

From Cape To Cairo: The search for meaning on the Journey to Healing  
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11 March 2011

Talking Notes

When I first heard about this conference I was excited because the subject – spirituality and trauma and the title are both profoundly related to what my life journey has been and is about. And so today, I will speak little about what I have learnt from the many books I have read. I will tell you about my own life journey, about the journeys of the people of South Africa, indeed of Southern Africa and in more recent years what I have learnt from the peoples of the world.

Thank you to Colleen Brown and the conference organisers for the invitation and for hosting this important conference.

Thank you, to so many of you who made and continue to make an important contribution to the healing of these blood drenched lands as well as other places across the world.

Kaethe and Professor Michael King

Rainbow  
Religion creating trauma

Victor Frankel's, *Man's Search for Meaning*  
Viktor Frankl's 1946 book *Man's Search for Meaning* chronicles his experiences as a concentration camp inmate and describes his psychotherapeutic method of finding a reason to live. According to Frankl, the book intends to answer the question "How was everyday life in a concentration camp reflected in the mind of the average prisoner?" Part One constitutes Frankl's analysis of his experiences in the concentration camps, while Part Two introduces his ideas of meaning and his theory of logotherapy. It is the second-most widely read Holocaust book in the bookstore of Washington's Holocaust Museum. According to a survey conducted by the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Library of Congress, *Man's Search For Meaning* belongs to a list of "the ten most influential books in [the United States]." (*New York Times*, November 20, 1991). At the time of the author's death in 1997, the book had sold 10 million copies in twenty-four languages.

Wrong place at the wrong time

Celtic Rangers

Role of faith – role of religion- to make sense of

My own story

The South African story  
Long cycle of resistance and repression  
Slavery

Mother 31  
Father war

Joining a religious order

Being sent to South Africa

South Africa traumatised me

Stopped being a human being – becoming a white man

Religious dimension of apartheid

Role of bad tribal theology in sustaining and perpetuating violence and conflict.

Language used to mystify - violence

Expelled – as part of the exile community  
Read the Bible in a new way

Exile – learnt to hope – not just analyse  
Generations dared to hope

Being on a death list

Bombing  
God  
Better to die  
Role of acknowledgment  
Bloody Sunday  
Same Gender loving  
Victim to victor

At the heart of the Jesus story is the convergence of trauma and spirituality  
Victim did not become the victimizer but became victorious

Victim to victimizer - suicide, alcohol abuse, sexual violence

Mandela – many mandelas

Mans search for meaning

Meaning became flesh and dwelt amongst us

Relatives of victims

Disability – Jesus one leg shorter than the other

Learning from trauma centre

Healing of memories

Safe and sacred spaces

Role of liturgy

Forgiveness

Bicycle theology

Cairo

Reflecting a doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Quote from Obama

“But at a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized - at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who think differently than we do - it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we are talking with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds.”

Obama’s speech made in a sports stadium to a traumatised community after the killings in Arizona has reverberated around the world.

Its not every day that a world leader asks people to “talk with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds”.

As we know sometimes, a speech or piece of writing is very localized but has universal import. We would do well to consider what Obama has said.

Unfortunately the political class has been less than exemplary in this regard.

Given the centuries of war, conflict and hatred which has characterized our relationships in South Africa, I guess we should not be surprised that we still have a journey to travel. When immature or unhinged people act on the words we say, it is simply not good enough to claim that we did not mean to be taken literally.

Do the words which slip out reflect the degree to which we are a damaged people carrying deep within our souls unfinished business and destructive feelings - ready to infect the body politic and successive generations?

As the local government elections are around the corner, the parties and erstwhile public representatives have an opportunity to offer the nation a positive vision without vilifying others. And at the same time showing an appreciation of the hopes and fears of those who think differently and whom they may still represent.

Some years ago I was speaking in an impoverished community in KwaZulu Natal about healing of memories. At the end of my presentation a grandmother asked: Are you working with our leaders? No, I said, we have chosen to work in communities. She retorted. Well you should, they are much more messed up than we are.

Regardless of our role in society we can all have demons, that will not be silenced and need to be exorcised.

How we speak is a reflection of what is inside of us and perhaps, of our own need of healing.

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