
BY THE CROWD THEY HAVE BEEN BROKEN, BY
THE CROWD THEY SHALL BE HEALED:
THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF TRAUMA

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INTRODUCTION

The social transformation of trauma is probably as old as the social nature of humankind. Our predisposition to gather in groups of mutual support and defense is an evolutionary response to the overwhelming stress, vulnerability and helplessness of solitary primate existence. We are biologically programmed for attachment from “cradle to grave” and the natural human response to danger is to gather together, to seek out the safety of human companionship. The social transformation of trauma can be seen in its early form in the highly developed rituals of our ancestors. Rites of mourning, rites of healing, rites of passage were all vital in helping us to resolve the traumas of the past and move ahead into the present and future (Lex, 1979). All important rites were accomplished in social settings, usually involving the entire group as participants. These rites provided a sense of group identity and cohesion and were essential to the life and well-being of each tribal group. In healing rites, the patient was frequently expected to become a member of a healing society after his or her own recovery (Van der Hart, 1983). The performative arts have their roots in these social rites and may have evolved, in part, as biopsychosocial mechanisms for resolving individual and group trauma (Bloom, 1995; Shay, 1995).

The subject of group transformation is a complex one and raises many questions about the relationship between the group and the individual. For the purposes of this discussion, I am going to make several assumptions that I have elaborated on elsewhere (Bloom, 1996). I am going to assume that there is an intimate and interactive relationship between the individual and the group and that our individual identity is closely tied to our “group self” and that, in fact, our group-self may be the core

component of our sense of personal identity (Cohen, Fidler, & Ettin, 1995). Even more controversially, I am going to assume that “groupmind” can exist as a meaningful concept. Groupmind is the word that has been used to describe a concept of the supra-individual nature and independence of the collective mind of a social group (Forsyth, 1990, Hewstone et al., 1989; McDougall, 1920). Group-as-a-whole refers to the behavior of a group as a social system with the assumption being that when a person behaves in such a group context, representing aspects of the group’s unconscious mind, the individual is seen as a living vessel through which unconscious group life can be expressed and understood. In such a model groups are seen as living systems and the individuals in the group are subsystems of which the group is comprised. From this perspective, when a person speaks he or she does so not only for themselves but also voices the unconscious sentiment of the group (Ettin, 1993; Wells, 1985). In such a model, leaders easily become “delegates” for both the conscious and, often more importantly, the unconscious wishes and desires of the group (DeMause, 1982).

Making these assumptions allows us to tentatively apply concepts rooted in individual dynamics to the psychology of the group. Since we now know that traumatic reenactment is a central dynamic in the development and adjustment of traumatized individuals, we must consider the possibility that traumatic reenactment is a strong possibility for traumatized groups as well. The author Tina Rosenberg, has studied traumatized populations in Latin American and Eastern Europe (1995) and has stated that “Nations, like individuals, need to face up to and understand traumatic past events before they can put them aside and move on to normal life”.

But how does a group overcome the powerful dynamic pull of traumatic reenactment in order to transform the trauma into something better for the group and the individuals within the group? There are several dimensions to such a topic. An individual’s personal traumatic experience can serve as the basis for the creation and transformation of a group when the traumatized individual serves as the inspirational leader for the group. Alternatively, a group trauma occurs and must be transformed for the group-as-a-whole, frequently through the mediation or inspiration of a leader who arises out of the group and becomes the delegate for the group, giving voice to the conscious and unconscious aspirations of the group. Additionally, the witnessed traumatization of others can cause a group response, even when the trauma has not been experienced directly by the group members. In the examples below, it is difficult in most cases to make such clear-cut distinctions. The interaction between the individual and the group, the leader and the led, is an interactive, dynamic one in which all of these elements can be found.

TYPES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Individuals and groups have searched throughout time for the means to turn adversity into strength. For the purposes of this discussion I have divided the panoply of examples for social transformation into seven somewhat arbitrary categories. In reality, human motivations are usually quite complex and many of my examples could fall into several of the categories. Around the world, attempts are being made to begin to deal with these traumatic issues in a broader social context. The Nuremberg Trials are a post-war attempt to resolve the trauma of the Holocaust through the opportunity to bear witness and seek justice. In Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, South Africa, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other war-torn areas, similar engagements between witnesses, victims, and perpetrators are being explored, albeit tentatively. Live-Aid, Band-Aid and other organized and widely watched and attended performance events - including the highly ritualized parade of nations in the Olympics - are all indicative of our group attempts to share and transform suffering through the use of the arts. On television, we watch massive international rescue efforts to attenuate the effects of famine in Africa, save whales and dolphins off the coast of Japan, minimize the effects of huge oil spills off of the Alaskan coast and in the North Sea. Self-help support groups have become a major part of the American therapy scene and for the last century various groups have contributed to preventing child exploitation, the abuse of animals and the environment, domestic violence, and virtually every other evil that man has invented, through education and through political action. And one unique human quality that provides a healing balm simultaneously for groups and individuals is humor. Perhaps we will recognize that our salvation is at hand when we can begin to laugh together at the strange peculiarities of our species in the way that oppressed groups throughout time, have been able to find sustenance through laughter.

All of these categories of transformation appear to have at least one thing in common - a sense of moral commitment, a sense that personal and group trauma must be converted into a community asset, not just a personal asset or catastrophe. From such traumatic origins springs the co-construction or reconstruction of civilization. In this sense, there is a "moral maturity" about these transformations. Gil Noam has said that "moral maturity needs to be judged by the relationship between the complexity of judgments and the capacity to transform judgments into positive adaptations" (Noam, 1993). All of these transformations hinge upon a moral position that is often implicit, but which is the guiding hand in such social transformations, and individuals who epitomize this moral position become the "moral exemplars" for entire cultural system (Colby and Damon, 1993). This moral position hinges on a generalized sense of respect,

compassion, and concern for all life and a willingness to risk one's self-interest for the sake of these values. Ultimately, all positive transformation is rooted in the attempt to make sense out of inherently senseless acts of violence. I have not separated out a religious or spiritual category of transformation because I believe that this search for higher meaning and higher connection is implicit in all transformative acts and is a fundamental striving of human nature. The transformation of trauma is not a possible option; it is a moral necessity and we cannot heal as individuals or as a group, without striving for something more whole, more loving, and more ethically coherent than our individual selves.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

Shoshana Felman has asked directly the question, "Is there a relation between crisis and the very enterprise of education?... In a post-traumatic century, a century that has survived unthinkable historical catastrophes, is there anything that we have learned or that we should learn about education, that we did not know before? (Felman and Laub, 1992). For those of us who work with victims of trauma, individual progress often hinges on a process of re-education, on a cognitive, emotional, and epistemological reordering and recategorizing of old information which occurs simultaneously with the integration of new, often contradictory information. Such education can stop the spiral of individual degradation and when placed in a group context, can prevent harm from occurring in the first place. As new knowledge spreads throughout a culture and is passed down through the generations, prevention replaces intervention. Two examples of this kind of transformation are illustrated through Mothers Against Drunk Driving, an extremely effective group that originated with the individual traumatic death of a child, and Physicians for Social Responsibility, which began when concerned American physicians became alarmed at the prospect of other Hiroshimas. Both groups have spent a great deal of effort in educating the public about their two fundamental concerns, and although both groups have also been involved in political action and witnessing, I was most impressed with how their educational and preventative methods have effected the larger social group.

MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

MADD or Mothers Against Drunk Driving was founded in 1980 by Candy Lightner following the death of her 13-year-old daughter, Cari, by a hit-and-run driver who was a repeat DWI offender. He was allowed to plea bargain to vehicular manslaughter, was sentenced to two years in prison, but was allowed to serve time in a work camp and later a halfway house. Candy Lightner was so enraged by lenient laws and a weak judicial response to drunk driving crimes that she decided to start a group that could educate the public, draw attention to the issue of drunk driving, and provide support for those victimized by drunk drivers. By 1985, MADD had 340 chapters in 47 states and 600,000 supporters, grown to 1,100,000 by 1996.

