

Healing of Memories training – Cotonou 2022

COLLECTIVE WOUNDS

QUESTIONS FOR JOINT REFLECTION (1 April – 30 June 2022)

- within your own group
- with your partner groups
- beyond your usual circle of contacts

There are no right or wrong answers!

It's only your answers and those of the people you meet that matter in this exercise.

The 7 points below are intended as a guide for your conversations. Feel free to expand on them as you wish.

ANSWERS RECEIVED FROM ANGELIQUE BADIANE (Senegal)

1. What are the ancient, old and recent wounds that affect our country, our region, our community?

Draw up a list of those wounds.

2. More specifically, what are the events or situations experienced by our nation, or by certain communities within our nation, that are at the root of these wounds? Describe these events and situations, and say in what way they have been painful, and for whom.

The rebellion is one of the painful situations that we have had to live through in our country.

This fact has been at the base of many human losses on the side of the rebels as well as on the side of the military and civilians. Families have been destroyed, their property (fields, land, houses, women, children, inheritances) stripped away, villages have been deprived of their tranquility, and some people have been falsely accused of belonging to the rebel movement in order to be locked up or tortured. Other people took advantage of this to kill people with whom they had differences,

The Diola ethnic group was discriminated against in Senegalese society; it was enough to say that one was Diola or by one's physical appearance or by one's name to be called a rebel. They were called rebels even beyond the borders of their region, it was the look that spoke. Mistrust, fear, and judgments settled in the country, sometimes they were feared to the point of not being accepted in certain workplaces.

At the time of this tragedy of the sinking of the boat "JOOLA" before the first reports, I remember being a young student, I was leaving the classes (of vacations) which were cancelled and while returning in the streets of the city, the comments were directed in the direction that it was a divine punishment well deserved by this ethnic group. It was heard everywhere in the capital of Dakar that the people of Casamance had shed a lot of blood and that God was paying them back because of the loss of human life. Reflections and discussions were going on and all possible words of malice towards the Diola ethnic group were heard. When the reports came out, it turned out that the passengers were from different ethnic groups in Senegal.

3. What social or political attitudes in our country have been, or are still, the cause of wounds?

What groups are discriminated against, marginalized, humiliated?

We see that caste problems have not totally disappeared, despite the level of education or the place of religion in society. The families of castes do not mix or more precisely they marry only between them. Everyone plays his or her role in the community, blacksmiths remain blacksmiths, griots also, nobles with nobles. Those who defy the ban are banished from the community, from the group, from the concession, they are left out or seen as pariahs, rebels in the eyes of the elders or the tradition, or their children are not considered to be descendants or heirs, the spouse is considered as an added piece. No matter how many years they have been married, they will always remain a stranger in the family.

Recently the quietude of the country has been upset the difference in the practice of religion has been at the origin of this injury. With a Muslim majority, the secularism of the country wants to be put into account by representatives or religious leaders who stand on the air of televisions or social media to denigrate other religions especially Catholicism (it is more targeted because being the most popular and best known in our country. The other religions are not too well known, I would even say that the majority ignores their existences) Sometimes to the point of vandalizing Catholic places of worship by tagging or destroying their status. Under the pretext that the bad morals in the country come from the other "Christian" religions: the sale and consumption of alcohol as well as pork, dancing and other distractions.

We can also add the discriminations made towards women, their place in society is always to be behind. The woman is just to marry and have children. And their right on their child is below and far from those of the father, non-existent even. Not listened to, they suffer unjustly the refusal of paternity of irresponsible parents who are not worried about being sanctioned, or being obliged to compensate or pay alimony to the young single mother. The latter is often obliged to assume the role of father alone under the critical gaze of society.

The marginalized groups discriminated and humiliated we can mention the uneducated, the illiterate, the women (housewives, single mothers), the disabled.

4. In what ways are these wounds visible in people's lives in our country?

What are the collective wounds in my country that affect me (or us) personally? In what way?

