossed, especially if those who were the most

affected by the atrocities, who have the most to lose, are willing to hold their oppressors accountable.

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[i] All author conducted interviews are cited in text, with individual name being listed as authorized (full name, just last name, anonymous.)

Sport as a Strategic Tool for Deploying Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The article argues that in spite of the progress made in the field of Sport for Development and Peace, and evidence supporting the claims about benefits of sport in peacebuilding, much work remains to be done for sport to be used more broadly in this sector by sport and non-sport actors alike. In support of its argument, the article analyses the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in Zimbabwe, where a series of sport-based programmes delivered by both state and non-state level actors aimed to reduce violence, enable positive youth development, and instil peace. Following the analysis of these activities, the article reinforces three foundational premises using which all sport-specific programming for purpose of building peace should be based on.

DEVELOPMENT, ZIMBABWE, SPORT, UNITY ACCORDS, PEACE

Despite all this progress, we strongly feel that framing sport as a strategic tool for peacebuilding and to support the positive development of post-conflict situations remains a task to be fully accomplished. In fact, if we want our efforts of framing and using sport as a viable peacebuilding tool to be successful in the long run, it is paramount that we engage in systematically exploring answers and gathering evidence with view to mainly three closely connected questions. These questions are: **first**, what are the main challenges in peacebuilding and post-conflict situations? **Second**, why and how can sport help in those situations, meaning, which are the main features and mechanisms of sport that can contribute to promoting peace and positive social transformation in post-conflict situations? **Third**, what are preconditions of success of sports-based peace interventions, and how do we honestly measure success (Cárdenas and Lang, 2016)?

Introduction

Sport has been defined differently by various authorities. The European Sports Charter (Council of Europe, 2001), defined sport as “means of all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels”.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003) presented a definition of sport as “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games”. From the definitions presented above, sport presents several benefits to participants and communities alike. Sport contributes to team building. It also contributes to mental health as it offers an avenue for releasing tension and to overcome difficulties through sharing and exercise.

Sport appeals to the different levels of peacebuilding, as articulated by the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy (Institute For Multi-Track Diplomacy, n.d.). Sport can influence peacebuilding at the political level to promote and encourage diplomatic engagement among adversaries. One of the most talked about strategies for ensuring peace is the use of sport for peacebuilding purposes (Cárdenas and Lang, 2016). It has been hailed as a pragmatic and strategic vehicle for peacebuilding in post-conflict societies. Yet the conceptual lines remain unclear. Each community, region, country, or international community experience conflict in different ways. Zimbabwe’s conflict over the past few decades is mostly political with the youths taking a prominent role. The polarization in Zimbabwe is mostly driven by racial, ethnic, and political party polarization, which goes back to the colonial era (Muchemwa, 2015). This chapter will explore various questions relating to sport and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Specifically, the chapter engaged with the questions; what is the nature of conflict in Zimbabwe? Which sporting disciplines/activities are best suited for peacebuilding initiatives in Zimbabwe? What are the challenges and opportunities for developing sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding? The purpose of this chapter is to make both a scientific and practical contribution to peacebuilding and development.

Brief History of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa known for its dramatic landscape and diverse wildlife, much of it within parks, reserves, and safari areas. The name

Zimbabwe is derived from the Shona, *dzimba dzemabwe*, meaning houses of stone or stone buildings, today symbolized by the Great Zimbabwe Ruins near the present-day town of Masvingo. Zimbabwe has a rich history, of not only achievement, innovation, cooperation, and economic prosperity, but also of conflict, trials, and tribulations that reflects the dynamism of its peoples. Pre-colonial Zimbabwe was a multi-ethnic society inhabited by the Shangni/Tsonga in the south-eastern parts of the Zimbabwe plateau, the Venda in the south, the Tonga in the north, the Kalanga and Ndebele in the south-west, the Karanga in the southern parts of the plateau, the Zezuru and Korekore in the northern and central parts, and finally, the Manyika and Ndau in the east. Scholars have tended to lump these various groups into two huge ethnic blocs, namely 'Ndebele' and 'Shona' largely because of their broadly similar languages, beliefs, and institutions. (The term Shona itself is, however, an anachronism as it did not exist until the 19th century when it was coined by enemies as an insult; it conflates linguistic, cultural, and political attributes of ethnically related people). The political, social, and economic, relations of these groups were complex, dynamic, fluid, and always changing. They were characterized by both conflict and cooperation.

From the 1880s to the early 20th century, a coalescence of Christianity, mercantilism, colonialism, and capitalism gradually displaced the pre-colonial socio-political and economic formations discussed above, bringing about a colonial transformation marked by the emergence of new identities, commodities, languages, and ideologies, as well as new political and economic frameworks. One significant characteristic of early colonial rule in Zimbabwe was land dispossession and forcible proletarianization of the Africans. And the key aim of settler manufacturing/production was maximum output premised on minimum cost. This had to be achieved through the restricting African access to land, thus undercutting African peasant agricultural production, increasing taxation, as well as forcing Africans to sell their labour cheaply to white mine owners and farmers. Paying the African starvation wages augmented all these exploitative measures. These machinations were legally supported by such oppressive and exploitative legislation as the Masters and Servants Ordinance, the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau, the Pass Laws, the Native Regulations Ordinance, and the

compound system that gave mine owners semi-'feudal' powers akin to those of slave owners of the 19th century. We therefore note that in the 1920s and 1930s, the state increasingly intervened on behalf of the settlers against the interests of the Africans.

The impact of these policies continued after the nation liberated itself and formally took on the name Zimbabwe. Since independence, the nation has continuously experienced intermittent conflicts that often exhibit forms of direct, structural, and cultural violence. One reason for these conflicts is political party-based polarization, which occurs when party members defect to form other parties, e.g., formation of ZANU PF from ZAPU in the 1960s; e.g., formation of MDC into MDC T, MDC-M in 2005 and more recently MDC-Alliance and MDC-T. It can be noted that polarization in Zimbabwe is most severe in the rural areas and is mostly driven by political elites, and to an extent, funding partners, popularly referred to as donors (McCandless, 2011).

The late political scientist, John Makumbe, also submitted that traditional chiefs play a significant role in sustaining political polarization in rural areas and that they have often acted in favour of the ruling ZANU PF party. Although there have been significant efforts to address conflicts through official state actions, the quest for sustainable peace has remained elusive. Notable initiatives include the Unity Accord of 1987, the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONHRI) which was operational during the Global Political Agreement from 2009-2013, and in recent years, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC). However, the level of political polarization and hatred among identifiable political groups in the country is frightening. Conflicts in Zimbabwe are particularly pronounced during election times, particularly the year 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, and 2018 plebiscites, where lives were lost owing to political electoral violence. Zimbabwe's performance on the Global Peace Index (GPI) (Visions of Humanity, 2019) which is conducted on an annual basis by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) (Institute for Economics and Peace, n.d.) show that the country's social, political, and economic environment remains fragile. In fact, the country's performance has been poor with Zimbabwe ranking low compared to other countries in the region and beyond.

The situation of the youth is particularly disturbing. Youth form the majority of the population. Similar to other African countries, Zimbabwe has a higher number of youths on its population pyramid. The African continent has been aptly described as a growing population owing to its youthful population (The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of United Nations Secretariat (UNDESA), 2008). The African Institute for Development Policy (African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), 2015) indicated that the African Youth Population stands at around 60% of the total population. (CODESRIA 2018 Democratic Governance Institute, 2018). The 2012 census results in Zimbabwe showed that the combined population of youth and children is around 77 per cent of Zimbabwe's approximately 13 million people (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, n.d.). The African Economic Outlook (African Development Bank, 2019) and Africa Renewal Reports (Africa Renewal, 2019) underlined the dire state of affairs when it comes to issues of youth empowerment on the continent. And in recent years, drug abuse has also emerged as a serious challenge to the youth in the country, and thus raising questions of how best the country can respond to these developmental questions from a peacebuilding perspective. While the country is not at war or experiencing a civil war, the country's long history of unresolved conflicts (from pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts) calls for innovative and relevant intervention strategies for constructing workable and sustainable peace processes that will secure the future of Zimbabwe's youth.

Conceptualizing Sport, Conflict, Violence, and Peace

Peacebuilding practice is a discourse that has continued to evolve. It is a discourse credited to the pioneering work of Galtung who first coined the term peacebuilding, (Galtung, 1975) and later in the post-Cold War dispensation when former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Ghali, published the report "Agenda for Peace" (Ghali, 1992). The report was later consolidated and published as a book under UN

publications. Here, peacebuilding was taken to mean the long term efforts to transform situations of conflict and violence into positive peace. Another UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, later contributed to the discourse when he submitted that peacebuilding is sustained, cooperative work on underlying economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems (press.un.org, 2001).

According to Makwerere and Mandoga (Makwerere and Mandoga, 2012), peacebuilding goes beyond the emphasis on state security and nation building to emphasise human security. Schirch cited in Makwerere concluded that "there is a close relationship between peacebuilding and human security, whereas peacebuilding initiatives aim at providing sustainable solutions to both immediate and structural sources of fear and want, human security on the other hand requires a citizen-oriented state, an active civil society as well as a robust business sector so as to ensure a secure environment for every individual in the community" (Schirch, 2013). As John Paul Lederach has noted, a major strategy in peacebuilding is conflict transformation. He stated, "Conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily, see 'the setting and the people in it as 'the problem' and the outsider as the 'answer'. Rather we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting" (John Paul Lederach, 1995).

We argue that sport can be one tool to resolve conflict and reduce violence to secure a better future for Zimbabwe's youth. One of the organizations that seeks to actively promote sport as a vehicle for socio-economic transformation, Right To Play, stated that sport "possesses unique attributes that enable it to contribute to development and peace processes. Sport's universal popularity, its capacity as one of the most powerful global communications platforms, and its profound ability to connect people and to build their capacities make it one of the most crosscutting of all development and peace tools. These attributes also make sport an effective, low-cost means of preventing and addressing a broad range of social and economic challenges" (Right To Play (RTP),

2007). The whole idea in exploring the transformative benefits of sport in the context of conflicts is to transform such conflict into more constructive and productive non-destructive outcomes, as the chart below indicates:

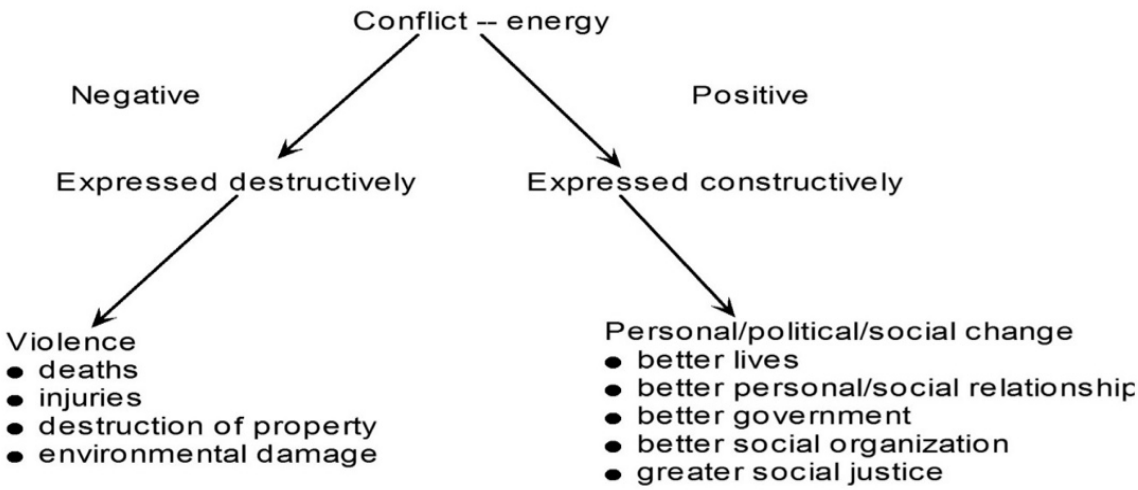

Figure 1: Transformative benefits of sport and non-destructive outcomes (authors, 2023)

Within any conflict, there are basically three forms of violence, *direct violence* (physical, emotional, verbal abuse), *structural violence* (policies that favour one or more groups at the expense of others, use of state apparatus to disadvantage other groups), and *cultural violence* (cultural traditions and practices that violate the rights and dignity of other members within that cultural set up, e.g., gender discrimination). This framework can be expanded through including the insights of Johan Vincent Galtung, who found out that violence can be direct or indirect. Galtung explained that, “We shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct, and to violence where there is no such actor as structural or indirect. In both cases individuals may be killed or mutilated, hit or hurt in both senses of these words (i.e., physical and psychological), and manipulated by means of stick and carrot strategies (Galtung, 1969).

Finally, the World Health Organisation [WHO] defined violence as, “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. (World Health Organization (WHO), 2002).

This last definition makes an attempt to cover the micro-level as well as the macro-level manifestations of violence. It also covers the public and private nature of violence. WHO further divides violence into three categories: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, collective violence (World Health Organization (WHO), 2002). The first category relates to self-inflicted violence. This includes self-abuse through drug and alcohol abuse, as well as suicide or para-suicide (attempted suicide). The second category of inter-personal violence is in relationship to smaller group dynamics. This can be one person inflicting pain on another person. This can be at a family level, workplace, or even within a religious or cultural group. The groups are relatively small and do not qualify as a community. What is thus particularly encouraging is the fact that sport has the potential to appeal to the different dimensions and levels of violence to promote peace.

We align ourselves with John Paul Lederach, who, in “The Moral Imagination,” stressed the transformative potential of culture in peacebuilding and transformation. He observed for peacebuilding to be necessary, there was a need to be creative and to combine formal and artistic strategies, including the use of sport to navigate the complexities of building sustainable peace. According to Lederach (John Paul Lederach, 2005), peacebuilding is complex, and the goal of transcending violence is advanced by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build the moral imagination. This imaginative faculty rests on four capacities:

1. Moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships, one that includes even our enemies.
2. It requires the ability to embrace complexity without getting caught up in social schism.

3. It requires a commitment to the creative act.
4. It requires an acceptance of the risk that necessarily goes along with attempts to transcend violence (John Paul Lederach, 2005).

That is, peacebuilding requires a better understanding of the dynamic nature of the presenting conflict, its causes and drivers, as well as its actors. Sport by nature is very competitive, if not aggressive, and its use in peacebuilding initiatives must be handled with due care, because there is always the potential of the games re-igniting the conflict – and yet the idea would be to transform the conflict through sport as part of the moral imagination. Therefore, it requires a delicate balancing act of ensuring popular and inclusive participation whilst avoiding stocking the fires of conflict and making the situation worse for the targeted group. In most cases, conflicts exhibit attitudes that paint an ‘us versus them’ mentality and if not carefully managed, any team sport can actually reinforce this, albeit inadvertently.

Although in his presentation of the moral imagination Lederach emphasised artistic power of music and other creative arts, we want to argue for the various sporting disciplines, particularly those that are team sporting activities, as being part of the creative art and the moral imagination for transforming volatile relationships into healthier ones. In this regard, Lederach submitted that "the perspective of meditative capacity focuses attention on introducing a quality of interaction into a strategic set of social spaces within the web of systemic relationships in order to promote constructive change processes in the conflict-affected setting as a whole" (John Paul Lederach, 2005). In this regard, the social spaces of interest are those that are created by various sporting activities that include football (by far the most popular sport in Zimbabwe), handball, netball, rugby, cricket, basketball, tennis, and various other sporting disciplines that are practiced in Zimbabwe.

TRANSFORMATIONS
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Sport and Social Inclusion in Conflict Resolution and Transformation

A major contribution brought by sport is its ability to nurture socially inclusive processes. Most sporting disciplines transcend racial, ethnic, economic, and political divides. Sport has the ability to bring together people and communities with diverse and often conflicting backgrounds. According to Silver (Silver, 2015), social inclusion is defined as a process encouraging social interaction between people with different socially relevant attributes or an impersonal institutional mechanism of opening up access to participation in all spheres of social life. Social inclusion is affirmative action to change the circumstances and habits that lead to or have led to social exclusion. The World Bank defines social inclusion as the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society (The World Bank, 2013). According to Allman (Allman, 2013), the terms social inclusion and social exclusion have been used throughout the social science and humanities literature in a number of different ways—to describe acts of social stratification across human and animal societies, as a principle to reflect the ordering that occurs within societies to determine social position, and as a narrative to explain, and at times justify, why one or more groups merit access to the core or the periphery, to the benefit or expense of others. Other scholars like Eitzen (Eitzen, 1973) and Baxter (Baxter, 2014) agree with the above assertion, although they looked at social exclusion through the sociological lenses. A complementary analytical lens derived from Johan Vincent Galtung's Resolution, Reconciliation and Reconstruction model, the "3Rs" model (Galtung, 1998). The model places emphasis on the importance of resolution of differences in constructive ways. It also underlines the importance of social reconstruction as the basis for long-term and durable peace among and within individuals and communities in general. Social reconciliation is about (re)building relationships and promoting positive co-existence at different levels of society. This is usually bound on fairness, equality, and respect.

Most sporting disciplines preach these “inclusive” values, and they are, thus, useful for sustainable peacebuilding. For example, the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) values are listed as :

- Transparency: is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- Accountability: is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions.
- Integrity: is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one’s actions. Integrity can stand in opposition to hypocrisy.
- Solidarity: is a unity of purpose or togetherness.
- Courage: is the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.
- Justice: as found in the study and application of the law.
- Democracy: the rule of the majority (Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA), 2019).

The more inclusive International Olympics Committee (IOC) express similar values of other sporting disciplines. According to the IOC, the original values of Olympism as expressed in the Olympic Charter were to “encourage effort”, “preserve human dignity”, and “develop harmony”. Over time, they have evolved and are now expressed in more contemporary terms as:

- Striving for excellence and encouraging people to be the best they can be.
- Celebrating friendship, which is quite unique to the Olympic Games – an event that brings people together every few years.
- Demonstrating respect in many different manners: respect towards yourself, the rules, your opponents, the environment, the public, etc.

It can be argued, then, that all sporting disciplines generally preach the virtues of respect, fairness, friendship, and harmony, themes that resonate with Galtung’s “3R”

model. The IOC stated that, “Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will, and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example, and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play (International Olympic Committee, 2021). From the foregoing, it can be argued that sport provides greater value and relevance to peacebuilding. Sport provides a platform for resolution, reconciliation, and reconstruction in many creative ways.

