



INSTITUTE  
FOR HEALING  
OF MEMORIES

# Global Network Report 2023-24



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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

I had a feeling that I hadn't done much in 2023. Then I reviewed my calendar for the year, which painted a different picture.

I include here some of what I have been involved in during the last year, more or less in chronological order.

The Healing of Memories Global Network meets virtually every couple of months. These meetings always begin with a sharing from our different contexts as well as an update on healing of memories activities. We are seeking to standardise training of facilitators across the network.



## Dioceses of Cape Town and Edmonton

I continue to be the Canon for Healing and Reconciliation both at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town and at All Saints Cathedral in Edmonton, Canada.

I was invited to be part of a Lenten course at St Cyprian's Retreat, a Cape Town parish especially addressing the wounds created by Covid 19. During the year I was invited to preach at three other Cape Town parishes.

## Luxembourg

I visited Luxembourg in late February. The programme included:

- a phase 2 workshop on 4 March (well attended: most of the participants from last July's workshop took part + 4 from Hamburg)
- preaching at the Jesuit church on 5 March; Frauke Eiben, a Lutheran Pastor from Germany, joined me, and co-celebrated with me and my Jesuit brother, Christian
- facilitator training for the German team on 5 March
- a meeting on 9 March with the Omega 90 team (accompaniment of people grieving loss of loved ones), who are partnering HOM in Luxembourg
- a day of training for all Luxembourg facilitators and co-facilitators on 11 March
- preaching at a packed Bonnevoie parish church, led by the very devoted Father Laurent
- a prison workshop on 13-15 March (very successful workshop despite rather small numbers)

During the year I have been doing ongoing facilitator training virtually with people from Luxembourg and Quebec.

*Fr Michael speaks on racial justice in Freiburg, Germany*



## Healing the Wounds of History - Military Veterans Conference 24 to 27 March

Since the Institute for Healing of Memories opened its doors twenty-five years ago, it has hosted eight international conferences. These gatherings always sought to bring together people who in their personal, professional, or communal life were engaged in their own healing and/or are part of collective processes accompanying people on their journeys. In addition, it endeavoured to gather people coming from diverse life experiences, educational backgrounds, religions, cultures, sexual orientations, artists, and so on.

The *Healing the Wounds of History – Accompanying Military Veterans Conference* that took place on 24 – 27 March at the District Six Homecoming Centre was no different. Except, this time, the gathering also brought together a group of people who are historically ideologically diverse and who still hold different worldviews. This is a very important and challenging dynamic to bear in mind as the Institute is committed to the accompaniment of military veterans on a journey to wholeness that transcends ideological perspectives.

## Germany

I visited Germany twice. On the first occasion I was invited to be a keynote speaker at a conference in Osnabruck on *The Wisdom of Presence and Non-Violence: Building Bridges in Uncertain Times*, with two presentations and an introductory healing of memories workshop. The participants were psychologists and psychotherapists. They are keen for further engagement next year.

My second trip to Germany was to Freiburg, where we were invited by the Anglican Diocese of Europe to a conference on Racial Justice. I spoke on *The Colonial Past and Present - Acknowledging what went wrong - and daring to dream of a racially just today: Healing the Wounds of History*.

## **International Introduction to Healing of Memories**

Fatima, the Director of Programmes for the Institute, and I lead this course. Suffice to say that it was the largest number of participants hitherto with some having to be turned away.

Fortuitously the course coincided with a visit by Marina Cantacuzzino, founder of The Forgiveness Project, who was promoting her new book on Forgiveness. Marina came to speak to the course participants. We also held a very successful public event at the Centre for the Book -in darkness, thanks to Eskom.

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination as a Priest**

A mass of Thanksgiving was held on 2 July at St George's Cathedral, Cape Town. It was livestreamed with Brother Moeketsi participating and a number of colleagues also present.

## **ICPCC Congress**

In early July, I was the keynote speaker at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Council on Pastoral Care and Counseling (ICPCC) Congress on 3-6 July in Potchefstroom, South Africa, on the theme of Truth and reconciliation: Pastoral caregiving within processes of radical socio-political transformation, change and conflict.

## **South Sudan**

Together with Loret and Tumo, we visited from 13 to 22 July. This is covered in Fatima's report. Just to say that after 40 years of war, virtually every person we met spoke about it being a traumatised society.

It was sobering to meet people living in the IDP camps with no prospects of returning to a normal life. I am investigating the possibility with the Michael Lapsley Foundation in Ghana of establishing libraries there. On our last day in Juba we also met with the Minister of Justice, whom we had met in South Africa, to discuss their forthcoming TRC.

## **Timor Leste and Bali**

12 to 22 July with Clint Bowers

I am a member of the International Advisory Council of the Centro Nacional Chega!, the structure set up by the Government of Timor to implement the findings of the truth and reconciliation commission, which unfortunately never happened in South Africa.

Before the IAC meeting we held a workshop on gender-based violence. At the end of the meeting, I was the main speaker at a seminar on healing.

We spent our last days in Bali at a Transitional Justice course, where we celebrated Nelson Mandela Day, and I spoke as well at the final seminar around our woundedness, all under the auspices of Ajar Asia Justice and Rights. We have worked with AJAR before in a way which is similar to our work with human rights defenders.

On 13 October I was the speaker at a Business Breakfast hosted by the Ubuntu and Amy Foundation on Healing the Wounds of History.

On 4 November I was a keynote speaker at a virtual conference under the auspices of Trauma Aid Europe.

I was approached by the Leadership Conference of Consecrated Persons in South Africa (LCCLSA) to assist them in a virtual seminar on the obstacles as religious thirst for reconciliation as part of a jubilee year promoted by the Vatican. This took place on 2 November.

## **25th Anniversary Gala Dinner 17 November**

The Institute was founded in 1998. To celebrate this important milestone, we held a fundraising dinner in Durban with Pali Lehohla, the former Statistician General, as the keynote speaker. He argued that healing should be added to the UN's Sustainability Goals. I just wanted to note that for half of my 50 years as a priest, I have been with the Institute for Healing of Memories

## Gaza

In relation to Gaza, I issued a statement as President of the Healing of Memories Global Network condemning 7 October, condemning the genocide of the Palestinians, and calling for the release of the hostages, an immediate ceasefire and negotiations.

I participated a few days back in an online Seminar with Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center "which strives towards theological liberation through instilling the Christian faith in the daily lives of those who suffer under occupation, violence, injustice, and discrimination."

Imam Rashied invited me to speak about Gaza at a lunchtime event at Westerford High. The presentation was facilitated by Mickaeel Collier, one of the parents. To cut a long story short Mickaeel is connected to the Aqaf Foundation. After meeting with Fatima and me, he invited us to submit an application for funding.

## Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam

We were asked to do a workshop with the LGBTQIA+ community, many of whom were transgendered. Because of their life experiences with religious people, the participants wanted assurances before the workshop that we would not be prejudiced against them.



Fr Michael  
Lapsley

There was also a workshop and training with a delegation from Myanmar with whom we have worked over the years and who are also part of our Global Network

Before returning home we made a private three-day trip to Hanoi in Vietnam. As I may have mentioned before, there is a Vietnamese translation of my memoir but no publisher. However, thanks to help from the South African Embassy in Vietnam, we met a publisher. They will decide in the first part of 2024 if they will publish. I am hopeful.

We are also in the process of looking for a publisher for the Swahili edition of Redeeming the Past.

## Healing of Memories in Lesotho

Each time I have visited my religious order in Lesotho I have also worked with the local healing of memories team, including a day with potential facilitators in Butha Buthe. In May I was invited to give a public lecture, which was also livestreamed, at the National University of Lesotho, where I was a student from 1976.

## 2024

I led a workshop targeted to faith communities, which brought together Christians, Muslims and those who follow a traditional African worldview.

In March I have been invited to speak at the College of the Transfiguration graduation ceremony. This is the seminary of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

## Travel in 2024 as planned at present

In March I will travel to Quebec to do some healing of memories work in Montreal before travelling to Nunavik in the North of Quebec to work with the Inuit people and then across the US. Later in the year there are planned visits to Germany, Benin, Timor Leste and possibly India and Mozambique.

Ad Gloriam Dei in Eius Voluntate  
Fr Michael Lapsley SSM



# CANADA – WEST

**Edmonton, Alberta**

Healing of memories is still officially on hold in Edmonton due to leadership capacity issues. However, our facilitators continue to participate in the global HOM community and local healing, reconciliation, and decolonization initiatives. We have one person attending the international training in 2024 and we are looking for ways to maintain the presence of healing of memories in Western Canada.



