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### **Bringing the Personal into Public Life: How Relational Morality and Meaningful Action Can Enrich an Organization's Work**

Anna N. Taft

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Bringing the Personal into Public Life:  
How Relational Morality and Meaningful Action  
Can Enrich an Organization's Work

By

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*Abstract*

While an overly detached perspective dominates contemporary discourse on development and other public projects, an alternative approach, built on a personal perspective, can enrich an organization's work. Organizations can bring elements of a personal perspective into the public realm, employing the virtues of relational morality and restoring the possibility for meaningful action. Narrative accounts from many people who have experienced The Tandana Foundation's work show how one organization has brought a personal approach to collective work, generating positive results. While emphasizing the personal aspects is important to counterbalance the dominance of a detached perspective, it is important to bring elements of both perspectives together in order to steer between the converse excesses of instrumentalism or alienation and pettiness or parochialism. As organizations like The Tandana Foundation, as well as other NGOs, institutions, and businesses, apply a personal vocabulary to public life, they reclaim space for agency and meaningful action.

## *Introduction*

Modernity brought a complex set of interconnected changes to intellectual, political, and economic life in Europe, which have since become dominant in most centers of global power and come to influence most parts of the world. These changes brought both important benefits, such as rapid increases in technological capabilities and recognition of the ideals of universal human dignity and freedom, as well as more problematic developments, such as alienation from the world, from each other, and from ourselves. Akeel Bilgrami argues that this alienation results from “the transformation of the human subject to an object or, to put it more elaborately, an increasing *detachment* of the wrong kind in one’s relation to the world, including one’s relations to others and, therefore, an increasing loss of genuine subjectivity and subjective engagement with the world and with others” (*Secularism, Identity, Enchantment* 130, emphasis in original). Like most aspects of public life in the West, the development project, as the attempt to bring all societies forward upon a supposed continuum of advancement toward a particular endpoint that happened to look like “the First World,” is dominated by the vocabulary of a detached perspective, and the results of this orientation have sometimes been destructive and wasteful.

Although a detached perspective dominates public discourse, in everyday life many of us still use a personal, relational viewpoint, and this approach can be used to temper the alienation of the dominant public framework. Taking a personal perspective means staying grounded, looking at others eye-to-eye, rather than surveying a panorama of human processes from above, and this stance toward others generates relational moral obligations. It is very difficult to apply personal morality at the level of a society or polity, because by definition relationships do not scale and because, as Reinhold Niebuhr points out, the needs of a society require the use of means that are incompatible with personal morality (257). While organizations typically employ

the vocabulary of a detached perspective, they do not have to do so. By emphasizing aspects of a personal perspective in their approach, they can provide a mediating level to assert the relevance of personal morality for public life. Organizations can temper modernity's excesses of detachment by bringing personal morality to collective action.

The Tandana Foundation is one organization that demonstrates the possibilities and results of bringing a personal perspective to public life. By starting with a personal approach and a willingness to engage with others who are different, The Tandana Foundation has developed as an organization committed to values usually associated with personal interactions, such as sharing, forgiveness, gratitude, respect, responsibility, caring, and a desire to maintain relationships. The experiences generated by the Foundation's work show that, whereas traditional "development" has often failed, a personal approach applied to similar community work can bring about positive results.

Because the detached perspective is so dominant, an organization seeking to do unalienated work must emphasize the personal. At the same time, it cannot take a purely personal approach, or it would find itself in the converse excesses of pettiness and parochialism. Elements of personal and detached perspectives can be brought into productive tensions that improve the work. Group-level relationships can moderate individual jealousies, while detached ideas of fairness can limit the problems of favoritism. A task orientation from an instrumental perspective and the simple "being with" of personal compassion can be brought into conversation to facilitate improvements. Universalism at a deep level can be combined with attention to context at the level of particulars to promote dignity for everyone.

Despite the challenges and imperfections, aspects of a personal approach can be brought into public life with salutary effects. The work of organizations, as well as institutions and

businesses, applying a personal vocabulary to public life can facilitate the acceptance of wider applications of elements of personal morality to politics. The personal approach can provide a ground from which to resist the excesses of detachment that have come to dominate the public realm and to enrich collective work with actions, values, virtues, and experiences typically associated with the personal and private. This enrichment is necessary in order to reclaim our human agency and the possibility of meaningful action.

In this thesis, I will argue that organizations can bring elements of a personal perspective into the public realm, tempering the excesses of alienation dominant in modern approaches to collective life and restoring agency and the possibility for meaningful action. After describing the liabilities of the overly detached perspective that dominates contemporary discourse on development and other public projects, I will offer an alternative approach, built on a personal perspective. Drawing on narrative accounts from many people who have experienced The Tandana Foundation's work, I will show how one organization has brought a personal approach to collective work, generating positive results. Next, I will explain how elements of a detached perspective can be brought into conversation with a personal approach to avoid falling into excesses of pettiness or parochialism. I will show that as organizations apply a personal vocabulary to public life they reclaim space for agency and meaningful action.



## I. A Detached, Instrumental Perspective

### *Detachment*

In eighteenth-century Europe, a set of profound and complex changes in the dominant intellectual, economic, and political frameworks took place and ushered in what is known as the modern age. Tzvetan Todorov argues that this period, “was an era of debate rather than consensus” (4); nonetheless, he finds three ideas central to the Enlightenment project: “autonomy; the human purpose of our acts; and universality” (5). In such a major shift there are always many strands, and the relationship between various positions can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. When dealing with such a complex set of thinkers and ideas in a time that was, as Todorov asserts, characterized by disagreement, it is, of course difficult to define the “central” ideas and even to articulate the relationship between different strands of thought. For example, Akeel Bilgrami highlights different views on the relationship between the strand of thought known as Romanticism and the classic ideas of Enlightenment, noting that Romanticism has at times been considered a “Counter-Enlightenment” (*Secularism, Identity, Enchantment* 178), while he sees the Romantic legacy as a “Radical Enlightenment” (ibid. 214). Regardless of the relationships between the different strands of thought, it is clear that some significant shifts took place, and that the effects of these shifts shape the ways we approach collective life in modernity. Certainly, these shifts brought important benefits, including the ideas of universal human dignity and freedom, and the science that they accompanied has enabled vast technological feats. At the same time, they brought more problematic developments, particularly alienation.

Bilgrami describes alienation as, “the transformation of the human subject to an object or, to put it more elaborately, an increasing *detachment* of the wrong kind in one’s relation to the world, including one’s relations to others and, therefore, an increasing loss of genuine

subjectivity and subjective engagement with the world and with others” (ibid. 130, emphasis in original). He argues that both Gandhi and Marx critiqued this alienation that had come to dominate the West. According to Bilgrami, what Gandhi opposed was not science itself, but rather the:

*dominant status* that modern science has tended to acquire in the cultures in which it flourishes under the watch of power- and profit-oriented wealth, and the *outlook* that this generates in those cultures. It is this outlook that gives rise to the forms of detachment mentioned earlier that are the sources of the alienation that comes from undermining our subjectivity and moral engagement with which we would otherwise inhabit the world. When it begins to dominate a culture, science’s methods are applied in domains where they are inappropriate and this is the basis for the creation of a mentality and eventually institutions that, in turn, generate the forms of detachment that threaten the subject-bearing and agentive elements of human life that are the basis for an unalienated life. (ibid. 131, emphases in original)

Bilgrami then elaborates a set of questions that are implied in Gandhi’s critique of this alienation:

1) How and when did we transform the concept of *nature* into the concept of *natural resources*? 2) How and when did we transform the concept of *human beings* into the concept of *citizens*? 3) How and when did we transform the concept of *people* into the concept of *populations*? and 4) How and when did we transform the concept of *knowledges to live by* into the concept of *expertise to rule by*? (ibid. 133, emphases in original)

Nature was becoming desacralized, turned into resources available for extraction. Politically, human beings became citizens, as reliance increased on what Bilgrami calls, “perhaps the Enlightenment’s most fundamental assumption—that what is bad in us can be constrained and overcome by good politics” (ibid. 145). People were aggregated and objectified as populations. As Bilgrami notes, “The reification of people into populations, thus, abstracts attention from particular effects and numbs the sensibility to the connection between theory and practice” (ibid. 143). As God was conceived increasingly as outside of the world, rather than immanent in it, expertise became necessary first in a priesthood and then, by extension, in government, law, and other areas. As Bilgrami argues, “Expertise ceases to respond to people as people, converts them

into populations, something to be studied in a detached way rather than to be engaged with for the needs they have” (ibid.). According to Bilgrami, Marx diagnosed a similar alienation, stressing both, “the objectification of the relations between nature and human beings such that nature was not seen any longer as prompting their practical and moral engagement (‘living in’), but rather seen as the object of their detached and extractive gaze (‘mastery and control’)” and “the objectification of the relations between human beings themselves whereby they are not mutually seen as *subjects* to be *engaged* with but rather—with detachment—as a source of production of a form of value that was at once abstract and material” (ibid. 151, emphases in original).

Hannah Arendt also describes a shift to a more distant viewpoint and points out its dangers. Arendt traces the desire for a very distant perspective to antiquity, particularly in the aim to use philosophy to overcome the frustrations of life. She recounts Cicero’s story of Scipio’s dream, in which:

Scipio is invited to look down on the earth, and the earth appears so small that “he was pained to see our empire as a mere dot.” Whereupon he is told: if the earth appears small to you from here, then always look up to the sky so that you may be able to despise human matters. For what kind of fame is it that you may be able to attain in the conversation of men or what kind of glory among them? Don’t you see how narrow the space is in which glory and fame reside? And those who speak about us today, how long will they talk? And even if there were reason to place our trust in tradition and the memory of future generations, one day there will be natural catastrophes — floods or fire — so that we cannot obtain a long-lasting fame, let alone an eternal one. If you raise your eyes you will see how futile all this is; fame was never eternal, and the oblivion of eternity extinguishes it. (*The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, 159-160)

She cites this story as an example of, “how certain trains of thought actually aim at thinking oneself out of the world, and by means of relativization” (ibid. 160). In her view, the frustrations of action have always led to a desire to get out of the scene of human affairs to a distant perspective. However, she argues that it was not until modern science enabled space travel that

we were able actually to approach this viewpoint. She warns of the consequences for meaningfulness of taking such a distant perspective:

Without as yet actually occupying the point where Archimedes had wished to stand, we have found a way to act on the earth as though we disposed of terrestrial nature from outside, from the point of view of Einstein's "observer freely poised in space." If we look down from this point upon what is going on on earth and upon the various activities of men, that is, if we apply the Archimedean point to ourselves, then these activities will indeed appear to ourselves as no more than "overt behavior," which we can study with the same methods we use to study the behavior of rats. Seen from a sufficient distance, the cars in which we travel and which we know we built ourselves will look as though they were, as Heisenberg once put it, "as inescapable a part of ourselves as the snail's shell is to its occupant." All our pride in what we can do will disappear into some kind of mutation in the human race; the whole of technology, seen from this point, in fact no longer appears "as the result of a conscious human effort to extend man's material powers, but rather as a large-scale biological process." Under these circumstances, speech and everyday language would indeed be no longer a meaningful utterance that transcends behavior even if it only expresses it, and it would much better be replaced by the extreme and in itself meaningless formalism of mathematical signs. (*Between Past and Future* 280)

Seen from such a distant perspective, all human activities appear simply as processes and there is no possibility of meaningfulness. Arendt elaborates, "Invisible processes have engulfed every tangible thing, every individual entity that is visible to us, degrading them into functions of an over-all process. . . . What the concept of process implies is that the concrete and the general, the single thing or event and the universal meaning, have parted company" (*Between Past and Future* 63-64). From a very distant perspective, we see only processes and nothing we do can have meaning. Arendt points out that this very distant point of view has become dominant. She argues:

How deep-rooted this usage of the Archimedean point against ourselves is can be seen in the very metaphors which dominate scientific thought today. The reason why scientists can tell us about the "life" in the atom—where apparently every particle is "free" to behave as it wants and the laws ruling these movements are the same statistical laws which, according to the social scientists, rule human behavior and make the multitude behave as it must, no matter how "free" the individual particle may appear to be in its choices—the reason, in other words, why the behavior of the infinitely small particle is not only similar in pattern to the planetary system as it appears to us but resembles the

life and behavior patterns in human society is, of course, that we look and live in this society as though we were as far removed from our own human existence as we are from the infinitely small and the immensely large which, even if they could be perceived by the finest instruments, are too far away from us to be experienced. (*The Human Condition* 323)

We view the interactions that we experience directly as though they were too far away for us to experience them, thereby alienating ourselves from each other and from the world in which we live.

### *Instrumentalization*

While the urge to step back and take a more distant perspective often begins with a quest for greater knowledge or understanding, to overcome the epistemological limitations of being positioned within, it easily enables an attempt to dominate and control what is seen. The distant perspective is “above” that which it surveys, both in terms of the spatial metaphor and in terms of an exercise of power. Edward Said describes the vision of the Orientalist as a “holistic view of the Orient (description, monumental record)” (239). The Orientalist “surveys the Orient from above, with the aim of getting hold of the whole sprawling panorama before him—culture, religion, mind, history, society” (ibid.). Narrative, which exerts pressure against this vision, “asserts that the domination of reality by vision is no more than a will to power” (240).

Emmanuel Levinas likewise sees vision as domination. He argues that, “[i]nasmuch as the access to beings concerns vision, it dominates those beings, exercises a power over them. A thing is given, offers itself to me. In gaining access to it I maintain myself within the same” (194).

For Levinas, “In knowledge or vision the object seen can indeed determine an act, but it is an act that in some way appropriates the ‘seen’ to itself, integrates it into a world by endowing it with signification, and, in the last analysis, constitutes it” (195). Taking a perspective of panoramic

vision, we seek to control that which we see by fitting it into a static array that we can comprehend. The unknown becomes domesticated as something we can define and control.

An additional step is needed to get from the use of a distant perspective to see and the exercise of control over what is seen. If we are completely detached from what we see, in fact, there are no possibilities for practical engagement with it. If, however, the shift is not only spatial, to a location “above” what we see, but also to a mode of interacting with it “from without,” then we can attempt to control what we see. The instrumentalism of the mode of fabrication allows for domination. Arendt argues that what she calls homo faber, the prototypical fabricator, “conducts himself as lord and master of the whole earth” (*The Human Condition* 139) and “is indeed a lord and master, not only because he is the master or has set himself up as the master of all nature but because he is master of himself and his doings” (ibid. 145). Arendt argues that frustration with the risks of action, combined with the modern belief that we can know only what we make led to elevation of the mode of fabrication as the highest ideal and to its generalization to the realm of human affairs, which ordinarily would be approached in the mode of action. She argues that:

Exasperation with the threefold frustration of action— the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors— is almost as old as recorded history. It has always been a great temptation, for men of action no less than for men of thought, to find a substitute for action in the hope that the realm of human affairs may escape the haphazardness and moral irresponsibility inherent in a plurality of agents. (ibid. 220)

Because of these difficulties of action, people have often sought to replace it with fabrication, treating human affairs as though they could be made. While “the attempt to eliminate action because of its uncertainty and to save human affairs from their frailty by dealing with them as though they were or could become the planned products of human making,” (ibid. 230), was not new, in modernity this approach became more explicit and more dominant. Arendt suggests that,

“the modern age’s conviction that man can know only what he makes, that his allegedly higher capacities depend upon making and that he therefore is primarily homo faber” elevated the “toolmaker and producer of things, and therefore could overcome the deep-seated contempt and suspicion in which the tradition had held the whole sphere of fabrication” (ibid. 228). Arendt finds the attitudes of fabrication evident in the modern outlook:

And, indeed, among the outstanding characteristics of the modern age from its beginning to our own time we find the typical attitudes of homo faber: his instrumentalization of the world, his confidence in tools and in the productivity of the maker of artificial objects; his trust in the all-comprehensive range of the means-end category, his conviction that every issue can be solved and every human motivation reduced to the principle of utility; his sovereignty, which regards everything given as material and thinks of the whole of nature as of “an immense fabric from which we can cut out whatever we want to resew it however we like”; his equation of intelligence with ingenuity, that is, his contempt for all thought which cannot be considered to be “the first step . . . for the fabrication of artificial objects, particularly of tools to make tools, and to vary their fabrication indefinitely”; finally, his matter-of-course identification of fabrication with action. (ibid. 305-306)

These attitudes, which are evident today in so many trends, ranging from the focus on STEM education to the limitless extraction of oil and minerals to the drive to plan social change, illustrate the degree to which fabrication has become the dominant mode. Even religious movements that may seem or even claim to challenge modern ways of thinking are often steeped in the mode of fabrication. For example, “Although [American Christian] fundamentalists made modernist theology one of their primary enemies, they drew on modernist thought and practice just as much as their liberal counterparts. Their dependence on modernism was most obvious in how they read their Bibles. They treated it like an engineering manual. They saw individual verses as pieces of data that they could extract, classify, cross-reference, quantify, place into taxonomies and then reassemble, to form something new” (Sutton). Furthermore, the vocabulary that is used in nearly all discussions of public concerns also highlights this dominance. Above, we saw Bilgrami’s summary of Gandhi’s critique of the alienation implied in a shift from the

words: *nature, human beings, people, and knowledges* to the technical terms: *natural resources, citizens, populations, and expertise*. Arendt also sees a shift in vocabulary that marks the modern tendency to treat action as though it were fabrication:

How persistent and successful the transformation of action into a mode of making has been is easily attested by the whole terminology of political theory and political thought, which indeed makes it almost impossible to discuss these matters without using the category of means and ends and thinking in terms of instrumentality. (ibid. 229)

These vocabulary shifts not only illustrate the change in perspective; they also limit the ways that we can think about and engage with public life.