Kelly asserts that, social inclusion through sports participation is considered by government bodies and sports scholars globally as an important part of the inclusion process within the wider society (Cole and Kelly, 2015). The notion of social inclusion is reinforced by the values of fairness, equity, and social justice. The premise of an inclusive society is built on the concept of inclusion, the idea being that in an ‘inclusive society’, individuals will be able to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of a nation and achieve their full potential (Lister, 2010, pp.143–164). According to Parnell and Richardson (Parnell and Richardson, 2014), sport’s potential to contribute positively to a range of social issues is widely celebrated. Research by Coalter (Coalter, 2007) argues about the underpinning notion being that the participation in sport can support social inclusion that is reduce crime, develop communities and improve health.

Some scholars have also linked the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the fight against social exclusion. According to Silver (Silver, 2015), the emphasis on inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) compels us to specify what social inclusion is and how to accomplish it. The Open Working Group’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 8, 10, 11, and 16 all refer to inclusion. Goal 8 is to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable growth with employment creation; Goal

10 to “empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status”; Goal 11 is to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”; and Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies as well as inclusive institutions. Sport can help improve communication and cement existing ties between individuals and groups from different and potentially conflictual backgrounds (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1983).

Zimbabwe sports also reflect these beliefs about sport. The Zimbabwe Aquatic Union in its code of conduct highlights essential elements of character building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these "six pillars of character". The Sport and Recreation Commission confirms that sport has always been an integral part in the country’s quest for nation building and development as enshrined in various sport codes. The Zimbabwe Handball Federation code of conduct states that “within the framework of the association, the belief that all humans are born equal irrespective of race, creed, colour, or nationality shall be preserved forever. It is the intent of this body to preserve and advance these principles… by joining the nations and continents of the world by… usage of… sport designed to challenge individual skills while creating a better understanding. Further, this body recognises the sovereignty of each nation to administer such programmes as it deems necessary and desirable for the benefit of handball within the nation and the world”.

In Zimbabwe, the challenge is to reconstruct the narrative and the agency of the youth in conflict dynamics. In most cases, the youth have been used or deployed as the merchants of violence and as foot soldiers unleashing violence on perceived political opponents on behalf of their political principals. The violence has taken both inter and intra-party dimensions with others fighting amongst themselves and others against other members from other political parties. We also found out that sport has been used by different actors, namely the state, business and Non-Governmental Organisations,

to promote peace at different levels in society. Examples include the Independence and Unity Day football tournaments, the School Sports Games, the Youth Empowerment through Sport (YES) programme, and various "sport for peace" tournaments that have been organised by NGOs in different parts of the country. Yet, sport, football in particular, regardless of the background in which it takes place, cannot be isolated from the rest of the society. We explore the ability of sports to create social inclusion in the context of Zimbabwe below.

Zimbabwe State-level Sport for Peacebuilding Initiatives

At the state level, state authorities have sought to use sport, particularly football, as a nation building tool. Examples given were the Independence Cup football tournament which is played to commemorate the country's independence every year. Although this has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was noted that the Independence Cup has always been synonymous with the country's independence celebrations and that it helped to magnify the importance of the country's hard-won independence across generations, from the elderly to the young. The Independence Cup was usually contested for by teams in the country's top-flight football league. In fact, it started off as a tournament for the top four teams (per the previous season's log standings), but it later changed to be a preserve of the country's top two football teams (based on following), i.e., Dynamos and Highlanders. This reduction is an issue that raised concerns about inclusivity of the tournament and relevance to peacebuilding initiatives. Apart from the Independence Cup, the study also found out that in the past, the country used to celebrate continental integration through the hosting of what was then known as the Africa Day Cup. This was again a football tournament meant to celebrate the importance of a united Africa that is actively seeking to see a fully integrated continent for the good of the continent's citizens. Unfortunately, although this was a popular tournament, it was abandoned a long time ago owing to funding challenges.

Another football tournament that showed the country's intention to use sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding was the Unity Day Cup that was played to commemorate the

Unity Accord that was signed on the 22nd December 1987 between the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). The Unity Accord birthed what is now known as the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), currently ruling party in the country. The tournament initially enjoyed the funding of the state, and it is unclear why the tournament was abandoned altogether. The Unity Day Cup tournaments were also extended to provinces and districts. However, these lacked proper technical and practitioner input to allow for monitoring and evaluation of their impact to wider peacebuilding. The initiatives on Unity Cup also failed to yield its results due to football club executives releasing the clubs for the festive season so it would be not necessary for them to take part in the tournament. As a result, organizers had to try and find other teams to participate to no avail. In 2015, the tournament could not take place due to the burial of a National Hero, hence bringing confusion to the participating teams.

These state-led efforts demonstrate that while sports have the ability to achieve a new moral imagination, this potential is dependent on outside actors not corrupting sports with their own agenda. This is common, however, with politicians who use sport events to garner support from the electorate. If the State does not alter its behaviour, then a sporting event will not be seen as neutral or without an agenda. As such it will not accomplish its purpose of fostering unity amongst people. As such, sports might actually be seen as giving a lever to reform such non-sport organizations behaviour towards these conflicts.

Zimbabwe State and Non-state Partnerships in Sport for Peacebuilding

Several initiatives, particularly in primary and secondary schools can also be attributed to directly and indirectly contributing to the peacebuilding agenda in the country. These are mostly organized team sports in schools that are funded by business partners. A flagship tournament remains the Coca-Cola Schools Soccer Tournament. This targets

mostly those under the age of 17. Other partners have funded junior tournaments in primary schools. Apart from this, another equally popular tournament is the COTCO Schools Rugby Festival, while other corporates have also supported football including Dairiboard.

The country has also benefitted from the Youth Education through Sport (YES) program. The program started in 1999 and is stirred by the Community Sport Development Program. The initiative started in Harare around 1999 and was later rolled out to other parts of the country. The main purpose of the initiative was to teach the youth about social responsibility whilst enjoying the benefits of sport. It was meant to tackle the ravaging effects of HIV/AIDS and other social challenges that then affected society. In contemporary times, it has been used to address the challenges relating to youth drug abuse. The program has a presence at national, provincial, district, and ward levels in all parts of the country and thus contributing significantly to social cohesion. The Sports and Recreation Commission (SRC), which was created by an act of parliament in Zimbabwe, plays a very significant role in coordinating the activities.

Although it is difficult to directly link these school-based sporting activities to peacebuilding, the benefits brought about by merely participating in these tournaments are immense and they go a long way in contributing to the well-being of the nation. A research project (Borsani, 2009) has confirmed that participating in sport nurtures values of cooperation, teamwork, emotional resilience, respect, fairness, problem solving, tolerance, discipline, etc., among many other advantages of sport. Indeed, the constituency of social cohesion is complex, but at its essence, social cohesion implies a convergence across groups in society that provides a framework within which groups can, at a minimum, coexist peacefully. In this way, social cohesion offers a measure of predictability to interactions across people and groups, which in turn provides incentives for collective action (The World Bank, 2013). Social cohesion can in a positive sense stand for the elements of social progress which include human security, an absence of the threat of violence or coercive force, and solidarity. As such it can be

seen as both constitutive to development, and instrumental to other elements of development, for example, the ability of social groups to sustainably improve living standards, thereby nation building.

Several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have also contributed to peacebuilding in Zimbabwe through sporting initiatives. Some of the NGOs that have led the way in promoting peacebuilding through sport include the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Heal Zimbabwe, Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT), Generations For Peace (GFP), and several other entities. Most of these organizations have implemented sport for peace tournaments in different parts of the country. However, these initiatives have been accused of lacking both peacebuilding acumen as well as continuity. Thus, making it difficult to measure the program's impact, success, or lack thereof.

The above school and NGO efforts demonstrate the breadth of assistance including conflict prevention, mediation, peace support, and post-conflict reconstruction as vehicles for peacebuilding, which makes Zimbabwe's approach to this assistance comprehensive. The modalities for delivery of this assistance are clearly distinct from established actors in this field, as they do not feel obliged to push the ideology of human rights and democracy in their assistance. As a result, its pre-conditions have little to do with conforming to certain political cultures preferred by South Africa, as contrasts with established donors.

Conclusions

Although sport presents massive opportunities for peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, several challenges can be noted as well. The first challenge is that just like any other peacebuilding strategy, such opportunity requires political will for it to be effective. The study observed that there is no political will to effectively transform the social and political tensions affecting Zimbabwean communities. For as long as the polarization

is being driven by political elites, the transformative potential of sport as a tool for peacebuilding will remain largely peripheral.

Another challenge noted is the tendency for a top-down approach in the use of sport for peacebuilding, particularly in instances where the state is involved. Tournaments that were cited, such as the Independence Cup and the Unity Cup, are typical examples. The study noted that teams that ordinarily participated in these tournaments were cherry-picked by the political elites and thus raising questions of inclusivity and relevance of the whole tournaments to the goals of peacebuilding. Connected to this is the challenge of elitism. The tournaments focus on premier league teams that are popular with the politicians at the expense of the lower leagues and community teams that are otherwise closer to the communities.

Another area of concern is that even where the tournaments are inclusive, particularly school sports tournaments, most of them are seasonal, are played for a short period of time, and are then abandoned until the next sporting season. This has a disruptive effect on the goals of peacebuilding and thus making it difficult to judge the significance of sport in peacebuilding in the different parts of the country. If sport is to be deployed as an effective tool for peacebuilding, there is a need to ensure continuity, inclusivity, and proper funding at different levels in society.

Another challenge noted is to do with NGO initiatives. These have also been accused of being once-off events that are difficult to replicate and let alone measure in terms of impact.

Apart from that, NGOs have also been accused of fanning political divisions, as they appear to work with selected groups in society and thus undermining inclusivity. It was also noted that there is no expertise both in government and peacebuilding practitioners able to design sport for peacebuilding activities. It is not supposed to be a serendipitous occurrence that by merely hosting a sporting tournament then the goals of peacebuilding are somehow achieved. Peacebuilding must be a result of proper expert planning leading to transformation at different levels of society. When

considering sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding, there is also a need to put in place proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

It can be concluded that sport presents massive opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding initiatives in Zimbabwe. Its ability to draw numbers is a huge resource that peacebuilders can ride on. This will greatly ensure the achievement of social inclusion, a significant requirement for sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding. Apart from the social inclusion potential of sport in peacebuilding, it can also be concluded that the generic values in most sporting disciplines such as fairness, transparency, honesty, and respect are all values that can be consolidated for the good of society and for the achievement of the long-term goals of peacebuilding. (A good example is how football contributed to the wider peace processes in the Côte d'Ivoire.)

Sport can also contribute to economic peacebuilding that will help to emancipate a lot of the unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. Economic peacebuilding is very important because it is the reason why most youths have turned to drug and alcohol abuse and thus creating a vicious cycle among the youths in Zimbabwe. Apart from drugs, the youth are easily manipulated by the unscrupulous politicians to perpetuate violence as a way of advancing their (politicians') political objectives. It can also be concluded that sport can contribute to social peacebuilding through nurturing mental well-being, healing and relationship building through team games, competition, being glorious in defeat and in victory, and knowing that competition is healthy.

However, the chapter concluded that implementation of sport, as a vehicle for peacebuilding can be very difficult in politically polarized environments. Zimbabwe is one such environment where the political terrain is much polarized and will require neutralization if sport initiatives for peace are to be effective. The other major challenge is that sport requires considerable resources to organize meaningful games. It also requires meaningful and decent infrastructure and, here, it has been noted that in Zimbabwe the resources are limited.

Regardless of the challenges cited, it can be concluded that sport, particularly team sports, present massive and useful resources for sustainable peacebuilding in Zimbabwean communities and the world at large. However, for this to be effective there is need to invest in training at different levels of society so that the deployment of sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding is structured and informed by verifiable scientific designs. The chapter thus recommended the following:

- Invest more in researching the benefits of sport in peacebuilding and be able to identify situations and levels of peacebuilding within which sport can be deployed for peacebuilding purposes at the political, economic, and social levels.
- Develop sport and peacebuilding intervention programmes that can be properly implemented whilst providing for an opportunity for monitoring and evaluation to document success stories.
- Train resource persons in sport and peacebuilding given the fact that most of what is being done is largely unstructured and lack the needed expertise. These resource persons will go a long way in helping in the designing of programmes/projects and activities for peacebuilding.

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Six Principles of Writing for Peace: Lessons from EncantaPalabras in Colombia

Seis Principios de Escribir para la Paz: Aprenizajes de EncantaPalabras en Colombia

Juana María Echeverri, Rodrigo Rojas Ospina & Kate Vieira

Abstract

Based on the work of EncantaPalabras, an educational organisation in Colombia focused on the teaching of writing for peace in territories impacted by the country's armed conflict, the article discusses six principles of writing for peace. These principles address writing holistically from a human and community perspective, in terms of its social, creative, and healing potential. The essay argues that writing is conducive to peacebuilding through promoting emotional healing and dialogic in which new narratives are built in sites of entrenched conflict. Through authors' leadership in founding intergenerational writing projects, the essay offers insights into a philosophy of writing that puts writers and human relationships in the centre.

This philosophy is based on theories of human potential that believe in a poetic seed in everyone. This seed, then, can transform and expand the meaning we make of our lives together in community, resulting in increased trust, respect, and empathy within oneself and with others. The process also becomes conducive to peacebuilding through offering marginalized communities opportunities to voice, a voice often silenced by a culture of hegemonic exclusion. The essay also features examples from community writers who discuss the liberating and transformative force of writing.

WRITING FOR PEACE, COLOMBIA, FIRMANTES, PEACE ACCORDS, PEACEBUILDING

In a moment of both violence and reparation in many communities, we – the award-winning poet Juana María Echeverri, Rodrigo Rojas Ospina of the Colombian educational organization EncantaPalabras, and Kate Vieira of the University of Wisconsin, Madison – offer six principles of writing for peace based in EncantaPalabras work in communities impacted by Colombia's armed conflict. We believe that although Colombian and US legacies of violence differ, and although the United States and Colombia can learn from each other as we work toward a common goal: building peace. To echo the mission of Transformations, our shared goals are to "reinvent public spheres, marked by conflict, into peaceful civic spaces premised on tolerance and inclusion. We are proud that our principles are part of the "Transformations" inaugural issue.

En un momento tanto de violencia como de reparación en muchas comunidades, nosotros, la premiada poeta Juana María Echeverri y Rodrigo Rojas Ospina de la organización educativa colombiana EncantaPalabras, y Kate Vieira, de la Universidad de Wisconsin, Madison, ofrecemos aquí seis principios para escribir por la paz, basados en el trabajo educativo de EncantaPalabras en comunidades impactadas por el conflicto armado en Colombia. Creemos que, aunque los legados de violencia colombianos y estadounidenses difieren, y aunque los Estados Unidos han promovido la violencia dentro y fuera del país, los educadores,

lectores, escritores y miembros de la comunidad en Estados Unidos y Colombia pueden aprender unos de otros a medida que trabajamos hacia el mismo objetivo: Construir la paz. Para hacernos eco de la misión de Transformations, nuestros objetivos compartidos son “reinventar las esferas públicas, marcadas por el conflicto, en espacios cívicos pacíficos basados en la tolerancia y la inclusión”. Estamos orgullosos de que estos principios sean parte de la edición inaugural de “Transformations".

The armed conflict in Colombia lasted five decades and saw hundreds of thousands of deaths and disappearances, as well as internal displacement of millions of people – a scale second only to that of Syria. With the 2016 peace accords, a new kind of society seemed possible, one marked by relationships of trust and peace. Peace accords signed by government officials and (eventually) voted for by the people are important. But peace, reparation, and reconciliation are longer, grassroots processes. They involve processes of social change that occur in everyday interactions (such as in writing). As of this writing, the commitments of the peace accords – Justice, Truth, Reparation, and Guarantees of No Repetition – have been only partially fulfilled. Violence thus continues to touch too many Colombians.

El conflicto armado en Colombia duró cinco décadas, vio cientos de miles de muertes y desapariciones, así como el desplazamiento interno de millones de personas, una escala sólo superada por la de Siria. Con los acuerdos de paz de 2016, parecía posible un nuevo tipo de sociedad, marcada por relaciones de confianza y paz. Los acuerdos de paz firmados por funcionarios del gobierno y (eventualmente) votados por la gente son importantes. Pero la paz, la reparación y la reconciliación son procesos de base más largos–son procesos de cambio cultural que pasan en nuestras interacciones cotidianas (como en la escritura). Los compromisos de los acuerdos de paz -Justicia, Verdad, Reparación y Garantías de No Repetición- se han cumplido sólo parcialmente. Por lo tanto, la violencia sigue tocando a demasiados colombianos.

In this context, the educational collective EncantaPalabras has been teaching writing for peace workshops in territories impacted by the armed conflict, mostly in the Colombian state of Caldas, to children, young people, women, those in indigenous communities, and former combatants, who are now known as “firmantes” (from the word “firmar”/”to sign”) of the peace accord. EncantaPalabras publishes booklets of children’s and community members’ poetry, “cartillas”, that are then distributed for free, so people can see their words in print, and so that peace can be circulated along with the written word. The Caldas secretary of education takes these booklets to various committees, not to sell them, but instead to promote the construction of peace. A recent

such volume of poetry was taken up by Caldas' Commission for Truth, wherein children's poetry was interpreted as recommendations for the principle of "no repetition of violence".

En este contexto, la colectiva educativa EncantaPalabras viene impartiendo talleres de escritura para la paz en territorios impactados por el conflicto armado, principalmente en el departamento colombiano de Caldas y Risaralda a niños, niñas, niñes, jóvenes, mujeres, comunidades indígenas y excombatientes, que ahora son conocidos como "firmantes" (de la palabra "firmar"/"to sign") del acuerdo de paz. Publican libretas de poesía infantiles y comunitarias, cartillas, que luego se distribuyen gratuitamente, para que la gente pueda ver sus palabras impresas, y para que la paz circule junto con la palabra escrita. La secretaría de educación de Caldas lleva estas cartillas a varios comités, no para venderlas, sino para promover la construcción de paz. Un volumen reciente de poesía fue retomado por la Comisión de la Verdad de Caldas, en el que la poesía infantil se entendía como recomendaciones para el principio de "no repetición de la violencia".