# CANADA – EAST

**Montréal, Québec**

In 2023, the CSJR (Centre de services de justice réparatrice) organized two healing of memories workshops in Quebec. They were held on 23-25 June and 8-10 December in two different regions of Quebec. Some forty people from a variety of backgrounds immersed themselves in the HOM workshop process, with enthusiasm and seriousness. The follow-up meetings, a few months later, provided an opportunity to gather their testimonies about the impact of the workshops on their lives. We heard beautiful stories of liberation and transformation!

The facilitation team was strengthened with the certification of Lucie Brousseau as a small group facilitator. In Quebec, we now have five people certified to facilitate workshops, and three are in training to become facilitators. Three people are also training with Michael Lapsley to become facilitator trainers themselves. Our growing team of facilitators has participated in workshops outside Canada both as part of their training and as qualified facilitators. The capacity of the HOM international network to share human resources is one of its strengths.

Centre de services de justice réparatrice  
[www.csjr.org](http://www.csjr.org), 514-933-3737

*Photos: Lucie Brousseau*







Travels in Montréal, McGill University, and the Waseskun Healing Centre

Photographie Lucie Brousseau



With materials (as marked) by Photographie Lucie Brousseau



# CANADA – NORTH

## Nunavik, Northern Québec

Easter, for the Inuit of Northern Canada, is a family occasion. People who have been working in the South, or in another Northern village, fly home to spend the holiday with their loved ones. People fly home, because during the winter, when the sea is frozen, the 14 villages in Nunavik are only accessible by air during the winter, when the sea is frozen. For those returning home from Montreal, it's not a short trip. Kuujuaq to Montreal is almost as far as Montreal to Florida!

Although the Inuit in Nunavik struggle with the ongoing effects of colonialism, racism and intergenerational trauma and violence, Easter in Kuujuaq is a time of festivity for the whole community. In addition to the traditional church services, Easter Sunday features a village-wide hunt for Easter-eggs, some of which come with quite valuable prizes. Easter Monday includes dog races and games, and competitions in traditional skills such as ice fishing and ptarmigan plucking. On Easter evening, there is a prize-giving celebration.

When they learned that Father Lapsley's first visit to Nunavik would begin on Easter weekend and would be in competition with all this joyful activity, the planning committee was concerned. So concerned, in fact, that they decided to focus on those few who might have no family to go to, or who were feeling alone and lost.



*The Ven Travis Enright, pointing out the location of Nunavik, in Northern Quebec*

First, though, we went all went to the Church of St Stephen's on Sunday morning. "We" included Father Michael, his assistant Philani Dlamini, a trained facilitator in the Healing of Memories, and the Venerable Travis Enright, Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Decolonization in the Diocese of Edmonton, member of James Smith Cree Nation, and also a Healing of Memories facilitator. "We" also included most of the Healing of Memories Nunavik working group, of which I was the only non-indigenous member.

When we arrived at St Stephen's, Father Michael was graciously received by Bishop Benjamin Arreak, and invited to offer an Easter reflection. Lay Reader Eva LaPage agreed to interpret into Inuktitut, the first language of most of the congregation. A residential school survivor, Eva LaPage has a deep personal connection to Fr Michael's message. Father Michael thanked her, at the end of his talk, for being "the best interpreter ever."



*Ven. Travis Enright, Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Decolonization, The Right Reverend. Benjamin Arreak, Father Michael Lapsley, SSM, Eva LaPage, Lay Reader, St. Stephen's Anglican Church*

In his Easter reflection, Father Michael talked about love, forgiveness, and new life. He also talked about wounds. He spoke of the way that wounds can be both healed and healing, leaving scars that can draw us closer to each other and to God. But he also warned of the way wounds can fester and poison us from within. He reminded us that this is true, not just of physical wounds, but of psychological and spiritual wounds. If our wounds are cleaned of toxins, of bitterness, resentment, hatred, and guilt, then we are freed to become wounded healers. If they are left untended, however, these toxins will destroy us. They may also lead us to destroy others because, in the absence of healing, the victim often becomes the victimizer, and the cycle of violence continues. We wound ourselves and each other, and we wound our mother Earth.

Father Lapsley recalled that, for him, giving up the sense of bitterness and betrayal he experienced after his bombing became possible because he was surrounded by love - the love of God, and of all the people who prayed for him and sent him messages of support during his recovery. He remembers in particular a bundle of paintings that school children in North Bay, Ontario (Canada) had sent to the hospital where he was recovering. My room, he recalls, "was papered with love."

As he recovered, Father Lapsley became committed to ensuring that others had the same opportunity to tell their story, and to have it heard, acknowledged and believed. He approaches pain, guilt or grief not as forms of illness or pathology, but as normal responses to abnormal and tragic situations. Father Lapsley explains that pain, when shared, can bring people together. It can foster a deeper sense of connection to each other and the whole human family.

Of course some wounds will require further, more clinical, intervention. But acknowledgement, Father Michael explains, is a first step towards healing, a first step towards forgiveness. Father Michael emphasised, however, that forgiving does not mean giving up the fight for justice. Rather, forgiving ensures that the fight is based not on hatred but on compassion.

Apparently, this message resonated with the Kuujjuaq congregation, most of whom turned up at the town hall on Sunday afternoon to hear more, leaving the Easter eggs to others. There followed a wonderful week of meetings, workshops, laughter, tears, and prayers. We shared meals of Arctic Char and caribou stew, prepared to perfection by local chef Guy Labranche and his wife Elena Labranche Koneak. We visited the Elder's Home, where several residents expressed amazement and gratitude that Father Michael came all the way from South Africa to visit them. We also attended the games, where Travis and Philani discovered that they had much to learn about the art of running on snow.



*Father Lapsley with Lisa Epoo Mesher at the games on Stewart's Lake, Easter Monday, 2024*

But the highlight of the week was a three-day Healing of Memories Workshop, in which we were all participants together – clinicians, clergy, and laity, Inuit, Cree, African and European together, from all walks of life. It was a space in which love and acceptance were palpable, respect and safety were ensured.





*Far left: Clay symbol of peace created by one of the participants*

*Left: Sharing a traditional tune*

*Below: In search of our lost childhoods*

Healing of Memories workshops promise participants one step toward healing. In order to fulfil that promise, the workshops draw deeply upon theological insights and clinical training. At their core, however, are the principles of Restorative Justice. As Estelle Drouvin, Director of the Restorative Justice Centre CSJR, explained in an interview with Radio Canada, the workshops “deal with collective memory and the way it affects people's lives... This is what links them to the restorative justice model, which considers that a crime is not just a matter for the perpetrator and the victim, but for society as a whole.”

During the workshops, Father Lapsley challenged us to keep this bigger picture in mind. How has the history of my country and my people affected me? How has the history of my parents affected me? How has my relationship with a faith community affected me, for good or for ill? What did I do? What was done to me? What did I fail to do?

At the end of the workshop, people reflected on their experience. One of the young women in my group explained, in Inuktitut, that it was the first time in her life she had “felt important”. In English, we might say, “the first time I felt respected.” Others spoke of feeling new, feeling loved, feeling free.

In the Healing of Memories workshops, Father Michael explains, participants heal each other. The facilitator’s role is to create a space for this healing to take place. One of the participants, a highly experienced clinician and a leader in the field of intergenerational trauma, said she came expecting to work, but found participation and acceptance. She said she especially appreciated the spiritual dimension, which was non-judgmental, and inclusive of us all.



During the workshop, we shared some of our favourite music, singing and dancing to songs in English, Inuktitut, Cree and Zulu. My favourite music, for Holy Week and Easter is *Ubi caritas et amor...* Where love and charity are, God is there. I experienced this truth, this year, in ways I will never forget.

- Brenda Linn



*Father Michael's most recent trip to Canada was made possible by a grant for indigenous healing from Health Canada, and by the generous support of the Inuit Values and Practices division of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. Additional funding and support was provided by ESUMA, an agency whose mandate is to encourage school perseverance among the Inuit, and by the Montreal-based CSJR.*

# FRANCOPHONE AFRICA PROJECT

**Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo**



*Participants and trainee facilitators from Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, with trainers from Luxembourg and South Africa – Bingerville (Côte d'Ivoire, November 2024)*

## **Year 2 – Getting down to business**

As mentioned in last year's report, the very first stage in the new Francophone Africa project was a 10-day session held in July 2022 in Cotonou (Benin) and bringing together 29 trainees from 7 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Mali, Senegal and Togo).