Fabrication is guided by instrumentality, because the goal of the fabrication process is a defined end, the idea of which exists prior to the work. Within the fabrication process, this end not only “justifies the means; it does more, it produces and organizes them” (ibid. 153). The extension of this instrumental framework to the realm of human affairs has several dangerous consequences. First, it means that any means are justified if they serve the chosen ends; “As long as we believe that we deal with ends and means in the political realm, we shall not be able to prevent anybody’s using all means to pursue recognized ends” (229). This consequence is unavoidable, because “to make a statement about ends that do not justify all means is to speak in paradoxes” (ibid.). Second, it justifies violence; the “element of violation and violence is present in all fabrication, and homo faber, the creator of the human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature” (ibid. 139). When applied to human affairs, such violence becomes more dangerous.

Arendt cites the examples of Machiavelli and Robespierre:

They understood the act of founding entirely in the image of making; the question to them was literally how to “make” a unified Italy or a French republic, and their justification of violence was guided by and received its inherent plausibility from the underlying argument: You cannot make a table without killing trees, you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, you cannot make a republic without killing people. (*Between Past and Future* 139)



Not only is there violence in the making, but also in the only kind of unmaking that can be done from within the mode of fabrication; “one of the great dangers of acting in the mode of making and within its categorical framework of means and ends lies in the concomitant self-deprivation of the remedies inherent only in action, so that one is bound not only to do with the means of violence necessary for all fabrication, but also to undo what he has done as he undoes an unsuccessful object, by means of destruction” (*The Human Condition* 238). Third, treating human affairs as though they could be fabricated precludes meaning. As Arendt explains, “The trouble with the utility standard inherent in the very activity of fabrication is that the relationship between means and end on which it relies is very much like a chain whose every end can serve again as a means in some other context” (ibid. 154). Ends become means until we are, “caught in the unending chain of means and ends without ever arriving at some principle which could justify the category of means and end, that is, of utility itself. The ‘in order to’ has become the content of the ‘for the sake of’; in other words, utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness” (ibid. 155). She elaborates:

In the world of homo faber, where everything must be of some use, that is, must lend itself as an instrument to achieve something else, meaning itself can appear only as an end, as an “end in itself” which actually is either a tautology applying to all ends or a contradiction in terms. For an end, once it is attained, ceases to be an end and loses its capacity to guide and justify the choice of means, to organize and produce them. It has now become an object among objects, that is, it has been added to the huge arsenal of the given from which homo faber selects freely his means to pursue his ends. Meaning, on the contrary, must be permanent and lose nothing of its character, whether it is achieved or, rather, found by man or fails man and is missed by him. (ibid.)

In modernity, this confusion of meaning and ends has banished meaning from the world:

Meaning, which can never be the aim of action, and yet, inevitably, will rise out of human deeds after the action itself has come to an end, was now pursued with the same machinery of intentions and organized means as were the particular direct aims of concrete action—with the result that it was as though meaning itself had departed from the world of men and men were left with nothing but an unending chain of purposes in whose progress the

meaningfulness of all past achievements was constantly canceled out by future goals and intentions. (*Between Past and Future* 78)

Meaning, as we shall see in part two, has to do with not having lived in vain, rather than providing for the needs of life. A further drawback of approaching human affairs as though they could be made is that it is unrealistic. Arendt argues:

The idea that only what I am going to make will be real— perfectly true and legitimate in the realm of fabrication— is forever defeated by the actual course of events, where nothing happens more frequently than the totally unexpected. To act in the form of making, to reason in the form of “reckoning with consequences,” means to leave out the unexpected, the event itself, since it would be unreasonable or irrational to expect what is no more than an “infinite improbability.” Since, however, the event constitutes the very texture of reality within the realm of human affairs, where the “wholly improbable happens regularly,” it is highly unrealistic not to reckon with it, that is, not to reckon with something with which nobody can safely reckon. (*The Human Condition* 300)

Though perennially tempting and the dominant approach in modernity, the attempt to deal with human affairs as though they could be fabricated is fraught with many dangers.

As Bilgrami noted, in Gandhi’s critique of scientism the problem is not with instrumentality itself, but with its application to an inappropriate sphere, namely that of human interaction. Also, in alignment with Bilgrami’s explanation of the shift to the concept of expertise to rule by, Arendt notes that the treatment of action as though it were fabrication enabled the concept of expertise in public affairs to develop. When human affairs are addressed as though they could be made, “the statesman is understood to be competent to deal with human affairs in the same sense as the carpenter is competent to make furniture or the physician to heal the sick” (ibid. 111). Action, which ordinarily would be the prerogative of every free person in a community, has been replaced by fabrication, which is the purview of experts. Only experts are now considered qualified to make decisions that shape our collective life.

Both Bilgrami and Arendt describe the advent of the social sciences as a way to produce the expertise that is called for when the mode of fabrication is applied to human affairs.

Bilgrami notes that the idea of opportunities was needed to mediate between a natural world devoid of values and our human mental states. He argues:

It is exactly here I think that we find a role for the social sciences as they have come to be understood in the modern Western paradigm, a cognitive enterprise which navigates resources that the world offers (“opportunities”), for the satisfaction of our states of mind (values as they are conceived in terms of desires and utilities, constrained, when we are lucky, by socially sensitive moral sentiments). Hence this last step, at this intermediate level of description, reveals how the social sciences, quite apart from the details of their intellectual pursuits, came to have a broad underlying mission: to study how *our* desires and utilities (the basis of all values) combined with our probabilistic apprehension and calculation of the desire- (and utility-) satisfying properties *in the world* (opportunities) explain all human individual and collective behavior. (*Secularism, Identity, Enchantment* 155, emphases in original)

Arendt argues that “economics, which substitutes patterns of behavior only in this rather limited field of human activity, was finally followed by the all-comprehensive pretension of the social sciences which, as ‘behavioral sciences,’ aim to reduce man as a whole, in all his activities, to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal” (*The Human Condition* 45). She emphasizes the role of the social sciences in attempting to improve the management of human affairs. She suggests:

The comparatively new social sciences, which so quickly became to history what technology had been to physics, may use the experiment in a much cruder and less reliable way than do the natural sciences, but the method is the same: they too prescribe conditions, conditions to human behavior, as modern physics prescribes conditions to natural processes. If their vocabulary is repulsive and their hope to close the gap between our scientific mastery of nature and our deplored impotence to “manage” human affairs through an engineering science of human relations sounds frightening, it is only because they have decided to treat man as an entirely natural being whose life process can be handled the same way as all other processes. (*Between Past and Future* 59)

In keeping with the approach of fabrication and the modern focus on processes, the social sciences treat human affairs as just another set of processes that can be managed. In doing so, they further remove meaningful action from the realm of possibilities. Arendt points out that, “The application of the law of large numbers and long periods to politics or history signifies

nothing less than the wilful obliteration of their very subject matter, and it is a hopeless enterprise to search for meaning in politics or significance in history when everything that is not everyday behavior or automatic trends has been ruled out as immaterial” (*The Human Condition* 42-43). This temptation to abolish action in favor of fabrication is perennial, because of frustration with its unpredictability, irreversibility, and anonymity; however, if it is replaced with fabrication, we are obliged to accept any means to given ends, the justification of violence, the loss of meaningfulness, and inevitable failure, because the actual course of events is bound to be full of the unexpected.

### *Development*

The development project was born out of the notion of civilizational progress that grew from the experience of progress in scientific research in modernity. Arendt notes that, “When the experience of constant correction in scientific research is generalized, it leads into the curious ‘better and better,’ ‘truer and truer,’ that is, into the boundlessness of progress with its inherent admission that the good and the true are unattainable” (*The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, 54-55). She argues that, “the modern age’s main and entirely new concept, the notion of Progress as the ruling force in human history, placed an unprecedented emphasis on the future” (*The Life of the Mind*, vol. 2, 19). Uday Singh Mehta explains how the liberal justification for empire turned on the universalization of a teleology of civilizational progress in which “[b]oth the immanence of the future that is present in history and the structure that is exemplified by the present are themselves given the cast of progress by a prior commitment to a rationality that identifies in the past and in the present the progressive extension of the future” (85). In the 1940s and 1950s, this idea of civilizational progress was separated from its colonial context and recast as

“development.” Gustavo Esteva points to President Truman’s 1949 inaugural address as the dawn of the “era of development” (6).

Development is a prime example of a domain dominated by a detached and instrumental perspective. It is a clear application of the idea of process to human affairs, as social changes would appear from a very distant perspective. It is also an exemplary case of treating human affairs as though they could be planned and fabricated. Its vocabulary is full of the detached terms Bilgrami mentions, such as natural resources, citizens, populations, and expertise.

“Development experts” are continually called upon to intervene to address the needs of “target populations.” This approach effectively banishes action, and, in fact, politics altogether, from many areas of public life that otherwise would be politically contested. James Ferguson and Larry Lohmann present a case study from Lesotho that shows to what extent development can be considered an “anti-politics machine.” They argue:

a "development" project can effectively squash political challenges to the system not only through enhancing administrative power, but also by casting political questions of land, resources, jobs, or wages as technical "problems" responsive to the technical "development" intervention. If the effects of a "development" project end up forming any kind of strategically coherent or intelligible whole, it is as a kind of "anti-politics" machine, which, on the model of the "anti-gravity" machine of science fiction stories, seems to suspend "politics" from even the most sensitive political operations at the flick of a switch. (7-8)

Development recasts human affairs, with its political questions best addressed through action, as technical questions that are to be solved by experts in the mode of fabrication. In doing so, it expands the reach of the bureaucratic, administrative power of the state. This technical expertise also obscures the (detached and instrumental) moral premises underneath its recommendations.

James Ferguson argues:

I have shown that scientific capitalism seeks to present itself as a non-moral order, in which neutral, technical principles of efficiency and pragmatism give “correct” answers to questions of public policy. Yet a whole set of moral premises are implicit in these

technicizing arguments. Notions of the inviolate rights of individuals, the sanctity of private property, the nobility of capitalist accumulation, and the intrinsic value of “freedom” (understood as the freedom to engage in economic transactions) lie just below the surface of much of the discourse of scientific capitalism. (80)

Because such questions are understood to require technical expertise, rather than human interaction, the “moral premises on which the technicizing justifications of structural adjustment depend almost always remain implicit. ... The morality of the market thus denies its own status as a morality, presenting itself as mere technique” (Ferguson 80-81). This obfuscation of moral premises further entrenches the interests that those premises serve by naturalizing them and treating their results as the inevitable outcomes of a merely technical analysis.

With this approach, development has been remarkably unable to reach its stated goals and has sometimes led to damaging changes. William Easterly describes what he calls the second tragedy of the world’s poor:

This is the tragedy in which the West has spent \$2.3 trillion on foreign aid over the last five decades and still had not managed to get twelve-cent medicine to children to prevent half of all malaria deaths. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still had not managed to get four-dollar bed nets to poor families. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still had not managed to get three dollars to each new mother to prevent five million child deaths. (4)

Ferguson and Lohmann argue that, “‘Development’ projects in Lesotho have consistently failed to achieve their stated objects, not least because they are based on a ‘construction’ of the country that bears little relation to prevailing realities. They do, however, succeed in expanding the field of bureaucratic state power in people’s everyday lives” (1). Drawing both on the failures of development to reach its stated goals and on the often-lamentable power relations that it entrenches and expands, a group of “postdevelopmentalist” scholars has declared it time to “write its obituary” (Sachs 1). Wolfgang Sachs argues that “Over the years, piles of technical reports have been accumulated to show that development does not work; stacks of political studies have proven that development is unjust” (ibid.). He cites “the ecological predicament,”

increasing wealth disparities, and “social polarization,” as ill effects of both the Western “model” and the attempt to bring the rest of the world toward it through development (2-3). He also alludes to the predicament of so many people whose lives have lost old support systems through development but have not come to benefit from the new ones that were promised:

The old ways have been smashed but the new ones are not viable. People are caught in the deadlock of development: the peasant who is dependent on buying seeds, yet finds no cash to do so; the mother who benefits neither from the care of her fellow women in the community nor from assistance of a hospital; the clerk who had made it in the city, but is now laid off as a result of cost-cutting measures. (3)

Arturo Escobar argues that development “has failed to solve the basic problems of underdevelopment” but “has succeeded well in creating a type of underdevelopment that has been, for the most part, politically and technically manageable” (47). Escobar argues that violence is part of development’s effects; he suggests that, “development has been linked to an economy of production and desire, but also of closure, difference, and violence. . . . From the will to civilization in the nineteenth century to today, violence has been engendered through representation” (214).

Even if the postdevelopmentalists’ outrage leads them to overgeneralize at times, there is no doubt that development projects often fail to reach their explicit goals and have either neutral or undesirable effects on the communities they treat as “target populations.” The personal experiences of people from rural Malian communities who partner with The Tandana Foundation corroborate the notion that development projects often do little good and seem to be working for the benefit of their agents rather than for that of those they are supposed to serve. Housseyni Pamateck from Sal-Dimi, Mali recounts:

NGOs, without understanding the problem in the village, they come with a certain sum of money to do a certain project—“we want to give you a building for shallots.” They build it. The building is there, but there is no follow up. They never see if it is being used or working or if anyone is managing it. There are lots of buildings that have fallen down

because of that. There are lots of committees that were set up but never received training. They come with their idea and tell the people, “no matter what, you have to do this.” And there is no follow up. In my village, there was a mill that was given by an NGO. It is broken, and nobody talks about it and the NGO never came back. . . . We had experience with other NGOs who gave us false promises. They said they are coming on a certain day, and we waited for them impatiently, but they never came. They asked us to break stones, but then they never showed up, so we had problems with NGOs like that.

Moussa Tembiné from Kansongo adds, “We have seen lots of NGOs who come with large amounts of money but with their own project, not the people’s project, and then they leave, and there are no traces.” Ousmane Tembiné, also from Kansongo, notes, “before the arrival of Tandana, there were other NGOs who came for money. . . . Other NGOs leave, and we don’t see them again, and people drop it, and it doesn’t continue.” Similarly, Yagouno Tembiné, also of Kansongo, noted, “Other NGOs work for their own benefit, rather than for the village.” Adama Kanambaye from Kani-Gogouna explained, “In the other project, they wanted interest for themselves; they took the interest with them.” Kessia Kouriba of Kansongo elaborates:

There is a project, last year maybe, they brought money, and women took 5000 francs per woman as loans. Then they came in three months and took 2000 francs from each woman. In another three months they came back and took another 2000 francs. They said that was the interest. Then in the twelfth month, they came and took 2000 francs plus the 5000 francs. So, they took 6000 francs plus the money they had given. There are many things like that. That is why women are afraid. If you just say “project,” they are scared.

