# Creating a Space for Encounter and Remembrance: The Healing of Memories Process

**by Undine Kayser**

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**Undine Kayser** is a postgraduate student in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town.

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**Introduction**

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has been the subject of a large number of research studies. At the same time there have been several lesser-known parallel initiatives to the TRC. These processes were initiated by civil society campaigns, faith communities and non-governmental organisations and played a role in shaping, affirming and challenging the TRC's discourse on healing, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. This study looks at one of these processes, known as the 'Healing of Memories' (HOM). It is an initiative that supported the work of the TRC, but also sought to create an alternative intervention model for speaking about the past. The HOM model has been aimed at offering an additional and different space to the Commission's testimonial arena, providing an opportunity for South Africans to speak about apartheid memories that continues beyond the end of the TRC.

The aim of this report is to examine the HOM process as one intervention in the larger discourse around truth and reconciliation in South Africa since 1994 until today. HOM workshops present one of the few institutionalised post-TRC spaces for South Africans to consciously and practically engage with personal memories and with each other about the apartheid past. The workshops are based on the premise that speaking about one's experiences of the apartheid years can lead to a process of healing, provide relief for the individual and at the same time initiate a more collective healing process among South Africans. The workshop participants are encouraged that remembering through storytelling can be a positive force for change. The concept of HOM works through an intensive once-off intervention, which aims to help to form links among people and make them aware of their individual and collective powers for personal transformation and healing. It aims to open up a space for dialogue about the past and its impacts in the present.

**A Short History of the Healing of Memories Process**

During the negotiations about a peaceful transition of political power in South Africa, discussions were held about the possibility of a Truth Commission as a means to address the legacies of the apartheid system. By the time of the 1994 elections, the proposed Truth Commission had become an issue for public debate in the country. At the end of 1994 a group of interested members of civil society organisations in the Western Cape[1] called a public meeting in order to discuss the implications of a Truth Commission in the local context of the Western Cape. The gathering led to the formation of the 'Religious Response to the Truth Commission' (RR),[2] a volunteer campaign.

At the same time former ANC Chaplain Father Michael Lapsley returned to Cape Town from exile to take up the position of Chaplain at the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture (Trauma Centre). In 1990 he had survived a letter bomb that was sent to him by the apartheid government. Father Lapsley was part of the RR from its inception and became a driving force in developing possible intervention projects with regard to counselling and support for victims and survivors of apartheid violence.[3] Through his own experience of living in exile and having been bombed by the apartheid government as well as the stories of the survivors whom he counselled at the Trauma Centre, Lapsley realised the importance of giving people a space in which their experiences could be told and acknowledged. Lapsley described how his own process of healing had begun through the affirmation and acknowledgement that his story received from people who listened compassionately. He wished to give a similar opportunity to others. The public process of the TRC would give this opportunity only to a very limited number of people. Where could other South African stories find a place to be told?

The first HOM workshops were held in 1995. Many of the early participants were members of the RR or had come in touch with the initiative through Father Lapsley's work at the Trauma Centre. The workshop methodology included a combination of discussion forums and personal storytelling sessions in small groups over a period of two days. Elements of autobiography workshops and creative art therapy methodologies were incorporated.

Since their inception, the initiatives of the RR and the Trauma Centre Chaplaincy regarded themselves as a parallel process to the TRC that would support and collaborate with the Commission as well as critically monitor and comment on its work. The HOM process saw the relationship of the initiative and the TRC as one of constructive criticism and mutual support. The Commission regarded the collaboration as positive as well.[4] The main phase of collaboration between the HOM process and the TRC took place through interaction with the Human Rights Violation Hearings in 1996 and 1997. After the TRC had visited an area (in the Western Cape) Father Lapsley and his staff were asked to offer a Healing of Memories workshop to survivors in the area. The idea was that all survivors who had testified before the Commission would afterwards receive an invitation to come to a HOM a workshop.

1998 was marked by a sense of closure in the media and in public debates about the TRC as it began to near its end. It also became a year of transformation and change for the parallel process. In August 1998 the *Institute for Healing of Memories* (IHOM) was formed, and the HOM process became independent from the Trauma Centre. The mission of the IHOM has

been largely coherent with the aims of the former Chaplaincy. New elements included the extension of the process into the international arena. The positive feedback by participants in the workshops from other countries such as Rwanda and Ireland led to the idea that the workshop model may also be of use in other contexts outside South Africa. In April 1998 the first HOM workshop outside South Africa was held at Riverside Church in New York, USA. Further international workshops took place in Rwanda, Ireland, Sri Lanka, Australia and Lesotho. Interest and feedback from these initiatives have been very positive and more invitations have been received.

## Organisational Profile of the Institute for Healing of Memories

Currently the Institute for Healing of Memories operates with

- three staff members: a director, a full-time networker and organiser, a part-time administrator;
- the Board (nine members);
- the 'Counselling Working Group' (eight to twelve members): planning and development body for the process made up of HOM facilitators;
- 32 trained workshop facilitators of which about 12 are active at any one time; and
- a network of volunteers and other organisations.

The main activities of the IHOM consist of publicising, organising and conducting HOM workshops in the Western Cape (ten annually), nationally[5] (between six and eight) and internationally (between two and four). In addition to the HOM model, the IHOM is developing workshop models for dealing with emotions such as anger, hatred and guilt, and processes for reconciliation and forgiveness.[6] The organisation also engages in giving workshops, seminars, talks and sermons around these topics and works in collaboration with a number of other related organisations in the Western Cape, in South Africa and worldwide. IHOM is also involved in facilitating the local debate around reparations as part of the Western Cape Reparations Forum.

Between 1995 and the end of 1999 a total of 901 people attended HOM workshops in the Western Cape, and 785 people attended national workshops and 56 attended international workshops. Funding is received from a number of donors; many of them are affiliated to churches and faith communities.

## The Healing of Memories Research Study

### Objectives of the Study[7]

This study focuses on the potential and limitations of practical interventions that seek to facilitate 'healing and reconciliation'[8] at grassroots level. The HOM workshops can serve as one example of such interventions that the South African process of 'dealing with the past' has generated. As such, it contributes to an understanding of the many faces and facets that actively shaped the truth and reconciliation discourse before, during, and after the actual Commission's work. HOM did not operate as publicly as the TRC, but can illustrate the dynamics of a civil society process participating in the South African transition towards democracy. HOM's efforts to bring South Africans of different backgrounds together in the

same space to 'tell each other their stories of the apartheid years' are presented as an opportunity for South Africans to *encounter one another* rather than promoting 'reconciliation'. The basic idea is of an encounter as human beings who have experienced an inhumane system and are living its consequences (field notes, 1997).

The Healing of Memories process raises a range of questions around interventions that make use of a cross-racial, cross-cultural setting. It also gives an insight into the ways in which those South Africans who continue to be affected by and/or are actively concerned with the apartheid past[9] conceptualise key themes in the discourse around truth and reconciliation.

**Research Base and Limitations**

This study concentrates on a description and analysis of the HOM workshop model. My double role as a researcher and facilitator places several advantages and limitations on the study. It gave me the ground for an in-depth anthropological engagement with the people involved and provided me with access to an intervention that usually does not allow researchers to participate as observers. The concept of a 'telling space' that operates on the premises of confidentiality and participation does not accommodate the striving for 'scientific objectivity' that may be necessary for the researcher. At the same time my position as a young white foreigner, and specifically a young German woman, in post-apartheid South Africa provided a particular kind of access and limitation to the study, a quasi insider-outsider perspective that can serve as one reflective lens through which to view this process.

It is important to note that the HOM project regards the workshops as a 'sacred' and 'safe' space where participants tell their stories in an intimate and confidential manner. I therefore attended the workshops in my capacity as a facilitator and not as a researcher. This impacts upon the level of documentation that is possible. I have used my impressions from the workshops as guidelines for follow-up interviews, which allowed for in-depth conversations with former participants. In addition to the interviews, I have also assessed the written evaluation forms that participants fill out after the workshops. However, the information provided on the evaluation forms is not sufficient to create a statistical overview of HOM participants based on attendance, age, former apartheid racial classification and gender.

Being part of the HOM process at the same time as writing about it leads me to aim for a mode of critical analysis that is constructive to the Healing of Memories process and does not seek to question the fundamental value of the intervention.

**Methodology**

In addition to my two and a half years of experience and the observations as a participant and facilitator with HOM since 1997, I conducted research for the study over an intensive period of one and a half years. The research methodology included:

- participant observation at twelve workshops;
- participant observation at a number of activities such as presentations of the process to different organisations and strategic planning meetings;

- a range of qualitative in-depth interviews with former
- participants, facilitators, staff, volunteers and board members; five focus groups with former workshop participants, facilitators, the so-called 'Counselling Working Group' (which functions as a volunteer planning body for the process) and the Mina Nawe Theatre Group (who present a short drama about the apartheid years at each HOM workshop); and
- the production of a forty minute video documentary entitled *'Down Memory Lane. A day of remembering District Six'*[10] that shows parts of the HOM model in operation.

The range of interviewees does not constitute a representative sample, but the selection of respondents was based on a range of criteria, mainly:

diversity of experience during the apartheid years;
- levels of involvement with the Healing of Memories process (participants/facilitators); and
- diversity in terms of age groups, gender, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, former apartheid racial classifications and faith group.

The interview sample included one-on-one interviews with ten former participants from diverse backgrounds, as well as two focus groups. In addition, nine facilitators and four staff members were interviewed of whom 50% are white. With the exception of one facilitator and one participant of Jewish faith, all respondents were either of Christian faith (70%) or identified themselves as non-believers (30%).

#### Research Questions

The interview guidelines were based on three sets of questions addressing:

- contact with the Healing of Memories process and the workshop experience;
- the longer-term impact of the workshop experience; and
- the understanding of key terms: Forgiveness - Reconciliation - Ubuntu - Anger.

## The Healing of Memories Workshop Model in the Western Cape

#### Setting

HOM workshops in the Western Cape are held in-residence over a weekend of two and a half days, starting on a Friday night and ending Sunday afternoon. Participants are requested to stay for the whole duration of the workshop.

The venues for the workshops are often removed from the participants' living areas, aiming to be in a beautiful and tranquil surrounding to create a sense of 'being away from everything'. Transport was initially a problematic issue, as the impact of the socio-economic realities in Cape Town became apparent. Participants come to the venue either in their own transport or by taxi organised by the IHOM.

#### Participants

Workshops are advertised in the Western Cape in collaboration with a number of different

groups, institutions and NGOs such as the Trauma Centre, the Black Sash, the TRC and survivor support groups. A large part of the network has been linked to faith communities, their leaders and individual congregations. Staff and volunteers of the IHOM give presentations and talks about the HOM process around the Western Cape.