At the end of the session, each national delegation took home a 'roadmap' setting out its plans for the year ahead and how and when it would organise a healing of memories workshop in its own country as part of its practical training.

As a result, workshops were held in five countries over the course of 2023, with teams of 2-3 facilitators from Luxembourg and South Africa travelling in each case to act as mentors. As it proved impossible for them to travel to Mali and the DRC owing to the prevailing dangerous security conditions there, the Malian and Congolese trainees travelled to Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal respectively to co-facilitate with the local trainees in their workshops. Each workshop was preceded by a full day's interactive refresher course to ensure that trainees were ready to welcome the 12-15

participants and play their part in running the event. A further day's training took place after each workshop for prospective lead facilitators in each country. Although it all seemed a rather complex operation to start with, given the need to synchronise the availability of the local trainees with that of our itinerant teams of mentors, everything worked out beautifully. It was extremely encouraging to see to what extent the trainees had taken ownership of the project since the Cotonou launch and how engaged they were in identifying the best venue for their respective workshops and training sessions, recruiting participants and preparing themselves for their first experience as co-facilitators. Their enthusiastic and cheerful approach to the job was very gratifying.

The Luxembourg trainers also spent a few days in two 'new countries', Niger and Rwanda, to meet future participants in the training project and give them a basic introduction to the healing of memories experience. Four applicants from each of these countries will begin their training in July 2024.





*Participants in the Burkina Faso workshop – Ouagadougou, May 2023*



*Participants, trainee facilitators and trainers at the end of the workshop held in Togo – Sichem, July 2023*



*The 9 Beninese trainee facilitators with trainers from Luxembourg and South Africa – Abomey Calavi (Benin), July 2023*



*End of the workshop in Abomey Calavi, July 2023*





*Above: Participants and trainee facilitators from Senegal and DR Congo, with trainers from Luxembourg and South Africa – Rufisque (Senegal, December 2024)*



*Right: The new HoM team in Niger, a 2-day introduction to healing of memories with the Luxembourg trainers – Niamey (Niger), May 2023*



*The new HoM team in Rwanda and a member of the DR Congo team, at a 2-day introduction to healing of memories – Mahama (Rwanda), May 2023*



# LESOTHO

Greetings from Healing of Memories Lesotho. We wish you all the best for 2024.

## Activities that were planned for 2023

- organise two adult workshops
- organise three youth workshops
- recruit new trainee facilitators, in both Maseru and Butha-Buthe
- organize a retreat for facilitators
- establish partnerships with other organisations

## Achievements as per the 2023 action plan

### 1. Adult workshops

We managed to host the first workshop on 24-26 March 2023, where we had 15 participants and 3 facilitators. We received positive feedback from the participants, who said that the workshop was very fruitful.

We hosted the second workshop on 18 – 20 August 2023 with 15 participants and 3 facilitators. As with the first workshop, the participants were very enthusiastic about its impact. The two adults' workshops in the 2023 plan were successfully achieved.

### 2. Youth workshops

We successfully hosted the three youth workshops as planned. The first was hosted on 17–19 February with 19 participants and 4 facilitators. We also received very positive feedback from the attendees.

The second workshop was held on 21 – 23 April 2024 with 12 participants and 3 facilitators. At this workshop, the turn-up rate of the participants was not impressive as we expected 18 attendees. We assume the winter season was the reason behind the low attendance rate.

The last workshop was on 20–22 October 2023, where we had 14 participants and 3 facilitators. Given that the workshop date coincided with high school exam times, we considered the turn-up rate to be very satisfactory.

### 3. Facilitators' retreat

We had a successful retreat with 12 attendees. This retreat was a moment to be lived for, as all the facilitators gathered together to share the challenges they encountered year-round during HOM workshops as well as the success stories of our 2023 HOM journey.

### 4. Training new facilitators

We organised 4 facilitator training sessions, the first one being on 25 February in Butha-Buthe district. We managed to have 6 attendees, who provided impressive feedback as they were willing to learn. The second Butha-Buthe training was on 9 September, where we had Fr Michael in our midst and where were 8 participants. However, we had one person who found it difficult to be a facilitator.

We hosted 2 facilitator training sessions in Maseru, the first one being on 17 September with 18 participants. We encountered a challenge with a few people who found it difficult to become facilitators.

The last training was on 14 October and was attended by 5 people. Compared to our previous facilitator training workshops, the attendance rate at this last one was poor but the work done was nevertheless very impressive.



## 5. Follow-up sessions/Feedback

For the workshops we held, follow-up sessions were undertaken with two parishes to give and gain feedback. An open dialogue with both adults and youth groups was organised. Feedback from youth workshops was more focused on how young people feel about the things their parents do, while for the adult workshops the focus was on how parents feel about what their children do.

## 6. HOM fun walk

On 12 November, healing of memories organised a fun walk, which convened at the Society of Sacred Mission (SSM) premises and took us to Durham Link. Our expectation was to have 80 participants, but only 65 attended. The fun walk theme was “Let’s break the silence and start our journey of healing”.

Mme Constance Seoposengwe from the South African High Commission was invited as the main speaker but due to other work commitments was unable to personally attend. Despite that, she honored the invitation by sending the Embassy’s counsellor, Mr Mark, on her behalf. Ntate Mark gave an impressive and thought-provoking speech about healing.

We cannot thank our sponsors enough for making the event such a success. Our main sponsor was MTS Enterprises, who for the 5 years of HOM in Lesotho has been sponsoring us with 100 T-shirts. We were also blessed to have MAK Printing sponsorship of 60 bottles of water, Durham Link who provided free entrance at their venue, and finally individual sponsors who provided monetary sponsorship. Our sincere gratitude goes to all the fun walk sponsors.

## 7. Collaboration with other NGOs

To achieve our mandate and vision, we establish relationships with other local NGOs with similar mandates. In 2023 we partnered with:

**A. Makhala Girls Foundation:** The main goal of Makhala Girls Foundation is to assist vulnerable girls who are orphans and less privileged girls aged 9 to 20. In their line of work, they empower girls to discover their talents, they provide sanitary towels, and they assist girls with school homework. We have been partners with them on a couple of occasions to date.

**B. The South African Embassy:** After the successful fun walk, the South African Embassy invited us for a discussion on how we can strengthen the established friendship and as the output of that meeting we identified events that we can collaborate on. On 9 December, the embassy invited us to their Maseru Massacre Commemoration, event where 16 people from Healing of Memories attended. The event commenced with the cleaning of the graves from the sea point, followed by a walk to the Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) for speeches and finally a traditional lunch was served at the embassy’s premises.

**C. The Moshoeshoe Institute:** Fr Michael was invited to deliver a speech about his life journey at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and how he founded the Institute for Healing of Memories. After this session, the Moshoeshoe Institute, an organisation dealing with the well-being of students at NUL, approached us for a partnership and collaboration with them was scheduled to commence in 2024.





## 8. Closing party

A closing party was organised to celebrate the 2023 journey on 17 December, where each person contributed a certain amount of money for the party.

## 9. Achievements

We had positive feedback from all our participants throughout the year on how healing of memories changed their lives. One participant said he thought coming to the workshop was to increase his counselling skills but he realised it was for his personal introspection; that it is all about him not other people. Our most encouraging feedback was from youths. We had youths who had attempted suicide, while some were at the edge of committing suicide, but after a successful attendance at HOM workshops, they saw light at the end of the tunnel and saw life in a positive way. Young people who attended the workshops are encouraging their parents to attend the workshops. We received reports from the parents whose children attended the workshop informing us that their children had changed from worse to better. Some parents were eager to know the secret to the shift in their children's perspective.

## Butha-Buthe (BB) HOM Report

The Butha-Buthe district HOM is a growing family or group of 18 members at the moment, which is a part of the larger national group headquartered in Maseru, Lesotho's capital city.

### Activities/achievements

The BB team aimed to introduce people to HOM to encourage them to venture into the healing process/journey. In 2023, the family managed to successfully introduce 8 people to HOM workshops. Within the year, facilitators from Maseru together with Fr Michael visited the BB team to offer training-of-trainers on facilitation fundamentals. Furthermore, because healing is a process or a journey, a follow-up session was organised with the BB team. It is in these sessions that we hear from members and celebrate our birthdays (January to June and July to December).

