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# Working Creatively with Others to Transform Unjust Social Structures

Farid Esack

*"Today, I want to talk about ideas of working creatively towards justice, and about how this creativity is really also a recreation and internal recreation of the self. . . I come from, and I cut my teeth in, the South African liberation struggle. I am proud of my own background, and of the role that I played in our country's liberation struggle, along with thousands and thousands of others. For many people, that liberation struggle had come to personify a successful struggle. But the idea of that liberation struggle as a successful struggle, (the owning of the world of that struggle as a successful struggle) and the internal problems that we see, in some ways reflect the larger issue that we have with embracing ideas of change, ideas of forgiveness."*

## **Transcription of Plenary Session of the Institute for Body, Mind, and Spirituality Conference, held at Lesley University, 2007**

Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim, (In the name of God, the Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace).

Yesterday, I went to buy some fruit, and there was a fruit that I am not familiar with (in the United States) that I recognized in one of the shops. It was a quince. Do you know this quince? Is it a common fruit here? Not that widely? I bought one of those quince.

The fascinating thing about the quince for me was—well, it's a good fruit—but I also grew up in a society that was so basic, so desperately poor, that the quince had another important function for us. If you get to the very core of the quince, it is liquid and sticky. We would, of course, eat the quince; get to this liquid part—you have to be very careful—and put three or four of these cores in a quarter cup of water. We would let it stand for three or four days, after which, if you press it, you'll actually have glue. We could not afford glue for pasting pictures in our books at school, and this was our way of making glue.

I will talk about another fruit topic, but first, I also grew up in a society where we could never afford toothpaste. We used (I don't know if people ever remember these things, perhaps of course, in some societies they still do) ash from the wood of the fires that we made on the ground to cook food. We would use the ash to rub our teeth.

And so, on to the last fruit story, before I tell you the connection between these three things and where I am now. As a child, I also grew up scavenging... walking along curbsides, looking for discarded apple cores and rubbing it against my pants to clean it and get the sand off.

Now, when occasionally, I hear these introductions and so on about my life, I sit back from the person that introduces me and I think it's awesome. I am absolutely overawed by how far I have come in life. "God, Farid, this is amazing." But of course, at the same time, I find it utterly boring to sit and listen through, "...and he's this and he's that."

I'll be honest with you. Most of the time people ask, "Can you send us a couple of lines with which to introduce yourself?" On my computer I have one document that is called '33 words,' another document is called '106 words,' and another. That way, depending on how long an introduction I think these people want, I send those off.

A couple of years ago, I was also at Harvard delivering a series of lectures. Now, this is an inhouse thing, please, that I'm telling you now. It was my sister-in-law's birthday and I called her. I was talking to her—you know how you are on the phone, nobody else's in the room, and you don't have to observe normal social decorum and so on. (By the way, before I continue with my story, *alhamdulillah* is an expression we use in Arabic whenever we are grateful for something or 'praise be to God.') So, on that day, the 24th of November, I was talking to her. I was alone in the room on the phone, and when you are alone you do things. So I farted. And she said, "Farid, did you fart?" I said, "Yes." She said, "*Alhamdulillah*, you haven't forgotten where you come from." And so I'm always in awe, yes, it's great to know that you don't forget where you come from.

Anyway, that was just a connection between where I come from and where I am now. I promise not to do anything impolite while I'm standing and talking to you here today.

My talk here for today may as well be entitled 'ideas on forgiveness on a train of, or, on a train towards injustice'. I am always very cognizant as a South African, as a citizen of the world, as a Muslim, as the recipient of enormous injustices, both racial, and as a victim of the empire—I am always conscious of larger systemic things. At the same time, I am always conscious, also, that as a male, I wield power in relation to others. It is so easy to don the mentality of "victim."

I am black. (Oh yes, you are black, Farid, but you are brown. And in relation to darker skinned people, you also occupy a certain social space. As a black male, yes, you occupy a certain social space in relation to those "above" you. But wait, you also occupy a certain space in relation to those who are "lesser" than you.) I'm always cognizant of this.

Today, I want to talk about ideas of working creatively towards justice, and about how *this creativity is really also a recreation and internal recreation of the self*.