There are many reasons why writing is conducive to peacebuilding. It has been shown to promote emotional healing (Pennebaker and Frank Evans, 2014) (Vieira, 2019), it is a dialogic process that lends itself to communication (Nystrand, 1997), it can participate in liberation (Lorde, 1980), it can help us create new narratives in sites of entrenched conflict (John Paul Lederach, 2005), and it is a social practice that holds power (Street, 1984). Of course, as Colombian scholars have pointed out, art itself does not on its own lend itself to conflict resolution or peace (Guzmán et al, 2018). But its potential for peace, when used with collective intention, is powerful. If scholars in the United States have been asking for decades how writing/English/language can be taught such that people stop killing each other (Winn, 2018), we join authors Kelenyi, Luangpipat, and Vieira in asking: How can writing be taught so that it builds peace?

Hay muchas razones por las que la escritura conduce a la construcción de la paz. Se ha demostrado que promueve la sanación emocional (Pennebaker and Frank Evans, 2014) (Vieira, 2019), es un proceso dialógico que se presta a la comunicación

(Nystrand, 1997), puede participar en la liberación (Lorde, 1980), puede ayudarnos a crear nuevas narrativas en los sitios del antiguo conflict (John Paul Lederach, 2005), y es una práctica social que detenta el poder (Street, 1984). Por supuesto, como han señalado los académicos colombianos, el arte en sí mismo no se presta a la resolución de conflictos o la paz (Guzmán et al, 2018). Pero su potencial para la paz, cuando se usa con intención colectiva, es poderoso. Si los académicos en los EEUU llevamos décadas preguntándonos cómo se puede enseñar el aprendizaje y la escritura del inglés para que las personas dejen de matarse entre sí (Winn, 2018), nos unimos a los autores Kelenyi, Luangpipat y Vieira para preguntar: ¿Cómo se puede enseñar la escritura para que construya la paz?

Roots: an International Friendship / Los Raíces: Una Amistad Internacional

Juana, Rodrigo, and Kate's relationship began in Manizales, Colombia in 2018 when Kate was on a Fulbright and ICETEX grant to study writing and peacebuilding. We soon began teaching writing for peace workshops at a local school together, and engaged in various writing for peace projects, including participating in the "Imaginantes Sonoros," an intergenerational writing and music peace project founded by Colombian psychologist Luis Cuervo. We also participated, under the direction of co-editor Jhoana Patiño Lopez, in "Corazón Común", a University of Wisconsin-Baldwin-funded project that included a community-authored book on writing for peace, a community-developed writing-for-peace board game, and a pedagogical tour to distribute the Corazón Común kit to communities and schools in Colombia (www.escribiendolapaz.com).

La relación de Juana, Rodrigo y Kate comenzó en Manizales, Colombia en 2018 cuando Kate estaba estudiando escritura y construcción de paz con una beca de Fulbright e ICETEX. Pronto comenzamos a impartir talleres de escritura para la paz en colegios locales y participamos en varios proyectos de escritura para la paz,

incluida la participación en “Imaginantes Sonoros”, un proyecto intergeneracional de escritura y música para la paz fundado por el psicólogo colombiano Luis Cuervo. Nosotros también participamos bajo la dirección de co-editora Jhoana Patiño Lopez en “Corazón Común,” un proyecto financiado por la Universidad de Wisconsin Baldwin que incluyó un libro escrito por la comunidad sobre escribir para la paz, un juego de mesa de escritura para la paz desarrollado por la comunidad y una gira pedagógica para distribuir todo el kit “Corazón Común” a comunidades y escuelas de Colombia (www.escribiendolapaz.com).

The idea for the principles of writing for peace began in Kate’s apartment in Madison, Wisconsin in 2019, when Juana and Rodrigo were visiting the University of Wisconsin for a writing-for-peace week, during which we held a bilingual poetry reading, workshops for multilingual students, talks, and various activities. In preparation for a workshop for bilingual teachers, we began to articulate a philosophy informed both by Kate’s experiences as a teacher and scholar of writing studies and Juana and Rodrigo’s experiences as writers, activists, intellectuals, and educators for peace. We wanted to articulate for the educators with whom we would be working – and it turned out, for ourselves – the set of beliefs, principles, that undergirds our work.

La idea de estos principios comenzó en el apartamento de Kate en Madison, Wisconsin en 2019, cuando Juana y Rodrigo visitaban la Universidad de Wisconsin para una semana de escritura por la paz, durante la cual realizamos una noche de poesía bilingüe, talleres para estudiantes multilingües, charlas y diversas actividades. En preparación para un taller para maestros bilingües, comenzamos a articular una filosofía formada tanto por las experiencias de Kate como maestra y estudiante de la escritura como por las experiencias de Juana y Rodrigo como escritores, activistas, intelectuales y educadores por la paz. Queríamos articular para los educadores con los que estábamos trabajando–y resultó, para nosotros mismos–el conjunto de consideraciones, los principios que sustentan nuestro trabajo.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, it had been four short months since we had seen each other. Juana and Rodrigo began, like so many, to shift their teaching virtually. Faced with the pandemic-related traumas of isolation, uncertainty, and economic disenfranchisement, layered on top of existing wounds from the war, Colombian communities and students needed writing for peace more than ever. Juana and Rodrigo received multiple invitations for virtual workshops, and Juana's phone became filled with the poems of children writing to her from sometimes distant territories. Juana and Rodrigo, however, are only two people, and could not facilitate all of the workshops necessary in that critical pandemic moment, when all of us needed to feel heard, to feel "acompañados" (to be with others in a way that suggests warmth and friendship), and to write together. To respond to this need, the three of us turned our attention to how to help teachers and leaders of community groups use writing for peace in their own contexts. We committed to writing a book for teachers on how to implement writing for peace. The principles that we share in this article are the first chapter of the book.

Cuando llegó la pandemia en 2020, habían pasado cuatro cortos meses desde que nos habíamos visto. Juana y Rodrigo comenzaron, como tantos, a cambiar su enseñanza a virtual. Frente a los traumas de aislamiento, incertidumbre y privación económica relacionados con la pandemia, superpuestos a las heridas existentes de la guerra, las comunidades y los estudiantes necesitaban escribir para la paz más que nunca. Juana y Rodrigo recibieron más invitaciones para talleres virtuales que nunca, y el teléfono de Juana se llenó de poemas de niños que le escribían desde territorios a veces lejanos. Juana y Rodrigo, sin embargo, son solo dos personas, y no podían hacer todos los talleres que se necesitaban en ese momento de pandemia tan crítico, donde todos necesitábamos sentirnos escuchados, acompañados, y escribir juntos. Para responder a esta necesidad, los tres nos dimos cuenta de que necesitábamos dirigir nuestra atención a cómo ayudar a los maestros y líderes de grupos comunitarios a usar la escritura para la paz en sus propios contextos. Nos comprometimos a escribir un libro para docentes sobre cómo implementar la escritura para la paz. Los principios que compartimos aquí son el primer capítulo del libro.

Our Process / Nuestro Proceso

We have developed these principles in conversation and practice. We have circulated drafts of them to teachers in the U.S. and in Colombia, to literary artists in Wisconsin, to interdisciplinary groups in Colombia committed to inclusion, to the Conference on Community Writing in 2021, to firmantes committed to words and peace and not arms, to students in indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and rural communities in Colombia, and elsewhere. We have learned so much from all of our conversations and writing with these communities. We hope to have distilled the essence of these learnings here and invite readers to adapt them as they see fit.

Hemos desarrollado estos principios en la conversación y la práctica. Hemos distribuido los principios que estaban en el proceso de redacción a maestros en los Estados Unidos y en Colombia, a escritores literarios en Wisconsin, a grupos interdisciplinarios en Colombia comprometidos con la inclusión, al Conference on Community Writing en 2021, a firmantes comprometidos con la paz y las palabras y no con las armas, y estudiantes en comunidades indígenas, afrodescendientes, y rurales en Colombia, y en otros lugares. Hemos aprendido mucho de todas nuestras conversaciones y escritos con estas comunidades. Esperamos haber destilado la esencia de estos aprendizajes aquí, e invitamos a los lectores a adaptarlos como mejor les parezca.

To that end, a note on our process of translation: These principles were co-written virtually in Spanish by Juana, Rodrigo, and Kate, leaning heavily on Juana's gift for metaphor and poetry; then translated and edited into English by Kate for an audience of U.S.-based teachers and writers associated with the Greater Madison Writing Project and the Arts and Literature Laboratory in Madison; and then, when the three of us finally reunited in person in Colombia in 2022, we retranslated and re-edited the principles into both languages. This last step involved an intensive process of linguistic and theoretical conversations, where we refined the principles for an international readership. Not all words are direct translations, but we have done our best to honor

and responsibly extend our original meanings. We thank the editorial board of *Transformations* for promoting the bilingual publication of this article. We thank the workshop participants that gave EncantaPalabras permission to use their poetry. And we thank Luisa Fernandes Salazar for editorial assistance.

Con este fin, una nota sobre la traducción: estos principios fueron coescritos virtualmente en español por Juana, Rodrigo y Kate, apoyándose en gran medida en el don de Juana para la metáfora y la poesía; luego traducido y editado al inglés por Kate para una audiencia de maestros y escritores de EE. UU. asociados con el Proyecto de Escritura del Madison y el Arts and Literature Laboratory en Madison; y luego, cuando los tres finalmente nos reunimos en persona en Colombia en 2022, retraducida y reeditada a ambos idiomas. Este último paso involucró un proceso intensivo de conversaciones lingüísticas y teóricas, donde refinamos los principios para una audiencia internacional. No todas las palabras son traducciones directas, pero hemos hecho todo lo posible para honrar y extender responsablemente nuestros significados originales. Agradecemos al consejo editorial de Transformaciones por promover la publicación bilingüe de este artículo. Agradecemos a los participantes de los talleres que dieron permiso a EncantaPalabras para usar su poesía aquí. Y agradecemos a Luisa Fernanda Salazar por el auxilio editorial.

The principles that follow form a philosophy of writing that puts writers and human relationships in the centre. It is not a philosophy of text in the abstract, but instead a philosophy that exists in the flesh. It is a philosophy of human beings who—with all our contradictions, desires, failures, and loves—dare to take a pencil (or phone or laptop) in our hands and write our truths, which bloom both from language and living.

Los principios que siguen forman una filosofía de la escritura que pone a los escritores y las relaciones humanas en el centro. No es una filosofía del texto en abstracto, sino una filosofía que existe en carne y hueso. Es una filosofía de seres humanos que, con todas nuestras contradicciones, anhelos, fracasos y amores, nos atrevemos a tomar

un lápiz (o un teléfono o una laptop) en nuestras manos y escribir nuestras verdades, que brotan tanto del lenguaje como del vivir.

The Poetic Potential / El Potencial Poético

We organize these principles of writing for peace according to the concept of "the poetic potential." This concept is inspired by theories of human potential developed in part by our colleagues in peace studies at the University of Manizales' International Center of Education and Human Development (CINDE), where Kate was hosted for her Fulbright and where Juana and Rodrigo earned their certificates in "Children and Young People as Builders of Peace". To CINDE's work on such concepts of humans' "affective", "ethical", "communicative", "creative", and "political" potential, we add the notion of "poetic potential". The "poetic potential" draws on an understanding of language as an artistic, communicative, reflective, and personal practice, where one can name oneself and one's experiences.

Organizamos estos principios de escritura para la paz según el concepto de "potencial poético". Este concepto está inspirado en las teorías del potencial humano desarrolladas en parte por nuestros colegas en estudios de paz en el Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE) de la Universidad de Manizales, donde Kate fue hospedada para su Fulbright y donde Juana y Rodrigo obtuvieron sus certificados. en "La niñez y la juventud como constructores de paz". Al trabajo de CINDE sobre tales conceptos del potencial "afectivo", "ético", comunicativo", "creativo" y "político" de los humanos, le agregamos la noción de "potencial poético". El "potencial poético" se basa en la comprensión del lenguaje como una práctica artística, comunicativa, reflexiva y personal, donde uno puede nombrarse a sí mismo y a sus experiencias.

We propose that there exists a poetic seed in everyone, in all of us, which contains the potential for the kind of artistic-ethical-spiritual human development that can transform and expand the meaning we make of our lives together in community. From this seed,

with its intrinsic capacities (imagination, thought, reflection, sensitivity, intuition, expression) and its interrelation with our lives in their historical contexts, arise certain fundamental elements of writing for peace – the elements that we illustrate in this article.

Proponemos que existe una semilla poética en todos nosotros, que contiene el potencial para el tipo de desarrollo humano artístico-ético-espiritual que puede transformar y ampliar el significado de la convivencia. De esta semilla, con sus capacidades intrínsecas (imaginación, pensamiento, reflexión, sensibilidad, intuición, expresión) y su interrelación con nuestras vidas en sus contextos históricos, surgen ciertos elementos fundamentales de escribir para la paz, los elementos que ilustramos en este artículo.

To extend our botanical metaphor for writing: Seeds are often in states of dormancy. Botanists say that this dormancy corresponds to a period in the biological cycle of an organism in which growth, development, and physical activity is suspended, so that the organism can conserve its energy. If the seed meets unfavorable conditions, it does not germinate; it has a hard cover to protect it, preventing, for the time being, its vital awakening. Likewise, many people submerge their poetic potential in states of latency, due to adverse or threatening conditions.

Para ampliar nuestra metáfora botánica de la escritura: las semillas suelen estar en estado de latencia. Los botánicos dicen que esta latencia corresponde a un período en el ciclo biológico de un organismo en el que se suspende el crecimiento, el desarrollo y la actividad física, para que el organismo pueda conservar su energía. Si la semilla encuentra condiciones desfavorables no germina; tiene una cubierta dura para protegerlo, impidiendo, por el momento, su despertar vital. Asimismo, muchas personas sumergen su potencial poético en estados de latencia, debido a condiciones adversas o amenazantes.

Yet we propose that this seed-of-potency that nests in the heart of each human being can be nourished with the fertile humus of expression, which promotes relationships

of trust, respect, and empathy, with oneself and with others. This seed in our hearts gives us access to our deepest thoughts, where memories bloom, allowing us to reflect and write in the present with each other. As such, each writer can transform links in the cultural DNA of the social body we all share.

Sin embargo, proponemos que esta semilla-de-potencia que anida en el corazón de cada ser humano se pueda nutrir con el fértil humus de la expresión, que promueva relaciones de confianza, respeto y empatía, consigo mismo y con los demás. Esta semilla en nuestro corazón nos da acceso a nuestros pensamientos más profundos, donde florecen las memorias, permitiéndonos reflexionar y escribir en el presente con los demás. Como tal, cada escritor puede transformar eslabones en el ADN cultural del cuerpo social que todos compartimos.

Our understanding of each person's fundamental poetic potential does not depend on what is considered grammatically "correct" or "standard". Instead, **these principles address writing holistically, from a human and community perspective, in terms of its social, creative, and healing potential.** We invite you to discover for yourselves how these principles might extend your understanding and practice of the enormous power of writing to build peace.

Nuestra comprensión del potencial poético fundamental de cada persona no depende de lo que se considera gramaticalmente "correcto" o "estándar". En cambio, **estos principios abordan la escritura de manera holística, desde una perspectiva humana y comunitaria, en términos de su potencial social, creativo y sanador.** Los invitamos a descubrir por sí mismos cómo estos principios pueden ampliar su comprensión y práctica del enorme poder de la escritura para construir la paz.

1. It is powerful to feel like a writer. *Awakening our poetic potential.*

1. Es potente sentirnos escritores y escritoras. *Despertando el potencial poético.*

In contexts of armed conflict or marginalization, many stories have been silenced by the traumas of war and by a culture of hegemonic exclusion on the basis of sex, race, and class. In Colombia, the words of those in marginalized communities and regions are often undervalued by the exclusionary mechanisms of “centralization”, a colonial process by which indigenous communities are seen as “far” from the life of the cities and the nation. We believe, however, that to feel “far” from residents of these territories, unjustly impacted by the armed conflict, is a colonial standpoint that is necessary to transform if we want all subjects and communities to be recognized. In this context, we work to do everything possible to create spaces for each of us to assume the agency of raising our voices and feeling like a writer.

En los contextos de conflicto armado o marginalización, muchas historias han sido silenciadas por los traumas de la guerra y por una cultura de exclusión hegemónica por razón de sexo, raza y clase. En Colombia, las palabras de quienes viven en comunidades y regiones marginalizadas son subvaloradas, por los mecanismos excluyentes del centralismo, un proceso colonial mediante el cual las comunidades indígenas son vistas como “lejos” de la vida de las ciudades y la nación. Creemos, sin embargo, que sentirse “lejos” de los habitantes de estos territorios, injustamente impactados por el conflicto armado, es una postura colonial que es necesario transformar si queremos que todos los sujetos y comunidades sean reconocidos. En este contexto, trabajamos para hacer todo lo posible por crear espacios para que cada uno de nosotros asumamos la agencia de alzar la voz y sentirnos escritores.

Feeling like a writer has to do with affirming ourselves. Our life stories are valuable because of the right that we all have, to express what we feel and to develop our potential.

Sentirse escritor tiene que ver con afirmarnos. Nuestras historias de vida son valiosas por el derecho que todos tenemos de expresar lo que sentimos y de desarrollar nuestro potencial.

We also suggest here that all of our words *want* to be spoken, and that by taking charge of our words, we can become the protagonists of our stories. This power—to feel, as expressive beings, that we are the subjects of our own voice and words—is one of the most important conditions for reawakening the delicate embryo of human communication. In this way, we can recuperate our own sense of ourselves, our capacity to wonder at our truth and our beauty, which is too often decimated by our pain and our fear.

También compartimos que todas nuestras palabras *quieren* ser habladas, y que haciéndonos cargo de ellas podemos convertirnos en protagonistas de nuestras historias. Este poder —sentirnos, como seres expresivos, que somos sujetos de nuestra propia voz y palabras— es una de las condiciones más importantes para despertar el delicado embrión de la comunicación humana. De esta manera, podemos recuperar el propio sentido de nosotros mismos, la capacidad de asombrarnos ante nuestra verdad y nuestra belleza, que con demasiada frecuencia es diezmada por nuestro dolor y nuestro miedo.

In a workshop Kate, Juana, and Rodrigo facilitated in 2018, a young person who had suffered forced displacement, wrote:

> I'm from there where a war
> It made us stronger and more united
> So that I have many
> Pretty stories to tell
> If I tell them to you I'll never stop

One can see in this poem a vital struggle to survive, as well as the powerful role of feeling like a writer in imagining a future full of "pretty stories."

En un taller que Kate, Juana, and Rodrigo han facilitado en 2018, una poeta joven, que padeció desplazamiento forzada, escribió:

> Soy de donde una guerra,
> nos hizo mucho más fuertes y unidos,
> así que tengo muchas
> historias bonitas que contar
> si se las cuento nunca termino

Una lo ve en este poema, una lucha vital para sobrevivir, y el rol potente de sentirse escritora en imaginar un futuro lleno de “historias bonitas”.