### BB identified challenges

The most prominent challenge encountered by the BB team is irregular attendance by the group members at reflective meetings/ sessions. Secondly, there is a sign of lapses from other members.



Fr Michael with participants in Butha-Buthe



Healing of memories workshop and training of facilitators in Butha Buthe in Northern Lesotho

## 2024 plan

1. Continue introducing people in Butha Buthe to healing of memories
2. Hold refresher and revival workshops for facilitators
3. Host an HOM workshop at a district level; e.g. Sekubu parish.

## Personal reflections

At the end of every workshop, this question is asked: "What do you say healing of memories is?"

Here are a few responses from different participants at different workshops:

- *Sense of belonging*
- *Pain removal*
- *A place of reconciliation*
- *Spiritual growth*
- *A place of redemption*
- *A place of free expression of feelings*
- *A place of emotional support*
- *Home of abundant living*



## Restoring Humanity (RH) programme

### Introduction

In 2021, it came to our realisation that the youths for whom we organised HOM workshops were affected beyond our imagination and needed to participate more in this programme. They felt at home during our workshops. Following discussions with the HOM Institute on how we can engage with young people, a conclusion was reached to introduce the Restoring Humanity programme specifically for young people. 2022 was amazing given that it was the first year of introducing the RH programme.



*Restoring Humanity at St Mary & St John ACL Botshabelo and Good Shepherd ACL ha Makhoathi*

**Peace Rain Prosperity**  
**Khotso Pula Nala**

### Workshops

In February 2023 the HOM team met to discuss their year plan, topics to be covered and places to be visited, and churches and schools were identified as important places to engage with.

The year commenced with a workshop held on 4 March at St Michael's church Khubetsoana. The event was blessed with 12 participants and 6 facilitators, and the topics covered were depression and teenage pregnancy.

The second workshop was on 22 July at St Mary and St John church with 55 participants from three different churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lesotho Evangelical Church of Southern Africa (LECSA) and the Anglican

Church of Lesotho (ACL). Topics discussed were teenage pregnancy, depression and gangsterism. The workshop was truly a success and regardless of different religious beliefs, a common goal was achieved.

The last workshop was held on 26 August at Good Shepherd Ha Makhoathi, where 40 participants attended and the topics covered were depression, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy.

### Achievements

It was amazing how clueless the youth were about gangsterism, depression, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. After the workshops, we obtained fruitful feedback from the parents of the youths who attended the workshops on how their children have changed for the better, and their willingness to spread the word to their friends and how they would like the workshops to be structured in future.

### Challenges

The challenges encountered are that the number of trained facilitators is decreasing due to school and work commitments on weekends. Also, facilitators were uncomfortable opening up about gangsterism as it is a very sensitive topic in our country at the moment.

# LUXEMBOURG



*Phase 2 Workshop led by Fr Michael Lapsley in Luxembourg, including a few participants who came all the way from Hamburg (4 March 2023)*

Throughout 2023, Healing of Memories Luxembourg continued to gain momentum and to grow its activities in three main areas: healing of memories workshops, local facilitator training and the project to train facilitators in French-speaking Africa.

As far as the workshops are concerned, we made the most of Michael Lapsley's two-and-a-half week stay in Luxembourg in the spring to hold a prison workshop and a Phase-2 workshop open to a wider audience.

In November, HOM-Luxembourg held its first 'self-run' workshop in Luxembourg, i.e. without the presence of Michael Lapsley. Our team of lead facilitators now feels ready to build on this successful new experience to hold more frequent workshops, especially as the number of certified facilitators within our group continues to grow.

In this connection, our facilitator training programme continued in 2023 for trainees and more experienced facilitators from Luxembourg as well as France and Quebec, thanks to online communication, which enables us to benefit from the coaching skills of Michael Lapsley in South Africa as well as to open the training to individuals or groups from outside Luxembourg. Overall, our training sessions involved 30 people (20 in Luxembourg, 9 in Quebec and 1 in France), working at 4 different levels, from beginners to aspiring lead facilitators. Each group held a

minimum of 3 training sessions in the year. The Luxembourg facilitators also benefited from two in-person reflection days, one in the spring during Fr Michael's visit, and the other in the autumn.

A considerable amount of time and energy was devoted to the second year of our Francophone Africa Project, which also focuses on training facilitators, run in cooperation with IHOM South Africa and with the support of the Luxembourg Government (for further details, see the *Francophone Africa Project* article).

In partnership with the Martin Luther King Group in Goma (Dem. Rep. Congo), several of whose members are currently training to become HOM facilitators, our Luxembourg team began work on financing and producing a Kiswahili edition of Michael Lapsley's memoir 'Redeeming the Past', due to be published in Goma in 2024.

Also worth mentioning, among developments in the group's training and networking activities, are the close links that have recently been forged with the healing of memories group currently being formed in Germany, principally in Hamburg. Following on from Fr Michael's visit there with a member of our team in May 2022, we were delighted to welcome a number of the Hamburg group to take part in our March 2023 activities as part of their ongoing training and to co-facilitate in our November workshop.



2023 also saw the introduction of HOM-Luxembourg's excellent new communication and promotion tool: a video produced by a professional filmmaker and crew that outlines what healing of memories is about, through a variety of voices, and illustrates the type of work currently done by our group. The film was officially launched at the very well attended Annual General Meeting in July 2023, and has since been posted on our website and YouTube channel, with subtitling in two different versions.

The AGM also included a discussion on the theme "Is it possible to heal the wounds of the past?", which began with a talk by the chairman of the International Mauthausen Committee, whose father was a survivor of the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. His father's example has inspired him to become a prominent advocate of the power of remembrance and dialogue as a means of promoting peace among the younger generations.

Follow these links to watch the video:

For English-speaking audiences: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hegh0ep7NgM&t=32s>

and French-speaking audiences: <https://youtu.be/VPvn-zw4d94>

*Right: Annual General Meeting and film launch: Healing the Wounds of the Past – A Project Takes Shape in Luxembourg (1 July 2023)*



*Left: Facilitators' Training Day (7 October 2023)*

# MYANMAR

Since the first visit of Fr Michael Lapsley SSM in February 2018, religious groups, civil society organisations (CSOs) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Myanmar have started their own journey towards healing of memories. Since the Covid-19 pandemic period, in-person meetings were not possible anymore, particularly with Fr Michael, Brother Max and the healing of memories alumni from Myanmar. In the meantime, the people of Myanmar have deeply suffered from the impact of the military coup, three years ago, on their daily lives across the country. Everyday reality is full of enormous stress, anxiety, fear, traumatic situations, and the current conscription law has further created extreme challenges for all family members in Myanmar. In the meantime, armed struggle continues throughout the country. In this context, the healing of memories alumni are continuing to struggle at their individual and family level while supporting the people around them.

## **3-day workshop in Mandalay, May 2023**

During this reporting period, the healing of the memories alumni tried to take some risks and organise a psychosocial support workshop for the most conflict-affected area (Sagaing Region, central Myanmar), with the collaboration of religious institutions. Before the workshop, the alumni members met three times online and once in person to prepare the detailed plan for the workshop. The first two days of the workshop were organised by the alumni for the people currently affected by conflict, who are also confronting deeply traumatic situations in their daily lives.

On the first day of the workshop, the alumni led the group in self-reflection and trauma resilience. In the self-reflection session, the group used the river of life exercise to think about the participants' own life journey.

Enough time and space were provided for them to think and reflect on their own journeys and to draw a picture to share in the group.

Participants were allowed to share their real-life stories in their representative small groups. At the end of the first day, a song was created collectively based on the experience of the day, which had created such meaningful togetherness among the participants during this very hard time.

On the second day, the alumni members shared the life journey of Fr Michael Lapsley. The group also spent time on how to care for the children and create an enabling environment for children in this very tough conflict situation, which creates trauma in their everyday lives. Fr Michael was able to join us online in the afternoon and to listen to their painful stories and their everyday reality. Based on this online conversation as well as words of encouragement, the participants were able to derive courage to live through this challenging environment as well as to feel that they are not alone.

After the workshop, most of the participants were able to release a certain level of their pain and some requested us to organise more workshops related to healing of memories and how to heal the children of those who are in the conflict area. Lastly, on the third day, the healing of memories alumni met again with Fr Michael online to discuss their feelings during this coup period. They planned to meet regularly and to conduct the HOM workshops for the community as much as they can.