I come from, and I cut my teeth in, the South African liberation struggle. I am proud of my own background, and of the role that I played in our country's liberation struggle, along with thousands and thousands of others. For many people, that liberation struggle had come to personify a successful struggle. But the idea of that liberation struggle as a successful struggle, (the owning of the world of that struggle as a successful struggle) and the internal problems that we see, in some ways reflect the larger issue that we have with embracing ideas of change, ideas of forgiveness. I want to say that in our own liberation struggle, despite its valorizing and so on by people particularly on the outside, we have

manifested an ability to really confront the beast, the beast of racial oppression, but at the same time not everything that we did in confronting this beast of racial oppression really does much. Not everything that we did helped much to advance our own humanity, and I will come back to some of these ideas in a moment.

During the South African liberation struggle—it was an enormously exciting struggle—I remember once attending a funeral. It was a very difficult funeral. The police didn't want the funeral to take place. If it did, they wanted it to take place in a small conservative church. The family wanted to move it to a larger, bigger church where everybody would be welcome. (By the way, for footnote purposes, the one was an Apostolic church and the other one was an Episcopal church.) During the funeral, the police stormed the church. The (excuse for) battle was the flag of the African National Congress, which was illegal to display, and which was draping the coffin. I remember us running down the street with the coffin and people running behind us and the police shooting and so on. I also remember Desmond Tutu ducking under a car as the cops were shooting all around.

I remember going to visit Auntie Ivy that night. Auntie Ivy was Ashley's mother. And it was Ashley we had buried that morning. I remember just visiting because, often when the funeral is over, it's the mother that has to sit with her grief. In the morning there were all these crowds eulogizing the fallen hero in the liberation struggle—the kind of thing you often find in Palestine. At the end of the day, after the tea, after the cameras are gone, and after all the posters of the suicide bombers have gone up on the street, it is still a broken family that has to present a certain image. As I chatted to Auntie Ivy, I was amazed at her capacity to laugh, and I asked her about it. She said that it is this capacity to combine our laughter with our tears that makes us human.

And so in the middle of all of these very exciting moments, people were engaged in many creative things inside the liberation struggle. We are deeply grateful for this and it is not just a Nelson Mandela thing. Many leaders in the liberation struggle never failed to emphasize the humanity of the people on the other side of the line. I will come back to those people on the other side of the line in a moment. We are deeply grateful for our capacity to insist on the nonracial character of our struggle—that this was not a struggle against white people. It was great that there were so many whites that were engaged in the liberation struggle. The underlying idea was that we were creating a non-racial society.

Many people of course thought that it was Nelson Mandela who came with us after his personal kind of generosity. In some ways, there is an element of unfairness which is part of people's fascination, I think, with the "big leader" story. All the problems of our world will come to an end or started when... first it was George Bush the First and George Bush the Second, and all the problems of the world will come when Hillary or Barack gets elected. If only. These are far too easy options for us. We have absolved ourselves of sin, we have no confidence in our own selves, both our culpability in all of these, and our own capacity to be agents of transformation. And so essentially, it was the liberation struggle itself that was deeply committed to this vision of creating a non-racial society,

and that emphasized the idea of making sure that white people are always on board inside the liberation struggle.

Later, as the country (South Africa) understood that this new society was going to be an inclusive place, it also became part of a gender discourse—how to ensure that this whole struggle for gender justice is not a woman’s struggle. In the same way that this whole struggle for racial justice was not a black person’s struggle. This later on became a very important part in how we understood the struggle for gender justice.

I want to use an analogy to point out the difficulty that we often have in how we approach change transformation in the middle of systemic injustice, and the tension created by the fact that that we need to hold a notion of forgiveness if we don’t want to become mere cogs in the machinery that extends problems on an on-going basis. It’s an analogy that I had used with my class recently in relation to AIDS work.

Suppose you are here at the bottom of a river one day and you see a baby floating down the river. Your immediate instinct is to rush and save the baby and hold the baby, cover the baby and care for the baby, possibly try to find out what happened and so on, but that’s not immediately the most important thing. Then another baby comes down the river and yet another. You may think that the best option for you is to now set up a camp here, and build some sort of institution at the bottom of the river to catch all these babies. You might possibly have your own deep unfulfilled childhood needs and so do all of these things to also meet those needs. You could possibly get grants from different entities to look after all those babies and thereby become a bit of a media person. “*Farid Esack, you know, ‘Islam and AIDS’, ‘the pioneer in the field of Islam and AIDS’.*” *And so it becomes another ‘me and my ego’.*

