

Two Addresses

In December just past two of our LCLI Fellows were among three speakers who addressed an annual Interfaith Peace March that takes place in Cape Town, South Africa. The March moves from one religious site to another. At each site, places that are markers of diversity and resistance, one of the main speakers addresses the marchers. People are remembered, people of faith and of no-faith, who struggled against the racism, inequality and structural violence that marked the Apartheid state. Those issues have not receded, neither in South Africa nor elsewhere. So it is also a call to new faithfulness and action.

The march this year took place in District Six near the city centre, a large area that is still largely bare after its "non-White" residents were in the later 1960s forcefully moved out under Apartheid rule (the title of *District Nine*, the Oscar nominated SciFi film by South African Neill Blomkamp, references this history; in the film some of the same themes reappear in new guise). It is supposed to be returned to its original residents as far as possible but this has still not happened.

Nomvula Dlamini, Director of the Community Development Resource Association and one of our very new Fellows, was one of the speakers; Horst Kleinschmidt too, another of our Fellows. The third speaker on this march was Judge Essa Moosa, appointed by Nelson Mandela and famous for his defense of victims of Apartheid - I mention him in part because he died this last week of cancer and he is fresh in my memory. With their permission and because they are Fellows, I share here the contributions that Nomvula and Horst offered. -- Jim Cochrane



Nomvula Dlamini

District Six and Restitution

Interfaith Walk – 16th December 2016

On this Reconciliation Day I feel it is appropriate to greet you by saying "Sanibonani" – I see you and I acknowledge you as fellow South Africans. And it is appropriate for you to similarly acknowledge me by saying "Sawubona"!

I was first introduced to the story of District Six as a small child growing up in Galeshewe Township in Kimberley. One of my mother's cousins had moved to Cape Town and lived in

District Six. Every festive holiday she would visit and regale the family with stories about life in District Six ... the people, the music and the food. From her descriptions of life in District Six, as a small child I was struck by the vibrancy ... it sounded like a very interesting place to live. One year she visited and there were no more stories from and about District Six; she mentioned that she now lived in Gugulethu where they had been moved to. It is only when I was much older that I learned of forced removals and the impact on the lives of people.

So today, as we reflect on the story of District Six, and other areas of forced removals, I wish to mention that it is one that will forever sit as a scar in the history of our country. These stories are a reminder of the violence that was perpetrated by the apartheid government against our people. These removals were conducted in the most brutal way ... the one day people lived happy lives

brutal way ... the one day people lived happy lives and the next they were uprooted from their homes and dumped in places that were foreign to them. Living in District Six they were part of an intentional community; they were deeply immersed in a melting pot of cultures with their respective rituals that gave people a sense of belonging.

The human connections were deep and real ... and these sustained the people. District Six was characterised by its vibrancy and diversity; a community where people were fully awakened and allowed to be their true selves ... where healthy community not only supported diversity but was made possible by the diversity. So, today, as we walk through the area ... let us reflect on the strong sense of belonging that people living in District Six then must have experienced and the intensity of the connections and relationships. We know that some of relationships have been maintained irrespective of the physical distances that separate people.

So, thinking about and reflecting on the brutality of forced removals today, we need to understand why there continues to be pain. The pain remains in spite of the fact that this happened many decades ago. The pain people continue to feel is a result of the brutality of that act ... forced removals were conducted in a way that totally undignified, humiliated and dehumanised our people. Thinking back on the forced removals, in District Six and elsewhere, the deepest pain we continue to feel is because those acts of violence perpetrated against our people led to dispossession. But mostly we continue to feel pain because those acts of violence did not only rob one generation; they have resulted in a perpetuation of dispossession, of trauma, of inequality & dislocation.

With forced removals, a narrative was disrupted ... and this is the worst form of injustice that can be inflicted on any people. And for this reason, restitution is justified and is needed if healing it to happen.

But, there is also anger ... an anger that stems from looking around and seeing how the land from which people were forcibly removed is being used ... the market and capital has come to determine how the land is being used ... in the name of 'development' profit-making is allowed to triumph over restitution and reparations. This is like adding insult to injury!