Thanks in part to the efforts of this organization, more than 2,000 anti-drunk driving laws have been enacted nationwide and MADD has played a leading role in the enactment of the Age 21 Law, urging states to adopt age twenty-one as the standard legal drinking age. Two-thirds of the states have passed Administrative License Revocation laws which allow the arresting officer to take the driver's license of those who fail or refuse to take a breath test. Judges in over 200 counties across the U.S. are now assigning drunk driving offenders to attend MADD-operated Victim Impact Panels comprised of crash victims and survivors who tell offenders how drunk driving has affected their lives. MADD volunteers watch court cases involving drunk driving offenders and are reporting the outcome of cases to the media to ensure that drunk drivers are punished. They have produced an instructional video on Court Monitoring for all their chapters and Victim Advocacy Training is offered by MADD so that its chapters can provide a full range of victim support services in the community (Mothers Against Drunk Driving, 1996).

In their efforts to transform their own personal and private pain into social transformation, the volunteers of MADD have done much to educate the public about the profound effects of drunk driving and in impacting on the courts and legislation, they have been able to prevent an untold number of tragic deaths and disabilities.

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Hiroshima is one of the defining events of the twentieth century. Hiroshima and Nagasaki provided us with an irrevocable warning of a possible apocalyptic future, our

last stop before the total annihilation prefigured in the Holocaust. The nuclear bomb and the death camps redefined the very meaning of trauma. For the United States, the detonations over Japan have left us with a sense of confused identity, an underlying and unresolved anxiety that unconsciously permeates postwar American society. As Robert Lifton points out in his recent book, "It has never been easy to reconcile dropping the bomb with a sense of ourselves as a decent people. Because this conflict remains unresolved it continues to provoke strong feelings. There is no historical event Americans are more sensitive about. Hiroshima remains a raw nerve" (Lifton and Mitchell, 1995).

One of the group responses to the detonation of atomic bombs was the creation of PSR, Physicians for Social Responsibility. The organization was founded in 1961 by Bernard Lown, a cardiologist and professor at Harvard's School of Public Health. The statement of purpose for PSR declared that "The physician ... must begin to explore a new area of preventative medicine, the prevention of thermonuclear war" (Lifton and Mitchells, 1995). Lown organized a group of concerned physicians in his living room and then arranged for the publication of a series of articles in the *New England Journal of Medicine* about the medical consequences of nuclear war. This work showed clearly that there was no adequate medical response possible and helped persuade the Kennedy administration of the futility of bomb shelters. PSR went into quiescence after the 1963 signing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty until 1979 when the Reagan campaign's nuclear rhetoric revived old fears.

In 1980, Lown organized a two day meeting sponsored by Harvard and Tufts on "The Medical Consequences of Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War". The meeting was carefully orchestrated to gain public attention and brought together the nation's leading arms-control advocates to address a large audience. Helen Caldicott, a pediatrician, became the president of the group and worked tirelessly, touring the United States and showing the film, *The Last Epidemic*, which described how San Francisco would fare in an atomic attack. Caldicott saw her anti-nuclear campaigning as a simple extension of her medical work, "It is the ultimate form of preventive medicine. If you have a disease and there is no cure for it, you work on prevention" (Winkler, 1993).

As a result of Caldicott's efforts, PSR attracted more than three hundred new recruits per week and membership grew from 3000 in 1981 to 16,000 in 1982. Speakers Bureaus were set up in every chapter, slide shows were created, and materials were distributed so that physicians from every area of the country could go out and inform the public about the real consequences of nuclear war, thus serving as a useful counterpart to the

doublespeak rhetoric about “limited nuclear warfare” that was being disseminated throughout the highest levels of government. PSR became part of an international group, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War in 1982. Among their many activities they provided a televised account of the dangers of nuclear war that was shown to Soviet viewers in June 1982 and to Americans in October of the same year. In an essay in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, George Kistiakowsky, former head of the Manhattan Project’s explosives division, urged on the work before his death, “Forget the channels. There is simply not enough time left before the world explodes. Concentrate instead on organizing, with so many others who are of like mind, a mass movement for peace such as there has not been before” (Winkler, 1993). In 1985, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. PSR continues to pursue its antinuclear goals and has expanded to include related concerns about interpersonal and environmental violence as well (Bloom and Reichert, 1998). Thus far, the educational efforts of this group and others like it have provided the entire international community with a more realistic appraisal of what nuclear disaster could hold in store for us, and so far, their efforts have been successful in helping to prevent a thermonuclear holocaust.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH MUTUAL SELF-HELP

The title of this chapter is taken from a quotation by L. Cody Marsh, a minister and psychiatrist, and cousin to “Buffalo Bill Cody. He served in World War I as a morale officer at an American hospital in Siberia and came back convinced that active, educational, social approaches to treatment were necessary. Drawing on revivalist techniques, he related his approach to the “walking groups” of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Zoroaster. As early as 1931, Marsh was anticipating the modern milieu approach by holding community meetings at his hospital and providing a lecture series which involved testimonials from other patients (Ettin, 1992; Scheidlinger, 1993). Around the same time, Bill W. and Dr. Bob started Alcoholics Anonymous, the forerunner of all the Twelve-Step Programs.

SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY AND THE THERAPEUTIC MILIEU

After the Second World War, psychiatry was dominated by men and women who had served in the military. They had seen the effects of traumatic experience first hand and they had seen the powerful healing influences that men were able to exert on each other in groups. These insights influenced the developing of a then burgeoning

approach to psychiatric problems known as “social psychiatry”. One of the tenets of social psychiatry was that “the mentally ill person is seen as a member of an oppressed group, a group deprived of adequate social solutions to the problem of individual growth and development” (Ullman 1969). The result was the further development of group forms of treatment, most particularly the therapeutic milieu.

The therapeutic milieu - and its cousin, the therapeutic community - were based on the belief that an entire social system could exert powerful influences for positive change that surpassed the benefits of the sum of each separate component. But more than just a place for the treatment of individual “patients”, the hospital was seen as being a microcosm of the larger society, an experimental laboratory for social change (Tucker and Maxmen 1973). Unlike many other settings, the values that formed the underpinnings for every milieu were clearly articulated- egalitarianism, permissiveness, honesty, openness, and trust (Almond 1974; Leeman and Audio 1978; Rapoport 1960).

Like the Quakers who had originated Moral Treatment two hundred years before them, the advocates of the therapeutic milieu discovered that the social milieu could provide a transformative experience within which the group and the individual interacted to bring about change which could allow the victim to transcend traumatic combat experiences (Jones, 1953; Wilmer, 1958) and then later, traumatic childhood experiences (Bloom, 1996; 1997). The therapeutic milieu was extremely effective and has died out - or been killed - largely because of an adverse political and economic climate and not because it was shown to be ineffective. Nonetheless, the technology for managing groups of troubled and traumatized people in a nonviolent, democratic milieu within which all people learn and change in service of personal and group transformation is still available, and clearly, still needed (Bloom, 1994, 1997; Bills and Bloom, 1998).