How do we deal with the pain of pausing? Of saying, ‘Wait, I must leave this space. Possibly at the time I leave this space another baby could be coming down, but I need to go up stream and find out who is throwing the babies down the river. And then I need to confront that person.’ Confrontation doesn’t come easily to nice people. Confrontation, when our immediate impulse is to not deal—whatever our reasons—and I’m not saying at the very personal level, because all of us are moved by deeply altruistic, deeply personal reasons for all the good that we do. If we would just reflect on the inner motives that really drive us, none of us will do any good ever. I am not saying that the fact that we are driven by inexplicable personal motives for all the good that we do does not mean that we don’t act and we don’t do good. I am saying that occasionally we need to ask the hard question, and to do the thing that goes against our immediate goodness. Stop and go up and see who it is and be willing to confront. But this confrontation with the other that is throwing the babies down is not always a confrontation with the external other. It is also a confrontation, an on-going confrontation, with the internal other. When Moses has a responsibility to challenge Pharaoh, for a number of different reasons which I will come to in a moment, Moses also has a responsibility to ask, ‘What of Pharaoh is there inside me?’

I will now explore three aspects of the idea of working with others creatively:

Working with others was an amazing part of the liberation struggle. Years ago, I wrote *Side by Side with Others*. My major book is called *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*. The idea of working with others was a very important idea.

Here is a story I spoke about in another publication of mine. I was just fascinated by our neighbors, in the middle of this poverty (within which I grew up.) I was fascinated by how, in the middle of all of this suffering and marginalization, we still believe that only Muslims go to paradise. Our family was utterly dependent on our Christian neighbors and neighborhoods— Mrs. Batista, a Catholic lady at the back, Auntie Katie, a New Apostolic lady on our one side, another Auntie Katie—another New Apostolic lady on the other side. In the ghettos, the other side is not ‘there.’ The other side is right here. Quite literally, our doors were right next to each other. There is a fence there but you can stand on one side and knock on the door of your neighbor. That is how the council had built our houses. Yet, in the middle of our utter dependence on our neighbors in this poverty, we still had the ideas of the other, as the other— certainly when it comes to God’s grace. So I came to understand how this otherness works in terms of the creation of a new vision for a new society, and how it works against who we really are. *The Call of Islam*, an organization that I founded, became quite active in the liberation struggle and well known for our ideas of working with non Muslims, and our endless arguments with other theologians on the ideas of working with non Muslims.

In the middle of this, we had our own hierarchy also. One day I got a call from one of the Call of Islam members. I was in Johannesburg at a huge fundraising event in Cape Town held by the United Democratic Front, which was the internal wing of the African National Congress.

There was this huge fair and the *Call of Islam* people had just arrived and found out where their booth was. The problem for us was that the (Call of Islam) booth was next to an organization that we despised—the Organization of Lesbians and Gay Activists. So, here we were in the forefront, in the face of solidarity against Apartheid, side-by-side with the other—but which other? Only the other that we can stomach, not the other that we can’t deal with at all.

Later on, years later, as I got to know more people in the *Call of Islam*, I found out that there were several people inside the *Call of Islam* who were gay themselves—this is the crime of not recognizing your own internal otherness, the crime of recognizing others as “out there.” Later on I understood the violence that you do to your own internal otherness when you don’t embrace, as a man, your own femininity, or when, as a woman, you don’t embrace your own masculinity. When you don’t embrace who you are in your own transformation of becoming all: of being created by God on an ongoing basis. So this is the first thing that I want to say about working with others. It’s an enormous struggle to not see the other out there, to look instead, at how do I forgive Pharaoh, how do I embrace Pharaoh as out there and understand that, yes, Pharaoh is out there but Pharaoh is also in here.

When you embrace Pharaoh out there it's also part of a struggle of reconciling and embracing the Pharaoh inside here.

When we say that we need to work creatively with others, we're really also talking about working in a way that creates, but that also requires the painful task of destruction. Sometimes it requires the destruction of systems. The new South African cannot co-exist along with Apartheid. To confront racism is not easy. To confront patriarchy is not easy. To confront homophobia is not easy. So when we say that we want to walk and work along with others, we must be hard also. We must have the willingness to confront. It's not just about embracing. It's not just about being nice. And I'll be honest with you, this is one of the awkward things that I feel about the liberal circle and the interfaith circles. It is so much about being nice, which is one of the reasons for the proliferation of this "airport material"—all the cuddly stuff. It's not only about all the cuddly stuff. The confrontation with the self is not an easy one either.