Clearly, experience has taught many of the “subjects” of development to be wary of its promises.



## II. Bringing a Personal Perspective to Collective Life

### *The Personal Frame*

Even though a detached and instrumental perspective dominates modern approaches to public life, in everyday life many of us still use a personal and relational perspective. Aspects of this perspective can be brought into collective life to temper the alienation of the dominant public framework. Bilgrami points out that, despite the shifts that changed the vocabulary and possibilities of the dominant public framework, in everyday life we can still respond to each other and to nature in an engaged and unalienated way. He argues:

The conceptual transformation by which nature came to be conceived as natural resources (along with the other accompanying transformations I mentioned) is one that occurs at a level of *collective, public* understanding, a form of understanding generated by alliances made between powerful forces in society that control governance, political economy, and a slowly emerging and increasingly consciously determined public opinion on these large collective and public matters. (*Secularism, Identity, Enchantment* 206, emphasis in original)

In daily life, people often respond to each other and to their local environments in relational ways: “By contrast, there is a level of understanding in these very same people that is and remains *quotidian* in its responses to the world (including nature and human others), often instinctive, but often cultivated too, though cultivated in the habits of *local* forms of solidarity and concern” (ibid., emphases in original). Bilgrami argues, furthermore, that these two different modes are able to coexist in the same people because, “*Individual* mentality finds itself in *two quite different frames*,” one collective and the other personal (ibid. 207, emphases in original). For example, in my small town of Mancos, Colorado, a woman named Rosa Sabido took sanctuary in the local Methodist Church to avoid deportation. A number of local residents who would not, at least before that time, have advocated for immigration reform came together to support Sabido because we had, or began to form, personal relationships with her. When

thinking of immigration as a public issue, we had approached it with a detached perspective guided by legality. However, when it came to Rosa, a person with whom we were in relationship, we saw the issue of her immigration status quite differently. Bilgrami argues that, to counter the ill effects of the detachment dominant in the collective frame, we can “seek to *remove for us the boundary between what I have called the two frames* within which our subjectivity engages, making it one single and unified frame” (ibid. 208, emphases in original).

Bilgrami suggests that, if we bring these two frames together into one frame, we will have:

brought to our consciousness the inconsistency in our responses and judgments that we were hitherto unaware of. If this happens, there is . . . a serious chance that we will be able to remove these inconsistencies in a certain direction, seeing in the resources of the quotidian frame the possibilities of radical criticism of the thinking that takes place (and has taken place for some three centuries) in the collective frame. (ibid. 209-210)

Not all of our varying responses from the two frames are in conflict—as we shall see in part four, sometimes they can be combined to enrich our practice—, but when we bring the frames together, we are likely to discover that some of them are inconsistent. Some Mancos residents have found precisely this result. Because Rosa was a friend in the community, we supported her, and through doing so, we learned about the injustices of the immigration system, questioned our earlier views on immigration in general, and began to advocate for changes in immigration law and support for immigrants more broadly. The insights, values, activities, and orientation of the personal frame can be brought to collective life in order to challenge the harmful effects of the detached perspective.

### *Relational Morality*

Taking a personal perspective generates moral obligations that arise experientially through encounters with another. From a personal viewpoint, we see the other face to face. As Emmanuel Levinas argues, the “facing position, opposition par excellence, can only be a moral summons” (196). When we face another person, we are presented with the absolute otherness of that person. According to Levinas, the other person:

opposes to me, not a greater force, an energy assessable and consequently presenting itself as though it were part of a whole, but the very transcendence of his being by relation to that whole; not some superlative of power, but precisely the infinity of transcendence. This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial *expression*, is the first said word: “you shall not commit murder.” (199, emphasis in original)

Beginning with the first injunction against murder, this relational morality continues to emerge from the experience of encountering the other face to face. As we shall see in part three, it often takes particular forms that involve sharing, promise-keeping, forgiveness, respect, responsibility, caring, and compassion. For Adriana Cavarero, it is “a relational ethic of contingency; or, rather, an ethic founded on the altruistic ontology of the human existent as finite” (87). Each of us, in our finiteness, needs the other, who is absolutely other. She continues:

This ethic finds therefore a fundamental principle in the recognition that every human being, whatever her qualities, has her unjudgable splendor in a personal identity that is irrefutably her story. This is not a recognition that belongs to the classical realm of moral theory, and neither is it a principle whose ethic can be deduced. This is rather an irreflexive recognition, already at work in the exhibitiv nature of the self (ibid.)

Relating to another, we recognize, without needing deduction from moral theory, that she is a unique “who” deserving of respect. Paul Ricoeur notes that the first step in entering into relationship is making oneself available: it is “necessary that the irruption of the other, breaking through the enclosure of the same, meet with the complicity of this movement of effacement by

which the self makes itself available to others” (168). Openness to otherness leads Ricoeur to “not a moralism of abstract rules but an ethics of experience” (Kearney 112).

### *Action and Meaning*

A personal perspective also makes possible meaningful action. Bilgrami highlights the importance of inhabiting a first-person perspective for the possibility of agency, of acting at all. Agency, Bilgrami argues, “consists in the presence and exercise of a certain point of view” (“What is Enchantment?” 153). From a third-person point of view, we can only predict, not intend. Bilgrami explains:

When one predicts that one will do something, one steps outside oneself and looks at oneself in a detached way, as an object of causal and motivational histories; that is, one looks at oneself as another might look at one, and so we might call this the third-person point of view. But when one intends to do something, one has *not* got a detached observer’s angle on oneself; one is rather asking as an *agent*, “What should I do?” or “What ought I to do?” One is in the first-person point of view. (ibid., emphases in original)

It is, of course, possible to switch between these different points of view, but it is essential to return to a first-person perspective in order to act.

A first-person orientation toward others also maintains a plural space that makes action possible. As Levinas notes, “The face in which the other—the absolutely other—presents himself does not negate the same, does not do violence to it . . . As nonviolence it nonetheless maintains the plurality of the same and the other” (203). The face-to-face encounter maintains the separateness of two people; neither is dominated by, nor loses herself in, the other. This plural space is essential for action. As Arendt explains, “Human action, like all strictly political phenomena, is bound up with human plurality, which is one of the fundamental conditions of human life insofar as it rests on the fact of natality” (*Between Past and Future* 61). Adriana Cavarero highlights the importance of a plural space for the appearance of individuals as who we

are, rather than simply what we are. She argues that, the “who is precisely an unrepeatable uniqueness which, in order to appear to others, needs first of all a plural – and therefore political – space of interaction” (58). Plurality requires both equality and distinction. Arendt argues:

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. (*The Human Condition* 175)

This equality is not sameness. It is, “an equality of unequals who stand in need of being ‘equalized’ in certain respects and for specific purposes” (ibid. 215). Arendt points out that in Greek antiquity, “Equality, therefore, far from being connected with justice, as in modern times, was the very essence of freedom: to be free meant to be free from the inequality present in rulership and to move in a sphere where neither rule nor being ruled existed” (ibid. 33). An elevated perspective of “vision” is incompatible with free action because it reveals a drive to exercise power rather than to make oneself equal with others. A personal orientation, by contrast, equalizes us with others, giving us the opportunity to act in freedom.

To maintain this plurality, neither I can be subsumed within the other, nor can I seek to contain the other in what is familiar to me. Cavarero warns of the temptation to eliminate the distinction between other and self, criticizing contemporary philosophy, which, “By continuing to transport the category of alterity into the intimacy of the self, . . . in fact produces the inevitable consequence of impeding every serious naming of the other in so far as he/she is an other” (43). She recognizes that even in intentional efforts to create a space for reciprocal appearance, the desire to assimilate the other can creep in;

The comfort of similarity wins out over the relational status of distinction. The effect – or, perhaps, the empathetic motive for reciprocal narration – thus risks frustrating that reciprocal appearance [*comparire*] of uniqueness that qualifies the dynamic of

recognition as an ethic. To recognize oneself in the other is indeed quite different from recognizing the irremediable uniqueness of the other. (91)

Instead of seeing self in the other, we must allow the other to remain absolutely different; “The necessary other is indeed here a finitude that remains irremediably an other in all the fragile and unjudgeable insubstitutability of her existing” (93). Levinas goes even further in pointing out that the other must not even be distinguished from me by a particular quality. He argues, “The alterity of the Other does not depend on any quality that would distinguish him from me, for a distinction of this nature would precisely imply between us that community of genus which already nullifies alterity” (194). The development project is founded on a totalizing system in which each extant society fits into a location along a hierarchical continuum. Uday Singh Mehta shows that this perspective is based on “the assumption that the strange is just a variation on what is already familiar, because both the familiar and the strange are deemed to be merely specific instances of a familiar structure of generality” (20). A personal approach must allow the other absolute difference, rather than fitting it into a familiar structure.

The other must not be forced into my categories, but neither should I deny my own identity and uniqueness. Ricoeur asks, “if my identity were to lose all importance in every respect, would not the question of others also cease to matter?” and points out, “must one not, in order to make oneself open, available, belong to oneself in a certain sense?” (138-139). We must make ourselves available to others, but not lose ourselves in them. In order to act, we need to maintain our personal perspectives and our plurality, neither forcing the other into familiar categories nor losing ourselves in that which is different. It is human plurality that makes action unpredictable but also that gives it the possibility of meaningfulness.

Meaning is a concept that is interpreted in many ways, and it joins together seemingly disparate phenomena, but many of these ideas can be united by the notion that the desire for

meaning represents the hope that we can live such that we will not have lived in vain. Emily Esfahani Smith notes that death “poses a grave challenge to the ability to lead a meaningful life. If our lives will end anyway and we will soon be forgotten, what is the point of anything we do?” (215). She cites William Breitbart, who specializes in end of life care and argues that meaning and death “are two sides of the same coin—the two fundamental problems of the human condition” (216). For him, key questions are, “How should a human being live a finite life? How can we face death with dignity and not despair? What redeems the fact that we will die?” (ibid.). This understanding of the reason we require meaning recalls Ernest Becker’s analysis. For Becker, “The tragic bind that man is peculiarly in—the basic paradox of his existence—is that unlike other animals he has an *awareness of himself as a unique individual* on the one hand; and on the other he is the only animal in nature who *knows he will die*” (141, emphasis in original). Knowing that we will die, how can we live such that our lives will not have been in vain? This is the question of meaningfulness.

People have pursued meaning in a wide variety of manners. Arendt describes how the ancient Greeks thought of meaning as immortality, which they sought in various ways:

To strive for immortality can mean, as it certainly did in early Greece, the immortalization of oneself through famous deeds and the acquisition of immortal fame; it can also mean the addition to the human artifice of something more permanent than we are ourselves; and it can mean, as it did with the philosophers, the spending of one’s life with things immortal. (*Between Past and Future* 71)

Emily Esfahani Smith provides a very interesting summary of ways that contemporary North Americans find meaning, grouping them into four “pillars:” belonging, purpose, storytelling, and transcendence (*passim*). She describes belonging based on close relationships and momentary but high quality connections (70); purpose that “involves a contribution to the world” (78); storytelling, through which, by taking “the disparate pieces of our lives and placing them

together into a narrative, we create a unified whole that allows us to understand our lives as coherent” (104); and transcendence, through which, “our sense of self washes away along with all of its petty concerns and desires. We then feel deeply connected to other people and everything else that exists in the world” (133).

Action provides opportunities for some, though certainly not all, of these kinds of meaning to emerge. One important quality of action is that it reveals who the agent is. Arendt argues that, “In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world . . . . This disclosure of ‘who’ in contradistinction to ‘what’ somebody is—his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide—is implicit in everything somebody says and does” (*The Human Condition* 179). To act, and thus to reveal oneself, requires courage. Arendt notes, “This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human togetherness. Although nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure” (ibid. 180). Cavarero asks, “does the course of every life allow itself to be looked upon in the end like a design that has a meaning?” (1). She concludes that it does, insofar as it consists in exposition of the self. This exposition makes possible the telling of a story, and the meaning of a story is what makes events tolerable: “‘All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them,’ writes Blixen; and Hannah Arendt comments: ‘the story reveals the meaning of what would otherwise remain an intolerable sequence of events’” (Cavarero 2). Either hearing our own life-stories recounted to us, or simply trusting that stories can be told about them later assuages our fears of having lived in vain by showing that we will each leave behind a design that is unified and can have significance.



Action also takes place into a web of relationships, which means that it continues to reverberate and have consequences long afterwards. As Arendt explains, “The realm of human affairs, strictly speaking, consists of the web of human relationships which exists wherever men live together. The disclosure of the ‘who’ through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt” (*The Human Condition* 184). Furthermore, the:

consequences are boundless, because action, though it may proceed from nowhere, so to speak, acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes. Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. Thus action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners. (ibid. 190)

Action also creates relationships, thickening and extending the web: “Action, moreover, no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries” (ibid. 190). This aspect of action aligns with Smith’s sense of belonging as a route to meaning. She argues, “Compassion lies at the center of the pillar of belonging. When we open our hearts to others and approach them with love and kindness, we ennoble both those around us and ourselves — and the ripples of our compassionate acts persist, even long after we’re gone” (70). Through these continuing ripples, our lives continue to have effects even after they end.

Action also allows opportunities for the meaning found in purpose, as long as purpose is understood not as a specific end, as in the mode of fabrication, but as a principle. For Smith, purpose is “the forward - pointing arrow that motivates our behavior and serves as the organizing principle of our lives” (77) and also “has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self” (William Damon in Smith 78). Arendt

describes meaning as that “for the sake of” which we do things, noting “the distinction between utility and meaningfulness, which we express linguistically by distinguishing between ‘in order to’ and ‘for the sake of’” (*The Human Condition* 154). She argues that action:

springs from something altogether different which (following Montesquieu’s famous analysis of forms of government) I shall call a principle. Principles do not operate from within the self as motives do—“mine own deformity” or my “fair proportion”—but inspire, as it were, from without; and they are much too general to prescribe particular goals, although every particular aim can be judged in light of its principle once the act has been started. (*Between Past and Future* 152)

According to Arendt, principles are universal and inexhaustible, and yet they are only manifest while the actions they inspire are happening: “the manifestation of principles comes about only through action, they are manifest in the world as long as the action lasts, but no longer. Such principles are honor or glory, love of equality, which Montesquieu called virtue, or distinction or excellence..., but also fear or distrust or hatred” (ibid. 152). In this sense, the principle of the action is contained within its performance: “the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product which outlasts the activity that brought it into existence” (ibid. 153). Thus, “Greatness, therefore, or the specific meaning of each deed, can lie only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement” (*The Human Condition* 206). Therefore, in the case of action, “the end (*telos*) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself which therefore becomes an *entelecheia*, and the work is not what follows and extinguishes the process but is imbedded in it” (ibid.). The meaning is contained within the action itself, and the “means” to achieve its “end” are already the “end” itself. The instrumental category of means and ends does not make sense:

This specifically human achievement lies altogether outside the category of means and ends; the “work of man” is no end because the means to achieve it— the virtues, or *aretai*— are not qualities which may or may not be actualized, but are themselves “actualities.” In other words, the means to achieve the end would already be the end; and

this “end,” conversely, cannot be considered a means in some other respect, because there is nothing higher to attain than this actuality itself. (ibid. 207)

Action thus allows for meaning through the manifestation of a principle or ultimate purpose.