THE ANONYMOUS GROUPS

Alcoholics Anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous. Overeaters Anonymous. Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. Adult Children of Alcoholics. All of these groups have something in common besides their stated anonymity. They are community-based, self-supporting, and comprised of people who help themselves through helping others in overcoming some form of addictive, compulsive behavior that is damaging their lives. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of such groups are a structured and methodical way of transforming self-destructive and other-destructive behavior into an individually productive and socially constructive life. The Twelve-Step programs require that the individual connects with a larger whole in a meaningful way, recognizing that surrender

of the addiction is necessary if progress is to be made. The individual must carefully review all the destructive things they have done to themselves and to others in taking a “fearless moral inventory”. A fundamental part of progress in these groups involves revealing one’s story to the group. In this way, a narrative forms as the individual conforms to the group norm of confession. But, the Twelve Steps insist on more than talking. The individual is instructed to “make amends” to all who have been harmed and part of making amends and healing is to help others who have been seized by the addictive behavior (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1996; Narcotics Anonymous, 1996; Overeaters Anonymous, 1996; Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, 1996). The Twelve Step process has much in common with ancient forms of healing rituals that can still be seen among native peoples. Sacrifice, trial, confession, making amends, and public testimony are all part of our ancient tribal heritage. As we are learning, a substantial proportion of addicted people have trauma as a contributing factor in the evolution of their disease process. The power of the group in helping to transform their primary and secondary pain into socially constructive lives lends convincing evidence to the idea that the group transformation of trauma is a potent, evolutionarily developed tool for healing.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH RESCUING

Rescuing is a transformative act which powerfully impacts on the rescuer and those rescued. The notion of saving others - their bodies and their souls - has a long history and many of our cultural motifs and myths are related to the rescue of the innocent, the sick, the injured, the young, the helpless, the ignorant or the alien. From “The Scarlet Pimpernel” to the “Helen Keller Story”, “Ole Yeller”, “ET”, and “Schindler’s List”, watching and hearing the stories of great rescues makes us feel good, inspired, and sometimes even helps us to model future behavior. The examples of rescuers are so numerous that they could fill a book devoted to the topic. Many social action movements have originated in a fervid desire to rescue other living beings from some traumatic or degrading situation. From the Underground Railroad, to Clara Barton and the American Red Cross, to child labor laws, the ASPCA, rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, child abuse hotlines, and dozens of environmental protection groups, rescue efforts have played a dominant role in bringing the focus of public concern to endangered groups.

To discuss rescuing as an act of transformation, we must look at the psychology of the bystander. What is it that turns a bystander into a rescuer, oftentimes at great risk to

life and limb? Helpers are not born, they are raised. In studies of rescuers, many have come from families in which strong moral concerns are transmitted by the parents to the children along with a fundamental sense of empathy without regard to social, ethnic or religious background. Rescuers often have been marginalized or victimized themselves, and yet despite this they have - for a variety of different reasons - placed a high premium on maintaining human connection. And helping behavior is learned. As children see their parents acting as rescuers, there is an increased likelihood that they will follow in the same pattern. As in the case of Oskar Schindler, it has often been noted that helping behavior is reinforced and modeled at all ages, that the more one engages in helping others, the more likely it is that the same behavior will be tried again, often with an increasing sense of commitment (Fogelman, 1994; Staub, 1989). Two examples, one historical and one current, will serve to illustrate the involvement in rescuing as group normative behavior.

THE HUGENOTS AND THE DANES IN WORLD WAR II

The genocidal behavior of the Nazis also provided opportunities for individuals and groups to react against this slaughter, and some did react with inspiring displays of courage. Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in France was one place where an entire town colluded in rescuing persecuted Jews and the behavior of the citizens of Le Chambon raises the question of the transformative influence of group traumatic memory.

Protestantism was brought to France in the sixteenth century by the Lutherans, or, as they were known in France, the Huguenots. For three hundred years, French Protestants were persecuted. They had their property seized, they were imprisoned, and sometimes they were killed. In the eighteenth century, the King of France manned great galleys by men enslaved because of the crime of Protestantism. In a Tower, near Marseilles, Protestant women were imprisoned and left to die of starvation, cold, heat and despair.

Protestantism came to Le Chambon in the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1685, with the virtual destruction of Protestant rights in France under the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a thousand refugees fled to Le Chambon for protection where they stayed with their religious brethren and became a part of the community. Even by the time of World War II, the Huguenot history was still alive and vivid in the mind of the villagers of Le Chambon. Solidarity and resistance in the face of persecution combined with an intense loyalty to their pastors, were fundamental characteristics of the people of Le Chambon.

So when their pastors, André Trocmé and Édouard Theis began doing more than talking about the love of Jesus and the practice of nonviolence by defying the Nazis through providing safe passage and safe houses for fleeing Jews, the people of Le Chambon followed suit. In Le Chambon, even many of the Vichy police were “converted” to helping Jews. In doing this work, the ministers felt that they were filling two moral dictates: they were rescuing the innocent from harm and they were preventing those in authority from violating the commandment against killing. As Pastor Theis explained to the author who later told the story of Le Chambon, they believed that “if they failed to protect those in Le Chambon, they, the ministers, would share the guilt of the evil ones who actually perpetrated the harm-doing (Hallie, 1994). By the end of the war, this small village of three thousand impoverished people had saved the lives of about five thousand refugees, most of them children.

The Danes also rescued Danish Jews and they did it as an entire nation. At the time, Denmark had a population of four and a half million and only 8,000 of them were Jewish. There was no history of anti-Semitism in Denmark (Golderberger, 1987). As far back as 1690 a Danish police commissioner had been removed for having suggested the establishment of a Jewish ghetto in Copenhagen (Abrahamsen, 1987). Although there was cultural pressure for the Jews to fit into a society as homogenous as the Danes, the Jews had survived as a distinct religious entity.

Churchill called Denmark “the sadistic murderer’s canary” . Denmark had done little to protect itself from the Nazis from the beginning, seemingly determined to retain the neutrality they had established in World War I. The Nazis occupied Denmark in early 1940 and the government of King Christian X conceded to their demands. Many Danes felt embarrassed and humiliated by this lack of resistance, but in reality, Denmark was geographically indefensible against the overwhelming power of the Nazi panzer divisions. The Nazis responded to the Danish politeness with an unusually high degree of consideration. They wanted Danish cooperation to provide them with products, especially food. Hitler also saw the tall, blond Danes as true Aryans, as brothers in the cause. In exchange for their nonviolent cooperation, the Danes insisted on retaining absolute control of their own domestic affairs and in doing so they retained the civil rights of their citizens, including the Jews. As far as the Danes were concerned, there was no “Jewish problem” in Denmark. The Nazis going in to Denmark recognized early on that the Danes were different from other occupied countries - they would oppose the imprisonment of Jews (Flender, 1963).

As the Nazi plan for extermination of the Jews enlarged and encompassed much of Europe, the Danes held firm in their resistance to genocide. At first, the protection of their Bill of Rights kept them safe. But as Nazi intentions became more clear, the Danish citizenry quietly began developing “study groups”, “sewing circles” and “book circles” throughout Denmark. Organizations were formed along professional lines as well. By the time the Nazis gave the order to exterminate the Danish Jews in September, 1943 - an order that was leaked out to Danish officials ahead of time by a Nazi official - the nation of Denmark rose, almost as a single wave in a coordinated rescue mission of physicians, clergymen, fishermen, farmers, businessmen, taxi drivers, homemakers, students, professors, engineers, civil servants, union members, nurses and ambulance drivers. The Danish physicians became known as the “White Brigade” and assisted more than 2,000 Jews, believing that in doing so they were fighting the “disease” of anti-Semitism. Out of a total population of 7,800 (including 1,300 half Jews) about 7,200 were transported to safety in Sweden across treacherous seas. Known as “Little Dunkirk” this rescue was a totally spontaneous action of the Danish people. About 90% of the church membership participated and close to 100% of the university. Why was Denmark so different from other countries? There were many factors but Abrahamsen has pointed out what may have been the most important factor: “This nation had developed over the centuries what the Danes call *livskunst* (the art of living). It was a society where people *cared* about one another, where respect for individual and religious differences, self-reliance, cooperation, and good humor had become hallmarks of a civilized nation. These moral, intellectual, and ethical attitudes made the Danes say: ‘The Jews are our fellow citizens and fellow human beings; we shall not give them up for slaughter.’ And they did not. That’s why the Danes became the *real* victors in Europe. They did not lose their souls” (Abrahamsen, 1987).

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

The model for transforming trauma can be conveyed from one generation to another. The IRC - International Rescue Committee - was founded in 1933 at the behest of Albert Einstein to assist anti-nazis fleeing Hitler’s programs of terror. It remains today the leading non-sectarian, voluntary organization still providing relief, protection, and resettlement services for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict around the world. The Board of Directors is entirely voluntary and includes Henry Kissinger, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Liv Ullman, and Elie Weisel among its members. In the past six years the IRC has tripled in size, helping victims of racial, religious, ethnic, or political persecution as well as people uprooted by war and violence. Support for the IRC comes

from individuals, foundations, unions and the business community as well as civic, education and human rights groups in the United States and abroad. Since 1980, nearly 94 cents of every dollar contributed has gone directly for lifesaving assistance to refugees and U.S. News and World Report called IRS one of only five "Standout Good Guys" in 1995 and was the only international charity to make the list.