The regular public workshops have a range of 20-30 participants and take place at an average of once a month in the Western Cape. Each workshop is conducted by between six and nine facilitators. The public workshops have no particular participant target group at this point in time, but aim to include a wide range of participants from diverse backgrounds in terms of former apartheid classification, economic and social background, language, age, and gender. HOM participants are mostly over eighteen years old.[11]

The workshops are largely subsidised by the IHOM to ensure that people can participate regardless of their socio-economic background. Participants who are able to pay are charged a fee of R180. Others are asked to contribute as much as they can. A large number of participants cannot afford to pay at all and attend the workshop fully subsidised.

Trends among the participant groups show a move from a TRC-related audience to more mixed groups who may not have had any contact with the TRC. This reflects the networking practices of the IHOM that extended from an initial intense collaboration with TRC and related organisations like the Trauma Centre to more general interest groups. In the documentation there is a noticeable shift from a focus on survivors of apartheid human rights violations to a more diverse participant community. A persisting phenomenon is the difficulty to motivate white participants to come to the workshop. At the same time, white facilitators throughout the process have provided half of the active contingent in the mixed facilitator group. This may be related to the logistical requirements of volunteer work since facilitators invest substantial amounts of time and resources in the workshops and in the planning and extension of the HOM process.

In addition to the 'open' workshops in the Western Cape, specific groups have requested workshops for themselves that do not include other participants. These 'closed' (and often more homogenous) workshops have been held according to the same programme as the open workshops. Participants included church groups, self-help groups of survivors of apartheid violence, former members of *Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)*[12] and ex-political prisoners. There have also been a number of foreign participants at the workshop who expressed that they gained personally from the experience. This speaks to the applicability of the HOM model in a wider context than just South Africa and the apartheid system.

**Motivations and Expectations**

The main motivations to come to a workshop as they were expressed at the workshops and during follow-up interviews centre on three different aspects:

- personal healing by confronting the past;
- meeting other South Africans, listening to them and questioning them;
- grappling with existential and moral concepts such as questions around forgiveness, remembering and forgetting, finding ways to move forward and leaving the destructive impact of the past behind.

**Facilitators**

Diversity (cultural/racial/language background, age, and gender) is the main criterion for the demography of the facilitator team at workshops. The workshops aim to give people the opportunity to speak in their own language. The facilitators translate when necessary, and the aim is to have native speakers of each of the participants' languages in the facilitator team.

Future facilitators are mostly selected from the participants at the workshops by facilitators who identify potential candidates to join the facilitation team. The majority of facilitators have a background in social professions, teaching or human resources. Facilitators are trained in HOM facilitation by senior facilitators in two weekend workshops. After the training, new facilitators begin as co-facilitators assisting in the small group sessions during the workshops.

Father Lapsley's presence at a workshop shapes the weekend in a particular way. Many participants mentioned that they see him as an 'empowered victim' and drew strength and hope from meeting him. In this sense, Lapsley has been described in the imagery of the 'wounded healer' by other facilitators who point to the symbolic role he plays as lead facilitator during the weekend process. Facilitators and participants perceive him as a central figure, a driving force and 'visionary' shaping the HOM process.

**The Workshop Programme**

**Friday**

The Friday begins with the arrival of the participants at the workshop venue in the late afternoon where they are welcomed by the facilitator team. After dinner the group meets in a session where the *Mina Nawe* theatre group performs a short drama. *'That Spirit'* is a twenty-minute dramatic enactment of scenes from the apartheid years, a powerfully moving combination of interactive drama and song. The scenes that are enacted by the young performance team include a mother who has lost her son, a shoot-out in a township, the story of a young white soldier who is sent into the townships to kill school-children, a husband who witnessed the rape of his own wife by the security police, and others. A number of the songs are well-known struggle and working songs.

During the performance and afterwards participants are often visibly moved. They are encouraged by the facilitators to speak about the painful memories of the apartheid years that the drama has instantly evoked. Some people may be crying during the performance and afterwards because of the memories triggered by the drama and the songs. In the 'open floor' commentary that follows the performance many participants name anger and sadness as the main emotions they experienced when watching the drama. They voice their feelings of frustration and pain when prompted to think back to the apartheid times. The emotions that emerge are affirmed as important by the facilitators. In this way the opening evening creates a very intense and emotionally charged atmosphere that is often marked by heaviness and a feeling of 'having been opened up'. Before retreating to their rooms participants are given a question sheet asking about their apartheid experiences which will be used for the next days' storytelling session.

Facilitators explain that this evening session is aimed to be a 'catalyst' of memories that is meant to set the mode of the workshop, offer a first release and create the emotional depth for the next day's storytelling sessions. The Friday is described as a difficult and tense day by many participants who spoke about the discomfort and insecurities of 'being thrown into' a new and mixed group of people, some of which may be regarded as former 'enemies'.

**Saturday**

***Drawing Exercise***

The morning begins with a drawing exercise in which participants are invited to put their life-stories into colours, pictures or symbols using crayon on a large newsprint. Everyone is asked to work individually for 45 minutes. Facilitators emphasise that this exercise is about an expression of self and not artistic skill. They encourage participants to express their emotions through colours and symbols.

Afterwards the group is divided into small groups. Between four and six participants are allocated to two facilitators who aim for diversity of age, gender, language and apartheid experience. Participants who know each other are placed in different small groups. An ideal small group, as one facilitator described it, would 'include a diverse range of stories and experiences as well as people from different backgrounds'.

***Storytelling***

The small groups meet in separate rooms where a circle of chairs has been prepared and water, tissues and peppermints are arranged. The facilitators then negotiate an agreement of confidentiality and respect among the participants of the small group. They ask the group to create a 'safe space' for each other's stories by listening and supporting the person who is speaking. In this regard the idea of 'safe' means that participants and their stories should be given a space where they are not subject to criticism or attack regarding what they choose to say. The safe space is meant to give room to all participants' experiences and contain a wide scope of different narratives.

All participants have about 45 minutes to speak about their life-experiences and memories in relation to the apartheid years. Non-South African participants are asked to relate their life-stories to their country's history. There is no particular format in which participants' life-experiences (framed as 'the stories') are told. Participants are encouraged to make use of the drawings they have made in the morning. The sheet with questions about experiences of the apartheid years that was given out during the previous evening may be used to facilitate the telling. At the end the facilitators also tell their 'stories'. The mode of telling varies greatly in how participants make use of the 'listening space' in the small groups. In many cases a participant will speak for some time and afterwards the facilitators and the group will ask questions. At times a conversation develops out of a story. Participants also choose the level at which they share. Some go very deeply into their memories and the emotions connected to them, others keep more distance. Some narratives are coherent and chronological. Others are fragmented and ruptured, jumping back and forth in time or concentrating on one particular event only. The range of life stories is as varied as the participants' background. Often the stories begin to correspond with one another, not unlike a mosaic of South African experiences.

Facilitators often encourage participants to explore the emotional aspects of remembering

and to express emotions in the small group. Participants are also asked if faith and spirituality have played a role for them during the apartheid years. Facilitators described that ideally the atmosphere in the small group is concentrated and conveys a sense of 'compassionate listening'. Tears and expressions of fear and anger are often part of the telling. Facilitators aim to balance the time and space that is given to individual participants. The small group sessions last all day and leave everybody profoundly exhausted.

***Discussion of Themes and Questions***

By the time the group reassembles in a plenary session late in the afternoon, there is often a sense of relief in the exhaustion. Many of the tensions seen on Friday night have dissipated. There is a sense of having shared a difficult day. With the lead of one facilitator the plenary group now collects a range of themes and questions that have come out of the day's listening process. The themes range from emotions such as anger, hatred and joy to courage and resilience, from betrayal and struggle to initiative and support. Issues such as remembering, forgetting, forgiveness, healing, guilt and reconciliation[13] may be discussed. *Questions* that come up often address present needs and concerns; such as: how to deal with the present situation that is often shaped by violence, poverty and unemployment; what future there is for South Africa; if hurt can truly be healed; and if South Africans can live peacefully together. During the hearings of the TRC a range of questions also addressed the Truth Commission and its formal process, particularly the issue of reparations.

Forgiveness and anger appear as themes for discussion at almost every workshop. My observations are that the discussions on forgiveness are often conducted with a visible sense of respect for each other's experiences and an urge to understand as well as question one another. But the questions that are asked in the plenary also carry the potential for conflict, anger and tension that may be acted out in this arena. In some cases the discussion can lead to a polarisation of positions and disagreement among the participants. Here, as in the small group sessions, the diversity of the group plays a role as people may question each other's choices and motives across historical boundaries. This forum demands highly skilled facilitation if it is to induce dialogue on the issues rather than promote a particular opinion or model of forgiveness.

After the session the facilitators ask the group to choose five or six representatives who then use the collected themes and questions in order to draft a programme for the 'celebration' or 'liturgy' that is planned for the next day. After dinner the whole group meets for a 'party' with music, drinks and snacks. The party is thought to provide a voluntary space for movement and release of the days' intense energies. Participants have commented that for them it is often a new experience to 'socialise across (former apartheid-related) colour barriers'. The party can also be a chance to begin or continue conversations among participants and facilitators.

**Sunday**

***The Clay Symbol***

The Sunday morning begins with another creative exercise. Participants are asked to shape a lump of clay into a symbol that for them represents their experience of South Africa, of the workshop and their wishes for the future.[14] They are also given a candle.

Facilitators introduce the following event as an opportunity to celebrate the positive themes that have emerged out of the small group sessions and the discussion on Saturday. The mode of the event is meant to draw positives out of the negative experiences during apartheid. It is here that the 'redemptive theology' of 'overcoming evil' and 'celebrating resilience and strength' is played out (see Key Concepts). Many workshop celebrations resonate themes of hope and optimism such as 'From Darkness to Light', 'Alive Alive!' and 'Remembering whilst walking forward'. Depending on the participants' affiliation of faith, some celebrations are planned as a church liturgy or a religious service, while others are created less formally, including dance, poetry and other art forms.

***The Celebration/Liturgy***

The facilitators often suggest that the celebration/liturgy symbolically begin with a procession from the outside and a small ritual of 'burning negatives'. For this, a fire is provided in a drum and people proceed to the entrance while singing.[15] Here they burn negative issues and personal thoughts on what they wish to leave behind, written on a piece of paper.