Healing of Memories Alumni



*Photo: Nathan Cima on Unsplash*



## Healing of memories workshop in Bangkok, December 2023

After four years, Myanmar participants were able to meet in person again with Fr Michael and Brother Max in Bangkok (instead of inside Myanmar unfortunately). It was a truly blessed time for the Myanmar participants to be able to spend time with Fr Michael and Brother Max again in this very challenging period. 9 men and 13 women from across Myanmar participated in a seven-day workshop in Bangkok and almost half of them were healing of memories alumni.

This programme was divided into two sections: first, participation in a healing of memories workshop proper, and second, facilitation skills for healing of memories through storytelling, role play, spending time in silence and sharing experiences. Storytelling sessions in small groups helped people unwind, release, trust, and connect. Facilitators were urged to create a secure space in which people could communicate their feelings and experiences without judgment or condemnation. Sharing in large groups allowed us to organise our feelings, topics, and questions for Fr Michael. All participants agreed that the healing of memories trip is "a journey of recognising and beginning to let go of the things in the past that would destroy us and taking from the past that which is life-giving". In addition, each participant made a peace symbol and lit a

candle. This activity taught participants that people experience grief, anxiety, and concern. Everyone has emotional baggage. Finally, participants burnt the anxieties, worries, and concerns, along with the papers on which they were written. Participants then discussed their thoughts and experiences in a big group setting. Second, HOM facilitation approaches included engaging in case studies, allowing volunteers to share their life experiences, and facilitating participants who expressed their stories by role-playing together to learn from one another. We highlighted the facilitator's function in the context of HOM, including dos and don'ts, as well as lessons learned and unlearned from these performances. There was a lot of open conversation and sharing during the course, and Fr Michael provided excellent feedback. This workshop increased all participants' knowledge of HOM and resulted in healing, which not only improved their experiences, networking, and knowledge of the issue, but also committed them to carrying it out in the community.

This in-person meeting in Bangkok provided a big space to reconnect deeply on healing of memories at each individual level as well as to prepare more how we could be more supportive to the people who are suffering deeply in the current context. Deep friendship and being part of the global healing of memories family through Fr Michael created a truly remarkable experience for each of the workshop participants.

*Photo: Tony Wu Photography on Pixabay*



# NAMIBIA

We are still mourning the death of our late President Hage G. Geingob, who died on 4 February 2024. He went for treatment in the United States on 25 January and returned home on 30 January 2024. He died at the Lady Pohamba hospital, where he had been receiving treatment; he was 82 years old. After 20 days of mourning and celebrating his life, on Sunday 25 February, with thousands of mourners, including heads of state and former presidents in attendance, our late president was laid to rest at the Heroes' Acre. May his soul continue to rest in peace.

## Franciscan Healing of Memories Programme

The healing of memories programme continues to contribute towards the reconciliation process in Namibia. The demand for ongoing workshops, the attendance and the evaluation forms completed after the workshops confirm their impact on the nation at large. The feeling of being listened to and heard has such an impact that only those who attended can testify what it does to the human being. They manage to send facilitators from different regions for training and so participants can openly express themselves in their local language, which is very positive. The journey is long but we must keep on going forward. We are targeting all Namibians to attend, each one of us has a story to tell.

The effort to reconcile descendants of the Herero and Nama peoples and German Namibians is an ongoing process. We met with two representatives of KASA – Ecumenical Service on Southern Africa. KASA is an information and service centre for Southern Africa as well as a lobbying and campaigning agency, working on issues of social and economic justice in the content of globalisation and climate change. They invited the healing of memories team to form the Reparation Germany > Namibia Group for ongoing meetings and to plan how to go forward.



We support and advocate for:

1. the right of all citizens of Namibia and all who live in this country to have their voices heard, their stories told and their experiences acknowledged;
2. the right of all to play a full part in the social, political and economic life of the country;
3. the right to access opportunities for education, housing, employment and medical treatment.

At our strategic planning meeting on 17 – 19 November 2023 in Walvis Bay we planned the workshops for 2024 and fundraising events. During 2023 we held a few workshops and phase 2 workshops.

- Workshops 2022

- a) Katima Mulilo
- b) Mariental
- c) Dobra
- d) Okakarara
- e) Windhoek

- Workshops 2023

1. Walvis bay
2. Khorixas
3. Walvis bay
4. Windhoek
5. Dobra

NB: phase 2 workshops held accordingly (see the attached pictures for meetings and workshops)





## Achievements

1. The change in understanding yourself, accepting your condition and taking life-giving actions
2. Team spirit as facilitators, working together in a healthy environment, looking after one another as a family
3. Phase 2 attendance by participants
4. Facilitators that can assist in local languages
5. Franciscan healing of memories being part of the reparations process
6. Two representatives from Germany attending a healing of memories programme in Namibia
7. Being able to send more than ten facilitators for training in Cape Town.



## Programme for 2024

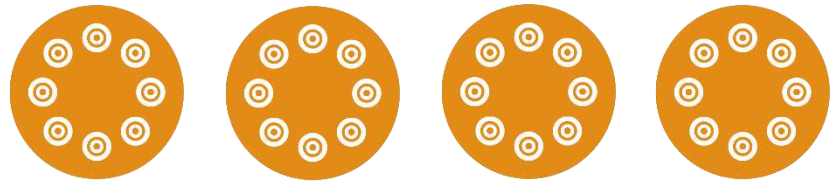
8. Workshop in the western and northern regions of the country
9. Fundraising and teambuilding events













# IHOM NORTH AMERICA

Though 2023 was a challenging year, we are proud of all we accomplished and the many lives transformed by our work. We are excited to continue building the many partnership opportunities we had in 2023. Partnerships are vital to expanding access to the healing of memories.

## **Multi-Faith Initiative to End Mass Incarceration Conference Atlanta, GA, 11-13 January**

Our executive director presented two sessions on healing of memories. These included an experiential portion that helped participants begin to understand our workshop firsthand. Participation and feedback from the sessions were excellent. The stories of the formerly incarcerated, their transformation, and how they are giving back were inspiring. It was an honor to be part of this important conference and to talk with and hear from both the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Senator Warnock, and Pastor Jon Vaughn about the work this initiative is doing to end mass incarceration.

We stand with them and look forward to doing our part to support this work.







**Healing the Wounds of History:  
Accompanying Military Veterans  
Hybrid Conference  
Cape Town, South Africa, 24-27 March**

Thank you to our South African colleagues for a meaningful and successful conference! Our facilitators, veterans Graciela Marroquin and Lina Webb, were conference panelists for the sessions titled “Stories of Women in War and the Liberation Struggle” and “Journeys of Healing of Memories”. We presented a hybrid panel live from the U.S. titled “Warrior to Peacemaker:

Perspective of U.S. Veterans”, moderated by our Healing of Memories Veterans Workshop Coordinator Mike Wold, a Navy veteran, with veteran panellists William Peterson, Cara Bissell, Anthony Allen, Mary Big Mountain, Travis Burns, and Jessica Morel. Many incredible and powerful stories were told during the conference. To hear the powerful and moving story of our healing of memories workshop facilitator and Airforce veteran Lina Webb, follow this link:

<https://youtu.be/UyvniLHPKao>.



## Women Veterans

### Healing of Memories Workshop, Carefree, AZ, 14-16 April

We continue to witness significant healing of our women veterans. Not enough women veterans get the healing space they need to help them address their unique military experience, which sadly too often includes military sexual trauma, bullying, and physical abuse. Providing healing of memories for these women remains an important focus for us.

## Veterans Workshop

### Scottsdale, AZ, 12-14 May

We continue to witness veteran healing and know that many more need healing of memories. That is why we continue seeking partnerships and support to expand geographical access to our workshops. We facilitate most veterans' workshops in Arizona and have had others in California and Hawaii. We plan to expand veterans' workshops to Montana in 2024.



## Veteran participant comments

*"Seeing the common threads."*

*"Meeting other combat veterans and sharing emotions."*

*"Hearing and sharing of personal experiences."*

*"It was an amazing experience."*



## Women Veterans participant comments

*"All of the facilitators were phenomenal."*

*"All of the activities were heart-centered and important for transforming and healing."*

*"I felt safe, loved, and listened to."*

*"I am not alone."*

*"I was able to listen to the stories of the other women and not feel so isolated and so alone."*

*"I was able to rethink some of the negativity I had in my head and really view them from a different lens. This was very powerful for me."*

*"Being able to speak truthfully with fellow veterans about my life and not worry about them telling the rest of the world."*

*"Sharing, inspiring, and empowerment with other sisters."*





### **Healing of Memories Workshop for Healthcare Workers Carefree, AZ, 9-11 June**

We had limited funding this year for healthcare workers but had one very successful Spring workshop. We remain committed to bringing them the healing they deserve and need. Our health system is in danger, with many healthcare workers leaving the profession and additional stress on doctors, who already had a very high suicide rate pre-COVID, with nurses now following suit. As many participants' comments reflect, they know their colleagues need this workshop. We continue seeking new funders to provide additional workshops.