Recruits to the IRC come from a wide range of specialties. President DeVecchi commented upon recruitment in a recent issue of the Harvard Business School Bulletin. "Our line of work demands extraordinarily resourceful and dedicated people," he said. "We offer impossible hours, plenty of physical danger and discomfort, a miserable salary, and no clear career path."

Nonetheless, recruitment is working. The IRC now maintains aid programs in more than twenty different nations. In the former Yugoslavia they are repairing water and gas lines, renovating schools, hospitals, factories, and homes, reviving agricultural production. They are organizing psychological help for the traumatized population with special services for rape victims. They have started a medical program serving war-injured children. In Rwanda the IRC is concentrating on reestablishing basic infrastructure, relief services and economic activities. In Azervaigan and Tajikistan the IRC's work focuses on improving the water supply and sanitation facilities, winterizing buildings and housing and initiating income-generating projects to promote self-sufficiency. The list goes on and on. Currently the IRC maintains operations in Ghana/Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mozambique, Sudan, Southern Sudan/Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Cambodia, Thailand, Pakistan, Former Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan (International Rescue Committee, 1996). Einstein would be proud of the fruit of his suggestion.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH WITNESSING AND SEEKING JUSTICE

The verb "to witness" has several related meaning. It means to see, hear, or know by personal presence and perception, to be present at an occurrence as a formal witness, spectator, or bystander, and to bear witness to, testify to, give or afford evidence of something that has happened, usually something unfair, unjust, or in some way problematic. In this century of genocide, totalitarian control, mass oppression and torture, bearing witness has become one of the most potent and nonviolent methods for transforming experienced and witnessed traumatic experience. Witnessing the

perpetration of an unjust act elicits a desire for justice. As Judith Herman has put it, “To study psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events... when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator. It is morally impossible to remain neutral in this conflict. The bystander is forced to take sides” (Herman, 1992).

In many parts of the world, through written, videotaped, and artistically derived creations, victims have been urged to use their traumatic experiences as a way of bearing witness to their losses, giving the dead a voice, serving as a warning to perpetrators and bystanders of the future. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Vietnam Memorial, the video archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, the digital archives of Cambodian Holocaust survivors - these and countless other memorials serve as visual reminders of the trauma of this century. Created by groups of survivors and other witnesses, their shared motto is “never forget”. Two current examples are available to us from two very different parts of the globe.

MOTHERS - AND GRANDMOTHERS - OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO

Between 1976 and 1981, Argentina’s military seized and murdered thousands of innocent young people. They are the *desaparecidos*, the “disappeared”. Taken from their homes, their jobs, or off the streets, they just disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again. On a day in 1977, fourteen mothers met in the Plaza de Mayo in central Buenos Aires to present a petition to the man who was then President of Argentina, General Videla. The petition was a demand to know what happened to their children at the hands of the “Triple A”, a paramilitary force schooled in torture, whose particular favorite “victims were pregnant woman from whom they would tear out their unborn babies - those who lived were often given to military families as “war prizes”. The instigator of this movement of mothers, Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti was arrested and never seen again. But the movement she started continues today. When first prodded to move by the soldiers in the Plaza, the Mothers took the order seriously and began walking in a circle. They have been circling ever since. “How else should the Mothers march?”, explains Hebe Bonafini, the movement’s guiding spirit, “than round - like their bellies and the world through which their protest echoes” (Ortiz, 1995). The Mothers march around the Plaza de Mayo, not seeking compensation but instead, silently protesting the silent death of their children. They call themselves “living apparitions”. For them “calling off their protest would mean that death had won... Once

each mother marched with the photo of her own child. Now they carry any picket sign, irrespective of the photo on it. They are universal mothers” (Ortiz, 1995).

Mothers become grandmothers and so there are also the “Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo”. The Grandmothers, led by Estella de Carlotto seek out the children of their children who were kidnapped by the military. They are using a genetic fingerprinting system set up jointly by two women physicians - one from Argentina and the other from the U.S.A. to establish the actual family links of children who are investigated. Of five hundred children known to have disappeared they have found about fifty-six through this method. The Mothers and the Grandmothers bear witness to all the disappeared children of the world and continue to seek justice for those who were illegally detained, tortured, and killed. Their silent and moving testimony has been heard around the world. Since winning the Sakharov Prize, their example has been followed by mothers in many other countries: by Sicilian mothers fighting against the mafia, by Spanish mothers fighting against drugs, the CoMadres of El Salvador and the Conavigua Widows of Guatemala seeking justice for their lost loved ones, killed by military dictatorships, by Ukrainian victims of Chernobyl, and by Palestinian, Israeli, and Yugoslav mothers who reject war (Ortiz, 1995; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1993; The grandchildren of Argentina, 1985).

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

When apartheid ended, South Africa remained a deeply divided and traumatized society with a long history of violent and unjust acts perpetrated against its citizens, many of whom began to assume positions of power in the new government. Some voices were raised calling for a general amnesty, but it was recognized that such a measure could not provide a sound basis for the healing that the country must go through if progress without violence is to be made. As the Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar has said, “We recognized that we could not forgive perpetrators unless we attempt also to restore the honor and dignity of the victims and give effect to reparation... we need to heal our country if we are to build a nation which will guarantee peace and stability”. (Omar, 1996).

Under the inspired leadership of President Mandela, the Interim Constitution established the basis for the development of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was appointed as the Chairperson of the Commission and seventeen people from diverse backgrounds were appointed to sit on the Commission. Conferences were held to explore how other countries were engaged in dealing with the

past and included representatives from Eastern Europe, Argentina, and Chile. The South Africans recognized from this international experience that “if we are to achieve unity and morally acceptable reconciliation, it is necessary that the truth about gross violations of human rights must be:- established by an official investigation unit using fair procedures; fully and unreservedly acknowledged by the perpetrators; made known to the public, together with the identity of the planners, perpetrators and victims (What international, 1996).

The Commission recognized that it must deal with three major questions, questions that bear a striking resemblance to the fundamental questions of individual survivors: (1) how do emerging democracies deal with past violations of human rights?; (2) how do new democratic governments deal with leaders and individuals who were responsible for disappearances, death squads, psychological and physical torture and other violations of human rights?; and (3) how does a new democracy deal with the fact that some of the perpetrators remain part of the new government and/or security forces or hold important positions in public life? (Boraine, 1996). Three separate committees were established to deal with three critical areas surrounding the problem: a Human Rights Violations Committee which conducts public hearings for victims/survivors; a Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee which works on policies and recommendations arising from those hearings; and an Amnesty Committee which hears applications for amnesty. The objective of the Commission is not so much to punish as to investigate, record, and make known, the crimes against human rights that were committed in the name of the State. The commitment and reason for this effort is to “break from the past, to heal the wounds of the past, to forgive but not to forget and to build a future based on respect for human rights” (Omar, 1996).

The Commissioners travel throughout South Africa and take the reports of victims of atrocities and torture which are all carefully recorded. The hearings are open to the public and have open media coverage. The names of the victims and the perpetrators are published. The Commissioners have the right of subpoena as well as search and seizure. Alleged perpetrators are invited to testify at the hearings, but if they decline, they may be subpoenaed and evidence will be gathered against them.

South Africa has been struggling with the thorny issue of amnesty and has been trying to benefit from the experience of other countries. Too often, a general amnesty has been offered by the very regimes responsible for the human rights violations and therefore the amnesty has been looked upon as just another betrayal of trust by human rights organizations and attorneys. As Vice Chairperson Boraine has pointed out, “There are

many implications flowing from general amnesty which really amounts to impunity... impunity threatens belief in a democratic society, ...confuses and creates ambiguous social, moral and psychological limits, ...tempts people to take the law into their own hands, ...invalidates and denies what has happened and thereby limits the possibility of effective communication between fellow citizens, ... strengthens powerlessness, guilt and shame, ...affects belief in the future and may leave people in a historical 'no-man's land, ... and reduces the scope for collective mourning and a collective working through of the suffering" (Boraine, 1996).