### *Difficulties of Bringing Personal Morality to Public Life*

While a personal perspective with its relational morality and meaningful action offers many valuable virtues for collective life, it is difficult to apply it directly to a large polity. Relationships, by definition, do not scale. The larger a group is, the more difficult it is to relate to the other members, to engage with them in any meaningful way. The greater the size of a group, the more detached we feel from the experiences of other members. A larger size also makes action more difficult because of the way it tends to collapse the plurality of individuals into a mass society. Arendt notes that, “every increase in population means an increased validity and a marked decrease of ‘deviation.’ Politically, this means that the larger the population in any given body politic, the more likely it will be the social rather than the political that constitutes the public realm” (*The Human Condition* 43). The social, for Arendt, describes the condition when people “are pressed together into a mass” (*Between Past and Future* 90) and behavior, rather than action, is the mode of being together. As Arendt notes, “society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to ‘normalize’ its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement” (*The Human Condition* 40).

Reinhold Niebuhr explicates some reasons why personal morality cannot be applied fully at the level of a state. He argues that:

the conflict between ethics and politics . . . is made inevitable by the double focus of the moral life. One focus is in the inner life of the individual, and the other is the necessities of man’s social life. From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice.

From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness. Society must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit. (257)

There are additional reasons why individual morality cannot be applied easily at the group level.

One is that, because communities require loyalty, they are hostile to criticism and actually turn individual members' moral unselfishness into group selfishness. Niebuhr explains:

While critical loyalty toward a community is not impossible, it is not easily achieved. It is therefore probably inevitable that every society should regard criticism as a proof of a want of loyalty. This lack of criticism, as Tyrrell the Catholic modernist observed, makes the social will more egotistic than the individual will. "So far as society has a self," he wrote, "it must be self-assertive, proud, self-complacent and egotistical." (89)

Furthermore, "There is an ethical paradox in patriotism which . . . transmutes individual unselfishness into national egoism. . . . Thus the unselfishness of individuals makes for the selfishness of nations" (91). Another reason is that the responsibility of leaders of groups is to put the interests of their groups first, which makes it impossible for them to yield to the interests of other groups. Niebuhr explains:

Furthermore a high type of unselfishness, even if it brings ultimate rewards, demands immediate sacrifices. An individual may sacrifice his own interests, either without hope of reward or in the hope of an ultimate compensation. But how is an individual, who is responsible for the interests of his group, to justify the sacrifice of interests other than his own? (267)

Niebuhr also sees increasing difficulty as the size of the community increases. He argues:

This social validity of a moral ideal which transcends social considerations in its purest heights, is progressively weakened as it is applied to more and more intricate, indirect and collective human relations. It is not only unthinkable that a group should be able to attain a sufficiently consistent unselfish attitude toward other groups to give it a very potent redemptive power, but it is improbable that any competing group would have the imagination to appreciate the moral calibre of the achievement. (266-267)

Even if the boundary between the public and quotidian frames is dissolved, and we see the inconsistencies in our thinking in the two realms, it is difficult to apply personal morality directly to the level of a polity.

### *Organizations as Mediating Level*

Organizations can provide a mediating level to assert the validity of personal morality for public life. While organizations typically employ the distant, instrumental perspective and its accompanying vocabulary, they do not have to do so. Instead, they can provide a bridge, amplifying the effects of personal, relational morality by applying it in a collective setting. Non-profit organizations, in particular, can overcome some of the limitations that Niebuhr outlines. Leaders of mission-oriented organizations are responsible for making sure that the organization's actions align with its mission, rather than for safeguarding the interests of the organization's members, so sacrificing group interests is not the problem it is for leaders of nations. Furthermore, in such organizations, it is the mission that demands loyalty, rather than the group itself, so uncritical patriotism is not the norm as it is at the national level. Organizations can also limit their size, and the number of people they serve, so as not to become so enormous that a personal orientation becomes impossible.

Organizations can bring relationships to collective work, but to make possible relational morality, agency, and meaning, the personal orientation must be foundational to the approach, rather than simply added on as a tool. While leaders in the social sector are paying more attention to the importance of relationships in the work of organizations, calls to revitalize relational attitudes are usually firmly embedded within instrumental approaches. Subsumed within the mode of fabrication, relationships become tools:

Luckily, one of the most powerful tools for reaching those goals is right at hand – it’s our relationships with each other and with those we serve. Relationships powerfully affect [sic] on other relationships. Leaders in relationship-based programs harness this power to attract and keep skilled staff members, recruit and retain program participants, promote program quality, and reach program outcomes. (Seibel)

Relationships are used as a tool to achieve pre-defined ends. Furthermore, relational competence has been turned into an area of expertise. For example, the Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center describes “Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement.” These “Relationship-based Competencies (RBCs) are based on research and recommended practice across many fields working with families from pregnancy through the early childhood years . . . They can reinforce and extend efforts across states to increase family engagement in early childhood programs.” The focus is on what these “RBCs” can achieve and on the technical questions of how they can be developed. Books, such as *Advancing Relationship-Based Cultures*, aim to teach the expertise that is needed “for the creation and nurturance of healthy relationships in health care” and to promote the “confluence of relational and clinical competence that advances relationship-based healing cultures” (Creative Health Care Management). These efforts to revalue the relational are very limited in their ability to restore agency and opportunities for meaningful action because they are subordinated to an instrumental perspective based in a detached outlook. When treated as tools to be used by experts, relationships lose their power to bring meaning and the unexpected into the world. A more radical embrace of the personal perspective is necessary to reclaim meaningfulness, and it is possible to take.

A growing number of organizations in the field dominated by the development outlook have come to see problems with the standard, detached approach and to highlight their difference. For example, Roots Ethiopia emphasizes, that it “partners with communities in

Ethiopia to turn local ideas into lasting change. We work together to improve schools, educate children, enable livelihoods, and include everyone. These are community priorities, so they're our priorities. We believe in the power of Ethiopian ideas to solve Ethiopian problems." Mama Hope states, "Our mission is to help communities achieve lasting, self-directed prosperity by challenging a broken aid system — one that perpetuates poverty and disempowerment. We do this by directly supporting projects in education, health, women's empowerment, agriculture and beyond — that are 100% community-led" (Mama Hope, "Mama Hope is an Advocate"). A few, like Mama Hope, explicitly emphasize the relational aspects of their approach, stating, "Our community relationships are rooted in mutual respect — we are truly a global family" (Mama Hope, "Mama Hope").

One organization that embraces an explicitly personal and relational approach and that positions itself outside of the development project altogether is The Tandana Foundation, which I founded in 2006. Its website states, "The Tandana Foundation is not about 'helping the poor' or imposing a developmentalist worldview or any particular religion. Rather, our goal is to create and nurture respectful and responsible relationships among people of different cultures" ("About"). Its mission: "To support the achievement of community goals and address global inequalities through caring intercultural relationships that embody mutual respect and responsibility" includes relationships directly ("Mission & Values"). Its approach "is built on a first-person orientation toward other people in relationship" (ibid.). Among organizations I am familiar with, this is the most self-conscious adoption of a personal, relational perspective to guide an organization's work. Rather than merely attempting to promote the development of relationships or to use relationships as tools, the organization itself works from a personal perspective embedded in human relationships. This unusual approach does not go unnoticed by

people who partner with Tandana. Claudia Fuevez of Panecillo, Ecuador, said “they are friends; above all, they are friends. They are always keeping us in mind and looking for help to improve things. It’s like personalizing things.” Ada Kanambaye of Sal-Dimi, Mali, explained, “They came for friendship and to exchange, to get to know us, to talk with us face to face.” “They connected with us and joined together hand in hand,” added Mamoudou Pamateck, also of Sal-Dimi. Volunteer Carol Peddie from Vermont noted, “I think it’s the connections and the partnerships, but it’s also the personal touch” (The Tandana Foundation, “Ten Years of Joining Hands and Changing Lives”). Because a personal, relational perspective grounds the organization’s entire approach, rather than being just one tool in an instrumental outlook, it allows the people involved to engage with each other and to act in meaningful ways. The example of The Tandana Foundation demonstrates that organizations can resist the alienation of modernity by bringing a personal approach to collective action, thereby restoring opportunities for meaningful action.



### **III. The Example of The Tandana Foundation and the Experiences It Has Generated**

#### *The Tandana Foundation*

The Tandana Foundation is a U.S.-based non-profit organization that brings a personal, relational approach to work with communities in Ecuador and Mali. Its materials do not use the word development, other than the statement that it is not interested in “imposing a developmentalist worldview” (“About”). Nevertheless, outside observers sometimes refer to its work as development because the programs and projects it supports resemble, from the outside, those of development organizations. However, they are animated by a very different ethic that springs from a personal orientation. When combined with a willingness to engage with others who are different, a personal approach gives rise to encounters that lead to the emergence of particular values and the formation of respectful, responsible relationships. The moral obligations of personal interactions lead to sharing, respect, and responsibility. Meaningful action and live encounters have unpredictable outcomes, which make promise keeping and forgiveness important. Experiencing inequalities and difference leads to self-reflection and greater awareness of what it is to be human. Sharing and forgiveness result in experiences of gratitude, which in turn lead to caring and a desire to maintain the relationships with the people we care about. All of these values result in greater compassion, greater wisdom, and the formation of caring, respectful, responsible intercultural relationships. These relationships are the foundation and guide for The Tandana Foundation’s work. When combined with funds and volunteers, these relationships lead to support for community initiatives and intercultural exchange experiences, which, in turn, generate beneficial changes.

There are, of course, biographical as well as philosophical reasons for The Tandana Foundation’s existence. As a privileged teenager from suburban Ohio, I had the opportunity to

go on a safari in Kenya. Rather than the animals, what captivated my attention was the ethical dilemma of how to be in right relation to people who were so different from me in access to resources and in culture. I encountered, in a close and personal way, both vast inequalities and pluralism of moral systems and values. Feeling uncomfortable as a tourist, I resolved to seek a relationship that seemed more fitting to people who were quite different from me. In order to attempt to learn about the possibilities of such a relationship, after graduating from high school, I signed up as a volunteer to teach in an elementary school in rural Ecuador. While I was there, I developed close relationships with members of the family who hosted me and with friends in the community. Wanting to honor those relationships and be responsible in them, I kept in touch and returned for later visits.

As a teacher and experiential educator, I had several opportunities to arrange joint activities for students from the United States and friends in rural Ecuador and found these interactions to be very positive learning experiences for all involved. At the same time, I saw that the students I had taught when I had first been in Ecuador were taking two very different trajectories. Some were in high school and told me of their plans to go to universities and start their own businesses or become leaders in their region. Others were married and having children, not having had the opportunity to attend secondary school, although they would have liked to. I decided to start The Tandana Foundation to make learning opportunities possible, both intercultural ones where visitors from the United States and local community members could share experiences and institutional ones through scholarships for Ecuadorean students. Around the same time, I wanted to learn about another cultural world that was totally unfamiliar to me and decided to go to Mali. Through a friend of a friend, I found a contact in Bandiagara, who invited me to stay with his family. Eventually I became connected with several villages and

local leaders and decided to collaborate with them on some of the projects they were determined to undertake. Over time, neighboring communities saw what the first ones were accomplishing in partnership with Tandana and asked for the Foundation's support for their initiatives as well. The Tandana Foundation now collaborates with dozens of communities in both Ecuador and Mali on projects that are their priorities. The initiatives are as varied as the goals of the communities. Wells, grain banks, gardens, Savings for Change micro-credit groups, literacy classes, leadership workshops, support for women's association enterprises, and support for an environmental association that is protecting forests, reducing the demand for firewood, preventing erosion, and reforestation are examples of some initiatives Tandana has worked with communities in Mali to realize. Scholarships, health care, community centers, school buildings, gardens, water systems, and sports fields are some of the programs and projects that Tandana has partnered with Ecuadorean communities to make possible.

Also integral to Tandana's mission are intercultural volunteer programs through which local residents and visitors work together to achieve local goals, while learning from each other and becoming friends. Volunteers, who are mostly from North America and who include high school students, university students, health care professionals, gardeners, and many others, travel to the communities in Ecuador and Mali in order to take part in these exchanges, which last from a week to a month. Tandana also offers internships and fellowships in Ecuador for those who want to volunteer for three months to a year or even longer.

Because of my position as founder of the organization, I have a very particular perspective on its work and certain kinds of relationships with the people involved. This perspective and these relationships certainly influence both my understanding of how it works and the ways that others describe their experiences to me. At the same time, my intimate

familiarity with the people and the activities involved gives me insight into which comments from participants and partners seem to resonate with common experiences. This study itself combines a personal, relational perspective with a more distant viewpoint from which abstractions can be seen.<sup>1</sup>

### *First-Person Orientation*

The impetus for The Tandana Foundation's work begins with a first-person orientation toward other people. Taking a personal perspective means staying grounded, looking at others eye-to-eye, rather than surveying a panorama of human processes from above. The vocabulary of traditional "development" constructs for its agents a detached perspective. From a distant viewpoint, we tend to see needs and problems and to fit those needs into a systemic understanding of the world. We describe poverty through technical terms like mortality rates and caloric intake. From this detached viewpoint, all changes appear as processes, some inexorable, others requiring technical intervention. Taking this distant point of view gives us an illusion of being able to understand and control the world in which we live, an illusion of being far-enough from our fellow human beings that we can avoid the simple moral demands of encountering

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to drawing on past interviews and published quotations, I conducted a series of interviews specifically to collect experiences, ideas, and opinions to inform this project. I have personal and professional relationships with the interviewees, which certainly influenced their responses. Nonetheless, I purposefully used open-ended questions and tried to avoid leading to particular answers, and I feel that the responses I received were sincere. The answers to the only leading question that I did use with many of the Ecuadorian interviewees reveal the candor with which they responded. After asking Ecuadorian community members if they were familiar with *randi-randi*, a Kichwa concept of reciprocal exchange and mutual help, I asked those who said they were familiar if they saw any examples of this concept in the work of The Tandana Foundation. Some of the interviewees responded that no, they didn't, some giving explanations for why not. Others said that yes, they did and offered examples. Furthermore, when asking what interviewees did not like about Tandana's work, instead of asking *if* there was anything they did not like, I asked *what* they did not like to give the impression that there should be something. While many interviewees said there was nothing, others replied very frankly about negative experiences they had had or difficulties they had encountered. My impression is that overall the responses were rather candid. All translations from Spanish, French, and Kichwa are my own. For the interviewees who used Tommo So, Moussa Tembiné, Housseyni Pamateck, and Kessia Kouriba took turns translating between Tommo So and French.

another person face to face. This orientation, however, obscures our personhood as well as the personhood of the people most affected by our interventions.

A first-person perspective means recognizing others as people and also recognizing our own personhood. The experience of being recognized as people with agency, knowledge, and capability can be surprisingly rare for some of those who are considered the subjects of “development.” Upon the creation of her village’s cotton bank in partnership with Tandana, Sata Lafia Samakan from Yarou Plateau, Mali, exclaimed, “Yippee!!! What a good wind has brought us happiness this morning! Finally, thanks to the partnership with The Tandana Foundation, we are now recognized by the organizations that support development. Before this, we were lost and unknown to development partners” (Koller). Her neighbor Kadia Samakan remarked, “We are now considered as women capable of generating income, thanks to Anna and our partnership with The Tandana Foundation, which helped us start the Savings for Change Groups. This is the first organization that has supported projects designed particularly for women, with, first the Savings for Change Groups, and today, the cotton bank” (ibid.). Women in Yarou Plateau had felt unrecognized as capable agents before being seen and acknowledged by Tandana. The residents of Ologuiné, Mali had been seeking support for a well project for many years without success. Finally, Tandana collaborated with them on this project, and then in the same year two other organizations supported other projects in the village. Mamoudou Guindo, the village chief, said, “Tandana is a bringer of happiness for us that opened the doors of partnership to us” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). It felt as if the residents of Ologuiné first had to be recognized as people, and, once they were, suddenly everyone could see them. From a personal perspective, we insist always on greeting people as people.