2. Writing has often caused us shame and pain. *Breaking the hard shell of fear.*

2. Escribir muchas veces nos ha producido vergüenza y dolor. *Rompiendo la coraza del miedo.*

Writing has been traumatic for many of us, for different reasons.
Escribir ha sido traumático para muchos de nosotros, por diferentes motivos.

Since our first writing lessons in school many of us have faced moments of shame. We remember, for example, spelling and punctuation errors corrected with a red pen, leaving our papers stained. Juana and Rodrigo also remember certain popular adages, such as “*la letra con sangre entra*/the letter enters with blood”, which in itself has a character of violence, of punishment. In contexts outside of Colombia, writing studies scholar Spencer Shaffner has written a sobering book devoted to the pervasive use of writing as punishment in schools and elsewhere.

Desde nuestras primeras lecciones de escritura en la escuela, muchos de nosotros hemos enfrentado momentos de vergüenza. Recordamos, por ejemplo, errores ortográficos y de puntuación corregidos con lápiz rojo, dejando manchados nuestros papeles. Juana y Rodrigo también recuerdan ciertos adagios populares que han marcado su cultura, como “la letra con sangre entra”, que en sí mismo tiene un carácter de violencia, de castigo. En contextos fuera de Colombia, professor de estudios de la escritura Spencer Shaffner ha escrito un libro completo dedicado al uso generalizado de la escritura como castigo en las escuelas y en otros lugares.

Similarly, many people believe that writing is only for elites, not for ordinary people. Consider the adage: “Lo escrito, escrito está” (“What is written, is written”). It is a monarchal and authoritarian sentence, which has been in play for a long time, and it embodies a vertical relationship of power with writing. This adage suggests, erroneously, that writing is something static, unmovable, petrified. Presented in this way, writing and what is written is a distant echo, something alien to the people themselves, who can only access it passively. This ideology deprives us of the possibility of recreating our memories and present experiences.

Del mismo modo, muchas personas creen que escribir es solo para élites, no para gente común. Consideremos el adagio: “Lo escrito, escrito está” (“Lo que está escrito, está escrito”). Es una sentencia monárquica, autoritaria, que ha estado en juego durante mucho tiempo, y que encarna una relación vertical de poder con la escritura. Este adagio sugiere, erróneamente, que la escritura es algo estático, inamovible, petrificado. Así presentada, la escritura y lo que se escribe es un eco lejano, algo ajeno al propio pueblo, que sólo puede acceder a él pasivamente. Esta ideología nos priva de la posibilidad de recrear nuestros recuerdos y experiencias presentes.

We also have to consider how many of us are reluctant to write or are afraid of expressing ourselves. Expressing our intimate thoughts and feelings can make us feel vulnerable or uncomfortable, especially when we become emotional. These aspects bear on our motivation to write, and even more so when writing poetry for peace,

because participants in such projects are often accessing painful or uncomfortable experiences. As such, we walk a path full of obstacles in order to get closer to ourselves and to try to construct, with our own words, a space of healing.

También tenemos que considerar cuántos de nosotros somos reacios a escribir o tenemos miedo de expresarnos. Expresar nuestros pensamientos y sentimientos íntimos puede hacernos sentir vulnerables o incómodos, especialmente cuando nos emocionamos. Estos aspectos inciden en nuestra motivación para escribir, y más aún cuando escribimos poesía por la paz, porque los participantes en este tipo de proyectos a menudo acceden a experiencias dolorosas o incómodas. Así, recorremos un camino lleno de obstáculos para acercarnos a nosotros mismos y tratar de construir, con nuestras propias palabras, un espacio de sanación.

Additionally, writing about our personal history sometimes is painful because one has to look both inside and also back in memory. One comes to situations, places, and emotions that one does not want to remember. In recognizing these aspects of our experiences, we can crack the hard shell of fear. By writing them down and sharing them with others, we can break the paralyzing cycle of isolation.

Además, escribir sobre nuestra historia personal a veces es doloroso porque uno tiene que mirar tanto hacia adentro como hacia atrás en la memoria. Uno llega a situaciones, lugares y emociones que no quiere recordar. Al reconocer estos aspectos de nuestras experiencias, podemos romper la dura coraza del miedo. Escribiendo y compartiendo con otros, podemos romper el ciclo paralizante del aislamiento.

We can illustrate this principle with the following example: an adult firmante who had been recruited into the armed conflict as a boy recently attended a workshop Juana and Rodrigo were facilitating of poetry for peace and reconciliation session in a rural indigenous educational institution.

Podemos ilustrar la manera en que uno puede superar este ciclo de aislamiento con el siguiente ejemplo: un firmante adulto que había sido reclutado en el conflicto armado cuando era niño asistió recientemente a un taller que Juana y Rodrigo estaban facilitando de poesía para la paz y la reconciliación en una institución educativa rural indígena.

After having participated in several collective activities of reconciliation, he became eager to “tell his story from a different place”, as someone whose childhood was stolen, but who in the process of remembering, was able to see his experiences in a new perspective. He gave EncantaPalabras the permission to use one of the poems he wrote in a subsequent workshop, where he sat down easily to write along with others. To return to the central metaphor of the principle: this writer broke the hard shell of fear.

Después de haber participado en varias actividades colectivas de reconciliación, se animó a “contar su historia desde un lugar diferente”, como alguien a quien le robaron la infancia, pero que en el proceso de recordar, pudo ver sus experiencias desde una nueva perspectiva. Le dio permiso a EncantaPalabras para usar uno de los poemas que escribió en un taller posterior, donde se sentó fácilmente a escribir junto con otros. Para volver a la metáfora central del principio: este escritor rompió la dura coraza del miedo.

He wrote:

> With great joy, oh majestic hill!,
> you orient me,
> and guided and accompanied
> by great friends that bring us
> their passion, their love, their poetry,
> their tenderness,
> bring words for me to speak
> with precision and strength, of peace.

Él escribió:

> Con enorme regocijo, ¡oh majestuoso cerro!
> me orientas,
> y guiado y acompañado
> por grandes amigos que nos entregan
> su pasión, su amor, sus poesías,
> sus ternuras,
> me entregan palabras.
> para hablar contundentemente de paz.

We believe that all of us deserve this vibrational space where our words are heard, by ourselves or by others. Despite the harmful ideologies of writing that too many of us have experienced, there is an opening, in fact many openings, for all of us to write for peace.

Creemos que todos merecemos este espacio vibracional donde nuestras palabras sean escuchadas, por nosotros mismos o por los demás. A pesar de las ideologías dañinas de la escritura que muchos de nosotros hemos experimentado, existe una apertura, de hecho muchas aperturas, para que todos nosotros escribamos para la paz.

3. In order to build peace, it's important to write our "interior refuge". *Germinating in writing.*

3. Para construir la paz, es importante escribir nuestro 'refugio interior'. *Germinando en la escritura.*

We cannot speak about writing for peace and healing without addressing inner peace, which nestles in the heart of our being, and which we can seek and explore through the symbolic and embodied exercise of poetic writing. Through writing, there is a real

possibility of discovering what we like to call our “interior refuge”. When we write our words and thoughts, when we rediscover our artistic and linguistic capacities, we find it and create it.

No podemos hablar de escribir para la paz y la sanación sin abordar la paz interior, que anida en el corazón de nuestro ser, y que podemos buscar y explorar a través del ejercicio simbólico y encarnado de la escritura poética. A través de la escritura existe una posibilidad real de descubrir lo que nos gusta llamar nuestro “refugio interior”. Cuando escribimos nuestras palabras y pensamientos, cuando redescubrimos nuestras capacidades artísticas y lingüísticas, lo encontramos y lo creamos.

We therefore propose writing for peace as a way to reconnect with ourselves. Seen this way, writing becomes a space of inner dialogue in which we become reacquainted with this ancient and affectionate home, soul, and centre. In this centre, we are truly valued, we love ourselves, and we know ourselves. From here, we can realize the action of writing for peace. This is to say, we can fill the blank page with writing from our being, and in this way value our own experiences and expression.

Proponemos, por tanto, escribir por la paz como una forma de reencontrarnos con nosotros mismos. Visto así, la escritura se convierte en un espacio de diálogo interior en el que nos reencontramos con este antiguo y afectuoso hogar, alma y centro. En este centro nos valoramos de verdad, nos amamos y nos conocemos. A partir de aquí, podemos concretar la acción de escribir por la paz. Es decir, podemos llenar la página en blanco con la escritura de nuestro ser, y así valorar nuestras propias experiencias y expresión.

It is not a coincidence that psychological research has shown that certain writing practices can help us to heal from traumatic experiences. There are even organizations devoted to “poetry therapy” and “journal therapy”. This experience of listening to ourselves through writing can bring tranquility. In fact, many people with whom we work describe feeling peace when they write.

No es casualidad que la investigación psicológica haya demostrado que ciertas prácticas de escritura pueden ayudarnos a sanar experiencias traumáticas. Incluso hay organizaciones dedicadas a la "terapia de poesía" y la "terapia de diario". Esta experiencia de escucharnos a nosotros mismos a través de la escritura puede traer tranquilidad. De hecho, muchas personas con las que trabajamos describen sentir paz cuando escriben.

To be clear, in our workshops our goal is never to “cure” post-traumatic stress. We do not engage in psychological therapy. Instead, we create opportunities for people to express themselves in writing. This expression can hold cathartic properties, when people reconcile themselves, in community, with memories, wounds, and scars. In this process, students, victims, and survivors of war often come to recognize in themselves their own poetic potential. This process is like opening up a clearing in the woods, calm and affectionate, lit by the warm light of hopeful words – everyday words, healing words, and liberating words. In this way, writing can open up a space of dialogue with ourselves.

Para ser claros, en los talleres, el objetivo nunca es "curar" el estrés postraumático. No realizamos terapia psicológica. En cambio, creamos oportunidades para que las personas se expresen. Esta expresión puede tener propiedades catárticas, cuando las personas se reconcilian, en comunidad, con los recuerdos, las heridas y las cicatrices. En este proceso, los estudiantes, las víctimas y los sobrevivientes de la guerra a menudo llegan a reconocer en sí mismos su propio potencial poético. Este proceso es como abrir un claro en el bosque, iluminado por la luz cálida de palabras de esperanza: palabras cotidianas, palabras sanadoras y palabras liberadoras. De esta forma, la escritura puede abrir un espacio de diálogo con nosotros mismos.

Consider, for example, the way a young person in a workshop with Juana and Rodrigo narrated her search for her interior refuge.

Consideren, por ejemplo, la manera en que un joven en una taller con Juana y Rodrigo narró su búsqueda del refugio interior.

Honesty in a dark world

I was trying to fit into an ordinary world
trying to escape my reality, run away from my thoughts,
hide from the crying and screaming inside me, from the pain and the fear
that was chasing me.
Trying to find the light that would guide me and
illuminate my life.
My soul, knocking on the doors of
honesty in a dark world
and if that was my dark and sad world
-the truth was it was everyone's-
In the end I realized that I had never gone elsewhere
I was always there,
I was just locked in my dark thoughts, in my world
and I no longer escaped from my reality
nor from myself.

La honestidad en mundo oscuro

Estaba yo tratando de encajar en un mundo corriente
tratando de escapar de mi realidad, huir de mis pensamientos,
ocultarme de mi llanto gritando dentro de mí, del dolor y el miedo
que me perseguía.
Tratando de encontrar la luz que me guiara y que
iluminara mi vida.
Mi alma, tocando las puertas de
la honestidad en un mundo oscuro

y si ese era mi mundo oscuro y triste
-la verdad era el de todos-
Al final me di cuenta que nunca me había ido para otro lugar
siempre estuve ahí,
solo estaba encerrada en mis oscuros pensamientos, en mi mundo
y ya no escapaba de mi realidad
sino de mí.

In this poem, after telling of her sadness related to the war, and the ways that she tried to escape them, the poet realizes that she “was always there”. There are other perspectives through which to see one’s life, the poet tells us, when one reencounters one’s interior refuge.

En este poema, luego de contar sus tristezas relacionadas con la guerra y las formas en que trató de escapar de ellas, la poeta se da cuenta de que ella “siempre estuvo ahí”, es decir, que hay otras perspectivas de ver la vida cuando uno reencuentra el propio refugio interior.

We believe that we cannot create peace with others without first accessing this “interior refuge”. One of the central goals, then, in writing for peace is to help people trust themselves, look at themselves, and listen to their interior voices. In the act of writing, there is an opportunity to listen to ourselves, to strengthen the wisdom that we all have, in order not to lose the thread of who we can be: beings that are peaceful, that want peace.

No podemos crear la paz con los otros sin primero acceder a este refugio interior. Uno de los objetivos centrales, entonces, al escribir para la paz es ayudar a las personas a confiar en sí mismas, mirarse a sí mismas y escuchar sus voces interiores. En el acto de escribir hay una oportunidad de escucharnos, de fortalecer la sabiduría que todos tenemos, para no perder el hilo de lo que podemos ser: seres pacíficos, que queremos la paz.

4. Writing is powerful in the hands of those who want to change our world. *Planting the desire to collectively heal.*

4. Escribir es muy potente en las manos de quienes queremos cambiar nuestro mundo y hacer un aporte al cambio social. *Enraizando voluntades para sanar colectivamente.*

When we transform ourselves in pursuit of a healthy and healed interior life, we can also extend our light to others: families, schools, our community. If we can manage to work from this perspective, we can generate real change. With the intention of change, we can transform our energy, mentality, and motivation. We can exchange the language of war for the language of peace and can move toward a new discourse.

Cuando nos transformamos en la búsqueda de una vida interior sana, también podemos extender nuestra luz a los demás: familias, escuelas, nuestra comunidad. Si logramos trabajar desde esta perspectiva, podemos generar un cambio real. Con esta intención de cambio, podemos transformar nuestra energía, mentalidad y motivación. Podemos cambiar el lenguaje de la guerra por el lenguaje de la paz y podemos avanzar hacia un nuevo discurso.

Many of us feel a call that drives us to put our words into action in solidarity with others. In sharing what we want to share in writing—joys, longings, traumas, pains, dreams—we create a space where we can listen both to ourselves and to a community of peers. This space of listening and sharing becomes fire/ritual/light/candle/mandala, thus sustaining the kind of ideology of peace and mutual respect that is crucial to face contemporary challenges.

Muchos de nosotros sentimos un llamado que nos impulsa a poner nuestras palabras en acción en solidaridad con los demás. Al compartir lo que hemos escrito: alegrías, anhelos, traumas, dolores, sueños, creamos un espacio en el que podemos escucharnos a nosotros mismos y a una comunidad de compañeros. Este espacio de escuchar y compartir se convierte en fuego/ritual/luz/vela/mandala, sustentando así el tipo de ideología de paz y respeto mutuo que es crucial para enfrentar los desafíos contemporáneos.

In this way, we heed that ancient call that defines us as a species – to come together for common causes that we believe are just and that affect us all. Consider, for example, the common cause to live in peace: We all have the fundamental right to live in peace in our homes, schools, streets, and countryside. As far as poetry for peace is concerned, this call, together with our right to live in peace, creates paths for us that can materialize in concrete action to mobilize communities. We can take, for example, symbolic actions directed toward recognizing both the affective and legal aspects of conflict and peace.

De esta manera, atendemos ese antiguo llamado que nos define como especie: unirnos por causas comunes que creemos que son justas y que nos afectan a todos. Consideremos, por ejemplo, la causa común de vivir en paz: Todos tenemos el derecho fundamental de vivir en paz en nuestros hogares, escuelas, calles y campos. En cuanto a la poesía para la paz, este llamado, junto con nuestro derecho a vivir en paz, nos abre caminos que pueden materializarse en acciones concretas para movilizar a las comunidades. Podemos tomar, por ejemplo, acciones simbólicas dirigidas a reconocer tanto los aspectos afectivos como legales del conflicto y la paz.

Recently, the three of us were invited to take a symbolic walk for peace. We went to a rural school in a community in Colombia that suffered greatly in the armed conflict. Together with students and teachers, we walked through the territory holding flags of peace. Along the way, we passed sugar cane, coffee, and cocoa crops, crossed streams, all against the backdrop of the breath-taking landscape of the mountains. We

almost fell many times, stumbling along the steep path of the mountain. We asked for help from teachers and students. And finally, we arrived, tired and happy, at a cooperative led by firmantes.

Recientemente, los tres fuimos invitados a realizar una caminata simbólica por la paz. Fuimos a una escuela rural en una comunidad de Colombia que sufrió mucho en el conflicto armado. Junto a estudiantes y docentes recorrimos el territorio portando banderas de la paz. En el camino, pasamos cultivos de caña de azúcar, café y cacao, cruzamos arroyos, todo en el contexto del impresionante paisaje de las montañas. Casi nos caemos muchas veces, tropezando por el camino empinado de la montaña. Pedimos ayuda a profesores y estudiantes. Y finalmente llegamos, cansados y felices, a una cooperativa dirigida por firmantes.

Once there, we led a short writing for peace workshop. Later we realized that the whole day was actually a “workshop”, in which symbolic actions of solidarity were part of the co-construction of peace. Metaphorically speaking, such actions are a book written by the community. They both help us recognize our own humanity and serve as a channel of common understanding that can promote local and regional changes.

Hicimos un taller breve de escritura para la paz. Después caímos en cuenta que el día entero era un “taller” en que la acción simbólica de solidaridad hacía parte de la co-construcción de la paz. Metafóricamente, tales acciones son como la escritura de un libro construidoescrito por la comunidad. Nos ayudan a reconocer nuestra propia humanidad y sirven como un canal de entendimiento común que puede promover cambios locales y regionales.

In another workshop Juana and Rodrigo facilitated, firmantes, teachers, young people, community members, and people from other public programs and institutions wrote their own recommendations for the non-repetition of violence (one of the objectives of the Peace Accords in 2016) in the form of poetry. Witnessed by the territorial Commission for Truth in the Eje Cafetero, the region where Juana and Rodrigo live

and work, it was a moment in which all were disposed to listen to each other. The participants recognized that all had been victims and survivors of this war, including the armed actors. In this way, the group co-created spaces of dialogue and listening, of empathy, among all those present. In this instance, sharing and listening facilitated individual and collective healing, as well as the healing of the land, which has also been a victim of the conflict.