The rest of the celebration takes place inside a room where people sit in a circle (in the Western Cape it has often been a small chapel). In most cases the event consists of a number of readings, songs, prayers, poetry, even short sketches, speeches and dances. Participants can make individual contributions and each of the previous day's small groups has to give a contribution that represents their experience during the storytelling sessions. If Father Michael Lapsley is present at a workshop, he may also offer Holy Communion as part of the event. The celebration culminates in the presentation of the clay symbols. Each participant takes their symbol, lights a candle in memory of a person of their choice, and presents the symbol to the group with a few thoughts. This way of presenting often has a powerful impact and creates an atmosphere of reflection in which people express a spirit of unity and hope for the future, their own and of South Africa. The celebration/liturgy is meant to bring a sense of closure to the workshop and end in an atmosphere of hope and affirmation.

The workshop ends with a feedback session and the agreement on a follow-up meeting.

***Follow-up meeting***

The follow-up meetings take place on a Saturday afternoon about three to four weeks after the workshop at a church or community hall. The idea is for every former participant to bring a friend or colleague who has not yet been to a workshop. In this way HOM tries to ensure that the workshops are more than a once-off intervention but generate a community of former workshop participants who can share the experience and motivate others to attend.

During the meeting the group of newcomers is introduced to the HOM concept separately, while the workshop participants speak about their experiences after the weekend. The facilitators ask what it was like to return home and the group discusses what has happened to them since the workshop (see Impacts).

Follow-up meetings are voluntary and often logistically problematic. The transport capacity that is used for the workshops is not available for the follow-up meetings. Participants have

to rely on each other for transport, which exposes some of the realities of apartheid's continuities in the (physical and mental) geography of Cape Town. Many (white) participants who have a car are fearful and not willing to drive into what they consider dangerous areas to pick up other (black) participants, who may not be able to afford the time or transport costs to come to a follow-up meeting.

## Key Concepts in the Healing of Memories Process

There are a number of concepts at work in the HOM process that are important to the philosophy of the organisation and the practice of the workshops. Some of these concepts are outlined in the documentation on HOM, for example the facilitator's guidebook. They are marked in brackets as (HOM). Other concepts have been given a heading by me as they are not explicitly noted anywhere in the existing documentation of the process.

#### Every South African Has a Story to Tell (HOM)

> Every South African has a story to tell about the apartheid years. It is the story of what we did, of what was done to us and what we failed to do. (Facilitators' Guidebook)

This concept can be read in relation to the TRC discourse[16] that seems to have contributed to the impression among many South Africans that only people who have been subjected to gross human rights violations have 'a story to tell'. Many participants from different backgrounds, especially women, arrive at HOM workshops saying that their experiences are not really worthy of being told. Z.M. who is a female facilitator and staff member of IHOM, said:

> I am not someone who likes to talk. I do not like talking about my experiences. But as I grew up, as I met other people, I now am able to converse about my experiences. I guess it is because I met other people who also share their stories with me, and I was able to share with them. Because when I first went to Healing of Memories I was almost certain that I do not have a story or that I was not part of what happened. … Now it is different. I mean, there are many experiences that happened to me. Now every time I go, I tell a different story. (Z.M., 1999)

The idea of the concept is to convey a sense of empowerment and affirmation in the participants' discovery that their life-experiences can be put into narrative form and be witnessed by other South Africans. The corresponding notion is that 'everyone is worth listening to,' which also is meant to work in powerful ways to promote the basic respect for people's voices that has been denied to the majority of South Africans under apartheid.

Allowing a diverse range of South African stories into the same space can help to provide a hint of the complexity, sometimes almost surrealism, of the abnormal 'normality' of apartheid's day-to-day reality. Remembering apartheid in a diverse group of South Africans is bound to evoke strong emotions since stories may be told in a small group that interrogate each others situations, choices and motives. This can happen, for instance when narratives of extreme violation are faced with stories of privilege or ignorance. For

example, in a small group that I facilitated a woman told us about her son's death in the 1980's. He was shot by the security police. In the same group another woman who had been living not even five kilometres from the site of the killing, 'on the safe other side of the fence,' remembered hearing shots at night during those times but as she said 'chose not to hear' (1997, field notes).

The small groups often grapple with the contradictions inherent in the multiplicity of apartheid experiences and the sense of separate realities of deprivation and privilege. The concept of 'every South African has a story to tell' is meant to facilitate the encounter of such difference and use the unsettling elements in a productive way to create an awareness of each other's perceptions of past and present. Through declaring every South African life-experience as worth telling and witnessing, HOM attempts to create a common ground for empathy to the other's suffering that may ideally transcend stereotypes and historical boundaries. At the same time the telling of 'all' stories may at times be experienced as disturbing and destructive (see Impacts). Again, the facilitators bear a large responsibility for the success of the process.

#### Every South African Has Been Damaged by Apartheid (HOM)

This concept is seen by HOM facilitators as an attempt to broaden the framework of the TRC that focused specifically on the damage inflicted by gross violations of human rights. [17] The HOM approach says that the apartheid system was inhumane in a way that left nobody living in South Africa (and many outside) unaffected, be it directly or indirectly. This concept at the workshops seeks to allow for a kind of 'common ground' onto which the tremendous and often contradictory scope of participants' experiences can be projected. At the workshops it gives every participant a reason and right to attend and to speak of their hurts and pains without necessarily measuring them against others.

This concept could be (mis)interpreted as a form of denial, saying: 'We were all victims of an outside evil system' and depersonalise a system that was run and supported by living and thinking individuals, the majority of white South Africans. In this sense the awareness that the degree of damage apartheid has inflicted on South Africans varies greatly is important. At the same time the premise of 'everyone has been damaged (in some way)' can assist to unveil preconceptions of a general 'white perpetrator-dom' and 'black victim-hood'. It can expose some of the 'grey zones' of human interaction and give insight into the complexities and consequences of apartheid's damage on individual people without blurring the larger social realities of (continuing) economic privilege and deprivation.

#### From the Heart, not from the Head: a Non-Intellectual Mode

HOM facilitators often emphasise that the workshop process is about exploring the *feelings* that may be evoked by an intense process of facilitating memory, rather than a rational analysis thereof. This is evident in the use of the Mina Nawe drama as a catalyst for memories and emotions and in the ways in which HOM facilitators focus on emotions in the storytelling sessions. Discussions of ideas and issues are not a main focus of the workshop. Interestingly, intellectualism carries a clearly negative connotation in this context. Emphasis is instead placed on the concept of 'unresolved' feelings such as anger, hatred, bitterness and desire for revenge that are to be 'released' or 'worked through' in a collective process:

> It is about recognising that people often need the space to be able to deal with their deepest *feelings*, to give themselves into the movement and to begin to let a whole lot of stuff go. A workshop can create that kind of space for people to stand up and see themselves in relation to others. Because people are extremely lonely in their deepest feelings. And [at a workshop] they begin to realise other people, often very different people, have travelled very similar kind of journeys. (Lapsley, 1999)

The 'non-intellectual' mode and simplicity of the model is emphasised and can be contrasted with a more psychoanalytical approach. Facilitators stress that the HOM process is run by 'ordinary people' for 'ordinary people', and that it is not meant to be an expert intervention space for therapy. At the same time the HOM workshop is clearly meant as a therapeutic intervention, an alternative and collective process of healing where trained (expert) facilitators create a 'safe space' in which emotions are externalised and acknowledged.

Language plays an important role in this respect. As the workshops aim to create a 'safe', comfortable speaking space for participants, they are encouraged to speak in their own language and linguistic mode while translations are offered for the rest of the group. Participants often perceive English as a more intellectual language than Afrikaans or Xhosa.

The concept of a 'non-intellectual' approach is part of HOM's attempt to bring together people not only divided by historically racial boundaries, but by culture, language, and educational and socio-economic background.

#### A 'Journey' towards Healing: the One-Step Philosophy (HOM)

The concept of a 'journey' of healing is central to the HOM process. Since the workshops present a once-off intervention in most of the participants' lives,[18] they are advertised as offering 'one step on the road towards healing' (HOM leaflet).

> People do not just come to a workshop out of nowhere. There is a journey to the workshop and there is a journey from the workshop. The workshop is a small journey in itself, one step in between. For some people it is a small step, for others it can break a whole logjam. (Lapsley, 1999)

The idea is that the workshop can function as a trigger for a transformative process within the individual that will have an impact beyond the weekend. Central to the concept of a once-off intervention, is the HOM policy to invite a large number of people to attend a workshop once,[19] rather than inviting the same people to attend several workshops.[20]

Father Lapsley described the 'essence' of HOM as 'storytelling in the context of journey' (Lapsley, 2000). The workshop is meant to mark one event along a 'journey' towards healing and transformation, meaning that it can be *one of many spaces* in which people may chose to engage with the past and each other. It can also be an opportunity for reflection and 'time-out'. This concept leaves open the question of whether an intensive once-off experience can have a sustainable impact on people's lives? How far are

individuals taking initiative to change prompted by one workshop experience?

#### Addressing the Psychological, Emotional and Spiritual Consequences of the Apartheid System (HOM)

The Healing of Memories facilitators point out that the workshop process is meant to give the opportunity for a once-off experience of storytelling and in this sense is catharsis-oriented.[21] It does not have the infrastructure for a follow-up process that assists participants with problem-solving and long-term intervention. In cases where participants experience severe and continuous difficulties of a psychological or economic nature the HOM process can only help with referrals.

The workshop model concentrates on the individual emotional, psychological and spiritual consequences of apartheid. The context of the system's larger political and economic legacies are seen as important aspects in engaging with apartheid memories, but the process is not meant to facilitate practical, structural interventions or provide training (Lapsley, 2000). The focus on emotional, psychological and spiritual legacies of apartheid underlines the need to inform participants clearly about the aims of the Healing of Memories weekend. While the process is advertised as 'open to any South African wishing to wrestle with the apartheid years'[22] the workshops may not be beneficial at particular points in time:

> It is maybe not the best option to start dealing with the past if the main concern is putting bread on the table. … Participants need to be clearly informed about the workshop purpose and what the process can and cannot offer. It may be a process for different people at different times. (Lapsley, 1999)

Facilitators explain that in some cases where people's lives continue to be traumatic and dominated by the present need for survival, the workshops may cause conflict and instability, especially if participants had hoped that the process would bring concrete change to their economic situation of unemployment and poverty.[23] This speaks to the ongoing reality of violence in a South Africa where past and present traumas and conflicts are often layered and interact. It may also speak to the notion that dealing with the past is a 'luxury' that is more beneficial in a situation of stability and safety and with access to basic resources. At the same time many of the disadvantaged participants expressed the need for hope and said how the workshop, even if temporarily, gave them motivation and energy to carry on.

In concentrating on the emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects Healing of Memories workshops aim to create a space in which South Africans meet despite socio-economic inequalities. It is here that encounter is thought possible through the 'performance' of a new South African equality, albeit for the duration of a weekend only. Father Lapsley mentioned that he views HOM as 'part of a larger package' of healing interventions[24] (Lapsley, 2000).