### **Healing of Memories Workshop for NYC Nonprofit and Community Leaders, Thomas Berry Place, Queens, NY, 13-15 November**

Partnering with Communities for Healing and Justice Harlem and Thomas Berry Place, we facilitated our first healing of memories workshop for NYC nonprofit and community leaders. We are committed to building our social and restorative justice work in NYC through expanded access to healing of memories workshops, facilitator training, and capacity building for NYC nonprofits.

*“From the beginning of contact, I felt genuine care from all facilitators.”*

*“Telling my life story was wonderful. Seeing my life as a whole lay before me. The people in my group who heard my story helped me see things or patterns I was unaware of and start focusing on healing. The affirmations were wonderful. The painful times of my past were revealed. Looking for similarities in our stories helped me feel I was not alone.”*

*“I felt the healing affection of seeing each facilitator make connections with each participant.”*

*“The facilitators used a good mix of humor and tender statements. It felt authentic.”*

*“The people that we had were great. I loved how personal each one was willing to be with their own journeys as well.”*



## Nonprofit and Community Leaders comments

*"This was a powerful life-changing retreat, and we have a new community."*

*"I'm so grateful and want to figure out how we can offer this more regularly, especially to people who do not have access."*

*"I appreciate it all. I would have stayed longer."*

*"This was amazing and life-changing, and thank you!!!"*

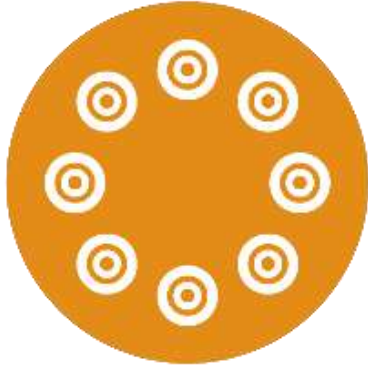
*"Thank you so much for seeing the good in me. I also love how the theme is healing because many workshops focus on external issues rather than going to the core of our trauma and letting it all out as a community."*



*"I also express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for an exceptional healing workshop. I want to thank the facilitators for their expertise and ability to create a safe and supportive environment that allowed me to reflect and explore my past experiences with a sense of trust and openness. Overall, the sessions were not only enlightening but also empowering, providing us with valuable tools to heal and grow."*

*"I recommend it highly."*





## Veterans and First Responders, Carefree, AZ, 17-19 November

We have been offering this workshop for years. When ready, we hope more first responders will find healing with healing of memories. First responders can benefit from healing of memories but are often less willing than others to seek help when needed. We are working to find ways to reach these folks and help where we can.

### Veterans and First Responders comments

*“This workshop should be available to as many veterans and first responders as possible. It’s quite effective. THANK YOU for this healing gift!”*

*“Thank you for creating a trusting, beautiful space for difficult conversations and healing that emerges in unexpectedly gentle yet profound ways.”*

*“It was an amazing experience.”*

*“Sharing my story and feeling validated and being able to forgive my attacker.”*





*Healing of Memories – North America director Gloria Hage in conversation with author Stephen Karakashian*

## **Book Event: One Life, Many Worlds with Author Stephen Karakashian, 21 October**

We were honored to host this book event for Steve, who has contributed so much to the world and to healing of memories. Throughout his life, he positively impacts every life and situation he touches.

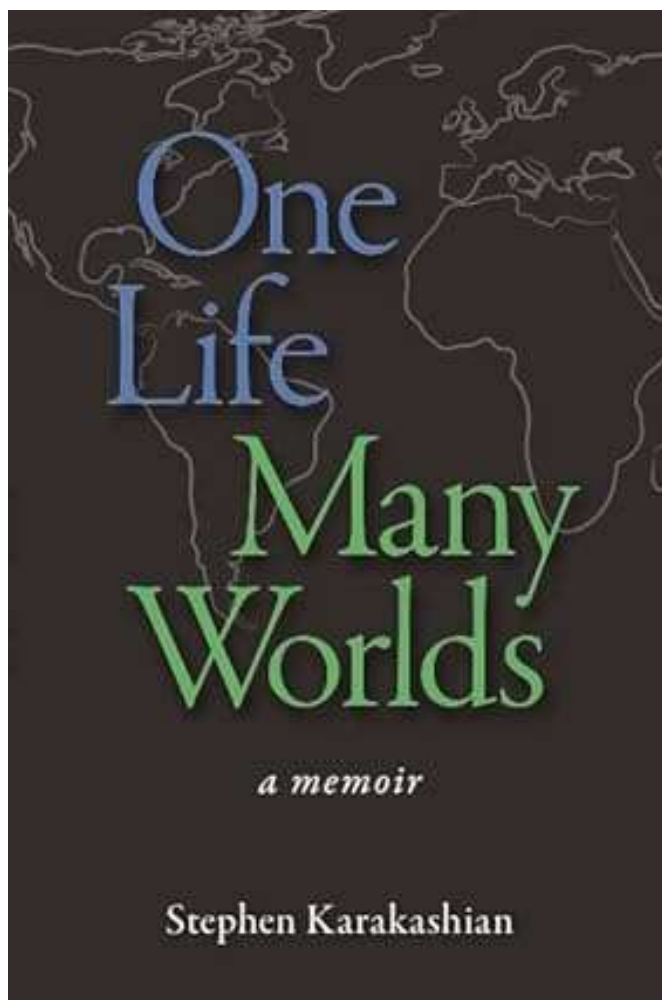
“This important memoir recounts a search for commonality amid difference, both private and social, and should cause us to reflect on what connections are indeed possible in our troubled world. It is the story of a multifaceted life fully lived. I highly recommend it.”

To view the recording of the event, go to

[https://youtu.be/K\\_-GHVMZ-vA?si=uIPO2xhKNFTEXHna](https://youtu.be/K_-GHVMZ-vA?si=uIPO2xhKNFTEXHna)

To purchase Steve’s book on Amazon, go to

<https://a.co/d/bTOcaw1>



*"A uniquely alive wonderful narrative"*

*"When I read "One Life Many Worlds," I was immediately reminded of what Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer said about my own memoir, which I co-authored with Steve. It is equally true this time. Through the depth of his sharing and honest reflection, we are invited to enter the many different and diverse spaces Steve has occupied throughout his long life in the service of humanity. Whether in doing scientific research, healing the wounds of nations and individuals, or owning his sexual identity in every sphere, the reader will be enriched and inspired by the authenticity of Stephen Karakashian's life."*

*Fr Michael Lapsley*



# SOUTH AFRICA

## Introduction

This report provides an overview of the activities implemented by IHOM South Africa. It does not include our partnership activities with HOM-Luxembourg, which they will report on.

As we continue to grapple with the enduring effects of the COVID-19 pandemic across the continent, coping with grief and loss emerges as a prevailing theme in our efforts towards healing. This theme is evident in the processes of healing of memories workshops, community dialogues aimed at healing, psycho-educational workshops, and individual counselling sessions.

Many of the communities we engage with in the three provinces where we have offices - Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the Western Cape - are facing profound economic challenges. Heart-wrenching accounts of individuals struggling to make ends meet in an environment marked by economic exploitation and hostility, coupled with soaring unemployment rates and the precarious nature of work, underscore the bleak outlook for a better future.

In addition to grappling with structural violence, our communities are witnessing a surge in incidents of gang violence, taxi-related violence,

and political unrest. Participants in our programmes increasingly express feelings of physical and emotional vulnerability, as there seems to be no safe haven—be it homes, workplaces, educational institutions, transportation systems, religious spaces, or public areas—where individuals are shielded from harm.

Moreover, the looming spectre of climate change is poised to further impact our work in the years ahead.

These disasters underscore the necessity of our organisation remaining agile and responsive, despite such occurrences not being part of our initial plans. Given our limited financial resources, how can we effectively support the most vulnerable communities affected by these crises?

Furthermore, we are witnessing a deepening polarisation within communities, with ethnic and racial identities often serving as divisive factors. Promoting inclusivity in all facets of our work remains paramount. It requires a conscious effort to comprehend the underlying forces driving these divisions and to actively contribute to the process of unlearning beliefs and behaviours that perpetuate them.