The Commissioners decided to institute a different kind of amnesty program which would include accountability and disclosure. There is no blanket amnesty - amnesty must be applied for on an individual basis. Applicants for amnesty must fill out a prescribed form which details information relating to specific human rights violations. Applicants must make a full disclosure of their human rights violations in order to qualify for amnesty and in most instances, these applicants will be required to appear before the Amnesty Committee at public hearings. The time period covered for granting amnesty is between 1960 and 1993 and the applicants only had a twelve-month period within which they could seek amnesty, from December 1995 to December 1996. Under the terms of the Commission, amnesty is not to be granted if the human rights violations were for personal gain, out of personal malice, ill-will or spite.

The hearings have not gone always smoothly. There is a sentiment on the part of some victims that the perpetrators should be more harshly punished and that only then can justice be served. This has been a difficult issue to resolve in all attempts to do so thus far, just as it remains a difficult issue in the cases of individual survivors of violent acts (Friedman, 1996). The architects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are well aware of the compromise that is involved. "South Africa has decided to say no to amnesia and yes to remembrance; to say no to full-scale prosecutions and yes to forgiveness", explains Boraine (1996). This tension has been described as a central conflict between the politics of compromise and the radical notion of justice, or as one commentator drawing on Greek tragedy has put it, between the "logic of mourning/remembrance and political logic" (Boraine, 1996).

Seeking justice is a uniquely human act, a form of traumatic transformation that is as old as civilization. At the end of the twentieth century, there are similar transformative movements for justice going on in several different parts of the globe - in Eastern Europe, in South America, and in South Africa - all seeking justice for acts of state oppression. There have been nineteen truth commissions operating in sixteen countries

over the last 20 years (Boraine, 1996). These movements have a great deal in common and could be used as a metaphorical description of the tasks that exist in recovery for the individual victims of overwhelming interpersonal trauma. As the Vice Chairperson of South African's Truth and Reconciliation Commission described in a recent speech:

- A shift from totalitarianism to a form of democracy;
- A negotiated settlement - not a revolutionary process;
- A legacy of oppression and serious violations of human rights;
- A fragile democracy and a precarious unity;
- A commitment to the attainment of a culture of human rights and a respect for the rule of law;
- A determination that the work of the Commission will help to make it impossible for the gross violations of human rights of the past to happen again (Boraine, 1996).

Although there is controversy over the effectiveness and fairness of these various commissions, perhaps the most important aspect of them is that they have existed. In our global, species consciousness, we appear to be at least wrestling with the issues of justice, accountability, forgiveness, and transformation. For South Africa, amnesty is the price they are paying for peace and stability, for a national life that learns from the past but moves ahead into a new future. It is a grand, global experiment and it is too soon to know the outcome. But the experiment continues to grow - nearby Namibia has recently asked for help in establishing a similar group. The outcome without such an experiment, however, is easier to predict. As Roberto Canas of El Salvador has put it, "Unless a society exposes itself to the truth it can harbour no possibility of reconciliation, reunification and trust" (Boraine, 1996).

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH POLITICAL ACTION

In *The Soul of Politics*, Jim Wallis offers the opinion that "We need a politics that offers us something we haven't had in a long time: a vision of transformation" (Wallis, 1994). Certainly, the study of victims of trauma provides us with an opportunity to once again realize the long-standing feminist notion that the personal is political and that perhaps

personal transformation has something to teach us about political transformation just as political transformation can inspire personal change. The interpersonal traumas that so many of our patients sustain occur in a sociopolitical context in which the abuse of power is encouraged and sustained. Whether we talk about the sexual and physical abuse of women and children, the abuse of the inmates of asylums and prisons, the imprisonment and torture of people of conscience, or the abuses of the totalitarian state, all violence focuses on the unfair distribution of power and the abuse of this power by the powerful against the helpless. The solutions to these problems are not individual solutions; they require political solutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that many traumatized individuals turn to political action as a way of transforming their own individual and group pain. A nineteenth century determined woman and a twentieth century playwright provide examples of social activism and political change.

ASYLUM REFORM

At the end of the eighteenth century, the care of the mentally ill was often harsh, brutal, and inhumane. One of those who suffered poorly at the hands of her keepers was a Quaker girl from York, England who died in suspicious circumstances in 1791, a few weeks after being admitted to a local asylum. Her social group, The Society of Friends, were so traumatized by this event that they responded to the tragedy by creating a new kind of asylum, "in which a milder and more appropriate system of treatment than that usually practiced, might be adopted". In doing so, the Quakers opened up a new chapter in the history of psychological treatment and they called their approach "Moral Treatment". Moral Treatment was based on respect for the individual and there was a belief that just as the environment was an important cause of mental illness, so too could an environment be designed that would promote healing. The social milieu was considered to be the most important factor in promoting recovery (Bockoven, 1963).

But by the mid-eighteenth century, the asylums for Moral Treatment which had been created in almost every state in the country, had severely deteriorated. Underfunding and a flood of chronically mentally ill and neurologically impaired patients made the practice of Moral Treatment impossible based as it was on small, socially and physically healthy environments (Dwyer 1987; McGovern 1985; Rothman 1980). Mrs. E. P. W. Packard was one traumatized woman who responded by transforming her pain and suffering into direct political action and thereby influencing her entire social group.

In 1860, Mrs. Packard, married to a minister and mother of six children, was hospitalized against her will in the Illinois State Hospital for the Insane at Jacksonville. Her husband

had taken issue with her more liberal religious beliefs and according to state law, a husband could commit his wife, even without any evidence of insanity. There she remained for three years. While in the asylum she was physically abused by other inmates and by members of staff. But worse than the violence directed at herself was the violence she witnessed, particularly the cruel and sadistic treatment of the inmates by their keepers. She witnessed many episodes of violence, including attempted murder. Her defense of other patients led to punishment by the superintendent and his aides, often by deliberately forcing her to stay in wards with seriously violent patients. While imprisoned, she spent much of her time writing a book that would later be entitled, "The Prisoners' Hidden Life or Insane Asylums Unveiled" (Packard 1868). After release, her husband locked her in a room to prevent her from seeing her children, while he planned for a commitment that would keep her locked away for life. She escaped only by secreting out a note to a neighbor who helped have her case brought to trial. In a sensational trial that achieved national attention, she was declared sane and on the night the verdict was given, her husband absconded with all the marital property and with the children, leaving her alone and destitute. She provided for herself by obtaining a loan to get her book published and then by selling her book and lecturing throughout the country. Her experience of being a married woman with no rights had left a deep impression on her and she dedicated herself to righting the wrongs she had suffered. She spent the next twenty years successfully campaigning for personal liberty laws that would protect individuals and particularly married women from wrongful commitment to and retention in asylums. Among her many accomplishments she saw to it that the superintendent who had so wronged her was relieved of duty and that the personal liberty laws in Illinois, Massachusetts, and Connecticut were changed. By the time of her death in 1897, she was a nationally and internationally recognized activist for the rights of women and the mentally ill (Grob, 1994; Packard, 1868; Packard, 1882; Sapinsley, 1991).

VACLAV HAVEL AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic, ancient Bohemia and Moravia, has a long history of trying times and provides us with a meaningful example of the national transformation of trauma through political action. Geographically trapped between the East and the West, bordered by Poland, Germany, Austria, and Slovakia, Czechoslovakia was formed after the strife of World War I and declared an independent republic with a liberal democratic constitution. Thomas Masaryk was a philosophy professor at the University of Prague

who led the Czech independence movement from 1907 and became the first president of the new republic after World War I until 1935. An ardent liberal and democrat, he was revered by the Czech people, although he was always faced with strong opposition from extremist groups. The West, faced with Hitler's demands, handed Czechoslovakia over to the Nazis in 1939 in a futile gesture of appeasement (Polišenský,1991). The Nazi oppression was severe. After liberation the country once again had a brief period of independence until the Soviet take-over of 1949. Except for the brief flurry of liberation known as the Prague Spring, that succumbed when the Soviet tanks rolled into Prague in 1968, Soviet totalitarianism ruled supreme until 1989.