#### 'Getting the Poison Out': Release of Emotions through Storytelling

Father Michael Lapsley often uses the phrase 'getting the poison out' when referring to the emotions that the Healing of Memories workshops seek to address:

> Let us pull out anger, but hatred and bitterness and desire for revenge [need to

> be released]. In a sense, they are all destructive while anger is not necessarily destructive. It can actually be positive as well. I think emotions like hatred and bitterness are destructive. To put it another way - it is about how do we get the poison out? Because of what it does to us. It is about recognising that people are justified to have those feelings, yet they are destructive. They imprison people and destroy them from within. (Lapsley, 1999)

This explanation points to the underlying concept of healing in the HOM process. The 'poison' in this concept is negative energies and emotions that continue to have detrimental effects on the individual as psychological consequences of apartheid experiences. The idea of framing the speaking of memories as 'storytelling' is then directly aimed at the release of such emotions through a collective process of narrating life-experiences. The idea of illness or damage as a result of violation, pain and suffering conveys a sense of pathology, something that needs to be 'cleansed' from the individual through the act of sharing memories. This metaphorical discourse of viewing the process as one of 'opening and cleansing the wounds so they can heal' resonates with the concept of healing used by the TRC.[25] Taking into account the complexities of the damage inflicted upon people by apartheid, one may question critically the healing models that are applied in a society where being 'damaged' in the broader sense is the norm rather than exception.

**The Redemption Motive: Remembrance as a form of Celebration**

> For healing, South Africans need to remember their hurts, tell their stories, and be accepted/respected/listened to. (HOM Facilitator's Guidebook)

Another important motive at the workshop is that of 'remembering as opposed to forgetting'. Participants are encouraged to remember, and speaking about their memories is encouraged as a means for empowerment. The way in which the workshop's formal frame is set is meant to enact a movement from negative to positive, from pain and suffering to release and hope:

> There is a theological word that I use: How do we make the past redemptive? It is about bringing life out of death, good out of evil. Which is not saying that evil is not evil. It says yes, evil was evil. But out of it - can there be something that is life giving? In recognition that whatever happens to people can either diminish them or make them strong. (Lapsley, 1999)

In the small group sessions, facilitators often try to draw out positive elements in someone's life-story: moments of courage; support; friendship; collaboration and love; in contrast to hurt and suffering. This positive momentum is picked up again at the celebration/liturgy on Sunday where people are encouraged to enact a mode of redemption through the passage of 'revisiting the bad times', now celebrating their ending and new possibilities for the future. As much as this concept aims to combine healing with remembrance, the themes of 'release' and 'letting go' also appear in the rituals that are created - especially during the 'burning of negatives' - and speak of a necessary process of forgetting. The ambivalence between the themes of healing, forgetting, forgiving and remembering remains in the stories and the discussions. It may be that in this ambivalence lies the potential for dialogue around the meaning of transformation and the complexities of healing under the current circumstances.

**'From Victim to Victor': Forgiveness as Empowerment**

Forgiveness as a theme plays a significant role at nearly every workshop. The facilitators may at times prompt the discussion, but the participants often bring up forgiveness as a theme after the storytelling groups. The fact that it evokes emotional discussion at almost every Saturday evening session I have observed speaks of its presence in the larger process.

The context that Father Michael Lapsley uses in his interpretation of forgiveness is marked by his own experience as a survivor of apartheid human rights violations. It is explicitly not about 'forgiving and forgetting', but promotes 'forgiving and remembering' (Lapsley 1999, field notes). He speaks of 'a journey of healing and empowerment', of going from being a 'victim to being a survivor to becoming a victor'. Forgiveness can play a crucial role in this process as a possible way of releasing 'destructive and imprisoning emotions'. The victim can take control of the situation regardless of whether there is a perpetrator, an apology or a sign of remorse and use forgiveness as a means to 'overcome the evil of the act of violation'. In this sense forgiveness functions as a collective process, a coping strategy used in connection with the act of sharing the experience with other participants who 'help carry each other'. The non-existent listening ear of the perpetrator[26] becomes replaced by the collective listener-ship of the other participants.

Father Lapsley stresses at the workshops that forgiveness is a long and costly process that must not be promoted as 'cheap' or easy. He notes that forgiveness should be only as important in a HOM workshop as it is to the people who come. Other issues may be more important for participants, and forgiveness should not be imposed. He emphasises that Healing of Memories does not run 'Forgiveness-Workshops' (Lapsley, 2000). At the same time forgiveness is described by the majority of Healing of Memories facilitators as a 'necessary step on the road towards healing'.

**Encounter of the 'Other' through Listening: A Collective Healing Process?**

> Listening is a gift we can give to people. Listening is also hospitality. It is the offering to someone of a space in which to feel welcome, met, safe, free to be him/herself, to be listened to, and heard. … This healing process helps us to further our journey towards peace and reconciliation. (HOM Facilitator's Guidebook)

In contrast to conventional one-on-one therapy the workshops are framed as a collective healing process. The concept that 'people need each other in order to be whole' (Lapsley, 1999, field notes), often expressed through the term 'ubuntu', is a frequent theme at the HOM workshops.

Father Lapsley spoke about 'finding a common humanity in each other' and relates the theme of 'ubuntu' to his experience of disability after his bombing by the apartheid government. Losing both his hands in the letter bomb attack, he will need assistance for the most basic tasks of life. Learning to depend on others on a daily basis, he described how he 'realised that we need each other to be fully human, not only for me in a physical sense but for all of us in a spiritual sense' (Lapsley, 1999, field notes). He pointed to the notion that healing has to be a collective as much as an individual process.

## Sketching some of the Impacts of Healing of Memories Workshops[27]

### Opening Up

Several participants mentioned the strong impact of the Mina Nawe drama group's performance on the Friday night and pointed to its function as an emotional trigger of their memories. They said that it brought them 'right back to the days of apartheid and how it felt'. In this regard the approach of the workshop to focus on the feelings that go with remembering the past rather than a more rational approach is experienced as a challenging but positive aspect of the workshop:

> [The performance] got me to go much deeper into my feelings than I had before, it was very very very hard but it was a good thing. (R.M., 2000)

### Telling the Stories and Listening to One An-Other

Asking about the most significant aspects of the workshop, the majority of responses centred on the second day of the weekend. Many participants experienced the 'storytelling' session in small groups as the most intensive part of the workshop and described it in retrospect as having the most profound impact. The coherent telling of one's life story[28] in relation to the apartheid years was for the majority of participants a first time experience that offered a moment for reflection and some new perspectives on their own lives. Participants said that they had never spoken about their personal experiences of apartheid in the way they did at the workshop. They also mentioned positively the ground for identification and comfort in the realisation that they are not alone in their suffering:

> The most important part for me was when we were telling stories, our stories, you see. That was the most crucial part because that enabled me to understand even other people's stories. That I am not the only one who is in the quagmire, but we are many, you see. The problem with people is that if you think that you are the only one who has a problem, then it becomes a problem. But if I know that I am not the only one - we are many here and we can help each other - then the burden does not become a bigger thing. It becomes reduced. (A.H., 1999)

Participants mentioned the impact of 'feeling listened to' by the small group, and how much it meant to have so much time to explore the stories with the help of the facilitators and the group. A young artist spoke about how the telling and listening gave her a sense of community and how she felt that the participants providing a collective healing space for each other:

> I felt profoundly affected by the sense of inclusion that happened after we told our stories and people went out. There was a kind of a naturalness that everything inside you had been heard and had been accepted. I found that most incredible because even though I have been trying a lot in therapy to come to terms with the things affecting myself inside me, there has never been an external group in my life that wants to do that. (L.L., 1999)

A special emphasis is placed on relating one's life-story across historical boundaries: 'It was

special to tell my story to a white person' - 'I was stunned that a black person listened to my story' were some of the common responses. At the same time the listening to one another, or maybe in a sense listening to the 'Other', was noted as very important. Several of my interviewees pointed out the degree to which many South Africans still live mentally and spatially segregated and in fear of each other. Carin who runs a small business and sees herself as 'a South African all my life long struggling with my own racism' related:

> Something happens when you actually see someone sitting in front of you and telling you about their experience of being a South African rather than getting [the information] through the media. I think it is hard for people from outside to understand how little contact South Africans have with one another. It is just not that easy to bridge that gap. There was not ever a venue for it. That is what apartheid was about - to stop people from meeting on a normal basis so that they could understand how wrong the whole thing was and that other people were not all monsters. … Something happens inside you when you see a person that you can actually touch right in front of you. And if you maybe went through that process many many times you would feel at one with the other people as South Africans instead of being afraid. (C.K., 1999)

A participant who was a freedom fighter during the apartheid years and today is working with survivors at the TRC, related:

> I felt good after talking a little about what I went through. And also it was interesting to find myself among the people who come from totally different backgrounds, who were playing different roles at the time. I do not remember one moment when they did not look eye to eye, so to me that was quite interesting. I thought it was an achievement. We had someone whose father was burnt to death by so-called comrades and by another group who belonged to another scam, who was a policeman and so on. So sharing all those kinds of stories together and people were *listening* to one another, and at the end of the day they were accepting the others. It is a small thing, but I think it was an achievement. (M.M., 1999)

His and other responses speak to the potential of storytelling to facilitate an understanding of the complexity of the damage that apartheid has inflicted upon people. Participants described how through the stories they were given a window onto the larger picture of apartheid as an inhumane system and found a complexity that put clear-cut boundaries into question. It allowed them to look beyond fixed categories such as 'good' - 'bad', 'white' - 'black', 'victim' - perpetrator'.

#### Rediscovering a 'Common Humanity'?

Some participants who suffered severely under the apartheid system and were physically violated explained that they found it meaningful to tell their stories and hear and feel the response of people whom they would have regarded as 'the enemy' before. After a workshop, a former participant who also made a statement to the TRC described to me that experiencing a compassionate response to his story at the HOM workshop had helped to return his belief in the humanity of (white) people. He said:

> [At the workshop] I found out that white people actually have a heart. It never seemed possible to me in those dark days. We always thought white people have no hearts, they cannot have. (J.W. 1998, field notes)

Other participants affirmed the significance of recognising each other as human beings rather than in terms of the persistent apartheid classifications, 'black', 'white', 'Indian' and 'coloured', and experiencing compassion and empathy for each other's stories and emotional reactions, despite the range of stories from extreme privilege to severe violation. Some of the interviewees explained how the notion of a 'common humanity' might be used to transcend hatred and racial stereotypes:

> In that workshop it gave me the power to understand that I should not look at you as a white person. I must appreciate you as a human being and you should not look at me as a black person. And even if we talk private things we must talk as equals. You see? We must not look at each other's colour or whatever you see. So that workshop gave me that tool which was very important. (A.H., 1999)

At the same time the workshops have to maintain the delicate balance between wishing to overcome racial boundaries and acknowledging their realistic existence and consequences, else they are in danger of blurring boundaries in favour of a superficial 'reconciliation' experience (see next section: Bridging Separate Realities?). It remains a big challenge for facilitators to balance the need for in-depth and at times conflicting engagement with the desire and need for harmony and unity. Both are necessary elements if the phrase of a common humanity is to be more than a word, if it is to build the ground for a genuine encounter and fruitful dialogue in a post-apartheid South Africa with its multiple divisions.