James Ferguson describes the non-recognition that many Africans feel as “abjection.” He argues:

For what is most striking in the recent history of much of Africa is not the breakdown of boundaries, but a process in which economic decline and political violence have produced new political and economic exclusions that distance Africa from the rest of the world and destroy the sense of connection with, and membership in, an imagined world community that so many Africans experienced during the early years of independence. The combination of an acute awareness of a privileged “first class” world, together with an increasing social and economic disconnection from it, is a contemporary African predicament that I have described elsewhere as “abjection.” (166)

He notes that, in this context, what many contemporary Africans demand is, “a right to be connected, noticed, and attended to . . . , not a right to autonomy or independence” (173). Many of those who have been left outside of a “first class” experience want to be recognized as people with whom we are in relationship. People who work with Tandana often claim this right to be considered as parties to a relationship and call on the organization not to forget the connection. Fatouma Kamia of Ondogou, Mali, exclaimed, “Don’t forget me!” Mamoudou Pamateck of Sal-Dimi, Mali said, “In our name, thank you for what you sent us, and for not forgetting us. We won’t forget you. Our hands are still together.” Alberto Panamá from Motilón Chupa, Ecuador, said, “I hope you can visit, don’t forget us, and come work with us hand in hand.” “Don’t forget us. Don’t get lost,” said Maria Torres of Agualongo, Ecuador.

In Ecuador, community members often contrast the non-recognition they experience from public institutions with Tandana’s openness to relationship. Manuel Perugachi of Agualongo said, “We were abandoned, since we were few people in the community, and the government didn’t listen to us, but The Tandana Foundation remembered us. . . . We asked the foundation not to forget our community.” Humberto Perugachi, also of Agualongo, mentioned, “because the community is small, when it is election time, when they are looking for votes, they come. But when they get elected, they forget about us, so the city, the province, the parish, haven’t

helped us. The foundation has opened a road to us and is bringing us forward.” Martha

Lanchimba of Muenala explained:

we couldn’t go to public institutions; they didn’t open the door to us. But since Tandana arrived, everything we need, sometimes urgently, whatever problems we have, with infrastructure, for the community center, they have supported us. . . . Everything was possible with Tandana, it wasn’t like next week or next year, they never said no, they always received us, worked with us.

Humberto Burga, also of Muenala, concurred, saying, “There are public institutions, but they don’t care about the communities, only the close ones with more people. But Tandana has always paid attention to those of us who are farther away, who have difficulties getting to the city.”

A personal orientation also requires us to recognize our own fallible humanity. As people, we cannot control the outcome of our actions, much less the world around us. We are prone to error and misunderstandings, and yet we must take responsibility for our actions. We must work within limitations. From the Greek tragedians through Montaigne and Pascal to contemporary postdevelopmentalists such as José Maria Sbert and Gustavo Esteva, there have been many warnings about the disasters that can result when we ignore our human limitations.<sup>2</sup> Accepting them means that we cannot be in control and that we will make mistakes with consequences for which we hold responsibility. The mistakes, however, may be easier to bear and to repair when they are made within the context of personal relationships than when they occur in a technical intervention designed to control from above. Mistakes are common in

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Euripides, *The Bacchae*, trans. William Arrowsmith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959); Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michel de Montaigne, “Of Experience,” *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, ed. and trans. M.A. Screech (London: The Penguin Press, 1987); Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 329, cited in Francis X. J. Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); José Maria Sbert, “Progress,” in *The Development Dictionary*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 1992); and Gustavo Esteva, “Development,” in *The Development Dictionary*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 1992).

Tandana experience, and each one serves as a learning opportunity, a chance to grow as people, and sometimes even an opening to strengthen relationships. To be fully human, we must take the risks of acting in full knowledge of our fallibility and in awareness of our incomplete knowledge.

There is no absolute authority to which we can turn, and so we must take the risk. As Paul

Tillich explains:

A morality which plays safe, by subjecting itself to an unconditional authority, is suspect. It has not the courage to take guilt and tragedy upon itself. True morality is a morality of risk. It is a morality which is based on the "courage to be," the dynamic self-affirmation of man as man. This self-affirmation must take the threat of non-being, death, guilt, and meaninglessness into itself. It risks itself, and through the courage of risking itself, it wins itself. (141)

In a personal perspective, we accept our limitations and our fallibility, acting while knowing the risks.

Taking a first-person orientation has several important results. First, it allows for face-to-face interactions, which generate relational moral obligations to the other. Second, it involves inhabiting a particular point of view, which allows for agency. Third, it keeps a space for a plurality of people, which makes action possible.

### *Engaging with Others*

Tandana's work also begins with a willingness to engage with communities of different cultures, economic situations, and lifestyles. This openness to those who are different contrasts not only with isolationist and xenophobic attitudes, typically attributed to "conservatives," but also with the contemporary "liberal" tendency to shy away from transnational work for fear of reinscribing imperial histories. On college campuses in recent years there has developed a sense that because of the enormous wrongs of Western imperialism and the continuing power of associated interests, anything that Westerners might do in nations that were formerly colonized is



tainted by neocolonialism and thus to be avoided. One student at Whitman College told me that through her study abroad program she had realized that she really should not even be in the country where she had studied. A group of students from George Washington University who traveled to Ecuador during their spring break to work with Tandana and the community of Guachinguero discussed their concerns with the neocolonial aspects of their enterprise so much that they struggled even to engage with their enthusiastic hosts. Lucas Crampton, one of these insightful students, reflected:

Look at me. Take a look at yourself. Okay, now look around. You are in one of the most scenic places on Earth, surrounded by the warmest people you have met. Is this service or is it vacation? Is this doing good? Maybe, you think, this is not what you set out for. Did you descend from the sky with all the grandeur and none of the benevolence of an angel? Did your touchdown fall into the centuries-old pattern of clash and exploitation?

The students from Guachinguero who were looking forward to getting to know new playmates were confused by their visitors' reticence. The mutual learning and human connections were inhibited by the North Americans' fear of replicating colonial encounters, but over time, with a willingness on both sides, this barrier was eroded and there was some connection. Crampton concluded, "Maybe instead of measuring your time in Ecuador upon an abstract utilitarian rationalist ethical scale, you can relax for a moment, connect with another human, and say yes to what is happening around you. Maybe it just is. This is here and this is an invaluable treasure." It is important, of course, to reflect critically on what we do and how it relates to larger patterns that are highly problematic. I applaud the student leaders who brought important questions about their own power and privilege to their group's attention and asked their fellow students to engage in critical reflection regarding the potential effects of their trip on the community they were going to visit. If this reflection leads to paralysis, however, it prevents us from being open to the other. The reality is that we cannot avoid participating in global networks that affect people in

many countries. Furthermore, there are ways to interact with those who are different that are respectful and compassionate. By opening ourselves to encounters with difference, we increase our opportunities for interacting in positive ways with people whose cultures, opportunities, and backgrounds contrast with our own. Engaging with communities that are different from one's own leads to experiencing inequalities and difference, and, when done with a first-person orientation, to the dynamic and unpredictable interactions that Parker Palmer calls "live encounters" (*The Active Life* 71).

### *Moral Obligations*

Taking a personal approach to others leads us to face-to-face encounters that give rise to relational moral obligations. As Levinas argues, the face of the other calls us to a moral stance (196). It calls me to goodness by showing me a need that is separate from me. To ignore this call, whether by eschewing a personal perspective or by seeking to avoid engagement, is to deny the basic moral imperative of human interaction. The face-to-face interaction is always with a particular other person. It is not, as Cavarero notes, "the anonymous face of an indistinct and universal alterity – namely, that face of the abstract altruism which is too easily identified as a generic benevolence or pious intention" (90). The relationship is between two unique people.

When I first traveled to Ecuador, I found myself face-to-face with a new host father, host mother, and four host sisters. Just as suddenly, I found myself in new relationships with moral obligations. At first, I thought I did not matter much to this family who had opened their doors to a stranger, but when I prepared to go away for a weekend, my host sisters urged me to hurry back because they would miss me. It was clear that what I did mattered to the particular people with whom I was living. Tandana volunteers and hosts continue to experience similar instances

of seeing each other and realizing that they have moral obligations to each other. For Kaitlyn Paulsen, a student from the United States who stayed with a host family in Ecuador in 2016, it began with a face-to-face interaction. She writes of her young host sister, “I will never forget the way she would look up into my eyes. In her mind, I was really her second older sister.” Once this relationship was established, Kaitlyn found herself carrying her sleeping sister home after a long day and then walking back up the hill to retrieve her fallen rubber boot. Taylor Garry, a U.S. student who stayed with a host family in Ecuador in 2018, wrote, “We had gone beyond the boundaries of a ‘normal’ two-week relationship, and shared interests, material things, and cultures. I was surprised by, but also thankful for the strength of the relationships we formed so quickly.” Taylor then felt a responsibility to make it clear that she had “no plans of forgetting my sister, nor my parents—when I left Muenala, it felt as though I were leaving my biological family behind.” Claudia Fuerez of Panecillo, Ecuador wrote of a volunteer who stayed with her family in Ecuador, “Without a doubt, she went away very happy to have gotten to know us like her family, which we now are. We were very sad when she left, but she said she would come back; for me she is another sister” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). Although true familial relationships do not develop so quickly, relationships that entail moral obligations do arise, and familial terms are often used to express the sense of connection and responsibility that these relationships entail.

Through these new relationships, moral obligations continue to arise, for both visitors and hosts. Julie Lundquist, an American volunteer who visited Kansongo, Mali, highlighted the personal relationships: “Welcomed by the entire community, we were also embraced as individuals and ushered into better understanding as the people of Kansongo shared their own personal stories, shared their comforts, worked with us side by side, taught us their songs,

celebrated great joys, and spoke of sorrow and hardships” (ibid.). These interactions led to a sense of moral obligation. Lundquist continues, “May my own words and actions as I continue this journey home and through the rest of my days bring this village honor” (ibid.). Hosts in both Ecuador and Mali also express moral obligations that arise through encounters with foreign visitors. Maria Panamá of Motilón Chupa, Ecuador explained that, “I went to look, to knock on the door of The Tandana Foundation, and I don’t want to end up in bad standing with Tandana, so I have always liked [to be present helping], even leaving behind my work in my house, I am here, . . . I have always been present here, and as long as I live, as long as you help us with anything, I will be here helping.” Alberto Panamá, also of Motilón Chupa, said, “[the volunteers] are more disciplined, responsible, so I have learned. The hours that they say, they are working, and I have liked that. It’s very good.” In a similar vein, Mamoudou Pamateck of Sal-Dimi, Mali, recalled, “When it was time to work, they were ready to go, even if we were late. That showed us that we need to do the same and work hard.” Kessia Kouriba of Kansongo, Mali also noted, “You came, and you worked together to build buildings, to create the garden. The village saw that if you came to work like that, they will also reinforce their efforts to make great progress.”

### *Meaningful Action*

As we saw in Part Two, to act, which reveals who we are, we need a plural space that both allows us to maintain our difference and equalizes us so that no one is ruling over another. For true plurality, we also must resist the temptation to fit the other into a familiar structure or totalizing continuum, which would domesticate her otherness, collapsing the distinction that is necessary for action. At the same time, we must not lose ourselves in the other but rather remain

distinct. It is precisely this kind of plurality, with its equality and distinctness, that we seek to create as Tandana and its members enter into relationships with communities and their members.

The North American and European staff and volunteers of Tandana are, of course, not equal with the Malian and Ecuadorean staff and community members in the sense of justice (access to resources, discursive power, privilege), but we position ourselves as equals in terms of dignity and worth. It is “an equality of unequals who stand in need of being ‘equalized’” in order to enter into relationships and create a space for action (Arendt, *The Human Condition* 215). Community members who collaborate with Tandana are often surprised and pleased by the equality they experience with Tandana representatives. Maria Perugachi of Agualongo, Ecuador said, “they don’t treat us as less. We are all equal, and they treat us as equals.” Kadidia Kassogu  of Kani-Gogouna, Mali noted, “We are all equal.” While Malian community members often describe equality as sameness, or a lack of difference, the quality they highlight is not a loss of distinctness but a sense that Tandana representatives approach them as equal, rather than looking down on them from a higher position. Housseyni Pamateck recounted about Tandana volunteers, “What I liked is that they didn’t show off that they are white or American. Whatever we did, they imitated us to participate.” Ada Kanambaye noted, “They also don’t make a difference between black and white. When they come to the village, they are the same as us.” Anouh Tembin  recounted that Tandana volunteers “came to see if they could help us and to show that they are the same as us.” He said, “they didn’t discriminate. We were all the same.” Kessia Kouriba explained, “I saw them working, drawing water, carrying stones. I really saw your courage to show that we are together, we are the same.” Mamoudou Pamateck also suggested that the volunteers “came because there is no difference between them and us and they wanted to learn about our culture and our life.” That they needed to learn about a different

culture and life shows that the distinctness was not lost, but that the North American Tandana representatives presented themselves as on the same level and as having the same worth as their Malian hosts. This kind of equality creates a plural space in which action is possible.

In our work with Tandana, we also seek to allow those with whom we are in relationship to maintain their difference rather than fitting them into a totalizing system. That is an important reason for declining to use the language of development, which fits all extant societies into a continuum from advanced to backward, organizing them into a hierarchical system that dictates the kinds of interventions necessary to bring the backward ones forward. It is virtually impossible to encounter another with no preconceived notions at all, but we can seek to limit those patterns and their role in our thinking and behavior, preferring to approach with as much openness as possible and to prioritize what we learn from the direct encounter. When I first went to Mali, I purposefully did not sign up with a program that would prepare me with a set of received ideas about the culture, instead learning from personal experience, which involved a lot of trial and error. While it was very difficult to interact with such limited knowledge of norms and expectations, ultimately I was grateful that, unlike the Peace Corps volunteers I met who had had months of training, I was able to approach with more openness and form my own understanding based on experience. When Tandana hosts short-term volunteer programs, we do provide orientation and background about the local culture, so that volunteers can interact in appropriate ways with the people they meet. We also encourage them to form relationships and approach local residents as potential friends rather than as exemplars of a certain form of society. Developmental narratives are sometimes so ingrained that volunteers describe the contrast between their home societies and those they encounter in temporal terms, as in “it’s like going back 50 years,” or “it’s like Biblical times.” When we hear these comments, Tandana staff try to

challenge the temporal classifications by pointing out the contemporaneity of the communities the volunteers are visiting.

Furthermore, we maintain distinctness by not seeking for Tandana to melt into the communities. As representatives of Tandana, we integrate in many ways in local communities and cultures, but we do not intend for Tandana to disappear. Instead of becoming one with a community, Tandana stays in relationship with it, maintaining its distinctness so that it can continue to be a party to the friendship. Many organizations are designed based on different models, planning from the start either to turn control completely over to a beneficiary community, or to make the organization obsolete by getting the community to self-sufficiency. These efforts are laudable in terms of the desire to center community capabilities, withdraw from the exercise of external power, and promote sustainable change instead of dependency. They do not, however, maintain a plural space for action. Tandana, on the other hand, is guided by relationships, from which arise the moral obligation to continue as a responsible partner in those relationships. To do that, Tandana must continue as an organization with an identity separate from those of the communities it partners with. This consistency as a party to the relationships responds to the expectation and wish of the other parties to those relationships. Humberto Burga, President of Muenala, Ecuador, said, “I have heard of foundations that only come for a short time and then end. I don’t want that to happen with Tandana. Keep paying attention to the farthest away communities. Remember us.” Martha Lanchimba, also of Muenala, emphasized, “Don’t forget our community. Always remember our community. . . . Send volunteer students again to this community to work together with us on whatever project. Here in Muenala we are ready, with arms open to receive any volunteers.” One of the most common complaints of Malian community members about other organizations is that they do one thing and then leave,

rather than continuing a relationship. Ousmane Tembiné noted, “Others have a current vision. They do something and then they leave. The foundation is continuous. As long as you don’t get discouraged, the foundation is there to support you.” Anouh Tembiné highlighted the same contrast: “This NGO made the road and left. Tandana stays with us.” Oumou Kansaye also appreciated that, “With Tandana if you start to work with them, they continue and follow up.” This sense of continuing relationship honors the desire of the communities to maintain the friendship, and it can avoid creating dependency as long as it includes the expectation that community members also demonstrate responsibility and centers what they can contribute to each initiative. As Segundo Moreta of Rey Loma, Ecuador explained:

What I have seen is that when there is an activity and a benefit for the community, you don’t just give it to give it, you ask for the participation of the whole community, and in this way the community doesn’t feel like they are just receiving. Before, that has done a lot of damage to the communities, treating them paternalistically, just receiving things. But you have them put in their part. That makes them feel important too and that what they are doing is their work.