Into this stormy world, Vaclav Havel and many of his literary and artistic compatriots were born in 1936. They grew up under the watchful and malevolent eyes, first of the Nazis and then of the Communists. This was the generation of intellectuals and artists who would end up using their talents, skills, and moral commitment to give birth to the Velvet Revolution of 1989. For the twenty years between 1968 and 1989, it was the artist that gave life to what would become a nonviolent revolution. For each artist or intellectual figure who was imprisoned or persecuted, thousands silently and secretly lent their support and were inspired by their example, for future acts of rebellion. In briefly tracing the course of this progression we can get a look at how individual trauma and sacrifice interacts with the group to produce long-term, massive results (Whipple, 1991).

In 1976, a rock group, *Plastic People of the Universe*, were arrested and imprisoned, giving rise to the first petition drives and dissident groups. Charter 77 was formed in 1977 as a way of putting group pressure on the government to adhere to its own laws and human rights obligations. The first three signatories to the charter were the philosopher Jan Patočka, the Prague Spring foreign minister Jiri Hájek, and the playwright Vaclav Havel. In March, Patočka died after police interrogation. In 1978, the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) was formed to focus on individual cases of unjust persecution by providing legal advice and the next year, large-scale police action against VONS signatories climaxed in the sentencing of six founding members to long prison terms. Throughout these years, *samizdat* - illegal - journals, novels, poetry, plays, articles, essays circulate freely among the population, fueling the growing dissident movement. For most of these artists and authors, publication was not permitted and only through samizdat, could their works achieve an audience. Books were smuggled in from abroad, conspirator librarians would keep a special secret cache of forbidden books. As Kriseová has said, "Almost everything we in Havel's and my generation learned and studied in the fifties was against the will of the regime and in

resistance to it. They were always forcing something on us, commanding us, shoving our noses into one thing, so that we would not see something else” (Kriseov, 1993).

Because of his political activities, Havel was publicly vilified and there were fewer and fewer friends he could turn to as the years went on. Some immigrated, some were imprisoned, others were afraid. His plays were being produced abroad, but he could not have them produced at home. But he continued to write - letters, essays, and plays - through which he became arguably the most vocal moral voice of his generation. He was constantly under surveillance and even his friends and neighbors were watched. On one occasion, two teenage girls, the daughters of friends, were kidnapped by the police and interrogated about the Havel’s. Kriseov describes the constant state of terror that prevailed throughout this period: “the days of Stalinist terror were still vivid in people’s memories. The irrational fear that someone could disappear and never be seen again, or could be executed without any crime ever having been proved against him, is buried somewhere deep in our unconscious minds - the fear that anything could happen, that those in power cannot be controlled.” Dissidents instructed people in how to behave when their houses were searched and during interrogations. The State Security were more likely to physically abuse people who were young and less well-known and people from the underground were treated with particular cruelty.

Havel endured his first imprisonment in 1977 for six weeks. But it backfired when Charter 77, VONS, his captors’ attempts to discredit him, and his imprisonment all served to fuel the resolve on the part of the public. “People straightened their backs; they were no longer so weighed down; they cease to be tired; and they had the feeling that life was worth the effort and that it was possible to do something, even if it involved a known risk. Citizens recognized that they were not as powerless and the government not as all-powerful as they had assumed” (Kriseov, 1991). Professors who had been purged from the institutions of higher learning began secretly teaching well-attended classes in apartments. In 1978, Havel wrote “The Power of the Powerless” which he dedicated to Jan Patozka and subsequently he was put under house arrest (Havel, 1985). Neighbors were warned not to have any contact with him or with his family. In 1979 he was imprisoned again along with many of his colleagues. His letters to his wife became the basis of a book of letters from prison published as *Letters to Olga* (Havel, 1983). While in prison, Joe Papp, the New York director, had his plays produced in the United States, bringing increased awareness of the Czechoslovakian situation to the West. After a quick trial, Havel was sentenced to four and a half years of prison, charged with subversion of the republic. He consistently refused any opportunity to travel, although he knew he could get away, because the government would have used

it as a way of getting rid of him and therefore silencing his message to the people. He knew he was much more a danger to the government in prison because in prison he was more conspicuous and more famous than before. They even offered to let him move to the United States but he refused.

In 1983, he was released from prison and he suffered for a while with what has been called “postprison psychosis”, finding it difficult to adjust to life outside. But once again he threw himself into politics, even though he knew he could easily wind up imprisoned again. He wrote several new plays, *Largo Desolato* and *Temptation*. He continued to write, to teach, to make public appearances and to participate in the growing number of dissident activities. Once again, in 1989, he was imprisoned and sentenced to nine months, but when 1000 intellectuals signed a letter demanding his release, his sentence was reduced to one month. The people were beginning to reclaim their country; the Soviet era was drawing to an end and the nonviolent, Velvet Revolution began. On November 21, 200,000 people gathered on Wenceslas Square where Havel addressed them for the first time, threatening a general strike unless their demands for the release of political prisoners and freedom of the press were met. Demonstrations increased around the country and on November 27, four-fifths of the total labor force stopped work in support of the people’s groups, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, insisting on full political pluralism and representation in a new government. By the end of December, Vacláv Havel was unanimously elected - after being released from prison only two months before - as the first President of the new republic.

Vacláv Havel and the Czech republic provide a convincing example of how an entire nation can transform trauma into freedom through the consistent exercise of strong, personal, moral authority. Havel is most notable as a leader for the unfortunately rare qualities of linking politics, art, spirituality, tolerance, compassion, humility, and morality (Havel, 1990; 1994).

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH HUMOR

It has been said that all great comedy is rooted in tragedy. According to the well-known drama critic, Walter Kerr, “Comedy, it seems, is never the gaiety of things; it is the groan made gay. Laughter is not man’s first impulse; he cries first. Comedy always comes second, late, after the fact and in spite of it or because of it... It seems likely that comedy comes *from* tragedy” (Kerr 1967). Laughter is of course, one of the most potent

antidotes to fear. A combat soldier, recalling a night of running and laughing on the rooftops of Casablanca as German bombs exploded around him, explained, “We knew we might get killed any second but we didn’t want to let that scare us, so we just laughed” (Jenkins 1994). For our adult victims of childhood trauma, a sense of humor has been the one invariable prognostic feature that must be present for transformation to occur.

Laughter is so potent because it is a complex biopsychosocial behavior. It has powerful physical effects, increasing blood circulation, working the abdominal muscles, raising heart rate and dropping blood pressure. It lowers stress hormones like cortisol and epinephrine and heightens the activity of the body’s T cells, antibodies, and natural killer cells (Angier 1996a & b). Nathanson’s work on the mechanism of shame helps us understand why laughter is so vital for healing because the effect of comedy is deeply related to the way both individuals and groups manage shame. Traumatic experience is overwhelmingly accompanied by the arousal of every conceivable negative affect or emotion. The flashbacks that follow closely on the heels of the trauma, then trigger once again these powerful negative emotional memories, locking the survivor into cycles of terror, despair, and shame (Van der Kolk, et al, 1996). It is humor, enjoyment, joy that serves to lyse these chronic negative feelings. Nathanson quotes Buddy Hackett: “There are two kinds of pain. Physical and psychological. Any time I do something that releases you from that pain, I create laughter. The laughter is a feeling of relief, of release and relief... And that’s the whole story of laughter. Release from pain. And that’s the whole story of what I do” (Nathanson 1992).