#### Meeting across Physical Boundaries

In accordance with the economic, social and psychological legacies of apartheid that continue to entrench modes of segregation between South Africans, there are few spaces in Cape Town where South Africans of different backgrounds come together. Moreover, opportunities to speak about the apartheid past and its role in the present context of South Africa and the Western Cape are lacking.[30] Many daily interactions in South Africa operate on the assumption of a presumed (and superficial) 'rainbow nation'-unity which is based on the notion of apolitical-ness and practices of forgetting, closure and exclusion of the memories of apartheid experiences. Yet these experiences continue to shape people's actions, choices and sense of self.

In this regard HOM workshops offer a rare space for an interaction that consciously includes the apartheid experience at a deeper and more sustained level than would be possible at work or in the domestic sphere where most of the old categories and power balances are at play. Carin's previous quote already mentioned the novelty of physical contact across the boundaries that apartheid created. Other participants emphasised the significance of such simple gestures as shaking hands or giving a hug:

> Two things, I think, have helped me, or seem to help. First of all is being able to listen. The other one is touch. I would not want to shake the hand of a white

> person before. I would stand with my hands behind my back. The person would say to me: This is Undine. And I would say: How do you do? But I would not do anything. My hands would be behind the back. And this would tell that person immediately: This chap is not prepared to extend the hand of friendship at all. But what I have discovered with Healing of the Memories is that it is easier. What tenderness does is so significant to the human. It is because for the first time two people are going to hug each other who have never ever touched each other before. And to do that, to suddenly do that! When you come into the workshop with these feelings of apprehension, feelings of fear, all kinds of feelings of the unknown - all of a sudden you got to take this person by the hand. And it's okay for him too. That is a very powerful message. (D.H., 1999)

**Bridging Separate Realities? Socio-Economic and Cultural Divides**

A number of people who would count themselves among those who enjoyed apartheid's privileges affirmed the strong impact of hearing a first-hand account of what reality looked and felt like 'on the other side of the fence' or (specific to Cape Town) 'on the other side of the railway-line'.[31] White participants often describe the individual accounts of participant's experiences of violation as an 'eye-opener'. They spoke about how it motivated them to relate these experiences to themselves and to the present:

> In a way through the stories things actually come alive. They are real. They are there. What those people were saying was profoundly real even though there was that separation between us. The people there [at the workshop], their humanity was like evidence that there is that life in me that wants to relate to other people. But it has been cut off. (L.L., 1999)

Several participants testified to the novelty of being in the same space with South Africans of different background and colour. They also spoke at length about the empowering feeling of being able to communicate and relate to one another.

At the same time the attempt to facilitate encounters across historical, cultural and socio-economic boundaries is bound to be complex and conflicting. While the experience of bringing each other's 'realities' into the same space is described as having many positive aspects, it can also be overwhelming and difficult to integrate with a reality of continuing discrimination and inequality. One of the long-term facilitators spoke about his own and other participants' experiences:

> First of all you bring these people from all different perspectives into one group and think that this is the rainbow South Africa for a weekend. And off they go again. There is a lot of dignity that needs to be picked up. There is a lot of respect that needs to be picked up. There are a lot of values coming with lots of different individuals. I for one know that a lot of people do not feel comfortable with all the other people [at the workshop]. And there are lots of complexes, inferiority complexes, mainly from black people. About lots of issues. And they sit with it all through that weekend. And everybody is being so nice to them. It is almost overwhelming. All of a sudden you have a white person offering to bring you tea or go to your table to make you toast and all that stuff. And it really outdates what was happening before. And lots of people find it difficult to

actually deal with that one first of all. …

> Though it is needed to put everybody else on equal footing, it can be unbearable at times. … Where we come from most of the people know that we are the maids, that we are the houseboys, that we are whatever. And our people cannot comprehend where [white] people come from who create this equality and who are actually being so nice and are doing things for me. They hold my hand, hug me, be my friends, stuff like that. I mean we go back into our own communities. And on Monday you just go out and be the housemaid again. Maybe you get your Madam at a different level, in a different mood on Monday morning. And you cannot comprehend: I mean, I have just been with white people the weekend and they have been so nice to me? And there I come to work and this devil of a Madam is already making me feel uncomfortable. So that is the thing that I do not know. Are we doing something good? (B.B., 1999)

This response raises a number of questions around the impact of the weekend experience. How far are present power balances challenged at HOM workshops? How can participants integrate the experience of the workshop with their present lives? How far can the workshop be an empowering experience?

In addressing the psychological, emotional and spiritual consequences of the apartheid past the HOM process concentrates less on the political and economic legacies, yet they inevitably affect the workshops in various ways.

The temporary 'freedom' from economics (in a place away from the context of continuing spatial segregation and where everyone is cared and catered for) seeks to create a sense of equal ground for the moment. At the same time the socio-economic divide between participants remains. It mirrors the racialised socio-economic divide that continues to exist in post-apartheid South Africa. For some participants the workshops can mean a 'carefree' weekend away in a nice quiet (non-violent) venue and with good food, while for others they may represent a weekend of having to share a dorm and canteen food away from the comforts of home. Still, the physical set-up of the workshops is closer to a middle-class comfort zone than to many of the participants' standards of living who come from the so-called townships or locations. During workshops moments of conflict arise when the presence of these divides seems to intrude upon the 'equal grounds' approach of the workshop. C.K. describes her sentiments:

> I think one of the parts that I did not like was that some of the black attendants of the workshop had a funny attitude, or what I have seen to be a funny attitude. At some point they just wanted to finish off all the cool-drink that was in the fridge and somehow that raised up my feelings of racism. Why do they always have to feel that we owe it to them and that they have to finish all the stuff? Can they not think: Maybe the next group will also want to have some cool-drink or something? Why do they feel like that? Why do they want to take it all for themselves and now-type of thing? It wakened up my racist feelings and I felt really angry. And I realised there is just something I just do not understand. (C.K., 1999)

This statement does not only speak of the socio-economic divide but emphasises the notion

that participants may not comprehend each other as living in separate realities. In addition it also speaks to the notion of cross-cultural interaction at the workshops where different concepts of viewing and perceiving the world meet. In the workshop situation, misunderstandings have to be read in the complex context of interactions across historical as well as cultural boundaries in addition to the legacies of apartheid socialisation. Cultural concepts that may drive motives, choices and behaviour are often unfamiliar and one may ask to what degree the Healing of Memories process aims to facilitate a cross-cultural approach to healing and interaction.

**Performing the New South Africa - a Non-Racial Society?**

> [The workshop] does seem a bit like a sneak preview. That this could be the South Africa that we want. (B.B., 1999)

Respondents mentioned the celebration or liturgy that is jointly created by participants and facilitators on the Sunday morning as a memorable event. Participants remembered presenting their clay symbols to each other as a very meaningful act. Many, and this applies across racial boundaries, alluded to the celebration as an event that left them in a euphoric mood where a sense of unity and community had been created that they had not thought possible among a diverse group of South Africans. L.L. spoke for a number of positive responses when she said:

> I realised that my own immediate family is responsible for that I never felt 'held' in any community before. Because of that the Healing of Memories was such a powerful thing. There was a sort of loving healing family that was there and that actually affected me quite enormously [in a positive way]. (L.L., 1999)

Another example is Irene Mxinwa who attended the first workshop HOM workshop with me in 1997. She is the mother of one of the seven young men who were killed in an ambush by the security police in Gugulethu in March 1986. At the end of the weekend myself, another young white facilitator and 'Ma Irene' as she was called from then, had formed a special relationship and Ma Irene expressed a sense of excitement and joy after the Sunday celebration:

> I lost my son in the struggle and the pain of the loss will remain. But after this [Healing of Memories] experience I feel I actually have new children, two white daughters. I feel happy about that. (I.M. 8/97)

A significant aspect for participants centred on experiencing difference in a positive way and seeing that South Africans can share the same space and be together as (a) people with all their differences. This was not necessarily presented as celebrating difference in the performance of unity alone, but was perceived as important in contrast to a day-to-day reality where difference is often experienced as entirely negative. My observations and conversations affirmed that many participants' embark on a process of self-reflection and questioning that extends beyond the individual to issues such as national unity and collective healing. R.M. who is a HOM facilitator, works in the human resource field:

> The fact that you are people at the workshop and also that you are of different

> races but you are a people at the workshop - it makes your life and how you look at the next person completely different. Completely different. I do not know what would have happened in my life had I not been through Healing of Memories. I really do not know. Because it is not easy living in Cape Town and being an African person who is conscious about racial things. You get white people who still think that white people have got the intelligence gene. Still, still! I think my friends know me as a person who would blow. I mean I would actually react to small things, little things and get very upset and ill actually. And I do not do that anymore [since my involvement with Healing of Memories]. I do not even realise that I do not do it anymore. (R.M., 1999)

**A Sense of Belonging - Initiating Citizenship?**

A number of HOM participants explained how the South African process of transition is affecting their communities. Socio-political changes are experienced as a rupture to previous notions of community, communal identity and belonging, and have an impact on participants' motivation to attend HOM workshops. This may relate to the need to redefine one's identity within the dynamics of transition and changing fault lines within different communities.[32] Participants of different backgrounds raised questions around belonging to the new South Africa, around the meaning of citizenship and active participation in nation building:

> I feel more connected to South Africa because of Healing of Memories. I am more of an insider now; my own experiences here have become more comprehensive. It made me feel I belong here and I can be here. It is an intuitive feeling more than a rational thing. You know it [the workshop] did you some good but you do not quite know why. (J.G., 2000)

A number of participants who would count themselves as beneficiaries of apartheid spoke about the need to find 'a place' in South Africa and emphasised a new sense of belonging, which they found at the workshop:

> When I heard about the Healing of Memories I know I struggled a lot, for about three to four months, asking whether I have the right to attend the Healing of Memories. Because [I asked myself] did I really struggle? Was I really a victim? How are black people going to accept the fact that I went to a very privileged school? I found the most important thing for me in the Healing of Memories was that I gave myself the right to own my South African-ness. So for me it was very much a turning point because before that I felt very much like an outsider in my community, in the larger South African or Cape Town community. I always say about the Healing of Memories that it gave me my passport. At that point it was stamped and I was a South African. (B.M., 1999)

**Healing**

A.H. is one of many participants who claimed to have found a sense of healing in the workshop. After serving his full term in prison for killing two white men in the fight against apartheid in the eighties, A.H. took the decision to apply for amnesty to the TRC. He did this despite discouragement from his comrades who said that it would unjustly place him

into the category of 'perpetrator'. He explained that what motivated him to apply for amnesty was the hope that he would contribute to a changed South Africa:

> The cry that I made in the TRC - it was a cry about that I myself, I was the perpetrator. I myself was being looked on as redundant, as a killer, as a murderer, a murderer who might have been perceived by many people as a criminal, particularly in white circles. It was a cry of hope and a cry of honesty, that is why I said that the cry was different from that one of crying for a brother. Now here, this was a cry of the nation. I was crying for this nation, for the South African nation to become a better nation amongst nations. (A.H., 1999)

A.H. said that the HOM workshop experience was a critical force in shaping his decision to apply for amnesty at the TRC. He commented how Healing of Memories contributed to his emotional healing and helped him to regain his sense of himself as a person:

> The special thing about the workshop, it was my first time to see people crying. Ahh, what apartheid did to me, it damaged my emotional reactions. It damaged my characteristics as a person. There was one stage in my life where I could not laugh, where I could not have an emotional reaction for another person, where I could not even cry. So it nearly killed the whole being of myself. I would just look at you and say 'This is a woman and there is nothing that I am going to appreciate about this woman.' But after that workshop all those things came back and became normal to myself, hence I am saying that this was the most important thing in my life. (A.H., 1999)

#### Getting the Poison out - Opening Wounds?

The majority of participants found that the workshop did help them to get in touch with their emotions. Many also voiced that they found release in the process of sharing their experiences and feelings. At the same time the emphasis on the release of negative emotions may cast them in a light of good/bad, or positive/negative and feelings are then not viewed in their continuities and complexities. At the same time traumatic memories have force and may have been 'forgotten' or suppressed as psychological protection with good reason. One of the facilitators voiced the concern that careful consideration may be necessary in the context of an intervention that works with the concept of 'releasing emotions' in a once-off storytelling if afterwards people go into a situation without support structures:

> I think, what we do is we open up these wounds and people bleed a hell of a lot. And I have a sense that they are expected to go back and be strong again. And nothing is there to support them, especially for those who come from out of Cape Town, like Worcester and places like that, that are far from here. I think it is difficult because the weekend is so short for this kind of thing. You do not have the chance to breathe and go slowly. And for a person who has never talked about this, who has never connected with that is inside you, it is difficult. (R.M., 1999)

She related this to her own experience as a participant and emphasises the need for follow-up processes and support mechanisms after the workshops:

Because when I went the first time I was really exhausted and I was really sore. I was starting to see myself as a different person. I had all these things going on in my mind all the time. And there is only me and my son in the house. What could I do? I am fortunate that I do counselling at work here. It was not easy, but at some level I actually disconnected and looked at myself there. But what happens to a person who actually went through terrible, terrible things and is expected to go back? … When you leave [the workshop] on Sunday, you are so spent. And these things come back to you, slowly. The wounds are open, and I do not know if people have got the ability to shut them themselves, to layer them themselves. (R.M., 1999)

**Anger and Forgiveness**

Participants repeatedly spoke about the themes of anger and forgiveness. The two are linked in the HOM discourse in interesting and at times contradicting ways. A number of interviewees found the HOM workshop a place to voice their anger and accept it as an important emotion. O.P., a former participant who is working in the performing arts in Cape Town, spoke about his process of acknowledging his anger at the workshop:

> I must say I still walk around with a lot of anger because people do not make the [mind] shift. And I must say I do not know why I tend to meet those more than other people. There is a lot of negativity. I find it very difficult to just be at ease with what is happening. Part of the workshop has helped me to recognise that I am not wrong in my judgement or I am not doing myself a disadvantage by recognising all of this [anger]. And at the same time I am trying to push through and not be a victim. (O.P., 1999)

There is a danger in the HOM discourse that certain emotions, particularly anger and the rejection of forgiveness, are viewed as 'improper' and negative by the rest of the group or even the facilitators, so that the person who experiences the emotion leaves the workshop with the feeling of being inadequate or 'not yet there'. Instead of experiencing release or affirmation participants feel exposed and confused. The way in which a space is created for people to speak about their emotions demands flexibility and skill from the facilitators, especially in terms of building trust and giving space to a diverse range of ideas about a contested and historically loaded concept such as forgiveness.

Participants' understanding and interpretations of forgiveness were varied, but many were influenced by the TRC's discourse on apology, confession, forgiveness and release.

Two concepts that participants mentioned repeatedly are:

- the idea of 'forgive and forget' as a concept that is prevalent in South Africa; and
- forgiveness as a means of coping with the present challenges.

Both concepts speak to the wish of 'moving on' from a situation. The following excerpt from one of the focus groups illustrates this:

> A: But I am trying to change. I am trying to forget. It is easy to forgive, but it is not easy to forget.

B: Do you think that the workshop was about forgetting?

A: Because everybody was preaching forgive and forget, everybody was talking forgive and forget. And to me it is not easy to forget.

B: At the workshop people were saying forgive and forget?

A: Yes.

C: For me it was rather about how I get to terms with it. That it is not a matter of forgiving and forgetting, but it is a matter of how you cope with it. For me, I have always been a Christian believer and people said: you must forgive and must forget. That is the way I was brought up - forgive and forget. But on that weekend I felt, you cannot just forgive when people hurt you, when things happened to you in the past. You cannot just forgive. And I mean at the age of nearly forty I can as a person say: It is not evil; it is not bad that I have got resentment towards the whites or someone that hurt me. I learnt that on that weekend. I came to terms with myself and it was good. It is how you cope with it. If I cope with my feelings, if I am cross, I have a right to be cross and not because I believe and I go to church I have to suppress that feeling all the time. …

D: For me it is also about coping. Because part of this workshop made me realise that if I want to become part of this new South Africa then I have got to [cope]. I cannot go into it with the same mentality because I am not a victim; I am not supposed to be a victim. (Focus Group, 1999)

The last statement resonates with the connection that Healing of Memories draws between forgiveness and a notion of 'empowerment of victims'.

In some cases the actual act of asking for forgiveness has taken place among participants. This has not happened in a direct mode between the victim and the perpetrator of a specific incident of violation, but rather in a displaced form in that some white participants felt the urge to ask some of the black participants for forgiveness. Some participants have experienced this as very meaningful:

I think that forgiveness is possible, amazingly. When these things were happening to us black people, to white people also, during apartheid, I myself did not think that I would ever forgive. I actually was angry when I realised how bad apartheid had been. The more I knew the angrier I got, but I forgot that I have in me the ability to forgive. I did not consider that. … And in that short weekend you see things so differently. That forgiveness is something that you have. It is not something that you have to go and get. It is within you. I mean it is such a powerful thing to think that somebody says to me: 'I am sorry about things, about the way things were.' And they genuinely mean it! … Especially if it comes from a white person. (R.M., 1999)

The complex dynamics of the dialogues around forgiveness that take place at HOM

workshops are very personal to participants. They can also lead to conflicting and negative encounters. If the idea of asking for forgiveness is perceived as imposing, it can be offensive and lead to a sense of further violation. At the same time critical participants questioned if forgiveness then becomes a 'feel-good' exercise for white South Africans Some of the complexities are reflected in the description of a participant from a mainly Afrikaans-speaking northern suburb of Cape Town:

> There was one black guy [at the workshop] who was really hurt … What I did there for the first time personally, I asked his forgiveness. I said: "I want to say this for myself and for a lot of other people who are never going to say this. That I'm sorry." I had never done that before that moment and I've never done it since. I think it was sort of owning up and taking responsibility for what my people have done. … But I think he was not ready to forgive. We ate together after that, and one of the facilitators saw what happened. She said to him that he must come to me and say he accepts the confession or something like that. … I think he did something of that sort, but I did not think he was at the right point. It did not matter for me what he did with it, in a certain sense. (N.S., 2000)

**Religion and Spirituality**

The HOM facilitators emphasise that the workshops should offer a process to everybody, regardless of religious affiliation and belief. However, the majority of the facilitators are practising Christians, which appeared to have a clear influence on the role of religion in the process.

The workshops aim to express the connection between healing and spirituality (and not necessarily healing and religion), which mainly finds its expression in the rituals around the celebration on Sunday morning. Participants described this event as very powerful and emotionally touching and said that it allowed them to leave the workshop with a feeling of hope and accomplishment. Many participants saw the connection to spirituality and/or religion as important for healing. While the participants themselves have some input in the way in which religion is played out during the weekend, this aspect can lead to sentiments of exclusion among some, especially if religion is enacted through a strong Christian discourse. This may depend upon the individual facilitators present. A young Jewish participant commented:

> That I think I got angry about, but I do not know how important religion is for some people. It can be such an [important] part of their lives. I do not know if there is any way of doing this without religion. I think there is an attempt at that [at Healing of Memories], but Christianity kept on coming out. Especially in the last bit where there were psalms and all that. I come from a non-religious background. … There is such a mixed group of people there, there must be a way of working around that, of allowing religion to be included without offending other people, without imposing it on people. For me, the moment that I get the feeling of something imposing on me I think: I do not want to hear this, I do not want to be involved. (L. B., 1999)

Meanwhile other participants mention that they felt there was enough flexibility in the framework of the workshop to accommodate a variety of approaches to religious practice:

> I am not religious but it was okay because I could choose to participate for example in the prayers or stay out. There was choice and also suggestion for input from us who were not so strong in religion and do not like the Christian things. (J.G., 2000)

**A Once-off Encounter - Knowing that Things could be Different?**

From respondents' mainly positive views it seems, that during the time of the weekend, the workshops provide a very engaging and intense experience. There were no explicitly negative voices on the process of the weekend itself in the sample group. When asked further for critical responses to the process, several participants mentioned that they found the workshop such a needed and rare space for reflection and meeting other South Africans that it 'needs to be protected rather than slashed' (field notes 2000).