Here is the last point that I want to make is about forgiveness in relation to working with self and other. We forgive for two reasons. The primary reason that we forgive is for ourselves. One part is for ourselves today and only the second part of forgiveness is for the self tomorrow. When we say that we forgive for ourselves today, it is part of the acknowledgement of our own vulnerability of who we are, and about our own need to become whole people. I cannot become a person when I hold all of these things against another group or against another society. I cannot reflect and dream, imagine possibilities of what I could possibly become for as long as I am wrapped up in the crimes that you have committed against me. And so it's about who I want to be today. It's about the liberating possibilities of becoming, even as I exist in a relationship of being subjugated by the other.

Victor Frankl, a survivor of the Holocaust, speaks about one of the things that he saw in the year in Auschwitz. One of his companions who is taken off to the gas chambers has a dry piece of bread in his hand and as he goes, he hands this piece of bread over to somebody else. He doesn't know that he is walking towards certain death. Victor Frankl says that this is the last and perhaps the only freedom that human beings have—to be in control of their responses however limited it may be, in any given situation. In this man's march towards death he was in control of his own humanity, manifested in the simple act of passing his last piece of bread onto another person.

We relate to others not because we are doing others a favor, but because we owe it to ourselves. Part of our own becoming is about today, but we also forgive for tomorrow. We carry vulnerability within us. We never know, brothers and sisters, where we'll be tomorrow. We never know how desperate we will be for the grace and the forgiveness of others. I've been to Buckingham Palace once. I stayed at Windsor Castle a couple of times. Whenever I feel like being awed by Windsor Castle and the royalty and the pomp surrounding them, I think about Her Majesty having constipation. And I often think about life like that. Can you imagine between this rather pathetic figure constipated on the one hand and on the other hand this human being?

For me as a Muslim, the Day of Judgment is utterly dependent on the grace of God. On that day, when there will be no shade except the shade of God. Who am I to not forgive—caught between the toilet bowl and God's grace? How do I walk over other people? How do I not care? How do I become hard? How do say I cannot do it for you, my brother, I cannot forgive you, my sister? And so it is part of just recognizing my own vulnerability tomorrow, my own need of being in grace that I need to forgive.

Two quick ones:

Who owns forgiveness despite all of this? I don't think that we can ever own forgiveness entirely. Forgiveness always in large measure belongs to the person that is being wronged. So we need to be careful when we talk about Palestinians, when we talk about Israelis, when we talk about Black people, when we talk about women. We need to be careful about who are we in relation to those categories that we are talking about, to assign the need to forgive to those people. We also need to make sure that those victims, wherever those victims may be, never lose the right to say yes or no. How do we work with them to get to that position, yes, but ownership of forgiveness never moves from those who are hurt to those who are doing the hurt.

We only ever work towards forgiveness. I don't know if there is ever a stage where you say I have been forgiven completely. In the religious discourse this may be a different thing when you say you have been cleansed by the blood of the lamb but with due respect to all of those beliefs that people may have, I think it's an ongoing process. As you are discovering the different dimensions of Pharaoh out there, as you are discovering the different dimensions of Pharaoh inside here, there are always new discoveries. For example, how do we know today, (after hundreds and hundreds of years, we are beginning to understand) that women have souls, that women are really equal to men. Not in real terms but we know that that it is how it should be, and we are beginning to understand. For many, many years people didn't think of women as having souls. For many, many years, people didn't think of human beings that are owned by them, as slaves, as having feelings. Is it possible that in another couple of hundred years that we will arrive at a stage where we recognize other sentient beings that inhabit this world with us as also capable of feeling, as also having a right to life. That it was in fact wrong of us to kill animals and to eat them. Is that possible? Perhaps. I am saying that we have been creating all the time, a deeper and deeper understanding of what it means to be. For now, we are understanding what it means to be a human being, but in the future, we will understand what it means to be a sentient being in a larger cosmos, part of a larger creative force. We will understand what it means to be created on an ongoing basis by a larger transcendent force.

One last story. In the middle of all of these, when I look at the program and see the immensity of all of the issues that we are facing—we have Tibet on the agenda and there is Palestine on the agenda and it is this and it is that. Then it is global warming again... and when do we start the withdrawal of the troops from Iraq... and did you see last night in the papers again the United States administration is now petitioning the courts to stop



the detainees in Guantanamo Bay from having any kind of decent access to their attorneys and so on. It is all so complex—the Jews, the Palestinians. I did go and watch that Al Gore movie, you know, but it is just too much. Let me walk away from it all.

Two things, people. In this walking away from it all we really become complacent in the crimes that we are witnessing around us. You only say that you are walking away from the problem. The reality is that you are embracing the problem as a part of the problem. All indifference is co-optation. All indifference is a part of criminality. But we embrace problems not so much because we're going to overcome them but as a part of what we owe to ourselves.