Photo: El Grincho on Pixabay



## International conference

We hosted a hybrid conference on Healing the Wounds of History - Military Veterans on 24-27 March at the District Six Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, South Africa. The conference commenced with an address from the Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Mr. Thabang Makwetla, serving as the keynote speaker. We extend our gratitude to our board members, Dr Bonita Bennet and Mrs Mamosilo Dumisa, for their valuable participation and support.

Throughout the four-day event, we welcomed a total of 63 in-person conference participants from various regions of South Africa (Western Cape, KZN, Gauteng, Eastern Cape), as well as international attendees from the United States, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Mozambique, and Germany. Additionally, numerous participants joined online from locations including South Africa, Luxembourg, the DRC, Angola, the USA, Germany, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Togo, and Ghana.



We also established three conference hubs:

- Gauteng Conference Hub (Fleurhof): Approximately 94 individuals attended the conference opening and participated in 6 virtual sessions and a session from the USA over the four days.
- KZN Conference Hub: Approximately 43 individuals attended the conference opening and engaged in 6 virtual sessions and a session from the USA over the four days.
- Mozambique Conference Hub (Nampula): Approximately 78 individuals attended the conference opening and took part in 6 virtual sessions and a session from the USA over the four days, despite intermittent Wi-Fi connectivity.





## Art exhibition

On 24 March we inaugurated the art exhibition Power of Art – Journey of Military Veterans at the District Six Homecoming Centre. This exhibition, celebrating human creativity, is believed to be the first of its kind in the country. It represents the culmination of last year's Art and Healing workshops with military veterans and has received an overwhelmingly positive response.



Visitors and artists experience the Power of Art veterans' exhibit. (Photos: D6M)





## International training

During the final 10 days of May, we hosted the Introduction to the Healing of Memories International Training, marking the largest group we have ever accommodated. With 28 participants hailing from South Africa, Namibia, the USA, Ghana, Canada, Malawi, Zambia, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and Angola, it was a truly diverse gathering. Our participants ranged from 23 to 80 years old, representing a wide spectrum of ages and backgrounds, fostering an intergenerational, transatlantic, and multicultural learning journey and healing experience.

The participants brought with them a wealth of knowledge and experiences, enriching our discussions with deeply moving and stimulating conversations.







## Healing of Memories and Reconciliation

We hosted 20 healing of memories workshops for the year, with an average of 20 participants per workshop. Workshops focused on interfaith leaders, communities affected by community violence and drugs, the LGBTQ + community, refugees, women, military veterans, men, youth, and people living with HIV/AIDS and disabilities. This workshop remains at the core of our work. We have 35 trained facilitators (KZN 13 + Gauteng 12 + WC 10), who are key to implementing the workshops.

A total of eight phase-2 workshops took place during this year and four reunions.

During this time period, 25 Community Healing dialogues took place in the three provinces. Most of the dialogues were intergenerational in nature, focusing on healing the wounds of history, gender-based violence, xenophobia, and social/political violence in communities. This excludes staff participating in dialogues, seminars, conferences, and various online meetings hosted by partner organisations. Of the workshops, eight concentrated on gender-based violence, which continues to remain a focus area in the dialogues and healing of memories process.

## Africa programme

In the rest of Africa programme we brought two new countries onboard - Uganda and South Sudan. Due to the political instability and armed conflict, we paused our work in the DRC. In Uganda, gender-based violence, femicide and domestic violence, and sexual assault against girls were recurring themes, as well as high levels of political armed violence resulting in insecurity. The levels of poverty, and refugees from South Sudan and Sudan also raised concerns. In Burundi, tribalism and land issues for the returnees after the civil war pointed to the urgent need to heal the wounds of history in that part of Africa. As in many places, patriarchy is fuelling gender-based violence and women living in poverty.

Our experience in Zimbabwe is that it remains a divided country. The spectre of Gukurahundi, a series of mass killings in Zimbabwe that were committed between 1982 and 1987, largely remains an open wound to people from the south. The increasing poverty and its accompanying burdens are the bedrock of many of the stories shared in workshops. Zambia is also challenged by the scourge of gender-based violence, including the abuse of women divorcees, and family disintegration. Recently there has been a spike in ritual killings. Ghana continues to battle with integrational trauma and harmful practices like child marriages and child slavery. Stories of HIV/AIDS are also very present in the workshops. The impact of climate change is being felt in Malawi resulting in stories of loss and grief, whilst Angola continues to struggle with historical trauma as they uncover mass graves. They also deal with issues of substance abuse and gender-based violence.



## Southern Africa - civil society and justice leaders

Working with human rights and social justice individuals, organisations and movements are becoming focused on the work we are doing. This is happening as part of the Southern Africa programme for human rights defenders and the broader Africa programme and our work in South Africa. Working in this space creates the opportunity to deepen our understanding of what we mean when we say “healing is political”. It also challenges us to better understand transformative justice and how this supports the healing of individuals and communities

We hosted three five-day retreats for civil society leaders from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Swaziland/Eswatini, providing a much-needed respite from the pressure of organisational work, state scrutiny, and family demands. Security training was also hosted in Zimbabwe and Swaziland/Eswatini addressing the pressing need for personal and organisational safety, whilst recognising the important role of building strong solidarity networks in this regard. In addition, six healing of memories workshops were held in the three countries working with social justice activists.



Healing of memories staff celebrate the Institute's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Psycho-education

We hosted 15 Psycho-education workshops addressing issues identified by the communities we work with. Anxiety, depression, and suicide were high on the list of priorities, whilst tools to manage stress, gender-based violence, and a myriad family issues were also addressed. Throughout the workshops, participants were encouraged to develop their emotional intelligence. These workshops are all designed to enable the participants to downstream the knowledge they gain through the process.

## Conclusion

These are the highlights and core healing of memories work we were engaged in for the year. Much energy is also spent on maintaining our facilitation base with training modules and meetings as well as our organisational partners in the different programmes we implement.





# SRI LANKA

## Kilinochchi, 16-18 June

Participants: 35

The workshop was conducted for young husbands in the Kilinochchi area.

These young husbands/fathers were a group of Christians and Hindus who were suffering from economic and social challenges, addicted to alcohol and in the middle of family disputes. There were several people who were addicted to drugs and were victims of the war, crippled by its bad effects. Some people lacked proper education. They do not have a clear understanding of their children's future and their family responsibilities.

Key features:

- People who had not participated in any workshop before
- Some members of the group were LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) members.
- There were also those who were in camps in India.
- The workshop enabled us to gain more experience than the previous one.
- Confirmation that healing of memories programmes go beyond healing and can be used as a powerful tool to change lives and attitudes.







## Vavuniya, 18-20 August

Participants: 30

Middle-aged men and women working in industrial establishments around Vavuniya participated in this workshop. They had experiences of strife between their families and the sufferings of war that have not yet healed. It is clear that the suffering lives without hope. There is a fear of mixing with other races.



Even though they lived in the same area, they did not know each other but they shared their stories in the workshop and that helped break down the distance between them, which was to some extent eliminated. It was a powerful experience for them to know that they have the ability to listen to the pain of others and to have the opportunity to share the pain in their lives with others for the first time. Many of them said that they were able to take the first step towards recovery.

The workshop was a great opportunity for our new co-facilitators and it provided good training for future contributions to healing of memories workshops.







## Hatton - 16-18 December

Participants: 35

The widowed young women of the plantation participated in the entire workshop. Some of them were planning to commit suicide at any moment. There is no light ahead of them. Family problems, especially the challenge from their husbands' side, were also a big source of trouble for them.

They have to send their children to school despite many economic problems. They often do not have enough resources to provide daily food. Against such a background, they experience pressure from society. Especially when women are alone, some people try to abuse them. Sexual harassment and bullying are common.

They said that this workshop was a great relief for many of them. In particular, many people who wanted to commit suicide said they have now given up that attitude. They also said that they derived hope, peace and tranquility in their lives from this workshop. Since they are in the same area, a collective bond arose between these widows.

We reached out to our co-facilitators around Hatton to meet them regularly. This practice is currently being observed. A reunion should be done with them very soon.