Many participants said that they did not manage to keep in touch with other participants after the workshop even though they had really wanted to do so at the end of the weekend. Some of the respondents managed to form meaningful relationships that continued beyond the weekend:

> I have maintained some connection with the people. And they are somehow deeper than with others, more than your everyday relationships because you have been in an outside space where you shared something special. (J.G., 2000)

All the interviewees said that they would have liked to come to more follow-up events or attend more workshops:

> I mean ultimately the best thing to do would be to go to a workshop like that where you could open up about those issues and keep on going to workshops with the same people until you have built a relationship. (C.K., 1999)

The respondents spoke of the fact that the weekend experience of community and the feeling of hope are not sustainable and wear off quickly after the workshop. At the same time the notion of 'knowing that it could be different' stays important:

> The main thing for me about Healing of Memories was the emotional experience, the feeling of connection. I know it fades, but it is knowing that you can connect. Knowing that it happened is important. … When you come away from the workshop you feel connected to everybody. But it does not stay. Still, you remember that feeling of how it was, and it counteracts the negative feelings of the present of separation and divisiveness. I can place myself back there and know that it can be different, place myself in the position of closeness to people, which counteracts that feeling of being outside. I do not even need to talk about these experiences [the past and the workshop]. I still know that I do not have to feel excluded. (J.G., 2000)

At the same time the confrontation with a very different and unchanged South African reality after the workshop left some participants disillusioned:

> Like me, I was in Gardens Centre once at Pick and Pay, when I saw this white

> young lady. I did not know where 'Musica' is there, so I asked her. I went to her wanting to ask where 'Musica' is. She just went like this (imitates gestures of disgust and rejection). I wanted to clap [hit] her! I was so angry. And I told her: 'Your mother taught you that we are baboons, did she?' So how can you change? Because these things are still happening. (Q.M., 1999)

Other respondents spoke to the fact that participants' serious material needs can put the positive workshop experience into question:

> A.H.: When I left the workshop I was the happiest man in the world. But now that happiness becomes temporary because you go back to the very same situation of unemployment. So now it looks as if you have never done a workshop.
>
> I: It is erased then, the whole experience?
>
> A.H.: Ja, it is erased because you go back to the very same suffering, and it reminds you of the things again. My advice to all NGOs is that when they workshop these people, they must have an alternative [afterwards] asking where does this person want to go? And try to contact companies and even government structures in order for that particular person to find employment. Or if he wants to go back to school, that person must go back to school. (A.H., 1999)

This response speaks to the need for an integrated approach that addresses psychological, emotional and spiritual needs (HOM's focus) as well as structural and material needs in order to facilitate a healing process. It points to the importance of networking and referrals in the context of a once-off intervention such as HOM. Otherwise the workshops are in danger of leaving participants even more frustrated and disillusioned by an unchanged reality. In the specific context of offering HOM workshops as a service to survivors of apartheid violations, it is important to offer continued support and institute the process as part of a larger 'package' of interventions.

**Long-term Engagement - Changing Practice**

Those participants who described the workshop as having an impact that was in some way sustainable beyond the weekend have often attended more than one workshop or have become HOM facilitators. It was particularly the facilitators who spoke positively of a long-term process of personal transformation that the HOM process has initiated for them. While the majority of the respondents who attended only one workshop described the experience as a valuable memory that impacts on their thoughts and reflection, facilitators spoke of the influence on their behaviour and the sense of understanding their daily experiences at a different level:

> Other things happen outside of the workshop that have a bearing on being South African, and white and black and all that. I experience my healing every day, at home, on the train and at work here. I am confronted all the time with situations that remind me of who we are and where we come from. And without judging everybody else I feel that there are a lot of people who still have to start

> somewhere. I am confronted with that and I am glad that I have this to hold on to - to know that it is actually, unfortunately that way because of apartheid. It is not that people have decided to be like that. (R.M., 1999)

Facilitators also spoke of their learning how to create lasting and meaningful relationships within the mixed facilitator team and how the engagement with the HOM process enabled them to intervene successfully in conflict situations, especially in the workplace.

> I do not know how I would have been able to work at X. also. Because of how racial differences are pronounced here and how, you know, institutionally we do not look after people in that way, say giving them information or taking them through training or just conscientising them or things like that. So each person actually goes into racial groups, cliques, and what is worse into tribal cliques. I mean I do not have that. I do not see myself as having to belong to a clique, African clique or any kind of clique and here it is a huge deal. Even when somebody is being recruited for a high position, the first thing people will ask is 'What race?' …

> I am doing on a part time basis employment equity training, and you know, employment equity is about equity and bringing black people on board. I am faced with a large number of white males who feel threatened and are afraid and are fearful and are thinking of going to Perth, places like that all the time. And they are very hostile. I think for me it is not about the Employment Equity Act only, but it is also about being South African. And I think, a number of times I have actually moved out of the Act itself and engaged as a South African. And it has verified for them, I think, because they are looking at this African person who is coming to gloat, I think they think that because things are beneficial [for us now] … . My healing comes [and] presents itself, a situation presents itself to me a lot and I am happy that I have something [she speaks about the skills and experiences from HOM] to hold on to. … And then at the end it is so wonderful because they always ask for my phone number (laughs). (R.M., 1999)

**Creating a Space? Challenges and Potential of the HOM process**

HOM workshops provide a unique space of telling and listening, of witnessing one another across historical boundaries in South Africa. At the same time it is bound to be a problematic space, which is reflected in participants' responses. By facilitating encounters between South Africans and creating multiple opportunities to speak about each other's life-experiences, the workshops offer a space to see, feel, touch and experience one an-'other' without ignoring the barriers that the apartheid experience has created. Ideally, this encounter creates an awareness and respect for apartheid's very real consequences. The many participants who have spoken about the experience of 'touching a white person for the first time', 'sleeping next to a white person', 'being hugged by a black person for the first time' affirmed that part of the power of HOM lies in the simple fact that it enables people to literally, physically, spend time together in the same space. This is still an unusual experience for many in a city like Cape Town where the majority of inhabitants continue to live and work in settings that do not easily allow for the crossing of the physical boundaries created by apartheid. In my reading of HOM, part of the potential for change that it offers

workshop participants evolves around the idea of deconstructing racial boundaries and stereotypes through a form of testimonial dialogue.

**Testimonial Dialogue**

In creating a space for speaking memories to each other the HOM offers what could be called an opportunity for 'testimonial dialogue'. The sharing of experiences marks an act of *witnessing* each other as people and as South Africans consciously taking on the legacy of apartheid. In this sense the small groups at the workshop can offer a different kind of testimonial space to the public platform that the TRC had instituted, a semi-public space marked by intimacy, anonymity, temporal limitation and confidentiality. The approach that all South African stories can enter into this telling-space is important in this regard. While who comes to the workshop and whose experiences are told is a self-selecting process, it makes room for dialogue about the past rather than placing testimony as a lone voice, speaking of 'victims' isolated in their pain. It is a space that seeks to open the possibility for an exploration of the past rather than close it. In this testimonial dialogue it is initially the stories that begin to correspond with one another negotiating great differences through the common frame of one system that generated them. At the same time participants discover often unexpected commonalties in each other's stories and relate to one another through empathy and listening. This process often allows a conversation to develop that may otherwise have been prevented by psychological barriers.

It is interesting to note that in the course of the HOM discourse between 1995 and 2000 the importance of the concept of 'truth' has diminished. Whereas in the earlier documentation there is emphasis on the need to 'tell each other the truth" (HOM Facilitator's Guidebook) and participants bring up the theme of truth, the term rarely appears at workshops after the TRC report was handed over. Rather HOM and participants place emphasis on a more integrative approach of listening to one another, and of coming to terms with the continuities of the past in the present.

**Enacting Conflict**

The aim of a safe space is crucial to enable the particular kind of testimony that is spoken at the workshops. Yet HOM workshops are in a sense also 'unsafe' spaces because of the immediate confrontation with each other's accounts of the apartheid years. There is little room for distance in this personal act of witnessing one another. Many of the interviewees spoke to the fact that workshops are unsettling and that the formal framework of the workshop programme was needed to deal with the fears and discomfort that are also part of the encounters. I would argue that this unsettling facet of encountering diversity, the notion of a space that may challenge comfort zones and passivity, is crucial to the dynamics of a collective healing process such as the one that HOM is aiming for. The storytelling in HOM, for instance, operates differently to processes that are offered by self-help groups for survivors because the set-up may challenge people as much as it can console.

In this regard one could read the HOM process as a possibility for a (non-violent) enactment of the conflicts and questions that emerge from an individual and mutual confrontation with the past. The majority of South Africans experience conflict as inherently negative, partly because in everyday life it is often enacted in violent ways and therefore not experienced as a productive force. The "normal" South African way of dealing

with conflict involves avoidance and denial of the continuities of the past in the present, all of which operate as a basic underlying condition for modes of communication. The tensions that emerge from these continuous realities, as much as from the remembered hurts and traumata that affect South Africans, are visible in the displaced ways in which anger is played out at different levels of society, for example in domestic violence, violent gang cultures, the brutality of criminal acts and others. Could memory work such as the HOM process then serve to enable a more 'healthy' enactment of conflict rather than prevent or contain it? Common approaches in conflict resolution and peace work often emphasise that they are future-oriented and may not include or marginalize the impact of the past and the role that memories play in daily interactions. I suggest that interventions focusing on community peace building and conflict resolution could enter into fruitful collaborations with processes such as HOM. In this sense the dialogue about the past forms one element in the forming and transforming of relationships that are part of social healing.

#### Creating Comm-unity?

The Healing of Memories process can be read as an attempt at creating the possibility for a different enactment of community between South Africans in the sense of a 'common-unity'. Former participants who spoke of the experience in terms of 'being initiated into a new kind of South African-ness' emphasised that part of the process of transition to democracy should be that South Africans see themselves as creating a new nation. Yet there is a need among many to be affirmed as 'having a place' in this new nation. For those who were only allowed to vote for the first time in 1994 it is an affirmation of belonging and ownership as much as it may be viewed as continued 'permission' to belong for those who had to begin sharing the vote with the oppressed majority. This sense of belonging is crucial to people's confident and positive enactment of citizenship on different levels, such as for example, civil responsibility towards each other.

## Thoughts for the Future

#### Making a Difference

No former participant has claimed that the workshop had no impact at all on his or her life. Even though many of the new qualities of interaction encountered at the workshop do not seem easy to sustain in the day-to-day reality of people's lives, the workshop experience plays a role for most participants. There is a desire to 'make a difference' in their families, communities and in society, albeit in a small way. Many asked if a process like HOM could not assist in facilitating a more active engagement in processes of change on a wider scope.