There this story in the Qur'an of Joseph. We share this story with our other religions, of Joseph being sold on the market as a slave. (Though this part of the story isn't in the Qur'an, it's in some Hadith literature.) So Joseph is being sold on the market as a slave and an elderly woman is seen going towards the market. The news had traveled around the city that this man was on the market, he was this really handsome slave. This woman had had a dream that Joseph was God's servant and she was on her way to the market. She was met by somebody else. "Where are you off to?" "I'm going off to the auction, had this dream that this man was there." And this rather pathetic looking woman had nothing except a small pail of water. "With which fortune are planning to free – to buy – this man?" And she says, "Me and this pail of water. Let it not be said that on the Day of Judgment that I understood that God's servant was being sold on the market and I did not do what I could with what I have to buy him and set him free." This woman had the vision of Joseph being free. She imagined Joseph being free. It was that imagining on her part that drove her. It wasn't the context of her own poverty. It wasn't the context of her own inadequacy. At the end of the day we only have our dreams that drive us, not the reality, and it is our dreams, and the extent to which we work to make them true, that define who we are, not our dreams really becoming true.

Thank you very much and God bless you all.

Question and Answer Session:

*Dr. Susan Gere: Dr. Esack is happy to take questions and I invite your engagement with Dr. Esack.*

*Member of the audience: When did you start publishing books and what motivated you to do so?*

I was always confronted by this question, "You guys are working with these non-Muslims. Doesn't the Qur'an say...?" I am a Muslim of course, deeply committed to Islam but I was troubled by many verses in the Qur'an. So it was at one of my retreats when I was just fed up with these Muslims raising endless questions with our working with non-Muslims that I decided to sit down and look carefully at what the Qur'an says. I took three weeks off from work and I wrote an essay titled Side by Side with Non Muslims. After I wrote it I thought it looks good, man, looks good, and that's what first got me going. At the moment I am using another book of mine in an Introduction to the

Qur'an course, it is called An Introduction to the Qur'an. When I was thinking about which book I should assign for this course, I didn't kind of think I should be using this Intro to the Qur'an course. And whenever I hear someone using this course I keep on thinking, "Oh why would anyone use this book?" Sometimes I get caught between "I don't think there's anything really useful in here" and "Oh gosh, this is really awesome, man. Did you write this?" But part of writing, I think, it is to give voice and, increasingly, I'm realizing the value of telling stories. And so it's not always kind of, you know, when you are with the big boys in the academy... Often at a place like Harvard and so on, you need to be careful about how you tell these stories because people sit in your audience and they laugh at your stories. 'But bloody hell', they think, 'why is he so short on theory? And why he's not citing Foucault or Gardamer? Sometimes part of being in the big league you think, "Wait, I must write something academic now" but at other times you think 'bloody hell, Farid, it's not about showing these other big boys, you know... I'm also big boy, you know...' It's about the fact that you have something to say. Tell stories, speak to people. You are not writing for a dissertation committee. These are some of the tensions that I have as a writer.

*Member of the audience: I am interested in how the view of forgiveness presents itself in the South African culture, in the Muslim culture and ... your own personal experience.*

Is that the topic for the next conference? I think in South Africa we are grateful. We are grateful for the political leadership that our country had. We are grateful for the religious leadership that our country had. I think that despite the fact that I didn't want to... I don't want to feed into this idea where we eulogize individuals... people like Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela and many, many others. I think in all of these people we've had remarkably visionary leadership, people that helped us to in many ways begin to forgive, but we also see the inadequacy of the forgiveness discourse in South Africa. We had The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, yes. The TRC made a number of recommendations—by the way, just a month ago the TRC celebrated its tenth year. Now we see how power political need has made it expedient to ignore (many of) the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

So while there was this enormous capacity on the part of people to forgive, the understanding was that society would work out its way to also undo the damage of the past and many of the leaders in our liberation struggle would become just boring. At the moment, though, many South Africans are beginning to wonder about these folks. Are much of the leadership of our country just occupying now the spaces that other white people had occupied before, repeating the same patterns of exploitation and so on? Were we taken for a ride? I had criticized the TRC from a religious angle. I really thought that what was happening in South Africa was a deep Christianization of the forgiveness and reconciliation process. Muslims and Jews are tiny minorities in South Africa. Both of our communities have always played important roles inside the South African community. Sadly, neither Muslims as a community nor Jews as a community made any significant contribution to the forgiveness discourse. I don't know if I'm really able to separate my personal forgiveness issues from my identity as a Muslim and my South Africaness. All

of these are really just overlapping things for me, but in some ways this reflects in the way in which I've told my larger story.