Long-term relationships can be both respectful and responsible while they maintain the plurality that makes action possible.

Because it maintains a plural space with equality and distinctness, Tandana makes possible action. I began Tandana through simple acts among my friends in Ecuador—a question of whether a community wanted to host a group of traveling students and work together on installing the water pipes they needed, a response to students’ desire to continue their educations. Tandana staff, community members, and volunteers continue to exercise their collective agency to make changes. Arendt argues that, “To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin” (*The Human Condition* 177). Furthermore, “Every act, seen from the perspective not of the agent but of the process in whose framework it occurs and whose automatism it interrupts, is a ‘miracle’—that is, something which could not be expected”



(Arendt, *Between Past and Future* 169). The most conspicuous beginnings in Tandana history are, of course, the initial forming of friendships with communities in Ecuador and Mali, but many more beginnings have followed those first ones. Moussa Tembiné recounts how “the executive director first connected with the Bandiagara District in 2007,” then “From one surprise to the next, the second year of her collaboration was more integrative, and this was the first time that the village welcomed in their homes a group of American volunteers,” and “It was truly a miracle” (“The roots of intercultural collaboration and friendship”).

These actions are meaningful because they can reveal who the agents are, because they can be recounted as stories, because they continue to reverberate through the webs of relationships, and because they actualize principles. Arendt argues that it is “the revelatory character of action as well as the ability to produce stories and become historical, which together form the very source from which meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence” (*The Human Condition* 324). The meaningfulness of Tandana actions is evident in the stories that are told about them. The Tandana Foundation Blog contains nearly 200 stories, told by many different people about their experiences and about the actions of others. Additionally, certain initiatives that Tandana supports create a space for stories to be told that expose their narrators to one another and thus constitute action in themselves, at the same time as they share meaningful stories. For example, during women’s leadership workshops in Mali, women recount their stories about their efforts to take political action or claim an opportunity to participate in local government.<sup>3</sup> Kessia Kouriba recounted:

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Aissata Kansaye, “Taking risks to become female leaders,” in *The Tandana Foundation Blog*, October 14, 2018 (<https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/10/14/taking-risks-to-become-female-leaders/>) and Oumou Kansaye, “Advocating for gender equality in local elections,” in *The Tandana Foundation Blog*, June 2, 2018 (<https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/06/02/advocating-for-gender-equality-in-local-elections/>).

When Oumou told her story, there were many women who said that, really, they are late. If we look, women are more numerous than men. If women work together, we can support someone to get to the mayor's office. And when we have a woman mayor, she will help resolve things for women. If there is a woman candidate, they will support her so she can advance and help them. . . . Aissata also told her story. Lots of women said she is really courageous. They said that courage is good, but many of us wouldn't have the courage to do what she did. They were impressed. Every time there was a story told, for 30 seconds there was silence and they were really thinking about it.

This situation is reminiscent of one Cavarero describes that was created by women near Milan: "a shared, contextual, and relational space is created by some women who exhibit who they are to one another" (59). In this case, "the narrated story that produces the reality of the self then regards, first of all, the revealing quality of political action, or regards the process of narrating this life-story as if it were already a political action. Surprisingly, it is" (ibid.). Women in these workshops act by revealing themselves to one another and simultaneously find meaning by telling their stories.

Action in Tandana's context also reverberates and continues to generate consequences long after the original act is completed, giving rise to meaning by starting processes that go on without limit. When these ongoing and unexpected consequences are felicitous, they are one of the most rewarding aspects of this kind of work. For example, Claudia Fuevez was my student when I first went to Ecuador in 1998. In 2005, when I brought a group of high school students from the United States, she was one of two local students selected to travel with the visitors as part of the group and then host some of them at her home. While some of the group was staying with her in Panecillo, I asked her if she would like to teach the visitors how to make *quimbolitos*, a local favorite dessert. She happily agreed, and everyone enjoyed the activity. Two years later, when I brought the first group of health care volunteers to the same community, I asked Claudia if she would be interested in repeating the *quimbolitos* lesson for them. Inspired by the success of these experiences and the positive reception from the visitors, Claudia began to dream of

creating her own cooking school, through which she could share her culture and at the same time create a family business to generate income. With great personal vision and support from the members of her family, Claudia has made this dream a reality. They now operate Kawsaymi, a community tourism project in Panecillo that offers cooking classes, meals, homestays, and other cultural experiences to visitors both foreign and national. I never could have imagined that a seed planted during that 2005 program with high school students would grow into such a beautiful initiative. Laura Nichols, meanwhile, was a student from the United States in the Traveling School group that I taught in 2004. When we visited Panecillo, I asked my host father, who was the operator of the local water system, to explain the system to my students after we all participated in a work day to clean the sand that filtered the water. He explained how the chlorine machine that the community owned was broken and they needed a new one in order to be able to purify their water. Laura went home and raised money for the necessary machine. I sent her a video of the inauguration ceremony celebrating the arrival of the new machine, and she was inspired to return to the area to volunteer in a local health center as she investigated her interest in medicine. I arranged for her to live with Claudia Fierrez' family for a summer while she assisted the staff at a nearby rural health center. Later, while she was in medical school, Laura participated in two Tandana Health Care Volunteer Ventures, and then as a medical resident brought her husband and two other residents to volunteer in hospitals and clinics in the area Tandana serves. Now she is a physician and donor to Tandana. This exciting trajectory was foreseen by neither of us; while Laura "was still adamantly proclaiming [she] would not be a doctor" on her first trip to Ecuador, I had no idea that Tandana would exist or that Laura would be involved in it for many years and pioneer what became its internship program (Nichols, "Ten Years with Tandana").

Segundo Remache, a Tandana scholarship student in Ecuador, explained, “When The Tandana Foundation helps, it is a chain of favors that starts. I am not returning the favor to the one who helped me, but I see it, and I help others. . . . It creates not just the gift, but love, compassion, hope, and helps them think about how they can also help others when they grow up. . . . They didn’t just help, they planted a seed too.” Teresa Marrinan, a volunteer from Ohio, also used the seed metaphor to explain to the staff how their actions were meaningful through the continuing consequences they would bring into the world:

The seed planted through this gardening week is a part of us, challenging us to carry the dream of unity that is Tandana – in our hearts, wherever we go.  
To all of you that guided us, please know that what you do matters, and we are forever grateful to each of you. You are first and foremost teachers and you may never fully know the impact and indelible mark that you have left on each of us.

She gave voice to the sense that the small deeds done during that week would continue to reverberate in positive ways.

Of course, the continued reverberations are not always so positive. As Arendt points out, action’s consequences “consist in principle in an endless new chain of happenings whose eventual outcome the actor is utterly incapable of knowing or controlling beforehand. The most he may be able to do is to force things into a certain direction, and even of this he can never be sure” (*Between Past and Future* 60). While we can try to push things in positive directions, they do not always go that way. Hiring perhaps does not fully qualify as action, since it lacks the necessary equality, but at the same time it is analogous to the fact of natality, the basis, in Arendt’s view, of action, in that, through it, “the human world is constantly invaded by strangers, newcomers whose actions and reactions cannot be foreseen by those who are already there and are going to leave in a short while” (*ibid.* 61). Hiring, likewise, brings new people into the space of appearance and into the web of relationships, and it is one of the most unpredictable things

that we do as leaders of the organization. Each person brings new things that become part of the organization, beginning new actions both within it and through it. Some people, meanwhile, start processes that do not align with our goals and intentions as leaders of the organization. One public health intern, for example, left the organization after two months of the year she had committed to, preferring to live on her own, focus on hiking and adventure, and work for pay as an ultrasound technician, using her Tandana-sponsored volunteer visa to stay in Ecuador on her own agenda. A recently-hired Program Manager, on her first trip to Ecuador, spread rumors about staff to interns, offended volunteers by cutting in line for the bathroom, and misrepresented her experiences and abilities to everyone. I ended up firing her and sending her home after a week and a half. Other short-term hires have brought cliquish behavior that has damaged the inclusiveness of Tandana's culture. These undesirable consequences are an inherent part of action and represent the risk that must be taken to have a chance at meaning.

As Tandana maintains a plural space for action, it also makes possible the opportunity for meaning in the sense of purpose or the actualization of a principle. Principles inspire us from without to make a difference and act for the sake of something of ultimate value. They are not deduced from logical argumentation but are observed through experience and then inspire us to actualize them in our own contexts. As we shall see in the following sections, principles such as respect, responsibility, compassion, and wisdom can emerge from sustained personal interactions with people who are different. Kessia Kouriba described how she was inspired to manifest courage when she saw the courage put into action by the Tandana volunteers who visited her village: "That gave me a lot of courage. I said that I, too, when I go to another village--I was working in Kedou at the time--I should do like these foreigners, to show that I am together with the women there. It gave me a lot of courage and a good lesson." Oumou Kansaye, similarly,

noted that she was inspired by the principle of equality in Tandana's actions: "The Tandana Foundation doesn't discriminate between people. Everyone is treated the same. I, too, want to do like that in my family, and in my literacy classes when I teach." Nola Killpack, a young volunteer who visited Ecuador, was inspired by Claudia Fuevez' determined pursuit of her dreams. Nola recounted, "Claudia is my role model because she has so many dreams. Unlike most people she does not think of dreams as only dreams, but as her real future and she works hard to fulfill her goals."

The combination of connection in relationship and purpose in making a difference for others often brings meaning for Tandana volunteers. Tandana board member and volunteer Susan Napier explained:

That moment of sitting there with them in their literacy class on the floor, with the babies sleeping in their laps, or again on their backs, with a little tiny piece of slate and an even-smaller, tiny piece of chalk, learning to write and say their letters, and then to have this year a letter written in their own hand, women that I know and are my friends, writing a letter of thanksgiving for being able to read and write in their own language, that to me is the most meaningful thing I've ever done in my life, been a part of. (The Tandana Foundation, *Ten Years of Joining Hands and Changing Lives*)

Zach Graves, a volunteer from Ontario, recounted, "what I have learned is that you can make a difference and develop meaningful relationships between people despite being completely different." These meaningful actions are possible because of a first-person perspective within a plural space of appearance. As in action "the end (*telos*) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself which therefore becomes an *entelecheia*," (Arendt, *The Human Condition* 206), Tandana's action contains its end in itself. Tandana's Mission is "to support the achievement of community goals and address global inequalities through caring intercultural relationships that embody mutual respect and responsibility." As we considered what our Vision Statement should be, we realized that our vision is simply a world in which more of that happens—in which people

support each other's goals through caring, respectful, responsible relationships. Our action manifests the principles, bringing to life its own purpose.

### *Live Encounters*

When we take a personal perspective toward others, maintaining our plurality, and combine that with a willingness to engage with those who are different, we can have what Parker Palmer calls "live encounters." "In every action," he explains, "there is an other with which the actor is in partnership and on which the action in part depends" (*The Active Life* 69). Yet, we often try to avoid acknowledging the other or to contain the other within the familiar. Palmer describes the fears that often prevent us from engaging in live encounters. He argues that, "The fear of the live encounter is actually a sequence of fears that begins in the fear of diversity" and that another layer of fear is "the fear of losing our identity" (*The Courage to Teach* 38). As Palmer notes, "We fear encounters in which the other is free to be itself, to speak its own truth, to tell us what we may not wish to hear. We want those encounters on our own terms, so that we can control their outcomes" (ibid. 37-38). However, as Mehta notes:

To contain those differences [that separate and potentially unite us] or to mediate them through a prior settlement that fixes on reason, freedom, ethics, internationalism, multiculturalism, the universality of rights, or even democracy, is to deny "the occult," "the parochial," "the traditional," in short the unfamiliar, the very possibility of articulating the meaning and agentiality of its own experiences. (23)

When we actually do keep both our own identity and those of others intact, and take the risk of addressing those who are different, seeking a "rightful relation," then we experience "what the 'live encounter' of right action is all about—an encounter between the inward truth of the actor and the inward truth of the other that penetrates all external appearances and expectations" (*The Active Life*, 71).

Dialogue, which is the mode of speech that arises most naturally from a first-person orientation toward others, has the power to overcome our efforts to control the encounter. Levinas explains: “In discourse the divergence that inevitably opens up between the Other as my theme and the Other as my interlocutor, emancipated from the theme that seemed for a moment to hold him, forthwith contests the meaning I ascribe to my interlocutor. The formal structure of language thereby announces the ethical inviolability of the Other” (195). In a live encounter, difference is not contained, and an interaction leads to that which is new and unexpected. Mehta also highlights the risks, including, “the possibility of being confronted with utter opacity--an intransigent strangeness, an unfamiliarity that remains so, an experience that cannot be shared, prejudices that do not readily fuse with a cosmopolitan horizon, a difference that cannot be assimilated” (22). As Palmer points out, there is always the possibility “that a live encounter with otherness will challenge or even compel us to change our lives. . . . Otherness, taken seriously, always invites transformation, calling us not only to new facts and theories and values but also to a new way of living our lives” (*The Courage to Teach*, 39). We may have to rework and revise our beliefs and even our practices, based on the experience of the encounter. By entering into a live encounter, we allow the other to express herself and cut through the image we have of her. When she can expose her otherness, the results are unpredictable and may cause us to change our actions. This dynamic interaction is what makes the encounter “live.”

Live encounters occur frequently in Tandana’s work. My first stay in Ecuador was an extended encounter with people I had never met but who came to be family and friends. I never would have expected that twenty years later I would be leading an organization that works in the same community and visiting twice a year. Through the encounter, I found that I was in relationships in which I had responsibilities. The way I would live my life was profoundly



changed. In Tandana's work, each project is undertaken through interaction between Tandana representatives and leaders of a community or organization. The process is open-ended, and the outcome is not predetermined. Malian community members who collaborate with Tandana emphasize how this absence of a predetermined project sets Tandana apart from other organizations. Anouh Tembiné explained, "Tandana doesn't come with a predetermined project for the village, they come and ask what difficulties you have and what you need" (The Tandana Foundation, "Community Initiatives"). Housseyni Pamateck, Tandana's Local Supervisor, noted that, "With Tandana, we don't come with money or a particular project. In a visit, we ask about the problems and how they can be solved, and if you receive funding, how will you manage it, what are your internal rules." Moussa Tembiné, Tandana's Mali Program Manager, recounted an anecdote that reveals how unexpected this approach is in itself:

When we explained our approach in Ondogou Township, we explained that we don't come with projects, but if you show us what you are working on, we can help. The mayor said, "how can this be? You ask for what the people are already doing? That is not a good support. Projects come with dams, schools, wells." We said, "no, we are different from others. We come in friendship. If you want friendship, with time you will understand us. But we don't come with the project. If we are friends, we talk together. What I do you understand, and what you do I understand. In these conversations, I will see that in what you are doing, if I give you support, you will advance further." The mayor didn't understand.

When community members and volunteers meet, there are also many opportunities for unexpected learning. When Tandana first brought a group of foreign volunteers to the village of Kansongo, Mali, not much went according to plan. Work schedules changed, the grain bank storehouse that residents and visitors were building together collapsed, and new invitations and gifts were offered each day. Through this live encounter, everyone involved learned and changed in some way. Thirteen-year-old volunteer Mick Lundquist wrote, "It opened my eyes and heart. It changed my look at the world and will change the way I live" (The Tandana

Foundation, “What People Say”). Dick Brigden, a volunteer in his late sixties, said he would tell others considering such a trip, “Go with an open mind and open heart and both will be touched, and you will have an opportunity to touch others.” (ibid.). Tandana Program Coordinator Shannon Ongaro reflected after this encounter, “the world has changed since [I] last wrote. [I] confess that [I] too have changed. [I]’d like to think that each one of us is in a constant flux, a state where we are open to experiences and are thereby changed and improved because of them.” Community leaders also expressed learning and the shattering of expectations. Moussa Tembiné and Timothée Dolo wrote:

The children still do the dance that you showed them in the village and in the fields; that really made an impression on the men, women, young people, and children. Be thanked for all of that. The women invite you to go out to look for firewood at the pink dune. The people are asking when will be the next visit of the group. As to the township, she has never seen white people come and work like you have done in your visit to Kansongo. (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”).