En otro taller que Juana y Rodrigo facilitaron, firmantes, profesores, jóvenes, miembros de la comunidad, y gente deinstituciones y programas de sociedad civil, escribieron sus propias recomendaciones para la no repetición de la violencia (una de los fines de los Acuerdos de Paz en 2016) en forma de poesía. Con la presencia de la Comisión de la Verdad Territorial en el Eje Cafetero, la región en que Juana y Rodrigo viven y trabajan, fue un momento en el que nos dispusimos a escucharnos. Los participantes reconocieron que todos habíamos sido víctimas y sobrevivientes de esta guerra, incluidos los actores armados. De esta manera, co-creamos espacios de diálogo y escucha, de empatía, entre todos los presentes. En esta instancia, compartir y escuchar facilitó la sanación individual y colectiva, así como la sanación de la tierra, que también ha sido víctima del conflicto.

In the moment when participants read their poems and texts, there is a connection, almost spiritual, a kind of friendly energy, in which words are both an offering and a tool for us all to better understand what happened to us, and what precisely it is that we do not want to repeat. In this way, writing can help us to generate a different kind of language—one that builds trust and promotes the resistance and resilience of people who do not want any more war. As such, writing and listening can be acts of reconciliation.

En el momento en que los participantes leen sus poemas y textos, se produce una conexión, casi espiritual, una especie de energía amistosa, en el que las palabras son a la vez ofrenda y herramienta para que todos entendamos mejor lo que nos pasó, qué es precisamente lo que no queremos repetir. De esta manera, la escritura puede

ayudarnos a generar un tipo de lenguaje diferente, uno que genere confianza y promueva la resistencia y resiliencia de las personas que no quieren más guerra. Como tal, escribir y escuchar pueden ser actos de reconciliación.

The poetry that resulted from this workshop formed part of the “Baúl de Esperanza”, a “suitcase” of regional pedagogical strategies for peacebuilding, which itself is part of the multimedia documentation organized under the auspices of the National Commission of Truth. In this way, writing together in local communities can also have positive consequences for national conversations about the construction of peace.

La poesíapoesia que resultó de este taller hizo parte del “Baúl de Esperanza”, un herramienta regional de estrategias pedagógicas para la construcción de paz, que forma parte de la transmedia nacional de la Comisión de la Verdad. De esta manera, escribir juntos en comunidades locales puede también tener impactos positivos en conversaciones nacionales sobre la construcción de la paz.

Kate would like to highlight this point for readers in the United States: The Commission of Truth in Colombia listened to the recommendations for the non-repetition of violence written by community members and young people. Imagine if such voices were taken seriously as part of our national conversation about the ongoing unjust violence and death that we daily face in the United States.

Kate quisiera subrayar este punto para los lectores en los Estados Unidos: La Comisión de la Verdad en Colombia escuchó las recomendaciones para la no repetición de la violencia escritas por miembros de la comunidad y jóvenes. Imagínese si esas voces se tomaran en serio como parte de nuestra conversación nacional sobre la violencia injusta y la muerte que enfrentamos a diario en los Estados Unidos.

We write to awaken to and change our social context, according to each person’s voice.

Escribimos para despertar y cambiar nuestro contexto social, según la voz de cada uno.

5. Writing is not a product, but a dialogic process that builds social relationships. *Expanding our root system to grow in community.*

5. La escritura no es un producto, sino un proceso dialógico que construye relaciones sociales. *Expandiendo nuestro sistema de raíces para crecer en comunidad.*

The first and deepest thing that war takes away from us is the ability to trust ourselves and others. Trust/confianza i*s* a word that comes from Latin, the prefix with/con, means to connect; the root “fi”, comes from the verb “fiar”, meaning loyalty, faith. In the context of war, the bonds of trust between communities and people are broken, and a feeling of permanent threat grows inside people that anyone can be a potential aggressor, an enemy. This is an imaginary rooted in fear.

Lo primero y más profundo que nos quita la guerra es la capacidad de confiar en nosotros mismos y en los demás. Trust/confianza es una palabra que viene del latín, el prefijo with/con, significa conectar; la raíz “fi”, proviene del verbo “fiar”, que significa lealtad, fe. En el contexto de la guerra, los lazos de confianza entre las comunidades y las personas se rompen y crece dentro de las personas un sentimiento de amenaza permanente de que cualquiera puede ser un potencial agresor, un enemigo. Este es un imaginario enraizado en el miedo.

The spirit of this principle, then, is the construction of bridges through the kind of dialogue that can help us better understand difference, affect, and community. This kind of dialogue can help us create a useful language for reconstructing the social fabric after so many decades of violent division.

El espíritu de este principio, entonces, es la construcción de puentes a través del tipo de diálogo que puede ayudarnos a comprender mejor la diferencia, el afecto y la comunidad. Este tipo de diálogo puede ayudarnos a crear un lenguaje útil para reconstruir el tejido social después de tantas décadas de división violenta.

Writing is never a simple record of human events. Rather it is an act of reciprocal meaning-making among readers and writers and listeners and speakers that has the potential to affect all of us at deep levels of consciousness and memory. Hearing others' words can shape how we look at ourselves and others, perspectives that we then take up, write, refract back to readers, who in turn can also write their experiences. "Dialogic" means that writing is part of an ongoing conversation.

La escritura no es nunca un simple registro de los acontecimientos humanos. Más bien es un acto recíproco de creación de significado entre lectores y escritores y oyentes y hablantes que tiene el potencial de afectarnos a todos en niveles profundos de conciencia y memoria. Escuchar las palabras de otros puede dar forma a cómo nos vemos a nosotros mismos y a los demás, perspectivas que luego tomamos, escribimos, refractamos a los lectores, quienes a su vez también pueden escribir sus experiencias. "Dialógico" significa que la escritura es parte de una conversación en curso.

Once a poem is written, it is filled with power and communicative force. When it is shared with others, the exercise becomes to listen to each other empathetically. In this way, we come to recognize others' stories, dreams, and desires. And we also recognize ourselves: we realize we are not the only ones with a painful story. Rather, by sharing our voices in a group and listening to each other, we can support each other, give each other courage, hope. In the middle of this polyphony, we begin to heal together.

Una vez que se escribe un poema, se llena de poder y fuerza comunicativa. Cuando se comparte con los demás, el ejercicio se convierte en escuchar con empatía. De esta manera, llegamos a reconocer las historias, sueños y deseos de los demás. Y también nos reconocemos: nos damos cuenta de que no somos los únicos con una historia dolorosa. Más bien, compartiendo nuestras voces en un grupo y escuchándonos unos a otros, nos apoyamos unos a otros, nos damos coraje, esperanza. En medio de esta polifonía, empezamos a sanar juntos.

We can also think of writing dialogically in relation to the confinement, fears, and pain of COVID-19: We can transform this experience into a story and a poem, which once shared, generates relief and liberation, such that we know we are not alone. When EncantaPalabras was teaching writing-for-peace by video in the early days of the pandemic, young people messaged Juana their poems, in order to continue the conversation.
También podemos pensar en escribir dialógicamente en relación con el encierro, los miedos y el dolor del COVID 19: podemos transformar esta experiencia en una historia y un poema, que una vez compartido, genera alivio y liberación. Sabemos que no estamos solos. Cuando EncantaPalabras enseñaba a escribir para la paz por video en los primeros días de la pandemia, el teléfono de Juana se llenó con la poesía de los jóvenes, que le enviaban mensajes con sus palabras para continuar con las conversaciones.

This principle also has another important component: publication! Sharing our writing through physical or digital means allows it to transcend the here and now, so that writers' messages are amplified, and a community of readers is developed who together can contribute to the reconstruction of relationships and communities. We see publishing writers' work, then, as an act of inclusion.

Este principio también tiene otro componente importante: ¡la publicación! Compartir nuestra escritura a través de medios físicos o digitales permite trascender el aquí y el ahora, de modo que los mensajes de los escritores se amplifican y se desarrolla una

comunidad de lectores que juntos pueden contribuir a la reconstrucción de relaciones y comunidades. Vemos, entonces, la publicación de la obra de los escritores como un acto de inclusión.

In short, our pedagogy is based on conversation, co-creation, and the sharing of many forms of knowledge and experiences. With an understanding of poetry as co-constitutive, we come to new semantic territories where “peace” is pronounced “peaces”, in the plural, because we are many, and because there are many ways to build a culture of peace. Our aim in a poetry-for-peace workshop is for each writer to hold other writers in what we like to call a “common heart”, which in turn holds everyone.

En resumen, nuestra pedagogía se basa en la conversación, la co-creación y el intercambio de muchas formas de conocimiento y experiencias. Con una comprensión de la poesía como co-constitutiva, llegamos a nuevos territorios semánticos donde “paz” se pronuncia “paces”, en plural, porque somos muchos, y porque hay muchas formas de construir una cultura de paz. Nuestro objetivo en un taller de poesía para la paz es que cada escritor sostiene a otro escritor en lo que nos gusta llamar un “corazón común” que a su vez sostiene a todos.

One example of this kind of dialogic perspective is the following acrostic poem, written collectively by young people in a workshop Juana and Rodrigo held. Collective writing requires dialogic conversations, in which key words – for example, “transformation” and “well-being” – and key metaphors, for example “light” – are elaborated so that a shared meaning is constructed.

Un ejemplo de este tipo de perspectiva dialógica es el siguiente poema acróstico, escrito colectivamente por jóvenes en un taller realizado por Juana y Rodrigo. La escritura colectiva requiere conversaciones dialógicas, en las que se elaboren palabras clave, por ejemplo, “transformación” y “bienestar”, y metáforas clave, por ejemplo, “luz”, de modo que se construya un significado entendido por todos/todas.

Las Palabras / The Words

Luz para un mundo mejor [Light for a better world]
Atención para los débiles en una [Attention for the vulnerable in an]
Sociedad ignorante [Ignorant society]
Para el pueblo las palabras [Words for the people]
Almas que sueñan en azul [Souls that dream in blue]
La transformación de un mundo que [The transformation of a world that]
Anhela amar y busca el [Desires love and seeks]
Bienestar común [collective well-being]
Reduciendo la ignorancia [Reducing ignorance]
A partir del diálogo [through dialogue]
Siendo mejores cada día y superando miedos [Becoming better each day and overcoming fears]

Creación colectiva Insitución Educativa Bonafont
Resguardo Indígena Escopetera y Pirza, 10°, 2016,
Riosucio, Caldas
(Publicado en la cartilla Soy Incluyente Poesía para la Paz V)

The acrostic in Spanish is “las palabras”, “the words” in English, enacting “words” as part of a poetic conversation.

El acróstico en español es "las Palabras" -"las palabras" en inglés, representando "palabras" como parte de una conversación poética.

Dialogism can also include voices, territories, identities, and languages. In the following poem by a bilingual educator in a workshop Juana, Rodrigo, and Kate taught in the U.S., the speaker’s relationship with words involves all the senses (smell, hearing) in

a kind of conversation, as words both identify us and move among us as “beings of the beautiful world”.

El dialogismo también puede incluir las voces, los territorios, las identidades y los lenguajes. En este poema de una educadora bilingüe en un taller que impartieron Juana, Rodrigo y Kate en Estados Unidos, resuena el tema de escuchar palabras, involucrando todos los sentidos (olfato, oído) en una conversación y algunas de las muchas formas en que las palabras nos identifican y se mueven entre "seres del mundo bello.”

La raza – omnipresente – inesperada

Vengo del náhuatl y del árabe, me acerco al español, al norteamericano, me comunico en el runashimi, el francés, el chino, el alemán, el japonés, el siciliano, el twi, sin fronteras.
Veo vínculos y enlaces, el gerundio, la acción del presente.
Cambio las cosas. Las terminaciones, soy mexicana-americana; estamos junt@s, juntos, juntxs.
La concordancia entre nosotr@s, nosotros, nosotrxs, seres del mundo bello, redondo, amoroso.
Toco tus labios, te masajeo, exploro tus palabras, experimento sus vocablos. Te los susurro.
Te oigo, las oigo cuidadosamente las lenguas suyas brillantes vibrantes, sacadas, oprimidas, desaparecidas.
Te las saboreo.
Aprecio el orden de sus palabras. Te las huelo. Aquí enfrente ponemos el sujeto.

Allí al final Uds. ponen los verbos. Te los escucho.
La voz cae y levanta como una canción. Te la abrazo. Su escritura, su caligrafía, me las absorbo con mi vista y las comprendo luminosamente.

Melina Lozano
Poema inédito escrito Taller Poesía para la Paz con un grupo de Maestras Bilingües
Abril/mayo 2019
Mádison U.S.A

When we facilitate a workshop, we open a space for conversation. This conversation that takes place through writing and talking helps us to listen to each other. Writing for peace is not necessarily about the writing itself. It is about the writers, and their capacity to both see each other and to be seen.
Cuando facilitamos un taller, abrimos un espacio para la conversación. Esta conversación que se da tanto por escrito como hablado, nos ayuda a escucharnos. Escribir por la paz no se trata necesariamente de la escritura en sí. Se trata de los escritores y de su capacidad para verse y también ser vistos.

6. Writing is an act of liberty through which we can become the subjects of our own stories and history. *Bearing fruit and expanding, word by word.*

6. Escribir es un acto de libertad a través del cual podemos convertirnos en sujetos de nuestras propias historias e historia. *Dando fruto y expandiéndose, palabra por palabra.*

The act of writing for peace comes from the will and necessity of communicating in order to heal individually and collectively. It puts in motion the body (arms, hands, fingers, tendons, muscles), the mind (our faculties of sensitivity, imagination, creativity,

rationality), and emotions (the emotions we want to express in words and those that arise from the act of writing in itself).

El acto de escribir por la paz nace de la voluntad y necesidad de comunicar para sanar individual y colectivamente. Pone en movimiento el cuerpo (brazos, manos, dedos, tendones, músculos), la mente (nuestras facultades de sensibilidad, imaginación, creatividad, racionalidad) y las emociones (las emociones que queremos expresar con palabras y las que surgen del acto de escribir en sí mismo).

Facing the blank screen or page, and with the previous principles in mind, the writer has the opportunity to decide which direction to take. There are an infinite number of things we can say and do to build peace. It is a choice. We can write for peace or not. We can assume agency or not. From here arises the question of the responsibility that we all have over our historical subject positions. We can choose to influence our own healing and that of the collective. Embracing the identity of a writer gives us the opportunity (among other opportunities) to be subjects of our own stories and of our larger collective history.

Frente a la pantalla o página en blanco, y con los principios anteriores en mente, el escritor tiene la oportunidad de decidir qué dirección tomar. Hay una infinidad de cosas que podemos decir y hacer para construir la paz; es una elección. Podemos escribir por la paz o no. Podemos asumir agencia o no. De aquí surge la cuestión de la responsabilidad que todos tenemos sobre nuestras posiciones de sujeto histórico. Podemos elegir influir en nuestra propia curación y la del colectivo. Aceptar la identidad del escritor nos da la oportunidad (entre otras oportunidades) de ser sujetos de nuestras propias historias y de la historia más amplia de la historia colectiva.

By putting our attention and intention into writing for peace, we take a new look at our memories and traumas in order to bring them to the surface. We let them out by writing them in poems. This is a kind of surrender—or should we say an acceptance of our

own liberation—to become lighter, more compassionate. It is a decision to write in service of our own peace and collective peace.

Al poner nuestra atención e intención en escribir por la paz, damos una nueva mirada a nuestros recuerdos, nuestros traumas, y los sacamos a la superficie. Los dejamos salir escribiéndolos en el poema. Esta es una especie de rendición, o deberíamos decir una aceptación de nuestra propia liberación, para volvernos más livianos, más compasivos. Es una decisión de escribir al servicio de la propia paz y la paz colectiva.

From there, a horizon opens where each writer takes charge of their own writing process, working to find their own poetic or narrative voice, which, we know, demands effort, enthusiasm, love.

A partir de ahí se abre un horizonte donde cada escritor se hace cargo de su propio proceso de escritura, trabajando para encontrar su propia voz poética o narrativa, que, sabemos, exige esfuerzo, entusiasmo, amor.

Our publication of young people's poetry in booklets establishes children as historical subjects with a particular voice. It is a recognition that contributes to their self-worth and affirmation. Taken together, each child's text added to others' texts constitutes a collection, which itself becomes a document of historical memory: tangible, articulate, capable of generating positive changes in educational institutions and communities. This is how individual writers become a collective.

Nuestra publicación de poesía juvenil en las cartillas establece a los niños como sujetos históricos con una voz particular. Es un reconocimiento que contribuye a su autoestima y afirmación. En su conjunto, el texto de cada niño sumado a otros textos constituye un acervo, que en sí mismo se convierte en un documento de memoria histórica: tangible, articulado, capaz de generar cambios positivos en las instituciones educativas y en las comunidades. Así es como los escritores individuales se convierten en un colectivo.

In this way, they contribute to the construction of the present and/or of memory in Colombia. In an adult-centric world like ours, being able to amplify the writings of children by publishing their poems is an honour and an education in and of itself; they provide us with new visions of the world and the country. In the practice of this principle, writers feel they are protagonists of their own story, worthy of having their stories told, and worthy of being listened to. And that in and of itself can have a positive impact on collective history. When one feels like the protagonist of a story, one feels like an agent of the future, too. For this reason, we emphasize imagination as a technology to build peace.

De esta manera, contribuyen a la construcción del presente y/o la memoria de Colombia. En un mundo centrado en los adultos como el nuestro, poder ampliar los escritos de los niños mediante la publicación de sus poemas es un honor y una educación en sí mismo; nos brindan nuevas visiones del mundo y del país. En la práctica de este principio, los escritores se sienten protagonistas de su propia historia, dignos de que sus historias sean contadas y dignos de ser escuchados. Y eso en sí mismo puede tener un impacto positivo en la historia colectiva. Cuando uno se siente protagonista de una historia, también se siente agente del futuro. Por eso, hacemos hincapié en la *imaginación* como tecnología para construir la paz.

When we arrive at the bodily act of writing, we turn intuitions into creations that we capture on sheets of paper—that come from old trees! We write along lines-corridors until we find the letter that delivers us to the horizon: memory/testimony or imagination/fantasy, where dark labyrinths or dreams reveal an untold part of ourselves. That sun, that moon, that light that we discover! Writing for peace! In the words of Kate, “In writing for peace, the use of testimony is often juxtaposed with fantasy; These two narrative elements—one linked to the past and the other to the future—interanimate to name the past and imagine a peaceful future at the same time”.