For many of the families and people directly affected by the forced removals the healing has been slow. Healing is important; it will bring people to a new place in their lives. It will help people to restore relationships not only with others, but more importantly with self. Healing will help people create harmony and symbiosis with others. Whilst restitution must include material reparations; it must help the healing process. Healing demands reparation that is more than simply monetary; healing seeks to restore human dignity; it seeks to renew and transform. It is only through healing that we will recognise and acknowledge each other and enable greater tolerance of those who are different from us. Without healing, we will continue to remain blind to the needs, gifts and talents of others.

So, today, as we celebrate Reconciliation Day, let us also reflect on our history as a people and the challenges that face our country ... the dearth of political leadership, the absence of good governance, the moral decay into which our society is slipping and the corruption that has become like a cancer. Looking around we see that challenges in our country have become soul size ... sitting on the fence and not becoming involved is no longer an option; our apathy and aloofness is no longer an option; blaming and pointing fingers is no longer an option; reminiscing and hankering for the good old days will leave us feeling frustrated and dissatisfied. Reflecting on South Africa today and thinking back to 1994, it feels like we have been robbed of a dream. From a time early in our new democracy when we were a country full of possibility, we are now faced with despair, apathy and hopelessness. We are all wondering "where did things go wrong?"

But, a South Africa of our future is still possible ... a South Africa that we can re-author together is still possible.

For that to happen we need to stand together, shoulder to shoulder ... as human beings we are collectively oriented. Our well-being, future and destiny as different groups are connected to the collective and we need to work together to create a society that is supported by and thrives because of our diversity – for us, a healthy society requires diversity!

So, we need to:

- 1) Re-humanise our country by telling and re-telling our stories in ways that bring

us together and help us to find each other and make us work together. In spite of our different social histories, our respective stories need to become the inspiration for bringing us together, to help us recognise and acknowledge each other's gifts, talents and contributions and to develop greater tolerance for those different from us.

- 2) Re-dream our lives so we can together live into a different future, a future that is collectively re-authored by all of us. We need to recognise that we have need for an alternative narrative that will take us in a different direction, a direction that we must co-create. This requires that we stop holding onto the past and those things that give us false security – it

demands that we find the courage to risk to journey together into a future that is unknown but must be co-created.

- 3) Re-communalise our country so we don't remain trapped in individualism and isolation; so we don't become a community of co-journeymen walking alongside each other – we need to become a community that journeys together. For this to happen, we have to reach out to each other, let go of those things that keep us trapped and risk working together to build an inclusive South Africa supported by our diversity.

As we prepare to continue our walk through District Six, I wish to end with the following poem:

PRESCIENCE by Dr Maya Angelou (from *And Still I Rise*)

**Had I known that the heart
breaks slowly, dismantling itself
into unrecognizable plots of misery,**

**Had I known the heart would leak,
slobbering its sap, with a vulgar
visibility, into the dressed-up
dining rooms of strangers,**

**Had I known that solitude could
Stifle the breath, loosen the joint,
and force the tongue against the
palate**

**Had I known that loneliness could
keloid, winding itself around the
body in an ominous and beautiful cicatrix**

**Had I known yet I would have loved
you, your brash and insolent beauty,
your heavy comedic face
and knowledge of sweet delights,**

**But from a distance
I would have left you whole and wholly
for the delectation of those who
wanted more and cared less**



Horst Kleinschmidt

Reconciliation Day address

Chapel Street Primary School, District 6

District 6: a place tears! The soil we walk on here today is drenched in tears; tears of yesterday, not dried yet, tears of today!

A few moments ago we walked past the Trauma Centre, here in Chapel Street – a very special place, dealing with the undue social and family violence in our neighbourhoods. But during the 1960's, 70's, 80's and early 90's, the Trauma Centre was known as Cowley House. Then, equally brave people worked in that building. It was then a reception centre for hundreds upon hundreds of wives and children of political prisoners incarcerated on Robben Island. The reception centre accommodated wives and lovers and provided what comfort the Cowley House staff could give, both before such fateful visits and after the pain-laden visits to the Island. Cowley House was a safe harbour for spouses and their children who arrived by train and bus from all over the country before boarding the rickety Willem Barends to make the crossing to Robben Island. Under the whip of warders and through the visitors-hatch, the prisoner and his spouse tried to convey news, love and affection, and commitment to the freedom apartheid denied them.

Let me today lift the veil on how the spouses of those on Robben Island got to Cowley House. From 1960 onwards Canon John Collins, clergyman at St. Pauls Cathedral in London, raised funds for the defence costs of those politically persecuted in, what was then, Southern Rhodesia, South West Africa and in South Africa. And then, he built an elaborate secret network to support the families of those incarcerated. A secret operation was crucial when Canon Collins' International Defence and Aid Fund was banned in this country in 1966.