Even after many years of collaboration, there continue to be surprises that break through appearances and expectations. Tandana’s Scholarship Coordinator learned, to her great surprise, that a model student who had been receiving a Tandana scholarship to medical college for four years was not actually living in the apartment for which Tandana was paying her rent, and that instead her cousin was living in the apartment. During Tandana’s twelfth year, the community of Motilón Chupa, Ecuador suddenly became a very enthusiastic partner, inviting Tandana volunteer groups to stay in their community and cooking all of their favorite meals to share with the visitors. And as new staff members and volunteers arrive, there are new live encounters.

Intern Hailey Shanovich wrote:

Even though Tandana sent me an extensive internship manual and I underwent an orientation upon arriving in Otavalo, I wasn’t prepared for what awaited me in my host community. The amount of warmth my new family greeted me with and the greater amount of good-will and optimism that they held was emotionally overwhelming for me and we continued to become close at a rate I had previously thought impossible.

Matias Perugachi, a long-time friend and partner of Tandana from Panecillo, Ecuador, appreciates the live nature of these interactions. Explaining that “Tandana is to unite together, be together, struggle together,” he argues that, “Tandana is not a sleeping word or a dead word. It is a living word” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”).

### *Experiencing Difference*

Engaging with communities of different cultures, economic situations, and lifestyles causes us to experience inequalities and difference. Knowing about different ways of life and seeing representations of them are quite different from actually experiencing them. Similarly, knowledge of economic inequalities is not the same as experiencing what it is like to live in a very different economic situation than one’s own. When I traveled to Kenya as a teenager, I had the opportunity to experience both great cultural difference and vast economic inequalities in close proximity to me. I felt uncomfortable with my relationship as tourist to the people I met whose lives were so different from mine. Because of that experience, I resolved to find a way to develop a relationship that felt more appropriate with people who lived in a situation very different from my own. This desire led me to sign up for a volunteer program in Ecuador, where I began to form the relationships that led to Tandana. Tandana volunteers and interns continue to experience these differences first-hand. Hailey Shanovich wrote of her internship with Tandana, “It allowed me to be able to see myself as part of the whole global picture and recognize that opportunities for global citizens are far from equal within and between societies.” Canadian volunteer Rebecca Lewinson wrote of her experience:

It has opened my eyes to a new world, new cultures, and new perspectives on family, friends, and how others are treated. In this past week, I have seen first-hand how hard people will work to persevere, even in the hardest conditions. I have seen people who

work all day, only to return home and work more to be able to support their families, and I have seen people who have very little donate as much as they can to the Tandana volunteers who came to help them.

U.S. volunteer Jessica Morales described her visit to an Afro-Ecuadorian community:

It's easy to read about painful history, but it's different when it comes directly from someone talking about their experiences and identity because of that history. It was eye opening for me and it makes me mad to think that so many Afro-Latinos in general get ignored in the media, are made out to be less, and are discriminated by their own people. . . . It made me realize that Ecuador is made up of different and diverse individuals, with groups that have their own separate traditions and ways of life.

She also remembered her experience living in an indigenous community immersing her in a different situation from what she was used to:

Not only did I get to interact with people like me, that don't struggle as much to drink a glass of milk or eat a full meal, I also interacted with people that despite how little they have, they're willing to give. You forget about people like that when you're used to privileged surroundings. You also forget about those surroundings when you become used to walking and taking the bus everywhere, being greeted in the street, having a nice conversation with a man or woman you just met; these are the interactions that I long for, and hope to experience more of.

A willingness to engage with those whose lives are different makes possible these experiences of cultural difference and economic inequality.

### *Unpredictable Outcomes*

Action and live encounters have unpredictable outcomes. Arendt explains, "Because the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, he is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer" (*The Human Condition* 190) and points out, "It is because of this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose" (ibid. 184). Ricoeur expresses this unpredictability as well. As Richard Kearney explains about Ricoeur's philosophy, "To exist in history means that 'to act is to suffer and to suffer is to act.' . . . Even

those we consider the active initiators of history also suffer history to the extent that actions, however calculated, almost invariably produce certain non-intended consequences” (Kearney 61). Palmer concurs: “Action has a life of its own, related to what we think we are doing, but often full of surprises. Action can take courses and have consequences that are decidedly independent of our own designs for it. . . . The question is whether we are willing to act in the face of these risks, willing to learn and grow from whatever new truths our actions may reveal” (*The Active Life* 22). Unpredictability is certainly a reality in Tandana’s experience. Unexpected events and changes in plan are so common that we instruct all of our volunteers on the importance of flexibility. Ken Gates, who brought several groups of students to Ecuador for Tandana programs, wrote, “Consistently I saw the Tandana team worked together at everything from always having a snack on hand, to coordinating with host families and the day to day...let’s call them unexpected Ecuador surprises/learning opportunities,” illustrating how common the surprises are (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”).

### *Self-Reflection*

Live encounters and experiences of difference lead to self-reflection. Palmer explains that, “we learn that the self is not a scrap of turf to be defended but a capacity to be enlarged” (*The Courage to Teach* 39). In action, he notes, “we risk exposing ourselves—selves at once strong and fragile, known and unknown—to the scrutiny of the world and, sometimes less mercifully, to the scrutiny of ourselves” (*The Active Life* 22). The benefit of taking this risk is that, “by risking we may learn more about ourselves and our world, and the bigger the risk, the greater the learning” (ibid. 23). Experiencing difference can also lead to dislocation, which, for Palmer, is a contemplative experience that reveals truths previously unknown to us; “This

happens when we are forced by circumstance to occupy a very different standpoint from our normal one, our angle of vision suddenly changes to reveal a strange and threatening landscape.” (ibid. 27). When we, “admit pluralism, we are forced to admit that ours is not the only standpoint, the only experience, the only way, and the truths we have built our lives on begin to feel fragile” (*The Courage to Teach* 38). Thus, we must reflect on our own views.

Integrating into Malian social life caused me to reflect a great deal on myself. I had traveled there in an effort to reach out to the unfamiliar and learn about a culture that was new to me. I had found a local contact through a friend of a friend and asked him if he had any ideas for volunteer work I could do and a local family I could live with. He had invited me to live with his family, and I had gone to do that without having any idea what I would do there. Without an established role or activity, I was forced to reflect constantly on my reasons for traveling to Mali in the first place and whether or not I could handle the challenges and whether or not I could contribute in any way to the community I was getting to know. The daily requests for money and gifts that I encountered made me very uncomfortable and led me to question the reasons for my discomfort and the assumptions that I held about economic inequality and polite behavior. Similarly, the response to gifts, which was to show them to others as a way of honoring the giver, made me quite uncomfortable as well, and again caused me to question the reasons for my discomfort. I was also surprised to experience a different set of expectations regarding the expression of emotions. Communal events, such as a death or the arrival of good news for a village led to intense public displays of shared emotions, but personal emotions were kept very private and never revealed in public settings. Trying to learn not to display my own personal feelings in inappropriate ways, I reflected on my relationship with my emotions and the different purposes their expression serves.

Self-reflection emerging from live encounters with difference is also regularly reported by Tandana volunteers. "The challenges you will face teach you invaluable lessons not only about another culture but about yourself," wrote Mariah, a student volunteer (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say"). Jim Hoyne, a doctor who volunteered many times with Tandana, wrote, "You will go home absolutely overwhelmed by what you saw, who you met, what you've learned, and how your heart has expanded. You will be inspired to exceed your own expectations of yourself" (ibid.). Emily Kuipers, another volunteer, reported, "It has caused me to rethink parts of my life--I'm now seriously considering going into medicine!" (ibid.). Live encounters with that which is different lead to reflection on our own perspectives, plans, assumptions, and expectations. Finding ourselves dislocated or confronted with inassimilable difference causes us to learn more about ourselves.

### *Sharing*

The morality that arises from face-to-face interactions, combined with the experience of economic inequalities, calls us to share. For Levinas, "The being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity—its hunger—without my being able to be deaf to that appeal. Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness" (200). The other's need calls me to a moral response. Yet despite the need, the other is equal with me. What is called for is not charity but sharing. Levinas explains, "The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger; but this poverty and exile which appeal to my powers, address me, do not deliver themselves over to these power as givens, remain the

expression of the face. The poor one, the stranger, presents himself as an equal” (213). In this reciprocal relation, I am both less and more than the other person:

To hear his destitution which cries out for justice is not to represent an image to oneself, but is to posit oneself as responsible, both as more and as less than the being that presents itself in the face. Less, for the face summons me to my obligations and judges me. The being that presents himself in the face comes from a dimension of height, a dimension of transcendence whereby he can present himself as a stranger without opposing me as obstacle or enemy. More, for my position as *I* consists in being able to respond to this essential destitution of the Other, finding resources for myself. The Other who dominates me in his transcendence is thus the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, to whom I am obligated. (215, emphasis in original)

Finding an equal in need, and finding that I have the resources to respond, calls me to the responsibility to share those resources.

Both Ecuadoreans and Malians describe the sense of equality that is inherent in sharing, unlike the pity involved in charity. Maria Esther Manrique of Rey Loma, Ecuador, explained, “is not like having pity. It is sharing what I have with a person who needs it.” Kadidia Kassogué of Kani-Gogouna, Mali, expressed, “We are all one. We are all equal. If someone has a difficulty, they want to help that person, because we are all the same.” Kadidia Yanogué of Dana-Guiré, Mali sees this spirit of sharing in the Tandana donors who supported the creation of her village’s cotton bank: “We and the Hubert family are the same family. They don’t see themselves as different, white while we are black. We are the same.” Anouh Tembiné surmised that the Tandana volunteers, “came to see if they could help us and to show that they are the same as us.” Helping others in a spirit of equality is sharing.

After living in Panecillo, Ecuador, I found that I had friends with goals and dreams I could very much relate to. And these friends often lacked the economic resources to achieve those goals and pursue those dreams. I also realized that I had resources at my disposal, and I wanted to share. The hard part was figuring out how to share in ways that did not undermine the



equality of the relationship. When I finally did begin to share, I made sure to emphasize the reciprocity involved and how much I had already received through the relationship, trying to make it clear that I was sharing, not giving in charity. Others involved with Tandana find themselves called to a similar kind of sharing. A family from the United States who lived with a family in Quichinche, Ecuador found themselves filled with gratitude for the welcome they had received and desired to share their resources in return, helping their host family install paving tiles in the courtyard, ordering a table and benches where all the members of both families could eat together, and assisting with other improvements to the house. A number of interns have been inspired by their host families' generosity to want to share by providing scholarships to young people in their families. Short-term volunteers, also, have been called to share and have donated for medical treatments for patients, educational materials for schools, a tent for neighborhood meetings, and many other goals of community members they have met. One volunteer, after several trips to Kansongo, Mali, decided to share the tools he had inherited from his father and father-in-law with young men in Kansongo who were starting a carpentry workshop. Tandana as an organization also supports community initiatives in a spirit of sharing. Moussa Tembiné, Tandana's Mali Program Manager, explained, "The spirit of sharing, that is the spirit of Tandana. We know there are always difficulties, but if we are animated by this spirit, we know we will overcome the difficulties" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say").

Sharing also involves mutuality and reciprocity, rather than a one-way flow or an exchange of material gifts for status. It is important to accept gifts that are offered with appreciation to show that the sharing happens both ways and that neither party considers herself superior to the other. Volunteers, because they typically come from a higher position in terms of

global hierarchies than the community members who host them, must emphasize their receiving in order to equalize the relationship. Student volunteer Chloe Willeford reflected:

All we were doing for them was helping them build a fence. And yet they took so much time out of their days and put in so much effort to make us feel comfortable and happy in a community we all knew we would only spend two and a half weeks in.

And that is what I will try to take away with me from this experience. Kindness and generosity never are wasted. . . . I am so grateful to the community of Agualongo, especially my host family and friends there.

Matthew Rothert, another volunteer, said, “I gained so much more from the experience than I gave.” Swati Biswas, a physician volunteer, similarly expressed, “We have received much more than we have given.” Don Gustafson, a health care volunteer, recalled, “I walked into the dental clinic to witness my wife be completely in love with each moment she shared with each child. I knew then that we were going to gain more from our experience than all of the people we were helping in the five communities combined. (And we did!).” Teresa Marrinan, a gardening volunteer, also highlights what she and the other volunteers received from the exchange, suggesting that, “While the garden projects we helped to bring to life at their school represent a modest contribution to the dreams these people hold for their children, working hand in hand with three generations of this community to manifest a concrete piece of their hope for their children was truly an incredible and enduring gift to us.”

Community members often highlight the mutuality of the sharing. Maria Perugachi noted, “we opened our doors to foreign people, we gave them affection, respect, confidence, and they also helped us day by day. [We show] good behavior of the residents, and the foundation always takes our community into consideration. We work together mutually.” Martha Lanchimba recalled, “the students were here. They supported with labor, and we also did with the lead mason and the lunch, and Tandana with materials....equally, we all put in and shared. Even lunch we shared, their lunch and our lunch.” Mónica Lopez, a Tandana scholarship

recipient, explained that hosting Tandana volunteers in her home is “a way of thanking the foundation for helping us so much with our studies and, in this way, I can reach my dreams and the goals I have set for myself. In appreciation, maybe it isn’t much, but giving them a place to stay and food, is a way to show our thanks.” Humberto Perugachi said, “We feel satisfied to help them, as they also help us...we feel that we helped them, and they went home satisfied.”

Reciprocal sharing is emphasized in the Kichwa concept of *randi-randi*, or “giving-giving,” and several Ecuadorean community members found aspects of *randi-randi* in the interactions of communities and Tandana. Maria Esther Manrique explained:

*randi-randi* is giving-giving. I don’t only wait for someone to give to me, but I also give and share from what I have. . . . You bring doctors, medicines--imagine how much that would cost--, so I appreciate the foundation bringing this, and you ask 50 cents from the patients, and the community provides a lunch from what they have. . . . Like an exchange, they give what they have, you give your knowledge.

Alberto Panamá articulated, “It’s like working in a group together, we are not charging any money for the lodging, and they are also working on the tank with effort, and we are giving them a place to stay, so we are giving-giving.” Scholarship recipient Segundo Remache noted, “with the scholarship students to the foundation, you see this, the foundation asks for help with our talents or what we are studying. The foundation helps us, and we also help the foundation with what we can, so this is an important part of the application of *randi-randi*.” Eduardo Pazmiño concurred: “I see that the help from Tandana comes to my family regarding studies, and it really pleases me that I also can help by hosting a volunteer in my house. Here we see *randi-randi*. I receive something, and it is not an obligation to have a volunteer in my home, but it is a way I can show appreciation for all the things that Tandana does for me.”

Sharing applies not only to material goods but also to knowledge, experiences, and cultures. In the case of knowledge, it is even more important to share from a position of

equality. Naeem Inayatullah points out how “Superiority turns responsibility towards others into charitable condescension” (364). When we sense that a giver is trying to confirm a sense of superiority, we tend to resist the gift, even if it is valuable. Inayatullah argues, “We resist because we sense that the donor needs us to confirm his superiority. Receiving such goods confirms the donor’s superiority and affirms our inferiority. Accepting this hierarchy is the real cost of receiving the donor’s ‘gift’ and the crux of the problem” (364-365). Instead of claiming superiority, however, we can approach with a sense of our own lack alongside what we can offer, seeking true sharing:

Claiming exclusive knowledge can be replaced by a stance that seeks what we may call knowledge encounters. . . . we de-emphasize the good we can offer and instead highlight our lack and need; and we search for others who present the same posture, avoiding those projecting missionary values. In sum, we search for opportunities and partners that allow mutual sharing. In this way, we can have access to others’ unique knowledge and they to ours. (365)

Not all Tandana volunteers arrive with such a posture, but many do, and we seek to cultivate it through our orientation activities and discussions. Those who may not arrive with much understanding of the importance of reciprocal knowledge sharing usually leave with a greater appreciation for it. Bill Brigden, a volunteer from Ohio, reflected, “Most memorable is the extraordinary welcome we felt at every interaction and meeting. By positioning ourselves to assist and learn, we seem to have avoided the condescending approach attributed to previous ‘tourists’” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). Peter Graves, a physician from Ontario, describes a knowledge encounter with local health care providers in Ecuador:

you learn about the challenges that [face] other health care providers with the same motivation as you have. They are no different. . . . A doctor is a doctor, throughout the world. The difference is what we have to work with. I’ve learned a lot about how we can do the best we can with what we have available to us, and often that means looking at the perspective of the whole of the patient and not necessarily on one specific element. I think that’s a really good thing we can learn from other physicians and other health care providers.