Social networks are fast channels, spaces of exchange and stormy uprisings between young people, who convey mostly racist or provocative messages, topics of discord (politics, news, religion). And very often people show their discontent by insulting, by clashes via social networks and national media. Some people take the law into their own hands; others fight legally by taking the matter to the appropriate institutions for the damage done to them or internalize their wounds.

The wounds of my country that affect me are rather oriented in faith, religion. For me, faith is personal. It should not be lived by constraint or in fear. Every man has the right to choose his way and to be fulfilled in his choice. Just because we are in inferior number we are subject to denigrations and let's talk about this number which does not evolve from year to year we are always at the same percentage. It's not only derogatory to be criticized or discriminated against because of your religion, but also to hear false doctrines or messages that are not true. Sometimes people who express their desire to embrace another religion are rejected by family members.

5. What are the areas of silence – the things that cannot be talked about – in our country or in certain communities within it?

The areas of silence we can note the rapes, the harassments, recently nude and sextapes. Another area of silence is the abuse of paternal authority, irresponsibility of men in their role of father.

Why are people silent about these issues?

The doctrine of the word "SOUTOUREU" which refers to the fact of preserving the dignity of a person, not to vilify him is very pressing in my country no matter the religion, the age, the ethnicity in the country it is mainly adopted by all. It is a character is innate in every person, children, women as well as men and imposed from the early age.

The silence or support is kept to preserve a household or a home, the reputation of a person (victim or guilty) to protect and avoid the victims and their families to undergo mockery, mockery, reflections of the kind it is deserved. To keep the balance of a family. Silence for fear of reprisals of being accused of people of bad morals. To keep the authority of the man at the level of the society for fear that the movement of feminism does not change the life of the submissive woman since our grandparents.

And with social networks we see the phenomenon of blackmail of sex tape or nudes (photos of naked people) women pay the price of a reputation of women with loose morals. We always blame the woman or the girl, but the man, even if he is the author of the facts, is not worried.

6. Who is "the other" in our context? Who is "us"? Who is "them"?

In our context "others" = family, parents, close circle

"Us" = victims of abuse, those who suffer in silence, those who witness, those who denounce, those who support

"Them" = the culprits, the neighbors, the vigilantes, the authorities,

7. What could be done to heal some of the deep wounds that we have identified?

What is our dream for our country, our nation? How can we contribute to realizing this dream?

Dialogue is an imperative tool to begin healing wounds. In relation to religion in my country, the complicity between neighbors, the half-Christian and half-Muslim or blended families, the distribution of gifts or food that are exchanged between neighbors and friends during religious holidays (ngalakh for Catholics, sheep for Muslims), the mutual aid initiated by associations that bring together people of different religions (Femme Chic, Femme de valeur, Ndogou pour tous, Just Vrai. ...), without forgetting the artists who work to convey messages of peace and harmony and who work with instrumentalists of various origins and religions contribute to this strong complicity which resists in the country, in spite of the divergences, criticisms and tangles raised by certain people. There is always this joy to see a country where people of different religions cohabit and stick together in times of celebrations and misfortune, the holidays of religious festivals are respected no matter if it is Catholic or Muslim.

Regarding the scourges that plague the country; Fight against the idleness of young people, strengthen and invest in the trade centers. To open help centers to accompany parents in the education of their children, I quote the teenagers. Assist victims, organize

support workshops or listening and exchange sessions, contribute to making the profession and role of psychologists more visible and accessible, make them known to the population, involve them in the life of society. To raise awareness of the injuries and the damage they cause.

My dream for our country is more parity, more respect for gender, more support for women, more fluidity in relation to their involvement in the decision-making spheres. In my country, for the same work, women have to prove themselves twice as hard as men. Her financial autonomy or her fight for justice is assimilated to a desire to be too independent or to belong to feminist groups and associations.

To contribute to the realization of this dream: Education. To educate the future generations to respect human rights and freedom of the other, the rights of the woman. To educate and make women and girls understand that the identity and purpose of a life is not limited to being at home with the help of social media.