What the Defence and Aid did was to select families all over the UK, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, New Zealand and elsewhere and match them with a

persecuted family in Southern Africa. Their job was to write to the spouse of the imprisoned, detained, banned, banished or fled breadwinners. Political exchanges were discouraged, to avoid



interference by the pervasive SA censors. The overseas families were allocated six amounts of money per annum, convert the money into International Postal Orders and send these with a letter to their allocated family here in SA. The money was sent to cover school fees of children and pay for a once-yearly train or bus trip to Cape Town. Many of these correspondence relationships lasted for close to thirty years – and some are solid friendships to this day.

Each Defence and Aid correspondent promised to send the letter they received and a copy of the letter they wrote, to a concealed contact in London. Each letter from SA was treated as a receipt – that the money was received.

A small group of UK and South African exiled women worked at Defence and Aid offices, on conditions of elaborate secrecy, to manage this correspondence and postal order traffic – no mean feat: to sustain several thousand relationships, one outside SA with one inside SA, for over three decades. Cowley House, more than any other place symbolises this incredible monument of international solidarity. When Canon Collins died in 1981, I had the privilege to take over the reigns from Canon John Collins – a man whose praises have not been sung in SA. I challenge St. George's Cathedral or St Marks to make amends for this omission. Canon Collins is not the only person deserving of recognition here. Two women stand out for doing this work in the dingy basement of the Collins' house in London. They are Rica Hodgson, later succeeded by Peggy Stevenson. They deserve our applause and recognition, together with other unsung heroines beaver away in that basement.

The entire correspondence of that period has survived and was brought to SA, in two ships

containers, in the 1990's and today forms the heart of the Mayibuye Archive at UWC.

The archive is testimony to tears and tears again. As we walk here today we must believe that one day, we, all South Africans can be reconciled; reconciled across the many things that continue to divide us.

Healing the wounds of the past demands restitution, contrition, acknowledgement and reparation that is done by all, each one of us, who derived benefit from the colonial and apartheid era. I believe this can only be done if we discuss a restitution tax, if land reform is energetically managed and negotiated and if our social order builds economic and social equality. This is what we, the people of this country, must stand up for and demand from our far too comfortable political establishment, in the ANC and DA and splinter groups. Political failure demands that we re-build a social movement with as wide a base as possible. We need a new United Democratic Front, led by working people, the faith communities and all those our social dispensation marginalises.

We need to build such a movement, stone by stone, set aside differences and build a negotiated united front.

Today's walk is one important building stone toward a people's movement for a just, restored and equal SA nation. Let us build on our powerful history of resistance; let us learn from the past that which was best in our civil society struggles – let us learn from this proud tradition and build a people's voice that those up there, in the Mayoral and Parliamentary offices, have to hear! Let us express this through our constitution and the provisions under our Bill of Rights. Let us build the society we desperately need.

Only when that happens, will the tears finally dry.

I stand here today in solidarity with the Right2Know and Social Justice Coalition campaigns; I stand in solidarity with the people of Bromwell Street, Tafelberg and with those thousands of District 6 awaiting restorative justice! We cannot accept that apartheid policies are replaced today with the language of market forces, highest return on investment and the crooked developer sector that sold us the CT Stadium.

Today's Reconciliation Walk might well be called the walk of tears. Arguable more tears have been shed on this soil than the many tears shed elsewhere in our troubled history.

Half a century ago the 60,000 residents violently evicted from here, shed tears. They are still shedding tears; men folk who feel that they let their families down by not being able to counter the Group Areas police who removed them from their homes.

Mothers still shed tears. The families evicted and strewn across the sandy wastes of the inhospitable cape flats, when they meet today, still shed tears over the humiliation they suffered – the humiliation de Klerk and company still do not confront and say and do 'sorry' for what they did.

We stand on this soil, drenched in tears, today because we tell the City, the Province and Parliament: You have failed these people!

You have made promises but you did not keep your promises! You lack the will and leadership! Instead, you collude with those who offer the highest price – and thus, in effect, continue to build the apartheid City where the rich get the best and the poor are destined for Blikkiesdorp. – Shame on de Lille, Zille and Nkinti – you do little more than re-produce an apartheid city under a different name!