Cuando llegamos al acto corporal de escribir, convertimos las intuiciones en creaciones que plasmamos en hojas de papel, ¡eso viene de viejos árboles! Escribimos a lo largo de líneas-corredores hasta encontrar la letra que nos remite al horizonte: memoria/testimonio o imaginación/fantasía, donde oscuros laberintos o sueños revelan una parte no contada de nosotros mismos. ¡Ese sol, esa luna, esa luz que descubrimos! ¡Escribiendo por la paz! En palabras de Kate, “Al escribir por la paz, el uso del testimonio a menudo se yuxtapone con la fantasía; Estos dos elementos narrativos, uno vinculado al pasado y otro al futuro, se interaniman para nombrar el pasado e imaginar un futuro pacífico al mismo tiempo”.

In the following poem written in a workshop facilitated by EncantaPalabras, Vivan Lorena Carmona narrates her own process of writing and liberation–and invites others to join her.

En el siguiente poema escrito en un taller facilitado por EncantaPalabras, Vivan Lorena Carmona narra su propio proceso de escritura y liberación–y invita a los otros a unirse a ella.

I Used to Be...

I used to be very shy, I didn't like to talk
or express what I felt, but now
through writing
I am freeing myself
and without fear I show who I am and that is my way out...
I feel calm after writing,
I discovered a world full of magic through words…
Now I am no longer afraid to say what I feel, I feel at peace,
in a deep tranquility after writing a verse
where I make my feelings clear.
Going far away and observing my surroundings,

enjoying what surrounds me,
helps me to think of a new poem to relate.
It's time to change history, through writing peace is found.
And now I leave you this verse so that, like me,
you can find peace in words.

Vivian Lorena Carmona
Institución Educativa San Lorenzo°, 11º, 2021
Resguardo Indígena San Lorenzo, Riosucio, Caldas

Solía ser . . .

Solía ser muy tímida, no me gustaba hablar
ni expresar lo que sentía, pero ahora
mediante la escritura
me voy liberando
y sin miedo muestro quien soy y esa es mi salida. . .
Me siento tranquila después de escribir,
descubrí un mundo lleno de magia a través de las palabras. . .
Ahora ya no temo decir lo que siento, me siento en paz,
en una profunda tranquilidad después de escribir un verso
donde deje claros mis sentimentos.
Irme lejos y observar mi entorno, disfrutar de lo que me rodea
me ayuda a pensar para un nuevo poema relatar
Es hora de cambiar la historia, a través de la escritura se encuentra paz.
Y ahora les dejo este verso para que al igual que yo
puedan encontrar paz en las palabras.

Vivian Lorena Carmona
Institución Educativa San Lorenzo°, 11º, 2021
Resguardo Indígena San Lorenzo, Riosucio, Caldas

Conclusion: The Poetic Potential /

Exercising these principles, the student or participant is already a subject that exercises their right to express, manifest, heal; give their opinion and recognize themself through writing. We invite readers to continue to elaborate, add to, and even delete principles so that they better serve the communities to which they are committed. We, for example, were considering adding a principle about writing and the senses, the way writing can recall the intimate bodily rhythms of our languages. But as of yet, we have not explored this principle sufficiently in workshops in both of our contexts, in theory and in practice, to integrate it into our philosophy. We invite you to work creatively to ignite the poetic potential in yourself and in others.

En ejercicio de estos principios, el alumno o participante ya es un sujeto que ejerce su derecho an expresarse, manifestarse, curarse, opinar y reconocerse a través de la escritura. Invitamos a los lectores a continuar elaborando, agregando e incluso eliminando principios para que sirvan mejor a las comunidades con las que están comprometidos. Nosotros, por ejemplo, estábamos considerando agregar un principio sobre la escritura y los sentidos, la forma en que la escritura puede recordar los ritmos corporales íntimos de nuestras lenguas. Pero hasta el momento, no hemos explorado suficientemente este principio en talleres en nuestros dos contextos, en la teoría y en la práctica, para integrarlo en nuestra filosofía. Te invitamos a trabajar creativamente para encender el potencial poético en ti mismo y en los demás.

Once the student discovers and activates their poetic potential, it emerges, via these principles, like a tree in growth. Consider a tree's expansion of branches to embrace itself and others! Its flowering! Think of the tree as a shelter of birds-nests and millions of other beings! Think of it rising to the light of the sun, taking vitamins which are transmuted into sap! Think of how the tree goes deep into the earth and drinks its own memory to know its ancestors! Think of how a tree establishes communication through underground rhizomic systems, through which signs of life are shared, and also

warnings! Sentient and thinking tree, branches and howling hair, through which the wind whistles and can dance!

Una vez que el estudiante descubre y activa su potencial poético, emerge, a través de estos principios, como un árbol en crecimiento. ¡Considere la expansión de las ramas de un árbol para abrazarse a sí mismo y a los demás! ¡Su florecimiento! ¡Piensa en el árbol como un refugio de nidos de pájaros y millones de otros seres! ¡Piensa en ella saliendo a la luz del sol, tomando vitaminas que se transmutan en savia! ¡Piensa en cómo el árbol se adentra en la tierra y bebe su propia memoria para conocer a sus ancestros! ¡Piensa en cómo un árbol establece comunicación a través de sistemas rizomáticos subterráneos, a través de los cuales se comparten signos de vida y también advertencias! ¡Árbol sensible y pensante, ramas y cabellos aulladores, a través de los cuales el viento silba y puede bailar!
To conclude – and to round out the botanical metaphor for writing for peace we have been developing – we leave readers with the following collective poem.

Para concluir, y para redondear la metáfora botánica de escribir para la paz que hemos venido desarrollando, dejamos a los lectores el siguiente poema colectivo.

The Poem

In its little room it lies asleep
When the light comes, it opens slowly
soon it touches the water, soon it ends up bearing fruit.
The poem needs the light of imagination
and the water of words to bear fruit
that comes from the heart.

Creación Colectiva
Institución Educativa, 8°, 2019
Villa de Leyva, Boyacá

El Poema

En su pequeño cuarto yace dormida
Cuando la luz llega, se abre lentamente
pronto toca el agua, pronto termina dando el fruto.
El poema necesita la luz de la imaginación
y el agua de las palabras para dar frutos
que vienen del corazón.

Creación Colectiva
Institución Educativa, 8°, 2019
Villa de Leyva, Boyacá

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Sustainable Peace from Learning to Unlearn

Safiya Ibn Garba,
Generations For Peace

Abstract

Our attitudes and behaviors are shaped by influences of social, environmental, formal, and informal learning in addition to other factors. It is therefore no surprise that our individual and sometimes collective positions align only with what we have been exposed to and tend to be deeply rooted because they form an essential part of our identities. When challenged by life events and changes in the world around us, our responses could include discomfort, confusion, and possibly strong resistance. However, even in the midst of such disruption, we are receiving an invaluable gift – the space to learn, unlearn, and relearn.

In this article, we go on a journey with Aisha, as she navigates barriers to change, associated risks and the elements of a change cycle model. This cycle includes awareness of the need to change, the desire to participate in and support change, building knowledge on how to change; and applying the skills needed to implement and sustain change. It is a journey of building peace and invites us to examine and challenge ourselves to be open to learn, and unlearn enabling us to gain new perspectives, and give ourselves the opportunity to grow in ways we may have never thought possible.

LEARNING, CHANGE, EMPOWERMENT, CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION, PEACEBUILDING

"The mere mention of communities like Narayi, Sabo, and the likes, gave me a shiver as these are Christian dominated areas in the southern part of Kaduna and for people like me, a Hausa Muslim who had never been outside my community, it means a death zone". Aisha Yahaya – participant, *Generations For Peace Empowerment For Peace Programme* 2016-2017.

Introduction

Learning is "a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning" (Ambrose et al., 2010). The change in the learner may happen at the level of knowledge, attitude, or behaviour. As a result of learning, learners come to see concepts, ideas, and/or the world differently. We learn to grow, improve, and carry out tasks effectively and efficiently – whether at home or externally. For example, as a child grows and begins to practice expected actions like talking and walking, parents are delighted because that child has started displaying skills that will be needed for life, which essentially means the child is learning and putting that learning into practice.

As we grow, we learn even more things that are meant to benefit us and are influential in the shaping of our worldviews, attitudes, and behaviours.

These can become either positive, negative, but, at the very least, they are expected to enable us to conform to social expectations within our identity groups, with the cultures and structures dictating our expected behaviour. What happens, however, when we are faced with doubts, or see the harm our learned approaches cause? What happens when we start to question what we know and have accepted as the natural and right way to do things in our lives? How do we bring about change on a personal or larger level if we are not ready to let go of what we have known to be absolutely true? Can learning to unlearn take us through the painful process of change?

Such internal conflict is a natural part of life and can produce new insights, growth, and even increased productivity. It should therefore be embraced as an opportunity. However, because conflict sometimes requires us to see things differently and question what we have learned, the courage needed to learn to unlearn is an important element of conflict transformation and overall change. Conflict transformation acknowledges the necessity of conflict because it does provide opportunities for growth and most of all, it offers the potential for lasting change, which can only happen when we are ready to unlearn. Being ready to question our positions and thinking means opening ourselves to the possibility of new narratives and experiences that, by doing so, enable wide-reaching change and transformation. This article briefly unpacks how our attitudes and behaviours are formed and influenced, why we naturally resist change, and, finally, details a process that can be followed to “learn to unlearn”.

To do so, the article will focus on Aisha. One can only imagine how afraid Aisha was at the first meeting of the Empowerment For Peace Programme. It took courage not only to be there, but to be open to challenge her perceptions and stereotypes that had been ingrained by experiences and learned histories. In this article, we will explore how Aisha was able to “learn to unlearn” through her participation in Generations For Peace’s Empowerment For Peace Programmes (EPPs). From 2013 to 2017, Generations For Peace implemented four cycles of EPPs engaging 60 women aged 25 and above, from eight ethnic groups, two religions; and from 20 selected

communities in the northern and southern parts of Kaduna state. This article will focus on an EPP in the north where girls and women are disparately affected by violent conflict and devastating losses from that violent conflict in the region.

How then can we learn to unlearn in such difficult circumstances of active violent conflict and stereotypes that have been formed? What does it take to begin such a change? It takes courage and the willingness to learn and unlearn.

Let us attempt this journey of learning how we can unlearn from courageous women who live within these difficult circumstances and enshrined structural and cultural violence.

The Case of the Empowerment For Peace Programmes in Kaduna, North-West Nigeria

We will start by exploring the context.

Nigeria is known as the Giant of Africa. Why?

Nigeria is 300 million strong with one of every five people of African descent being of Nigerian origin and one in every four Africans being Nigerian. She bears the proud title of the most populous Black nation in the world and most populous country in Africa. The United Nations estimates that as of January 2023, Nigeria's population was 219,207,865. Nigeria is set to be the fourth most populous nation in the world over the next three decades, after India, China, and the United States.

Nigeria is richly blessed with a variety of resources, not just a large population. In 2022, Nigeria was the seventh on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) crude oil production, is extremely rich in liquified natural gas (said to have the largest reserves on the African continent), and has an abundance of minerals like zinc,

lead, limestone, coal, iron ore, tin, and precious metals as well as a range of fertile land capable of producing a wide range of agricultural products. It is a country also blessed with at least 250 ethnic groups, 500 languages and multiple religions. Nigeria's diversity has served to be both a blessing due to the potential that diversity can bring and a deterrent to unity and peaceful co-existence when differences are not managed well.

Despite its many riches, the key divisions of north and south of the country went through periods of turmoil. In 1804, the north of Nigeria was subjugated to a holy war led by the Islamic preacher Othman dan Fodio, resulting in a strong Caliphate. In the southern region, colonialism started to take root. The industrial revolution in Europe spurred on the slave trade as well as trade in agricultural and mineral commodities. Colonization, which began in the 19th century, also brought Christian missionaries. Many attribute the beginning of major troubles of the country to the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria in 1914, after being governed separately by the British. In addition, a system of chieftaincies and traditional rule was imposed upon various ethnicities as a way to better control the citizens of the now united colony and, within these systems, men were the majority of such chiefs and traditional heads. "It was in this colonial era that many of the rivalries that were to later explode in conflicts were fostered", says historian Emeka Uzoatu (Uzoatu, 2003).

By the time Nigeria gained her independence from the British in 1960, the situation had become dire. It was obvious that violence would not be far off. Beginning in 1962, ethnic groups started to revolt and, in 1966, the first coup was carried out. This was followed very closely by a bloody "revenge" coup. Then the Biafra region declared itself an independent state in 1967. A civil war followed which did not end until 1970 and claimed more than one million lives. This Biafra issue remains a sensitive and influential conflict issue in Nigeria today.

And it seems violent conflict became a consistent fact of life after these events, since various episodes of violence continued to occur afterwards. Emake Nwafor, a

sociologist states that, “Years of misrule, massive corruption, and squandering of development opportunities by successive governments have not only pauperized large segments of the population, they have also left frayed nerves, forcing frustrated Nigerians to bare fangs against erstwhile peaceful neighbours at the individual and communal levels” (Uzoatu, 2003). Indeed, violence has stemmed from ethnic, religious, resource, social, and political differences, to mention a few. These violent conflicts have led to the loss of tens of thousands of lives, making various locations in Nigeria internationally designated flashpoints for violence and insecurity. And in more recent times, the list of violent conflicts is populated by violent extremism, security forces brutality, kidnapping and abductions, banditry, herdsmen and farmers conflict, resource control in the Niger-Delta, political unrest, and the list continues.

As Nwafor notes, one of the key drivers of violence in Nigeria is corruption and non-accountable governance. From the colonial precedent, Nigeria decided to adopt a governmental system that aimed to cater for its citizens on several levels. Nigeria is based on a three-tier government system; national, state, and local governments. Within the three-tier government model, local governments are seen as the closest structure to the people. However, even closer to the people are the subdivisions of wards or districts with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 for each Local Government Area. In these structures of wards and districts, traditional rulers oversee the welfare of their communities, who then report higher up the chain of the traditional/chieftaincy route all the way to the traditional rulers and chiefs. Put in place by the colonialists, this system has endured to this day with first class traditional rulers being extremely powerful in the structure that is Nigeria.

Despite her resources, Nigeria has not managed to provide the quality of life that one would expect from such a resource rich nation. Despite being a signatory to various legal and development instruments and treaties, the true localisation and implementation of these policies and laws have yet to be experienced by the citizenry. Whether the issue is security and the National Action Plan; the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent instruments; the

strategic direction, planning and coordination, advocacy and partnership development; resource mobilisation and management; and monitoring, evaluation, documentation and reporting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (OSSAP-SDGs), development data shows that the nation is lagging behind in the performance measures of the SDGs.

It is within this context that the political and economic status of women has been determined. The 2013 Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics' *Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria* which covers six key areas of policy (health, education, work, power, decision-making, as well as violence and crime), surfaces findings on the differences between the status of girls and boys, women and men. It states:

1. "Although women make up about half of the electorate and have attained the right to vote and hold public offices in almost all states of the federation, they continue to be underrepresented at the national, state, and local government levels. At the national parliament in 2011, 93.6 per cent of seats were occupied by men compared to mere 6.4 per cent recorded for women. Similar patterns were depicted at the state and local government levels. The judiciary at the state level was also predominantly male. The proportion of female judges was below 28 per cent in the period under reference (2010-2013). Women were also underrepresented among high-ranking government administrators with decision-making power.

2. The proportion of females violated physically and sexually in 2013 for the age bracket 20-24 years was 22.6 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively according to the 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey. Available statistics from the same source indicate that females in the age bracket 15-19 experience female genital cutting most (90.2 per cent) in 2013 when they were less than 5 years old compared to 89.6 per cent in 2008. The proportion of women in prison from 2010 to 2013 was 1.9 per cent on the average. Trafficking in persons in

> the period 2010-2013 was female dominated. For instance, the proportion of females trafficked for prostitution was highest for age group 18-27 years (70.8 per cent) in 2013" (Kale, 2014).

Here it is important to note that as of 2013, an estimate of the total national population was 174 million, with the ratio of women to men was 49.5/50.5 per cents respectively. Given an almost 50/50 ratio, it would be expected that the gaps between women and men should be minimal. Unfortunately, the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report lists Nigeria with an overall rank of 104 out of 136 (where 136 is the lowest score) based on gaps between women and men in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2013). Additional reports continue to provide similar dismal statistics and continue to paint a bleak picture. The World Bank's 2014 Nigeria Economic Report (NER) derives information from several sources including a survey which states,

> "[T]hat 33.1 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line in 2012/2013. The NER also documents major differences in poverty and living standards by macro-region in Nigeria. While the South of Nigeria has relatively low poverty rates, ranging from 16 per cent in the South West to 28.8 per cent in the South East, poverty rates in the North West and North East are 45.9 per cent and 50.2 per cent, respectively (World Bank, 2017).

While the South of Nigeria (especially the South West) has experienced a strong positive dynamic in poverty reduction in recent years, the poverty rate in the North West has remained stagnant, while poverty has actually increased in the North East. Thus, disparities between the North (North West, North East) and South of Nigeria in poverty and living standards have increased.

This is no doubt related to the recent security challenges in the Northern part of Nigeria. Explanatory factors for the high differences in living standards by geographical region

are likely related to differences in the provision of public services and the degree of connectedness to larger markets.

The North/South divide in poverty and poverty reduction is a regrettable trend and is likely related to the security situation in this part of the country. This particularly concerns the visible deterioration in living standards in the North East. The much higher absolute levels of poverty in the North also reflect other differences: (a) a relatively low level of many public services and (b) a relative remoteness from ports and current points of economic agglomeration in Nigeria. Research in economics continues to stress the high value of basic education for increasing the probability of productive employment. Over 90% of children in the Southern part of Nigeria between ages 6 to 16 attend school, while this is only true for less than half of children in the North West and North East. Health indicators show a similar divide. For example, immunisation rates of 14% and 21% in the North West and North East, respectively, can be compared with over 70% immunisation rates in the South. Infrastructure that could better connect markets in Nigeria or measures to facilitate higher productivity in agriculture could also have a measurable impact on poverty reduction in the North (World Bank, 2017)".

It is evident from the above information therefore that northern Nigeria is economically and educationally disadvantaged. Not by choice, but a combination of multiple factors including literacy levels, norms which hinder health and well-being interventions due to limited understanding of benefits and, in some cases misinformation, as well as the culture of dependence on resources from other parts of the country contributing to less initiative or drive to self-develop. The data above shows that the North-West and North-East are badly affected by some of these factors.