#### Opening the Wounds and Follow-up

The remembering through storytelling can be a very intensive process that leads people to reconnect with the hurts and traumas they have experienced in the past. A participant describes it as 'taking you apart and then you have to go back home and piece yourself together.' For a number of participants who were very traumatised the suffering continues as they have experienced little change in their lives. Economic problems are most pressing. The HOM workshop has been a good experience for them, but they expressed the need for continued support, especially shortly after the weekend. The follow-up meeting four weeks after the workshop is meant to be for networking and reconnecting with the other

participants, yet in practice most participants never see each other again after the workshops. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they would have benefited more from the process had there been a more sustained form of follow-up to the workshops in order to implement the new elements that the experience has offered to their lives. They also mentioned the need for the HOM process to go hand-in-hand with other empowerment and capacity building interventions.

**Creating Networks**

Questions were also raised regarding whether HOM could provide a platform for dialogue around issues that were raised at the workshop. This could be very useful if it serves, at the same time, networking purposes through which former HOM participants can get in contact with other organisations and services. Such a continuous engagement could incorporate people who work in fields like conflict resolution, trauma work, empowerment groups and others. These fields are often viewed separately as either 'dealing with the past' or 'focusing on the present'. They could dialogue in interesting ways since past and present co-exist and interact visibly in grassroots interventions.

**Support System for Facilitators**

The experiences of those working with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's survivor narratives over a long period of time have shown that the impact of listening and attending to human pain is profound, both positive and negative. The responses I received from long-term facilitators of Healing of Memories confirmed this. Facilitators described how they grappled with 'the stories' they heard upon returning to their daily lives after a workshop. It is important for the sustainability of such a project to ensure a good support system and debriefing mechanisms for facilitators within the project.

**Participant Target Groups**

There has been some discussion in the project of widening the range of workshops that are offered within the Healing of Memories process, for example to include a workshop for younger people who have not experienced apartheid in its immediacy. One could also assess the potential the process has in fields like education and in the workplace where people depend on establishing long-term relationships with each other despite historical differences and power imbalances.

These workshops would be likely to have a different emphasis, for example in the context of improving work environments. They may be used to complement the 'diversity workshops' that have become part of corporate practice in the 'new' South Africa. However, it is more risky to 'open up' in a situation where people have 'histories' with each other and continue to be confronted with them in their daily lives. The question of follow-up processes may be even more crucial in this regard.

Important considerations centre on the implications of the segregation of spaces in the larger Cape Town area. The question where HOM workshops and follow-ups are held and whether they could be moved closer or operate in disadvantaged communities has been asked repeatedly.

#### Documentation of People's Stories

Following the process of Healing of Memories I have listened to a rich reservoir of stories about the apartheid years. In offering people who come to the workshops to later record and capture their stories (after the weekend), one could add significant volume to the body of narratives that has been created so far. This could go as far as the beginning of a small archive on the experiences apartheid generated in the Western Cape. In that HOM does not concentrate on a particular group of people, a unique opportunity offers itself to gain insight into the broad spectrum of apartheid experiences and thus contribute to an understanding of the past and analysis of the apartheid system.

## Conclusions but no Closure

The research on HOM has shown one facet of the South African way of dealing with the past. This report could only begin to explore the depth of understanding that such a process can offer with regard to people's experiences, thoughts, emotions and beliefs during the apartheid years and in post-apartheid 'new' South Africa. Further writings on Healing of Memories can contribute to the investigation of the complex interplay of motivations that drove people to their choices, actions and reactions within a system that used a wide spectrum of political, cultural, psychological, economic, religious and other forces to establish and maintain its power balances. In addition to the healing impact that can lie in the practice of telling and being listened to, I see the potential of an initiative that focuses on a once-off weekend experience in the idea of an encounter, driven by the wish to understand and realise each other as human beings, the wish that South Africans - connected to an inextinguishable past - can begin to see themselves and each other as individuals with a significant spectrum of choice in their daily lives. In creating a space for dialogue about personal memory and past and present experience lies the potential to create awareness, respect and a sense of responsibility towards each other. This may often be an unsettling and difficult process, full of setbacks and disillusionment, but it is, nonetheless, a hopeful process that can lead to the beginning of a personal dialogue set against the pervasive physical and mental legacies of a racist system.

## References

#### Publications

Healing of Memories (1997) *Facilitators' Guidebook*

Kayser, Undine (1996-2000) Field Notes

Trauma Centre Chaplaincy (1996) *Annual Report*

Institute for Healing of Memories (1999) *Annual Report*

Healing of Memories (1998) promotional leaflet

#### Video Documentaries

Kayser, Undine (1998) *Down Memory Lane. A Day of Remembering District Six* (VHS, 40

min.) available from CSVR

Healing of Memories (1996) Insert in: *Fokus*. Produced by Sylvia Vollenhofer. Screened on December 2, 1996, SABC

**Interviews**

***Participants (in person interviews by author; tape-recorded)***

A. H. (1999, November 5)
C. K. (1999, July 19)
J.G. (2000, May, notes)
L.L. (1999, May 24)
M.M. (1999, November 10)
N. S. (2000, January 26)
L.B. (1999, July 23)
Focus Group (1999, May 12)

***Facilitators (in person interviews by author; tape recorded)***

D.H. (1999, July 20)
B.B. (1999, February 15)
B.M (1999, July 26)
R.M. (1999, July 9)
Lapsley, Michael (1999, July 13; and 1999, July 27) Director, Institute for Healing of Memories

**Notes:**

[1] The meeting was held under the auspices of the Western Cape Province Council of Churches (WCPCC), the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and other organisations.

[2] For a separate report on the RR campaign see: Kayser (2000) What do we tell our children? The work of the Centre for Ubuntu in Cape Town, CSVR. The reports are part of a forthcoming series of organisational case studies and analysis of post-TRC interventions.

[3] The Trauma Centre at the time conducted a number of programmes to meet the needs of survivors of violence in the Western Cape, among them were the 'Torture and Captivity Project', 'Refugees and Asylum Seekers', 'Education and Training', 'Advocacy', 'Truth Commission Evaluation and Education', 'Urban and Rural Violence' and 'Returned Exiles'.

[4] This becomes evident in the documentation of communication between the Commission and the initiative and was also affirmed in interviews with former TRC staff.

[5] In collaboration with the South African Council of Churches (SACC)

[6] IHOM funding proposal 1999-2001

[7] My personal motivation for the study grew out of attending a Healing of Memories workshop in 1997. At the time I was engaged in a study that compared German and South African strategies of remembering a past of atrocity. The first Healing of Memories weekend I took part in set me on a path of seeing my own, my family's and my country's past in relation to the South African experience. This led to a fruitful exploration of the links between personal, communal, and official national histories, their role as narratives or stories and the many ways in which they are enacted in practice. The report should be read against this background.

[8] Note that the interventions may not see themselves as doing 'reconciliation' work, but can be read within a framework of 'reconciliation-related' interventions. Father Lapsley emphasised that HOM does not make use of the term 'reconciliation' in its programme anymore.

[9] In this regard it is important to note that the Healing of Memories participants present a *self-selected sample* of South Africans who are motivated by a range of reasons to 'deal with' the past. They may represent a minority.

[10] Available from the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Johannesburg.

[11] A different workshop model for younger South Africans between 15 and 18 years is being developed by the IHOM.

[12] The 'Spear of the Nation', former military wing of the ANC

[13] These themes are a selection of the ones that have come up most frequently at the workshops.

[14] In some workshops the symbol is introduced as a 'peace symbol'.

[15] It is often a sad or lamenting song such as 'Senze'nina' [What have we done?].

[16] Note that the HOM workshops and this concept were developed in 1995, before the TRC came into existence.

[17] The focus of the TRC had to be narrower due to its mandate that defined gross human rights violation as "the killing, abduction, torture or severe ill-treatment of any person …" (TRC Report, Vol. 1, 1999, p.60).

[18] Participants who have attended more than one workshop are the exception. The only participants who have regularly attended a number of workshops are the facilitators. In their interview responses it becomes clear that a long-term engagement with the process has a significantly different impact to the once-off attendance of a workshop (see Impacts).

[19] Participants may attend a second workshop if requested, but further attendance is discouraged.

[20] Initially there were several survivor groups for whom the HOM has offered two or more workshops.

[21] The term catharsis is not meant to necessarily imply closure here.

[22] Chaplaincy Report 1996

[23] In some cases in 1998 participants had misunderstood the HOM process as responsible for paying reparations, which created conflict at some workshops.

[24] This puts em phasis on the importance for networking and collaboration with other interventions. See: 'thoughts for the future'

[25] Some Healing of Memories facilitators apply this metaphor to the workshop when explaining the process of healing, others do not use it. A number of my interviewees commented negatively on the Truth Commission in this regard, saying that it 'opened wounds and left them unattended'.

[26] This relates to many HOM participants mentioning that they found the reactions of perpetrators who testified to the TRC, their unwillingness to acknowledge and apologise, very disturbing and painful. HOM participants also spoke critically about the unwillingness of many white South Africans to engage with the past and to take responsibility for being beneficiaries of the apartheid system.

[27] In post-apartheid South Africa race remains a crucial marker to locate people's voices. At the same time projects like the Healing of Memories are working towards a deconstruction of apartheid's essentialism in employing racial categories. Reading the Healing of Memories as a process that aims to question and put to test the boundaries of these categories, I have made the methodological decision not to re-impose racial categories on my respondents' voices as a necessity, but rather to let the voices speak in their own context and the context of their experiences with Healing of Memories. This is not meant to deny the present impact of the former classifications or as a dislocation of people's voices. Rather it aims to let them speak from the point of complexity, ambivalence, self-questioning and transformation.

[28] It is important to note that the framework of the 'telling space' prompts a particular version of participants' life-stories. When HOM refers to 'the story' it is not to negate the multiplicity of people's life experiences and the many ways in which they can be told but concentrates on what people present as 'their story' on the respective weekend, to the respective participants in the small group. Facilitators and participants who have attended several workshops speak about their experiences of telling and re-telling whereby 'the story' changes in aspect and detail.

[29] All names have been changed.

[30] The significance that participants assign to the political context varies, but it is relevant to read this evaluation of HOM and participants' responses in the context of the Western

Cape as the only province in South Africa under the governance of the Democratic Alliance (DA), a combination of the Democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP). Both parties' constituencies represent mainly white and coloured middle-class voters.

[31] City planners during the apartheid era applied an effective concept of building 'natural' boundaries into the structure of the apartheid city. Highways and railway lines still mark the segregation of areas today, especially in Cape Town where the railway lines were used to divide so-called 'white' from 'non-white' areas.

[32] In many white affluent communities a fault line seems to exist around 'buying in' or 'buying out' of the new South Africa, taking part in the new society or considering emigration. In disadvantaged communities new economic divides appear with the development of a rising middle class, and the persisting and widening divides between townships and suburbs.