*Member of the audience: Can you speak about...rigidity within our own cultural groups.*

It is enormously difficult. As you are reaching out, you need to hold on. You are reaching out as a Jew to these Christians, to these Muslims, and then when you look back your own synagogue has said bye-bye to you. Get out, get lost. Who's he? He's not speaking for us. So the tension is to always look back; do I have my community with me? For me as a Muslim it was an enormous challenge. You know, I was a part of the religious leadership of the Muslim community. I would sit with the rest of the ulama for hours and hours discussing the correct way of slaughtering beef, cow, and whether these particular outlets, you know—supermarkets—are really halal or not. Whether the rennet was halal or not (Rennet is an ingredient in cheese) for hours. Meanwhile our kids are being slaughtered on the streets, and you are talking about the rennet. But I found this clergy enormously challenging. I don't know how. I often found that how I carry myself personally, how I carry myself with humor, how I empathize with them as human beings, those things really help. Sometimes (it helped just) avoiding theological issues, just talking to them as a person. Relating to people as people.

I often find that behind these images of doctrinaire-hardened individuals, they are also broken people. Orthodoxy hides a lot of brokenness. Orthodoxy or fundamentalism is often the way in which communities and individuals hide. It's a way of (covering) an inability to deal with their brokenness. Those of us committed to pluralism, have the strength to reach out to other communities often because we are so strong that we can do it. And so when we recognize the brokenness that hides behind the façade of those rules and regulations and orthodoxy then we begin to relate to them as human beings. I often find that we in our own open mindedness and our own pluralism often become deeply contemptuous of backward communities, of reactionary individuals. I don't want to say that we are digging graves for ourselves but (we often become contemptuous) in the way in which we relate to our own communities. They don't like the contempt and they don't like the arrogance with which they see us dealing. Those are some of the insights that I have. Look, I don't want to say it's only our problem. When our community rejects us, it's also our community's problem, it's also a problem of orthodoxy. But I think we have the responsibility to recognize the brokenness that often lies behind the hardened rhetoric.

*Member of the audience: We made a visit to South Africa shortly at the end of the TRC time. There were a lot of people and a comment was made that the blacks have more willingness to forgive even in the absence of apology than the whites. And there was something about the South Africans themselves who were oppressed and were willing to sort of forgive because they didn't want to hate, they want to be unburdened of going around hating their enemy, so to speak. I don't know if that phenomenon is true but I think Tutu sort of said it, that blacks are much more willing than the whites to acknowledge.*

Yeah, this is one of the really sad things in many ways. Those who know anything about the TRC will know that wasn't the white thing. Whites didn't come. Whites turned off their TV screens. Whites heard about this thing that was happening there. Occasionally TRC hearings took place in white areas. There was the rare white person that came and said I'm sorry. Whites who did come to the TRC came because this was a quid pro quid. I needed to come or I'd be in trouble. I needed to come because I need amnesty. I don't know which way this government is going to go. It's like sorry... It's like saying sorry, you know, you're caught with your hands in the cookie jar. You're not sorry because your hands were in the cookie jar, you're sorry because someone then would slap it if you don't say sorry. So even those who said sorry it wasn't... And so the amazing thing about this forgiveness thing there was no request for forgiveness. You may know that part of the TRC process was that people didn't have to say sorry. People didn't have to ask for forgiveness. They own up to the fact that they did it. So it's an inadequate process on the one end but also remarkable on the other. This forgiveness occurred, as you said, without people asking for it. In some ways, I'm caught still between the idea that all of this was a miracle. It was. And at the same time people also know the many, many unhealed wounds that there are. And that it is difficult, you know, when you don't have food in your house to hear that your forgiveness has been interpreted in such a way that your killer can continue living off on this huge state pension that he had. And you still don't have food in your house. This is one of the things that I meant when I said about forgiveness being an ongoing thing. When you forgave you thought it would also imply food in my house. Especially if you are forgiving for the crime of injustice, you are entitled to then think that it implied food on my table. And this man is still getting away with this huge pension. He asked for it. Founders keepers, losers weepers. It is possible to forgive the one moment and after some years think that I was wrong and for you to become all hardened again. But you are right, it was very much a one way thing that also shows the wonderful ability of people to forgive without being asked to forgive. I think it's great.

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