Remember Aisha who shared her concerns about interacting with others who were different from a different part of the state? She lives in Kaduna State, which is one among the 36 States in Nigeria, located in the North West geographical zone. It is the third most populous state in Nigeria as of 2006 with a landmass of 45,567 square

kilometres. It has an estimated population of 6,066,562, of which 2,954,543 are women and 3,11,028 are men. In a state like Kaduna, often referred to as a mini-Nigeria, due to its cosmopolitan nature and positioning as a national political powerhouse, one would expect that the almost equal ratio of women to men would offer more opportunities for equitable distribution of resources and participation in decision making as well as leadership. This is not the case. In their everyday lives, women and girls in Kaduna state are constantly relegated to the background and in some cases have no confidence in their ability or agency which inevitably affects their ability to stand up and be part of the system that drives development and prosperity. They are also faced with many challenges that hinder their self-expression and agency. These challenges include low self-esteem, absence of (or limited) leadership skills, and lack of income-generating as well as livelihood skills. Existing barriers to girls and women education remain across the country. And both girls and women have continued to endure levels of sexual violence and assault, along with related HIV infections, involuntary pregnancies, and health complications as a result of abuse.

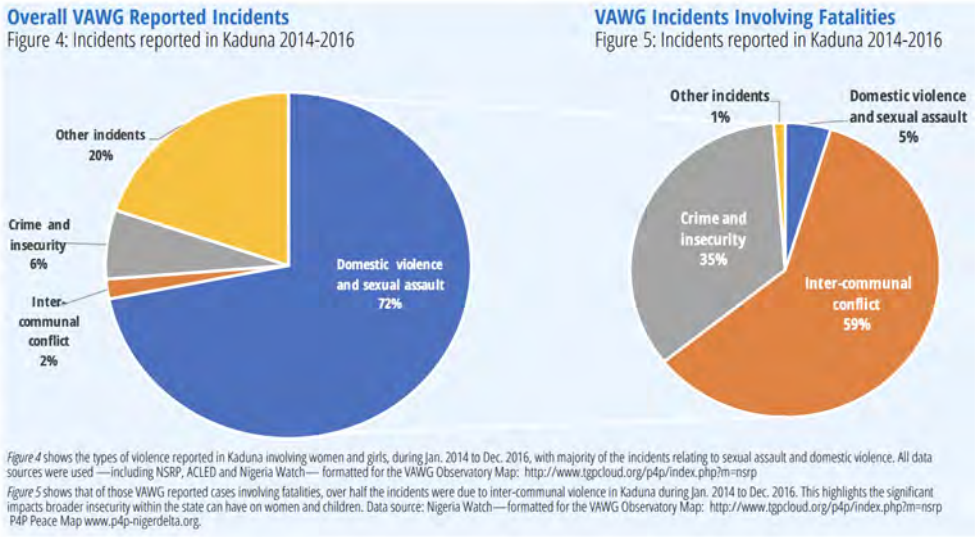
Women and girls in Kaduna also continue to be affected by wider conflict trends in the state, including activity by armed non-state actors and intercommunal violence between herders and farmer communities. While these two categories (crime and insecurity, and intercommunal violence) comprised less than 10% of all reported cases from the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) Observatory Platform sources from 2014-2016, Nigeria Watch reports these two categories were responsible for nearly 95% of reported lethal incidents involving women and girls (Visual One).

> “The immediate impacts of inter-communal violence on women and children, including the spate in late 2016 of herdsmen-farmer attacks, can be devastating; but is often lost in the reporting either by not being reported at all or being consistently underreported.

One such incident occurred between 15 and 16 October 2016, in which an estimated 20 people were killed in Jema'a after herdsmen reportedly attacked a farming settlement called Godogodo, according to NSRP Observatory sources and the Vanguard newspaper.

While there are occasional reports that women and girls are raped or sexually assaulted in intercommunal attacks perpetrated by each side, the exact numbers are rarely given, or details provided which might allow for more follow-up or a better understanding of the actual impact that these attacks are having on women and girls in the short term.

In the longer term, however, the impacts of intercommunal violence can be easier to gauge. Insecurity can affect women and girls in many ways, including through displacement, loss of livelihood (their own or that of a male family member), or direct violence. Economic and social disenfranchisement experienced by women and girls affected by conflict can in turn increase their vulnerability to sexual and economic predation. In reports received by the Kaduna Observatory, the displacement of women and children following intercommunal clashes between herdsmen and farmers is more often cited, either at the time of the attack or in later reports. In later reports, frequently these issues are intertwined with wider societal issues around women and girls being evicted from lands by relatives after husbands or brothers are killed or have lost their farms in attacks. It can often be tricky to create a direct causal relationship between the intercommunal violence and the impacts on women and girls as research on this issue, in particular, has not been extensively published (Blyth, Murphy and Taft, 2017)."



Visual One: Types of Violence in Kaduna Involving Girls/Women 2014 – 2016; Fund for Peace 2017

"Of particular concern is the growing level of abductions and violence specifically targeted at girls and women. From the infamous 2014 Boko Haram kidnappings of more than 270 girls in Chibok, north-eastern Borno state, with some still in captivity and abductions still ongoing in Borno state, to the ever-increasing instances of armed banditry across north-west Nigeria, we have reached a critical stage where girls and women are in a constant state of fear and unease.

The effects of abductions on girls and women cannot be minimised. Additional problems of stigma, and economic difficulties which may have come about because of ransom money paid or general destabilisation of the family, ill health, and poor well-being of the family also as a result of the abduction are all factors that additionally play a significant role in the effect of abductions on abductees. Many communities tend to see survivors as outcasts and in some cases even as traitors (especially when linked to terrorism and such abductees come back with children or even a "repentant" husband). The weight of being an abductee is enormous and only with proper medical attention, connecting with loved ones, talking about or relating their experiences, and being in a safe and secure

> environment can they even begin to experience some relief and potential healing from their ordeals (Ibn Garba, 2021)".

As stated above, the wards and districts in Nigeria are headed by district heads with a local council of officials (chiefs) and advised by different interest groups within the community. As a result, in most communities in Kaduna State, women are not involved in decision making. Reasons for this, range from their economic status to the perceived level of skills for engagement and contribution to decision making; this has led to the exclusion of women in decision making in the community as well as the country at large.

Cumulatively, this exclusion from power has rippled into multiple areas of women and girls' lives. For example, this lack of leadership opportunities is compounded by a culture/system that does not fully educated women to their actual (limited) legal rights. Girls in the city have had limited access to secondary school education, with poverty and early marriages often forcing them to forgo their education. Unsafe abortions and limited access to family planning prevent safe sexual and reproductive health. A number of women are unaware of their inheritance rights and freedom to purchase land due to inconsistent religious interpretations concerning these rights. This has prevented them from benefitting from the ideals of gender equality and empowerment; as well as accessing leadership positions within the wider society. It is in this context that Aisha had to "unlearn" in order to learn how to protect her body, her future, and transform how she saw "others" – through the realization that in fact despite their differences, women in this context face some of the same challenges.

Barriers to Change

It may come as a surprise to know that we are biologically wired to resist change and that fact explains our initial resistance to change. As Chris Pennington writes, "Part of the brain—the amygdala—interprets change as a threat and releases the hormones

for fear, fight, or flight. Your body actually protects you from change (Pennington, 2018)".

As such, a reaction of fear may make you freeze in the physical position or render you speechless. Fight makes you stand your ground and confront the change (or event) and flight, as the name implies, makes you run away as far as your legs can take you. And if you do not physically run, you are still not ready to engage on the issue and may choose to avoid the issue altogether. With this context in mind, it is no surprise that change is perceived as risky. We feel like we lose our identity, self-sufficiency and control. It has the potential to make us different people. A sense of control goes hand in hand with the familiar, and, as discussed earlier, the familiar comes from what we have been exposed to as acceptable and right over time, facilitating the formation of our worldviews and positions. From childhood, our worldviews are influenced by our environment, our socialization, our values, and our exposure to other cultures. If we are told something long enough and repeatedly, we believe it, consciously or subconsciously. It forms the very basis of sense and decision making, and therefore fuels the positions we take on different matters.

In Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory, these engrained ideas can manifest in all dimensions of conflict (personal, relational, structural and cultural) and interventions can address two dimensions at once. For the purposes of this essay, we will examine the structural and cultural dimensions of the identified conflict, gender discrimination in Kaduna. It is important to note that the process of individual change would start its manifestation within the personal dimension since it is possible to learn behaviors influenced by our own habits and how we feel about ourselves which consequently affects our interaction with others. We will focus, however, on the structural and cultural dimensions.

> "The structural dimension highlights the underlying causes of conflict, and stresses the ways in which social structures, organizations, and institutions are built, sustained, and changed by conflict. It is about the ways people build and

> organize social, economic, and institutional relationships to meet basic human needs and provide access to resources and decision-making. At the descriptive level transformation refers to the analysis of social conditions that give rise to conflict and the way that conflict affects social structural change in existing social, political and economic institutions.
>
> At a prescriptive level, transformation represents efforts to provide insight into underlying causes and social conditions that create and foster violent expressions of conflict, and to promote nonviolent mechanisms that reduce adversarial interaction and minimize violence. Pursuit of this change fosters structures that meet basic human needs (substantive justice) and maximize people's participation in decisions that affect them (procedural justice).
>
> The cultural dimension refers to the ways that conflict changes the patterns of group life as well as the ways that culture affects the development of processes to handle and respond to conflict. At a descriptive level, transformation seeks to understand how conflict affects and changes cultural patterns of a group, and how those accumulated and shared patterns affect the way people in a given context understand and respond to conflict. Prescriptively, transformation seeks to uncover the cultural patterns that contribute to violence in a given context, and to identify and build on existing cultural resources and mechanisms for handling conflict (John Paul Lederach, 2003)".

Basically, whether our ideas and views are formed by the formal and informal structures, whether formed by laws around us or burned into the very fabric of our identity, attitudes and behaviors are learned and imbibed; therefore, addressing such dimensions requires in some cases, extensive unlearning. In understanding the specific gender issues faced by women in Kaduna, it is important to recognize that the issue of violence equally affects their lives and whether this violence is explicit or latent. Violence can emerge in a number of structures and systems that affect the everyday lives of communities.

In the cosmopolitan, diverse and political powerhouse of Kaduna State, violence has been an unfortunate feature historically traced to Local Government Areas (LGAs) outside the capital city but gradually spread to all 23 LGAs in the state. It is no surprise, as we noted earlier, that localization of policies and plans is not felt which leads to the situation of "things on paper" that never get implemented. As noted earlier, despite the national and international instruments, like the Nigerian National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 that amplify the importance of inclusion of women in the process of peace building, peace keeping, conflict resolution and conflict management, these policies remain largely on paper. They have not been implemented at the local government and community levels. This means that both the written and unwritten policies of the communities are not in tandem with the national policy on gender. The conflict "context" is significantly influenced by the structural dimension.

In the domain of Nigerian traditional leaders which are sometimes referred to as the fourth tier of Government due to their close proximity to (and influence among) the people, no significant representation of women exists. In fact, of the eight first class traditional rulers who are highly regard and who represent the broad spectrum of Nigeria, none are women. In a 2019 study on Female Genital Mutilation in Northeastern Nigeria, the author notes,

> "Within this patriarchal society, cultural norms also relegate women to certain gender roles and do not recognise the value or potential capacity and agency of women to influence, lead communities and facilitate peace processes. Many cultural practices outrightly prohibit women from any kind of leadership or autonomy, with some practices being outrightly violent against girls and women. Examples of these include, "female genital mutilation (FGM), son/gender preference, breast Ironing, bride kidnapping, forced & early marriages, forced pregnancy, widowhood rites and female infanticide (Amodu et al., 2019)".

> "Four social norms were identified as drivers of the harmful traditional practices FGM and early marriage:
>
> - A respectable woman marries early
> - A respectable woman is submissive to male authority
> - A suitable woman is not promiscuous
> - A woman is worth more as a wife than as a daughter (Saskia et al., 2018)".

Sanusi stresses that "In Nigeria, the monarchy system is patriarchal in nature where only men can become kings and rulers of the society while the women are given supportive and less prominent positions. Though this is the case across all tribes in the country, there are a few exemptions to this rule. Most times, "female kings" are referred to as regents, but they act the same role as a male king would do. They attend the council of kings meeting at the local level, state level, and federal level. Despite being females, this set of monarchs are expected to dress as men and not women because the position they occupy is meant to be masculine. Females are preferred as regents because it is believed that they will want to be relieved of the position as soon as possible so they can settle and go ahead with their marital obligations. Regents cannot get pregnant while on the throne neither can they marry if unmarried before ascending the throne. But in the case of the male regent, it is believed that he might not want to vacate the throne when the time is up for him to do so (Sanusi, 2020)". Overall, it is important to keep in mind that we speak of seven female traditional rulers out of 500 (1.4%) traditional rulers in the country as of the end of 2020.

Bloody clashes in the state had polarized the people along ethno-religious lines. The state capital Kaduna evolved over the years into physical divides with majority of Christians living in the southern part of the town, and Muslims in the northern part. This not only exacerbated the already existing ethno-religious-political conflict within the state but did more damage to the possibility of women mobilizing together across divides for better representation and influence over decision making, peace processes

and conflict transformation. A notable example is the crisis of 2002 that still haunts the state and inter-communal relations. This is not the say that every other example prior or after this is minimal, on the contrary, every single outbreak of violent conflict in Kaduna built upon previous ones and continues to get more devastating.

> In February and May 2000, in some of the most serious inter-communal violence that Nigeria has seen in recent years, at least 2,000 people, and possibly many more, were killed in fighting between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna. Some commentators have described the 2000 Kaduna riots as the single worst outbreak of violence in Nigeria since the 1967-70 civil war.
>
> The 2000 violence in Kaduna took place in two main waves—sometimes referred to as “Sharia 1” and “Sharia 2” — a first wave from February 21 to 25, with further killings in March, followed by a second wave from May 22 to 23. In reaction to the prospect of the introduction of Sharia into Kaduna Sate, the Kaduna branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organized a public protest on February 21.
>
> Then the situation degenerated: Muslim youth clashed with the Christian protestors and fighting between Christians and Muslims spiraled out of control, with massive violence and destruction on both sides. An accurate, total death toll has never been ascertained, and as is typical in these situations, government and police officials were keen to play down the figures. A judicial commission of inquiry set up by the Kaduna state government reported that at least 1,295 people had been killed, while an unspecified additional number were buried unidentified, and others were declared missing. However, this number refers only to those killed in February and does not include the several hundred people reported killed in May.
>
> All the people Human Rights Watch (HRW) interviewed in connection with the 2002 riots believed that the number of people killed in the 2000 riots far

exceeded the figure of 2,000 and was likely to be closer to 5,000. A Nigerian journalist who covered the November 2002 Kaduna riots described them as 'child's play compared to what happened in 2000.'

The 2000 violence in Kaduna had repercussions elsewhere in the country, particularly in the southeast, as predominantly Christian ethnic groups, such as the Igbo, took revenge for the killings of Christians in Kaduna and turned against Muslim populations in their areas. The 2000 violence has left long-lasting scars on the people and the state of Kaduna; the memories were still fresh when violence struck again two years later, and many communities feel that their grievances have still not been addressed. In particular, many of those interviewed by HRW in December 2002 were still bitter about the fact that there had been no justice following the massive violence in 2000; they therefore expressed little hope that the organizers or perpetrators of the 2002 violence would be prosecuted.

None of the people interviewed by HRW were able to cite any cases of leading actors in the 2000 violence who had been brought to trial. It is widely believed that at that time, government authorities decided to avoid what they perceived as a risk of further escalating the violence by charging and trying the individuals responsible.

Many Muslims and Christians alike also attributed the lack of prosecutions for the 2000 violence to significant political pressure from leaders of both communities and feared that a similar absence of action would characterize the government's response to the 2002 violence.

As described in this report, their predictions have turned out to be true. Apart from the trauma that individuals and families have suffered, and the ever-deepening divisions in the society, the physical effects of the violence of 2000 are still visible in the widespread destruction of houses and other buildings.

> When Human Rights Watch visited the state capital in December 2002, local residents pointed out destruction that had been caused in 2000, separately from the more recent destruction caused in 2002.
>
> In some cases, the same neighborhoods or buildings had been hit twice, first in 2000, then again in 2002, and many had not been rebuilt or repaired since 2000. The 2000 violence also caused large-scale population displacement, leading to a sharp segregation of communities in some areas.
>
> By 2002, residents were describing particular areas of Kaduna town as "100 percent Christian" or "100 percent Muslim." This was largely as a result of the 2000 events, and to a lesser extent the clashes of previous years. Christians and Muslims increasingly moved to areas which were dominated by people of their own faith in the hope of finding safety there; many of them did not return to their original areas of residence.
>
> Following the 2002 violence, this physical segregation of parts of the city appears to have increased — an indication of deepening polarization in what was once a genuinely mixed population. Many of the people interviewed by HRW in December 2002 explained that they had moved homes not because they did not want to live with members of other faiths, but that it was a "survival tactic": they expected to be safer surrounded by their own community in the event of any future resurgence of violence (Human Rights Watch, 2003)."

It is noteworthy here that the diversity in Kaduna is not only faith related but ethnicity related with up to 63 ethnic groups across 23 LGAs. Furthermore,

> "for nearly 40 years, Kaduna State has been embroiled in multiple ethno-religious crisis that has pitted the southern part of the state against the northern part. In those 40 years, it's been from one attack to another with alarming

> casualties and destruction of properties worth millions of naira. The same scenario played out in 2018 where over 70 people were killed in the bloody ethno-religious clash, which started in Kasuwan Magani community, a few kilometers from Kaduna metropolis.
>
> This was the second time the Kasuwan Magani community had suffered from bloodshed. In February 2018, Muslim and Christian youth in the area clashed over allegations that Muslim youth were having love affairs with Christian girls and converting them to Islam and marrying them. In the February incident, about 20 people were said to have been killed with hundreds of shops and houses burnt during the incident.
>
> The Kaduna Peace Commission's Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2022 states that historically, several conflicts have been fueled by mobilizations of ethnic and religious groups. In fact, the state recorded at least 35 crises between 1980 and 2017 are reinforced by perceived economic disparities between communities.
>
> These include concerns among groups over perceived inequitable access to social mobility and economic opportunities, as well as provision of social amenities and infrastructure, like schools, health centres, water and electricity supply, location of industries and scholarship awards. According to the commission, inequality is another major driver of conflict in Kaduna state which has a huge youth population with over 54 percent of its 6.1 million people aged between 15 - 64 years. The youth are central actors in conflict either as causes, victims or actual perpetrators of conflict (Shiklam, 2018)".