## Facilitator Training Programmes

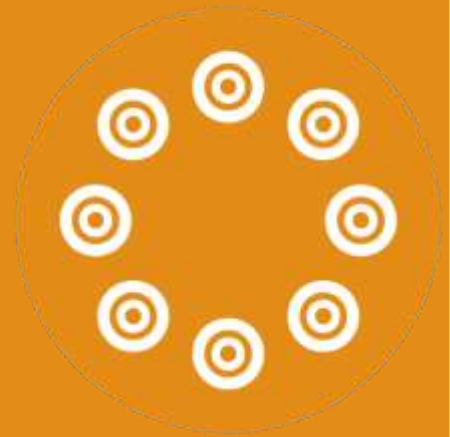
### Anuradapura - 27-29 May

Participants 30

It has been nine years since the healing of memories programme was launched in Sri Lanka. Facilitators and co-facilitators from all over Sri Lanka participated. In particular, they looked back at the HOM programme and considered how to move forward.

We talked again to HOM's core concept team here. During the HOM workshops, small groups were tried and they discussed our shortcomings and experiences, which were both good and bad. In the HOM programme, each facilitator made a self-assessment of where they are today.

Participants were encouraged to consider the benefits they had received so far from the HOM programme and the service they had rendered to society. We discussed whether the programme had affected the harmony of the country. Experience as a former LTTE facilitator and a political prisoner (Givoshan) was very important. Gayathri and Shamila, who we selected from Jaffna University, were soon identified as those who could contribute to this concept. At the end of the year, an evaluation was carried out and a decision was made to write down the stories of ten people.







## **Kandy - 22-24 December**

Participants: 20

HOM facilitators, animators and social activists who have been associated with the NCCSL in some way for the past few years contributed to this training.

The main purpose was to provide facilities to gather the information needed to write ten positive experiences and optimistic life stories from the HOM programme and the programmes that contribute to 'Peace and Reconciliation', networked with the NCCSL. It was conducted according to HOM methodology.

It was very successful and so far, ten selected characters have been completed in the Sinhala language. It will be translated into Tamil and English in the future and we hope to publish it in 2024. We believe it will be very useful material for society.

## Faida's Life Journey

Faida, a young Muslim divorcee from Vavuniya, had endured many painful life experiences when we first met her. Her marriage to a Sinhalese man did not thrive, leading to their separation and her subsequent rejection by her entire family. Even among her villagers, there was strong opposition to Faida due to her inter-ethnic marriage.

The aftermath of her separation left her in a deeply distressing situation, eroding her trust in the Sinhalese community. The misconceptions held by her family about the Sinhalese added to her anguish. Returning to her village after a cross-cultural and inter-religious marriage with a child, she faced considerable anger from the community, especially as she did not introduce her child to the Muslim faith.

This backdrop sets the scene for Faida's story in Vavuniya. At that time, we were conducting inter-religious initiatives in the neighbouring village. Faida was grappling with frequent headaches and severe depression, and she had made attempts to end her life on several occasions. When we first encountered her, she seemed to have lost all hope.

Her life took a significant turn when, as a Muslim woman, she attended a meeting arranged by a Christian organisation in a Hindu temple and led by a Hindu priest. This meeting became a pivotal moment for her. Subsequently, she participated in the healing of memories programme organised by NCCSL and she engaged in numerous workshops conducted by the organisation. She ventured alone to various locations such as Kilinochchi, Anuradhapura, Monaragala, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Colombo, Kandy, and Hatton, something she had never done before, considering the limited freedom for women in Muslim society.

Today, she is an integral part of our team, serving as a co-facilitator of the HOM programme, a regular translator at NCCSL, and a valuable resource person. Currently, she holds the position of coordinator for the Vavuniya Hindu-Muslim-Christian Interfaith Committee. Being young and a divorced woman, she faces apprehensions from her parents about her chosen path of work. Traditional social barriers have presented challenges, yet Faida remains optimistic about her journey ahead, transcending obstacles.

The transformative changes in her life have not only impacted Faida but have also served as an example for Muslim women in her village. Particularly, her widowed sister finds inspiration and encouragement from Faida's resilience and determination.



# ZIMBABWE



In 2023 Aqua Healing, working together with the International Order of St Luke, managed to hold two healing of memories workshops in Zimbabwe. Mr Mujodzi was responsible for handling the workshop logistics on behalf of the Institute on both occasions, i.e mobilisation of participants and booking workshop venues. Workshop materials were provided by the Institute for all the workshops.

## Workshop 1

The first workshop was held from 30 January to 1 February at Sethule Lodge in Bulawayo. This was the first ever healing of memories workshop to be held in Matebeleland province. Facilitators for this workshop were Malvin, Fr Noel, Fr Tigere and Loret from the Cape Town office. The target group were human rights defenders from the province's civic society. All 20 participants (9 women and 11 men) who attended the workshop were focal persons in their respective organisations and that dynamic positively impacted the general flow of the whole workshop. The workshop's goal was to provide this particular group of participants a platform and space to safely share their stories while also allowing them to take that much-needed time off their busy work schedules. Revisiting their pasts evoked a lot of buried feelings and gave them an opportunity to express them freely without the fear of being judged. Feelings that took centre stage were the anger and hatred emanating from the Gukurahundi massacres that happened in the province between 1982 and 1987. This generational trauma was so deep-rooted that most participants openly expressed their hatred towards the Shonas, whom they blame for these atrocities committed against their forefathers.



## Workshop 2

The second workshop was held in Harare at Daisey's Lodge from 23 to 25 June 2023. This workshop was facilitated by Malvin, Primrose, Fr Tigere and Thobeka from the Cape Town office. Participants attending this workshop were mostly political activists who had a role to play in the harmonised elections that took place in August of that same year. Amongst them were polling agents and potential election candidates. The workshop gave them an opportunity to share their life journeys and unburden themselves of the pressures of the task that was ahead of them. Most of them expressed a lot of fear especially of state security agents, who were using intimidation to deter activists from being involved in the electoral process.

## Aqua Healing Activities

Aqua Healing in collaboration with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) also did healing and capacity-building workshops in both rural and urban communities around the country. In August 2023, Aqua facilitators went on a retreat at Mutemwa Leprosy Center in Mutoko as part of the organisation's drive to provide care for the caregivers.



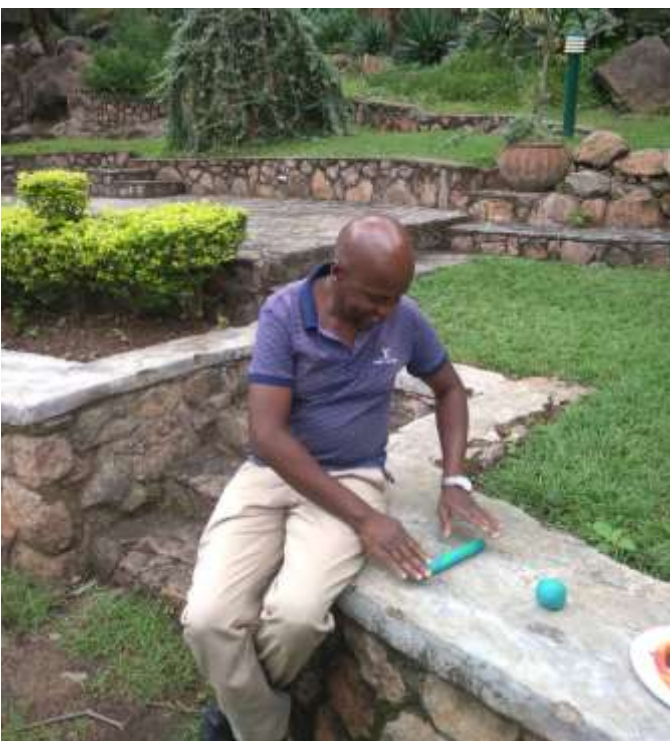
## Conclusion

The two healing of memories workshops that were held in Zimbabwe in 2023 were a success and Aqua Healing did not face any challenges in carrying out the duties assigned to them before and during the workshops.

## Recommendations

We recommend more workshops to give facilitators practical exposure so as to sharpen their skills and master the healing of memories process. It would also help to train facilitators in Bulawayo to be part of the healing journey of their region. Refresher courses online or otherwise can go a long way in keeping facilitators up to date so that they do not lose touch.











**The Healing of Memories Global Network strives to be a leading agent of hope, transformation, and peace by empowering individuals, communities, and nations through healing of memories.**

**Our work is grounded in the belief that we are all in need of healing, because of what we have done, what we have failed to do, and what has been done to us.**

**We seek to contribute to lasting individual and collective healing that makes possible a more peaceful and just future.**



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