But perhaps more importantly for our topic, laughter is an infectious social experience. As researcher Robert R. Provine, professor of neurobiology and psychology at the University of Maryland puts it, “Laughter is above all, a social act.” (Angier 1996a). Through shared laughter a group is able to synchronize its moods, increasing the possibility of synchronous actions. Noting the value of humor, Dr. Donald Nathanson has said that “if love is the balm that heals the pain of individuals, comedy is solace, consolation and relief for entire tribes” (Nathanson 1992). Even when we laugh in moments of solitude we are interacting with an author of a book, watching a comedian on the screen, or remembering a shared experience of humor with another person.

COMIC CLOWNS OF THE NATIVE AMERICANS

In traditional cultures, humor has always played an important group role in increasing group cohesion, reducing group tensions, and resolving intra- and inter-group conflict. In studies of Native American culture, humor is considered integral for existence. Complex customs utilizing humor as a central element can be seen in most cultures, as in the vital role of the clowns in the ritual behavior of the Hopi tsuklalwa and the Contraries or Heyhokas of the Plains Indians (Brown 1985, Loftin1991) . “The place of sacred clowns in Native American cultures has been well documented. These clowns and masked dancers are often closely connected to healing and to the most awesome power of the universe, even though their antics are the source of a great deal of laughter” (Bruchac 1987). Among the Iroquois, the strike-pole dance afforded an opportunity for members of the tribe to say things to each other through jokes and teasing, that could otherwise be perceived as hurtful or aggressive. When a man would rise, he would strike the pole, then relate a story about one of his fellow clansmen. When everyone was done laughing, he would give a small present to the butt of the joke to soothe over any bad feelings.

LAUGHTER IN LITHUANIA

The use of humor among oppressed and traumatized groups is well established. Jewish humor, African-American humor, feminist humor are all rooted in a willful desire to overcome the powerlessness of their respective positions. As Ron Jenks as put it, in his marvelous book on “Subversive Laughter”, “In a world fraught with danger and despair, comedy is a survival tactic, and laughter is an act of faith” (Jenks 1994). From Aristophanes’ comedies mocking the corrupt dictators of his time, to Richard Pryor’s attacks on racism, humor has always played an important role in the wider socio-political context. Likewise, the powerful fear, and often try to control the comedians - during the Nazi era, comedians were kept on the Gestapo’s shortest leash (Angier 1996a).

Eastern Europeans, while still engaged in the struggle against Soviet rule, provided excellent examples of the group use of humor to transform trauma into freedom. Landisberger was the president of the republic of Lithuania during these critical years. He saw that nonviolent resistance to military power required the use of symbolic weapons like art, music, and theatrical representations. Where the leader went, the people followed. Ridiculing their enemy, the Soviet state, became a group effort through jokes, comedic performances, and public performance art. Drawing on a long

history of political satire that dated back at least a century, the Lithuanian people declared their independence through laughter, inspiring a subversive attitude toward Soviet authority. “Humor provided Lithuanians with a psychological weapon for reversing the terror tactics employed for decades by the KGB. People who had been paralyzed by the fear of unspecified reprisals were liberated by the exhilarating force of their own laughter. The tyranny of the totalitarian state was subverted by the teasing suggestion of its comical vulnerability... The public’s belief in the fallibility of the once invincible Communist monolith was nurtured by years of laughing at its flaws” (Jenkins 1994).

On noticing this same comic sense among his countrymen, Vaclav Havel, playwright, jailed dissident, and then President of the Czech Republic said, “It seems that in our central European context what is most earnest has a way of blending in a particularly tense manner with what is most comic. It seems that it is precisely the dimension of distance, of rising above oneself and making light of oneself, which lends to our concerns and actions precisely the right amount of shattering seriousness” (Vladislav 1986).

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ARTISTIC CREATION

I suspect that a reasonably strong case can be made that our uniquely human capacity to create works of literature, art, drama, and dance is an evolutionary adaptation to help a verbal, curious, and remembering primate transform overwhelming experience into a form of expression that can be simultaneously verbal and nonverbal, private and shared (Bloom, 1995). Art is fundamentally transformative in its very essence. Out of simple materials meaning is born.

The examples of artistic creativity inspired by both individual and group traumatic circumstances are seemingly endless. Fragments of *The Plague* by Camus were published as an underground testimony for the French Resistance in Occupied France (Felman, 1992). Dostoevsky was arrested, condemned to death, and his sentence was commuted only during the middle of an execution ceremony as he stood before a firing squad - *Notes From the House of the Dead* and *Notes From the Underground* follow as “testimony to a trauma” (Felman, 1992). In 1985, in Poet’s Corner, Westminster Abbey, a memorial was unveiled to the sixteen poets of the First World War, among them Rupert Brooks, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon. Inscribed on the

memorial are the words of Owen, "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity" (Balcon, 1985). Magritte's mother suicided by drowning in 1912 when the artist was only fourteen. As the story goes, Magritte and his brother had gone to look for their mother and found her body practically naked but for a wet night-dress that was over her head and sticking to her skin (Meuris,1994). He left us a legacy of haunting pictures, many of them containing mysterious figures some of whose heads are covered in diaphanous cloth, others in which feminine objects stand before a storm-tossed sea, another of a woman's lower torso with a fish's head. Picasso painted *Guernica* in 1937 and named it after the small Basque town that had been destroyed by Hitler's bombers. In doing so he said, "One does not paint in order to decorate apartments. Painting is an instrument of offensive and defensive war against the enemy" (Picasso, 1976). Beethoven, even in his deafness, gave us the musical expression of transformation as in the *Fifth Symphony* and the *Ninth Symphony* which musically take us from storm and stress to triumph. Joan Baez moved us in song through the pain of Tiananmen Square to the triumph of the lone man standing before the tanks and leads us to a hope for the future in her song, *China*. Samuel Beckett served in the French Resistance until his group was arrested by the Gestapo and he was forced to go into hiding. Later he served in the Irish Red Cross at a military hospital in France. Out of all this came some of the most important works of twentieth century drama, including the unforgettable, *Waiting For Godot* (Beckett,1976). Judy Chicago took painting, photography, tapestry, stained glass, and words and continues the attempt of many artists for the last half century to make some sense, some transformation, out of the Holocaust (Chicago, 1993). *Shoah*, *Schindler's List*, *Apocalypse Now* are all examples of the power of film to bear witness to traumatic events, a witness in which we, as the audience all participate. Here are two examples of art in action, creativity waged against the forces of oppression, destitution, and loss.

PHILADELPHIA, THE PAINTED CITY

In 1983, twenty-six teenage graffiti artists were paid \$3.25 an hour to paint the North Philadelphia Amtrak station as part of an experimental program to turn ugly urban buildings and walls into artwork and to turn law-breaking wall-writers into artists (Sutton, 1983). This project, founded by Tim Spencer, who was 26 years old at the time, became known as the Anti-Graffiti Network, a nonprofit civic organization. Spencer had become involved in the idea when he saw a neighbor almost use a gun against a neighborhood kid caught writing graffiti (Kaufman 1984). Beginning in one area of the city, the project gained the support of the Mayor and City Council and became a city-

wide agency. Support came as well from businesses who donated materials and the media, who gave the Network wide coverage.