To put this into further perspective, much more than the official figure of 20,000 people have died in various incidents of violent conflict over the last three decades in Kaduna with every year numbers climbing due to the increase of violent extremism, extra-judicial killings, gender-based violence, banditry, abductions and increased crime rates.

Living in such overwhelming conditions and dynamics presents very tangible and difficult circumstances for women of the different identity groups to unlearn what they have learned from history, lived experiences, and observation. From Lederach's conflict transformation lens once again, it is easy to see how much of a struggle women, like Aisha, would face in all dimensions of conflict; ranging from personal perceptions of herself, how she relates with others she sees as different, the structural and cultural factors that limit her belief in herself and any opportunities she may have benefitted from and also served her community. I believe we can relate with the difficulty she and many like her faced to step into a change process.

The Risk of Change

One key factor I believe affects our willingness to unlearn and change is the theory of "loss aversion." In the field of behavioral decision-making, "loss aversion" is a behavioral phenomenon in which individuals show a higher sensitivity to potential losses than to gains (Klaus et al., 2020). When changing a position is perceived as a loss rather than a potential gain or an opportunity for transformation, such strong personal motivations are enough to limit the desire and possibility to try something differently. Since our worldviews are so central to our identities and the decisions we make, we truly may be under the assumption in certain areas that taking a different path is not worth as much as staying the same course, which in all honesty can be true sometimes.

Why is this the case? Essentially, because it takes less effort to change. It leaves us in our comfort zone to remain the same, to not try something new. Even if the state of remaining the same is tedious, we may feel compelled to do so because we are influenced by, or do not want to be seen as disloyal to, members of our identity group. This is despite the fact that remaining the same sometimes leaves us in a state of uncertainty, disorganization, vulnerability and even indecision sometimes. If I am affected by loss aversion or any other factor, how likely is it for me to change? Not very

likely, unless I am part of something drastic or transformational. Only if I see or experience something different from the usual narrative in a safe and reflective space will I possibly be able to embrace change, but this always comes with tremendous effort, self-awareness and self-control and going through the change cycle.

This insight illustrates how change can be related to our attitudes (how we see ourselves or feel about something/someone) and behaviours (how we act and live out our attitudes including how we act towards others. Here it is useful to consider how Saul McCleod constructs attitudes and behaviors.

When we say that attitudes are evaluations, we mean that they involve a preference for or against the attitude object, as commonly expressed in term such as *prefer*, *like*, *dislike*, *hate*, and *love*. When we express our attitudes—for instance, when we say, "I like swimming," "I hate snakes," or "I love my parents" —we are expressing the relationship (either positive or negative) between the self and an attitude object. Statements such as these make it clear that attitudes are an important part of the self-concept (Stangor, Rajiv Jhangiani and Tarry, 2014).

> "Behaviorism, also known as behavioral psychology, is a theory of learning which states all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment through a process called conditioning. Thus, behavior is simply a response to environmental stimuli. Behaviorism is only concerned with observable stimulus-response behaviors, as they can be studied in a systematic and observable manner. (Mcleod, 2022)".

Since, as earlier stated, we may be biologically programmed to resist change, getting to a certain position or worldview means we have been conditioned to believe that is the absolute truth and best way to view that matter. Learning through behaviourism concretizes our worldviews (right or wrong or subjective) since we have been made to accept (conditioned) a certain way as the right way to react.

We are born into this world with a “clean slate” in terms our attitudes and behaviors, however the moment we “arrive” we are laid bare and open to the shaping of our very way of thinking in terms of attitudes and behaviors from things we are taught or experience. This is a good place to expand on the term social conditioning.

> “Supposing parents have a very radical thought and are over opinionated regarding other religions, communities or castes, it is one dangerous form of social conditioning induced in children who, when grown up, may get very intolerant towards other communities and may get easily offensive on criticism about their religion and beliefs. They may just stop listening to what others are trying to convey. This is an extremist ideology which spreads in the mind like a cancer.
>
> As children, we were influenced by two sets of people- family (parents) and teachers. Though we spent most of the time in school, we were more subjective to our parents. Do you remember the time when your parents taught you to behave while you are at a relative’s place? Or the time when you were reprimanded for cribbing in the shop for a toy? Though they look like regular etiquettes being preached to us, these are typical examples of social conditioning. This is to teach us to display an acceptable behaviour in front of others.
>
> A second example of social conditioning in the society is ‘*gender-bias*’. Boys are the ones who develop prejudices against movement of women and their choices when they see how their sisters are treated at home. For children, whatever their parents do is right so, if they are restricting the girl child of the house, the son of the family will procedurally grow up to treat his daughter in the same way.
>
> It is vitally important to note that social conditioning is also a deterrent to personality development. If somebody is an introvert or an extrovert, it is all the

> consequence of it. It is so undeniable to say that whatever we are today it is a collective outcome of how we were brought up and the circumstances of our childhood. (Kasireddi, 2013)".

It is important to know both the benefits and consequences of social conditioning, as it is a way of transmitting either kind (positive or negative) of values and worldviews. How then do we deal with the very essence of how we structure our lives, belief systems and our identities being challenged? How can we break away from harmful learned behaviors which direct us towards violence in the presence of conflict?

In our case study, as with many examples of structural and cultural conflict, those who venture "out of the norm" are considered traitors or, at the very best, misguided by the "other" in this case religion and/or ethnicity as the dividing factor. In the midst of personal and collective loss and trauma which may be chosen (for younger ones) or experienced (for older ones who have been directly), it is completely understandable why the divides among women of different religious and ethnic identities are vast, distrust is prevalent, minimal communication exists and the desire to engage socially is almost non-existent. The combination of previously mentioned theories including social conditioning, the biological resistance to change, loss aversion and behaviourism further complicated by the dimensions of the conflict make it clear that attempting to change the attitudes and behaviours of these women is an extremely tall order. So, then what happens when change happens in such a complicated scenario?

Learning to Unlearn and the Change Cycle

From 2013 to 2017, four cycles of Empowerment For Peace Programmes (EPPs) were implemented by Generations For Peace with 60 women aged 25 years and above, originating from eight ethnic groups and two major religions in 20 selected communities in the Northern and Southern parts of Kaduna state. The EPPs addressed the lack of women's empowerment and inclusion in decision-making at the community level which had a direct effect on community level peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Programme activities included a series of increasing complex assessments, mapping and understanding of their communities and the identified conflict issue, as well as sessions to develop their income generation skills which would support greater economic empowerment and influence in their communities. Most importantly, the programme very importantly provided the opportunity for women to engage from the different sides of the violent conflict divides of religion and ethnicity, giving room for new narratives, experiences to be told and formed.

The EPPs recognized that change does not happen overnight and involves a process of well-designed and facilitated physical or abstract safe spaces and/or activities over a sustained period of time to kickstart and allow the change process to happen. Initially, it may (or will) seem impossible and, when the process starts, individuals may not even realize it is happening since it works on both a conscious and subconscious level, usually starting with the latter. During the process of designing and implementing conflict transformation programmes, the importance of personal motivations, willingness and participation cannot be overlooked. Getting to a place of unlearning takes time, effort and support. It is, however, extremely heartwarming to see the transformation happen and the fulfillment that comes from realizing that the efforts that have been made have borne fruit.

Yet, in my view one of the most difficult steps in change is once you realize change is needed, “How do I change? This is what I know, this is how I have lived, this is my comfort zone, where do I start?” A period of self-realization is the place to start and then other processes that enable you to “allow” yourself to unlearn must take place prior to the change itself. Aisha and other participants must have wrestled with this realization intensely. I would describe it as the proverbial fish out of water and now the fish trying to figure out how to survive, how to breathe, how to adjust, how to live now. As we learn new things and unlearn some of the old, it is necessary to be able to put them into practice or else we will forget and this is where we may face direct confrontation from members of our identity groups. I imagine that Aisha would be confronted by her community of “Why are you suddenly talking differently about these

people?" I know I would ask her that if I noticed her way of speaking about and interacting with the "other" had changed.

As a consequence of the resistance and, in some cases, outright ostracism to the change in behaviour and attitude of women like Aisha, it is vital to have the opportunity to constantly reinforce the change and continue the engagement long enough for the change to "stick" and remain. Another metaphor I would use to describe it is "locking it in." You cannot unlearn and leave the "space" empty – this might lead to a crisis of identity amongst other things, so it is important to acknowledge the process and affirm that the process is not easy. The action of unlearning is about change yes, yet it takes effort not only to unlearn but learn to unlearn. Aisha and the other women went through that cycle and, I daresay, they did so many times. Being exposed to those and things you had stereotypes and perceptions of and realizing that your views may have been wrong or at least not holistic, gave her the chance to stop, pause and say, well maybe there is a need to change how I see these people. In doing so, the desire to change and support change sprung up – knowing full well that this would not be easy. I imagine that doubts came up several times especially if incidents in her community or other communities seemed to solidify the previous viewpoints.

As an individual like any other person: Aisha or any of the women in the EPPs, I have had to learn to unlearn in some aspects of my life and I would list the below factors as necessary for this to happen:

- Self-awareness and the ability to reflect critically about oneself.
- The willingness to believe that what you know is the absolute truth may not be the only truth.
- The ability to open up one's mind to new possibilities and narratives.
- The ability to listen actively.
- The willingness to allow yourself to be vulnerable.
- The willingness to change.

These I would say are some of the key building blocks to learning to unlearn. While there are many famous change cycle models, each one being valuable and providing a unique lens to the change process. One that I like to refer to regularly is the ADKAR Change Management Model. This model has five elements represented by the acronym ADKAR namely:

- Awareness (of the need to change)
- Desire (to participate in and support the change)
- Knowledge (on how to change)
- Ability (to implement required skills and behaviors)
- Reinforcement (to sustain the change) (Sharma, 2022).

Visual Two: The ADKAR Change Management Cycle (Sharma, 2022)

I see the stages above as natural derivatives following the process of being ready to unlearn. Once we become ready and aware we need to change, then we need to find the motivation to do so. This motivation could be intrinsic or extrinsic but driven by a strong desire to make the necessary change. How do I change? I need to know, I need to know the new facts, feel the new environment, listen to people, and open up my mind to new things. Then I have the knowledge to practice what I have learned, means to develop my skills and habitualize it otherwise known as the competency needed. For change to be sustainable, it has to be continually reinforced. That could range from

continually developing new knowledge and putting it into practice to repeating or experiencing some of the same conditions that made the change possible in the first place. This is why long-term intervention is needed for social change. One off activities and sessions do not bring about significant change. This is especially the case if activities are not repeated within safe spaces where we can reinforce and sustain the change.

Sometimes change requires that we drop certain elements of our identity and there is always the risk of peer pressure or loss aversion to return to the former way of thinking, that is why interventions must be thorough enough for us to be strong enough not only to change ourselves but even those around us. If I am to introduce a new way of thinking, I do not only need to convince myself, but if I still live and relate within the identity group that largely holds the former worldview, I should be able to affect them positively as well. The changes and unlearning I have accomplished should even speak for itself and provide new opportunities for members of my identity group and environment to see and experience new ways of thinking. Whether we speak of conflict transformation, organizational or personal change, learning to unlearn means we are in a continuous process of change that can benefit not only us but those around us. It can contribute to new structural and cultural views and practices and ensure that the balance brought about through diversity and participation makes everyone feel included and valued.

The monitoring and evaluation data of the EPPs showed a significant improvement of 30% in terms of the number of women who say they felt more equipped for decision making as well as a 33% improvement in number of women who felt more confident to participate in decision making. In addition, there was also a 40% improvement in terms of the number of women who felt that community heads allow women to take part in decision-making. Data also showed a 60% improvement in the number of women outside the programme who said women are now included in decision making in the community. The participating women delightfully found common concerns and interests, and even went ahead to create initiatives on the local level like peace

initiatives, financial co-operatives and were recognized and engaged in decision making by community leaders - gaining seats at the decision-making tables where they should have been all along. I continue to hear stories of how these women from the EPPs have formed lasting friendships that further reinforces the change and makes it sustainable. What an honour to be able to be a part of such life-changing processes and adding a little drop into the mighty ocean of an envisioned peaceful society.

Impressive results, yet a lot to done still in other communities.

When Change Happens

No better illustration of change can be found than from the narrative of someone who has experienced the process. Aisha was a participant in Generations For Peace Empowerment For Peace Programme in Kaduna, Nigeria. Aisha did not necessarily go through the ADKAR steps in the order they are mentioned, in fact she needed an extrinsic motivation (in her case her husband) to sign her up. She did not know what she was going to go through. As she engaged and opened up more, she did realize there was a need to change because what she was experiencing was not consistent with what she had been conditioned to believe and the rest followed. Aisha's testimonial illustrates the transformation that is possible even in the most challenging of circumstances.

> "I am Aisha a Hausa Muslim and as an average Hausa lady, I got married at a young age, need I mention, I was born and brought up in Tudun-Wada community and got married in the same community. It's almost like I have been living in a different world entirely, it's like I have been blindfolded and everything I know about people from other ethnic groups is what I was told while growing up or what is shown in the media, for example whenever there is an outbreak of crisis (like the Zangon-Kataf crisis of 1992 and Miss-World crisis of 2000) we are meant to believe that the Christians are hostile and they hate our religion

> and we Muslims and will do anything to hurt us, and so I grew up to know that where there are Christians, I should keep my distance.
>
> The mere mention of communities like Narayi, Sabo and the likes gives me a shiver as these are Christian dominated areas in the southern part of Kaduna and for people like me; a Hausa Muslim who have never been outside my community, it means a death zone. I have never attended any activity or participated in any event from any non-governmental organization (NGO) before, but my husband, nominated me to participate in the EPP and I can say that, that was when I was born, that was when my life started and that is where my story began.
>
> Initially, during sessions, I never made any comments or contributions and whenever the sessions physically rotated to communities in the South, I would go with so much doubt and fear of a violent attack or such. But this changed gradually, I saw another side of people from the other religion and other ethnic groups in ways I never knew before, I now know they are good and kind people among them too. I could also confidently contribute meaningfully during sessions, in fact some contributions I made, I would never have thought I could make such contributions before!
>
> I never knew the office of the District Head or Village Head of my community, how much more visiting the office, or even contributing in any form of decision in the community, but as a result of my participation in the EPP, I was selected as one of the participants in a dialogue event by Pastors and Imams in my community. What earned me this position is my participation in the EPP and I am motivated to do more through the Community Initiative we are planning in order to bring other women like me out of their shells."

Aisha learned to unlearn within a safe space that allowed for reflection and exchange across differences. She and her fellow participants traveled through the process and

loops of the change cycle, experienced and were influenced by the theories we have discussed earlier. From being personally, relationally, structurally and culturally affected by the conflict, having to weigh the potential that change could bring despite the conditioning she had been exposed which she clearly shares in her own words, to gaining and acting on unlearning to learn new things, I can only salute Aisha and all the other women in the EPPs for their indomitable courage.

Conclusion

Why would one even attempt a programme like the Empowerment For Peace Programme in a context of such engrained beliefs and practices as detailed in Kaduna, Nigeria? Because it is important to try and improve the status of women. Going in with expectations in such a situation can be risky business. But then again… change is risky. Being able to approach challenging circumstances knowing full well what the landscape looks like is the kind of courage needed for change, to learn and to unlearn. With women in the communities that were engaged in the EPPs becoming more recognised, more influential, feeling more confident and able to contribute their part to the development and culture of peace in their communities, the potential to learn new things on an individual and collective level and unlearn that such things are impossible is enormous and provides a unique opportunity to replicate context specific and responsive interventions for lasting change.

It is often joked about that the Nigerian conversation can never end, because it is so complicated and intersects across so many factors that it would take a miracle for lasting change to occur. Perhaps so, but with sensitivity, respect for local knowledge and expertise, patience, time, surrendering to process, not being afraid to fail, and most importantly, supporting individuals like Aisha to come to their own place of self-realisation, we can see change. In order to learn anew, we must be open to unlearn the comfortable and familiar. Aisha and all her fellow participants are examples for us all to learn from, for communities to honestly look inwards and take the leap of faith to

start to unlearn and think differently, and for us as nation to start from somewhere in bringing about a more peaceful society.

In concluding this article, I would like to highlight tips to remember as we go through the personal or otherwise dimensions of unlearning, re-learning and change.

1. It is natural to follow learned behaviors and the conditioning we have been exposed to in our environment, regardless of whether these are considered positive or negative.
2. The things we learn are meant to benefit us and give us the skills needed to meet life's requirements and challenges. This is not always the case especially when we develop stereotypes based on our or others experience, or we opt for the path of chosen trauma.
3. I need to be self-aware to lead me in the direction of the change as well as teachable to learn.
4. The more we learn, the more influenced we are by what we learn, they form the basis for our worldviews, attitudes and behaviors.
5. It is possible to unlearn what we have learned, but it is very important to acknowledge that it is a process that takes time and is not an easy one.
6. Learning to unlearn precedes change and can also be seen as an additional element of the change management cycle.
7. Learning to unlearn can have numerous benefits, once we get to the point where we are ready to let go and let in new things, processes, experiences and narratives.
8. Conflict transformation provides us with the possibility of unlearning in safe spaces and for that unlearning to lead to concrete change.
9. Conflict transformation contributes to community wide and larger change that is of benefit to us and our societies.
10. Unlearning and change is and should be a continuous process to encourage sustainability. It takes much more than one event to unlearn and change, so

interventions must be long term, participatory and conditions to reinforce that change provided.

It has been a fulfilling journey working and reflecting on this piece and now, I invite you the reader and I the writer, to garner the courage, take the step and learn to unlearn continuously.

Photo One: An Empowerment For Peace Programme Participant
©Generations For Peace 2013

Photo Two: Muslim and Christian Participants at an Empowerment For Peace Programme Session. ©Generations For Peace 2016

Photo Three: Empowerment For Peace Programme Participants with Community Heads. ©Generations For Peace 2017

Photo Four: Empowerment For Peace Programme Participants Taking a Stretch during a Session. ©Generations For Peace 2017

Photo Five: Empowerment For Peace Programme Participants with Community Heads. ©Generations For Peace 2017

Photo Six: Empowerment For Peace Programme Participants Sharing a Laugh during a Session. ©Generations For Peace 2017

Photo Seven: Empowerment For Peace Programme Participants Group Photo. ©Generations For Peace 2017

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SECTION 3:

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National Dialogues in Peacebuilding and Transitions Learned from Six National Dialogues in Africa and the Middle East.

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