Huge, colorful, and sometime inspired murals began to emerge around the city, many of them in major public areas. The Reading Terminal financed murals on their buildings (Cooke, 1984). Pictures appeared on bridge abutments, subway cars, schoolyard walls, and vacant buildings. Between 1983 and 1986, the Anti-Graffiti Network produced 375 murals around the city, turning graffiti buffs into practiced artists, mentored by trained professionals, some of whom had been to art school and others who had taught art (Sutton, 1987). By 1987, the program had become a \$2.2 million city program and was hiring 700 inner-city youths each summer to paint murals, remove graffiti, and clean vacant lots (Cooke, 1987). Large volunteer efforts were started to clean graffiti from existing walls. In 1988 the program enlisted 132 graffiti writers into its amnesty program for those who admitted they had defaced a property and pledged not to do it again. They recruited 1,156 youths to volunteer for cleanups of 4,227 residences, 700 businesses, 17 public schools and 335 vacant lots, while painting 144 murals on buildings around the city (King, 1989). By 1989, over 400 cleanup drives had been organized and more than 7,000 buildings were cleaned (Wood, 1989). Kids arrested for writing graffiti were assigned to the program for community service, given 50-300 hours of "scrub time" (Pavlik, 1989). The Anti-Graffiti Network sponsored art auctions of works done by the youths. In 1990, a mural was done in one of the high-violence areas of the city to commemorate the violent deaths of thirty-four children in the previous 18 months (Colimore, 1990). In 1991, the Anti-Graffiti Network received one of 10 Innovation Awards presented by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University. By that time, the program had painted 1,093 murals, removed graffiti from about 3,500 properties a year, and 9,000 youths had volunteered in the program (Copeland, 1991). In 1992, the Network painted another memorial dedicated to 35 more children who died of violence and began planning another for 42 other children. These memorials served as opportunities for bereaved parents to gather together and mourn the deaths of their children (Rosenberg, 1992). During the 1980's the homicide rate for black teenagers more than doubled in Philadelphia. These memorial murals became a symbol of resistance in this undeclared domestic war (McCoy, 1993).

At this point, the future of the Anti-Graffiti Network is very much in doubt. Funding has been cut and this year, the founder, Timothy Spencer died after a prolonged illness. Graffiti remains a problem for the city of Philadelphia. Nonetheless, for the thirteen years that the program existed, thousands of children were encouraged to transform the trauma of their violent urban experience into artistic creativity. Thousands of

volunteers became involved in community action around this creative effort. And the lives of all Philadelphians have been enriched by the explosion of public art that still surrounds us.

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

The year 1994 marked the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Augusto Boal's, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal is a Brazilian theater artist who understands from firsthand experience, the vital importance of the role drama plays in transforming trauma. In his work, Boal has sought ways of combining theater, therapy, politics and art in the service of this transformation. From 1956-71, Boal directed the Arena Theatre in São Paulo where he and his collaborators created a theater founded on local experience. Brazil was taken over by a military coup in 1964 and an even more repressive regime began in 1968. Boal was widely known and politically active, developing "Forum Theatre" among the peasants and workers, a format that gave spectators the chance to discover their own solutions to collective problems. Working in direct opposition to the military regime, Boal was arrested in 1971, jailed and tortured. After three months he was released and told that he would be killed if he continued with his theater activities. He fled to Argentina where he lived until 1976. There he developed "Image Theatre" in which physical expression is favored over the spoken word and the human body is used as a tool to transform physical sensation into communicable language.

Argentina, however, became increasingly repressive and there he devised "Invisible Theatre" as a way to continue stimulating debate on current political issues. Staged in public spaces and acting as if it were real life, actors uncovered politically hot issues of social injustice and encouraged impassioned discussions on the street. In 1976, Boal escaped to Europe where, in Paris, he developed "Theatre of the Oppressed" (Boal, 1985; Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994). In Europe he encountered other forms of oppression besides political oppression, and began to see that all forms of oppression have similar roots. His work has been related to the psychodrama and sociodrama of Moreno and his colleagues. Both worked to help people overcome oppression and liberate themselves as individuals and as a group (Feldhendler, 1994). Their vision of the role of artistic creativity in bringing about change is similar, what Boal calls "the superposition of fields: the theatrical and the therapeutic" (Boal, 1995).

In 1986 Boal was invited to return to Brazil after a change in government and there he founded a Rio de Janeiro Center of Theatre of the Oppressed. He remains in Brazil, is

President of the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro and Paris, travels extensively giving workshops, and further developing his ideas. He is now a Member of Parliament for Rio de Janeiro and was awarded the UNESCO Pablo Picasso Medal in 1994.

The Theatre of the Oppressed has two fundamental and linked goals: to help the spectator/actor (spect-actor) transform himself into a protagonist of the dramatic action and rehearse alternatives for his situation so that he is then able to extrapolate into his real life the changed actions he has practiced in the theatre (Boal, 1995). He believes that “every oppressed person is a subjugated subversive” (Boal, 1995) and that the transformation that occurs to the spect-actor on stage also can transform the audience through what he calls the process of “osmosis”. The stage can try to transform the audience and the audience can also transform anything, try anything. “If the oppressed-artist is able to create an autonomous world of images of his own reality, and to enact his liberation in the reality of these images, he will then extrapolate into his own life all that he has accomplished in the fiction. The scene, the stage, becomes the rehearsal space for real life (Boal, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Judith Herman has spoken eloquently about recovery from traumatic experiences pointing out that “While there is no way to compensate for an atrocity, there is a way to transcend it, by making it a gift to others. The trauma is redeemed only when it becomes the source of a survivor mission” (Herman, 1992). This chapter has illustrated the many ways that trauma can be transformed in a manner that goes far beyond the individual, serving as a source of major dynamic change within a group and within an entire society. But such a transformation can only occur within a political climate that permits such a discourse. Herman has demonstrated the intimate relationship between the political climate and the recognition of abuse (Herman, 1992). McFarland has discussed how trauma in warfare could not even be recognized until Vietnam because of torn allegiances between military and medical objectives (McFarland, 1995). Summerfield has pointed out the criticism of the medical models of PTSD arising in oppressive societies, notably in Latin America, where working with victims of trauma is inevitably human rights work as well. As he has noted, symptoms of trauma are an indictment of the social contexts in which they occurred (Summerfield, 1995).

One of the dangers of writing about the “transformation” of trauma is that the reader can be led to believe that experiencing trauma is actually of positive benefit because it brings about such positive change. It must be said that the examples that illustrate this chapter are points of light in an otherwise dismal landscape of terror and horror. However, this is an exciting and largely unexplored area. In this chapter I have only touched on various ideas and examples, hopefully opening up a wider discourse on the subject. I say “hopefully” because these are all vital questions at the present historical moment. We know that unmetabolized, untransformed trauma interferes with healthy adaptation at an individual level. The individual adapts to a hostile environment and then proceeds to recreate a similar environment in order to make the best use of these adaptations. If groups - communities and even nations - respond in a similar way then we are dealing with a dangerous and volatile situation (Gamboa-Eastman, 1993). The twentieth century, the century of “megadeath”, has produced and continues to produce an extraordinarily high level of traumatic experience for a vast proportion of the world’s population (Brzezinski 1993). As we are seeing in our own inner cities, individual forms of intervention and treatment cannot turn back the tide of post-traumatic destruction. As long as we still had the luxury of believing that psychopathology originated in individual dysfunction, our models of intervention were justified. But now, as we see whole populations traumatized by war, famine, plague, disaster, and political oppression, our individualistic arguments are no longer persuasive. We must find larger scale, group forms of intervention to escalate the rate of transformation or the balance may very well shift further in the direction of global self-destruction.

It is vital that we learn from these group forms of social transformation in the service of PREVENTION. As I write these words, the political climate of my own country appears to be moving further away from, not towards, an atmosphere that promotes such transformation. We must follow the example of the political leaders, artists, physicians, clergymen, scientists, survivors, and just plain common folk who people the pages of this chapter and this book, and listen closely to the lessons they have learned. Each of our lives is the stage upon which we strut, for good or for ill, but even on the stage, life is never a monologue. We are all, in some way, survivors, and we all have a social responsibility to the whole. Augusto Boal may have the closing words:

“Thus, within the limits of the scene and the moment, the free exercise of all asocial tendencies, unacceptable desires, forbidden behaviours and unhealthy feelings is allowed. On stage, all is permissible, nothing is forbidden. The demons and saints which inhabit the person of the actor are completely free to blossom, to experience the orgasm of the show, to pass from potential into act. In a mimetic and emphatic fashion,

the same thing happens with the analogous demons and saints which are awakened in the hearts of the spectators. Always in the hope that, after it is all over, they will be tired out and will go back to sleep. In the hope that, in this holy and diabolic ball, the saints and demons of the actors and audience will return, exhausted, to the unconscious darkness of the person, restoring the health and equilibrium of the personalities, which will then be able, without fear, to reintegrate their lives into society” (Boal, 1995).

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