As Inayatullah notes, it is important to emphasize what we need to learn and downplay what we can offer. Kristin Linzmeyer, a cardiologist from Idaho, did just that, writing, “I ended up learning more from my patients than they learned from me. While I offered assistance with their eye irritation and their arthritis, I also learned much about their strength, courage, tenacity, and an overwhelming sense of family and community.” Teresa Marrinan similarly emphasized the volunteers’ own lack, calling her group:

An ill equipped band of relatively clueless gringos with shovels and plants and fertilizer who were schooled about pretty much everything – from gardening to terrace building to irrigation to diplomacy and determination – by Matias – the local plant guru of 32 or 99 or some unknown age between, and the amazing army of determined citizens of Padre Chupa.

Chloe Willeford discovered through experience that she could learn more than she could give, recalling, “Little did I know that the trip would teach me and help me grow just as much, if not more, as it helped Agualongo.”

Many community members also emphasize the spirit of sharing they have felt in terms of knowledge, culture, and experiences. Fabian Pinsag, president of Muenala Ecuador, said, “I think this is interculturality. Interculturality is not just in written words. It’s learning how to really share between different cultures” (The Tandana Foundation “What People Say”). Martha Lanchimba recounted, “In my house we shared ideas, foreign and from here in Ecuador, here in our community.” Sisa Panamá recalled, “they shared their experiences and we shared ours. We exchanged information, and we got to know more about what the world is like, in our country and in other countries.” Josefina Torres explained, “we have shared with you, and you have shared with us.” Maria Perugachi noted, “they share their ideas and traditions, what they eat at home. They tell us about their family. . . . They are happy to be in Ecuador and share experiences with us. . . . We teach them our traditions, customs, dress. It has been really nice

sharing these experiences with them.” Mónica Lopez said, “It’s like they are trying to learn from us and also to share with us their ideas, customs, and traditions.” Ousmane Tembiné of Kansongo, Mali, explained “In my view, they came to Kansongo to give and to receive. They wanted to learn our culture and share their knowledge with us too.”

### *Promise-keeping*

The unpredictability of action and the moral obligations of face-to-face interaction call for keeping promises. Arendt argues, “The remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic uncertainty of the future, is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises” (*The Human Condition* 237). Ricoeur explains that the obligation to keep promises arises from the interaction with the other: “The properly ethical justification of the promise suffices of itself, a justification which can be derived from the obligation to safeguard the institution of language and to respond to the trust that the other places in my faithfulness” (124). Keeping promises not only responds to the other, it also provides an opportunity for self-constancy, which allows us to express who we are. Ricoeur explains, “Keeping one’s word expresses a self-constancy which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely within the dimension of ‘who?’” (123). This self-constancy allows us to answer affirmatively the question, “Is there a form of permanence in time which can be connected to the question ‘who?’ inasmuch as it is irreducible to the question of ‘what?’? Is there a form of permanence in time that is a reply for the question ‘Who am I?’?” (118).

Keeping promises is important to Tandana’s approach. Tandana’s values statement includes, “We follow through on what we commit to do” (The Tandana Foundation, “Mission & Values”). Community members are sometimes surprised to find that Tandana actually follows

through. Villagers in Sal-Dimi, Mali, despite Tandana's promise of supporting them in creation of a grain bank, did not begin to break the stones needed for construction of the bank's storehouse until they saw the grain arrive. They had been betrayed by so many false promises in the past that they were not ready to invest in their part of the project until they knew that Tandana was going to follow through. Housseyni Pamateck recounted:

We had experience with other NGOS who gave us false promises. They said they are coming a certain day, and we waited for them impatiently, but they never came. They asked us to break stones, but then they never showed up, so we had problems with NGOs like that. The people thought The Tandana Foundation would be the same as that. So, they didn't break stones until the volunteers and the millet arrived. They realized that Tandana's promises were real. That's when they started breaking the stones. They saw that Tandana doesn't promise unless it is going to do it. They have understood the difference. Everyone knows this difference.

Moussa Timbiné, Tandana's Savings for Change Coordinator, described another NGO that offered him pay and then never followed through, contrasting that experience with Tandana:

"With Tandana, everything they have proposed to me has become reality." Marcela Muenala from Tangali, Ecuador, whose son had successful surgery through Tandana's Patient Follow Up Program, said, "Tandana is the only serious foundation that helps all the people in the communities, without lying to them. Others say they are going to help, to take us to good hospitals, and then they never return" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say").

Humberto Perugachi also mentioned Tandana's promise-keeping: "It is a serious foundation. When they give their word, they follow through. When they don't have resources, they tell us this is how far we can go and that is it." Martha Lanchimba echoed, "they do follow through when they offer something." Keeping promises allows Tandana as an organization to maintain self-constancy. Tandana, even though it is an organization rather than an individual, maintains an identity as someone that its partners can count on.

## *Forgiveness*

Action's unpredictability and its need for freedom require the possibility of forgiveness. Arendt explains, "The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility— of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing—is the faculty of forgiving" (*The Human Condition* 237). Since we can neither predict nor undo the effects of our actions, sometimes we need to ask for forgiveness. Desmond Tutu affirms that, "because we are not infallible, because we will hurt especially the ones we love by some wrong, we will always need a process of forgiveness and reconciliation to deal with those unfortunate yet all too human breaches in relationships" (273). Granting forgiveness allows the forgiver to remain free to continue acting, rather than being caught in a determined cycle of retribution. Ricoeur argues:

What the catharsis of mourning-narrative allows is that new actions are still possible *in spite of evil suffered*. It detaches us from the obsessional repetitions and repressions of the past and frees us for a future. For only thus can we escape the disabling cycles of retribution, fate, and destiny: cycles which *estrangle* us from our power to act by instilling the view that evil is overpoweringly alien—that is, irresistible. (96, emphases in original).

Tutu explains, "In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us wrong" (273). This faith is necessary to break the determined cycle of retribution. Tutu recalls, "I told them that the cycle of reprisal and counter reprisal that had characterized their national history had to be broken and that the only way to do this was to go beyond retributive justice to restorative justice, to move on to forgiveness, because without it there was no future" (260). The act of forgiveness asserts that evil is not all-powerful and that we are free to act. Kearney explains that in Ricoeur's thought, "the possibility of forgiveness is a 'marvel' precisely because it surpasses the limits of rational calculation and explanation. There



is a certain gratuitousness about pardon due to the very fact that the evil it addresses is not part of some dialectical necessity” (96-97). Forgiveness safeguards our ability to act by providing a chance for redemption despite the negative effects of our actions and by restoring our freedom to act rather than just react to evil we have suffered.

Forgiveness, however, is not automatic and cannot be taken for granted. It may be requested and refused, or it may be offered and unacknowledged if the offender does not admit fault. Tutu describes the risks involved:

When you embark on the business of asking for and granting forgiveness, you are taking a risk.

In relations between individuals, if you ask another person for forgiveness you may be spurned; the one you have injured may refuse to forgive you. The risk is even greater for the injured party, wanting to offer forgiveness. The culprit may be arrogant, obdurate, or blind; not ready or willing to apologize or to ask for forgiveness. He or she thus cannot appropriate the forgiveness that is offered. Such rejection can jeopardize the whole enterprise. (268-269)

Therefore, “forgiveness could not be taken for granted; it was neither cheap nor easy” (Tutu 271). Like live encounters, and action in general, forgiveness involves risk.

During my first stay in Mali, I experienced the marvel of forgiveness. I had heard about a cultural festival being presented for tourists, and, feeling lonely, I decided to attend despite my typical aversion to touristic settings. After I had arrived and sat down, however, I learned that there was an entrance fee. I did not really want to be there anyway, and I mumbled an embarrassed apology and intention to leave rather than pay the fee. I walked back to the borrowed scooter on which I had arrived and started the motor with my head down. Feeling awkward and regretful, I began driving slowly up the road, immersed in my own thoughts. Suddenly, I noticed that a group of mask dancers was processing on the highway to the festival. The dancers on stilts were already right above, looking down at me, and other dancers swayed and shook at ground level. Unable to gather my wits to get out of the way, I drove right through

the procession. A police officer pronounced official censure on my disrespectful deed, saying, “you are wrong.” Mortified, I frantically searched for a way to make up for my error. I could not undo my action, but perhaps I could ask for forgiveness. Knowing the importance of a third-party for any moral transaction in Malian culture, I asked an acquaintance to accompany me as I apologized. Together we returned to the festival, and I expressed my regret to the manager, whose name I learned was Modibo Iguila. I gave him a small sum of money as a token of my apology for my disrespect to the dancers and to the festival, feeling that nothing could really repair the damage I had done. To my great surprise, Modibo offered immediate forgiveness. He invited me to return to the festival each of the next days it would be held, and that evening he even showed up at the home where I was living with a gift of indigo cloth to cement our new friendship. The forgiveness that he offered so unexpectedly freed both of us to act again.

I have also had the opportunity to forgive and have found it to be as marvelous as being forgiven. After returning from a trip to Mali, I discovered that my closest Malian friend and my host to whom I had entrusted funds for a project had misrepresented the expenses to me. Although they had presented receipts to justify expenses of the total amount, they had separately created a spreadsheet revealing their projected expenses, including a small amount they intended to distribute to themselves without authorization, and accidentally shared it with me. I was devastated by their breach of trust, and, unable to resolve the issue through phone calls, planned another visit to Mali several months later in order to address the damage done to the relationships. When I was again face to face with my friend, he was able to express his regret and also explain their thinking, and I was able to forgive. Instead of ending the friendship, I decided to hire him to work for Tandana in Mali. Then he could earn something for his work

honestly and did not need to take a hidden cut. Our relationship was ultimately repaired and strengthened, and we both were freed to act meaningfully again.

### *Experiencing Gratitude*

Both sharing and forgiveness generate experiences of gratitude. When one person gives kindly to another, the natural response of the recipient is gratitude. When mutual sharing takes place, the effect is often mutual gratitude. As with plural spaces for action and sharing, it is important to approach gratitude with a sense of equality and freedom. Diana Butler Bass contrasts two models of gratitude, one hierarchical and closed, the other egalitarian and open. She argues that:

The standard model of gratitude is a closed cycle of gift and return bound by social obligation and indebtedness, whereby a “benefactor,” a superior of some sort (someone wealthier, more powerful), provides a benefit for another, a “beneficiary,” a person in a state of need or trouble. In the closed cycle, the beneficiary is dependent on the benefactor in a way that feels demeaning or signals indebtedness. (19)

In an open model of gratitude, by contrast, “gifts are not commodities. Gifts are the nature of the universe itself,” and “we understand that all benefactors are also beneficiaries and all beneficiaries can be benefactors” (20). She describes a kind of reciprocity that is “Not hierarchical, but neighborly . . . not payback [but] the sharing of gifts and care pro bono” (167). She urges readers to remember that, “Sooner or later, everyone will be on the receiving end because of need. You may be the benefactor now, but at some point you will need the help and goodwill of others. You will be a beneficiary. The truth of the matter is you are both benefactor and beneficiary all the time” (168). Gratitude must be approached from a stance of equal footing, rather than used to reinforce hierarchies, and it must be freely chosen, rather than enforced. Because Tandana donors and volunteers are often wealthier than its community

partners, they must take care to approach as equals and not to require a kind of gratitude that could reinforce a hierarchical difference.

Free and mutual gratitude is often shared by community members and Tandana volunteers. During the first Tandana volunteer program in Kansongo, Mali, the volunteers expressed amazement at the generosity of the villagers, who had few material possessions relative to the volunteers, but gave freely of their peanuts, cloth, jewelry, and other gifts, as well as sharing their time, daily activities, and culture with the visitors. Pebelou Tembiné, one of the elders of Kansongo, meanwhile, expressed wonder at the fact that this group of Americans who had no necessity forcing them to leave their country, had traveled so far to reach Kansongo, and then, once they were there, had agreed to carry rocks on their heads to assist with the building project. Both visitors and hosts were overcome with gratitude for the openness, generosity, and good will of the other. Not long ago I received a visit from Alberto Panamá, a leader of the community of Motilón Chupa, Ecuador, which had recently hosted a group of Tandana volunteers. “We are so happy,” he said, referring to the community’s partnership with Tandana, Tandana’s support for their irrigation tank, and the visit of the student volunteers. “We are happier,” I replied, remembering the great generosity of the women who had cooked delicious meals for the visiting students each day; the commitment of Alberto, who had worked late each evening in order to ensure the tank would be finished by the time the students departed; and the joy shared by Angela, who kicked off the dancing during the farewell ceremony. We each expressed appreciation for what the other had shared and concern that the other would get tired of us. We each tried to allay the other’s concern, reiterating our thankfulness. Sharing allows for deep experiences of mutual gratitude. Forgiveness also leads to experiences of gratitude. As Kearney explains, “forgiveness is a ‘marvel’” with “a certain gratuitousness” (Kearney 96-97).

Because it is not owed or expected, it gives rise to gratitude. I was, quite frankly, amazed by Modibo's response to my apology and filled with appreciation.

### *Greater Awareness of What It is to be Human*

Both experiences of difference and self-reflection lead to greater understanding of the human condition. The dangers of extrapolating a universal "human nature" from the experience of just one cultural milieu are well documented and the category of universal humanity has been deconstructed based on the fallacy of taking one particular version as universal. Yet, there are similarities as well as differences among us, and the category of the human can be quite useful, not only politically but also ethically. If, instead of beginning with an *a priori* idea of what is human and then using it to judge and exclude those who do not fit the image, we start with the assumption that all people are human and then slowly build an idea of humanness *a posteriori*, based on experience with different human beings, we can start to gain an understanding of what it is to be human. If we want to understand humanness, in fact, we must consider a variety of examples and what their differences and similarities reveal. Even Judith Butler, who in her wariness of the exclusionary history of notions of the human condition disavows that there is such a shared condition, admits that probing difference is how we come to understand what is human (20). She writes, for example, "[t]o come up against what functions, for some, as a limit case for the human is a challenge to rethink the human," and, "human rights law has yet to understand the full meaning of the human. It is, we might say, an ongoing task of human rights to reconceive the human when it finds that its putative universality does not have universal reach" (90-91).

An effort to seek understanding of a shared humanity across difference does not depend on a domestication of that difference. Mehta contrasts the vision of difference contained within a familiar structure, which he calls “the cosmopolitanism of reason,” with what he calls the “cosmopolitanism of sentiments” (20-21). He cites Edmund Burke as an exemplar of the latter outlook, noting that Burke’s “thought is pitched at a level that takes seriously the sentiments, feelings, and attachments through which peoples are, and aspire to be, ‘at home’” (21). Such a view involves openness to the unfamiliar, “undergirded by humility and a concern with the sentiments that give meaning to people’s lives,” and leads to a risky conversation in which understanding across boundaries of difference may or may not be achieved. Mehta suggests that this perspective is cosmopolitan in that it “holds out the possibility, even the hope, that through the conversation, which has as its purpose the understanding of the sentiments that give meaning to people’s lives, wider bonds of sympathy can be forged” (22). This perspective involves thinking “in terms of concepts through which the coherence of other peoples’ lives can, in principle, become evident as a concrete and experienced reality” (214), and is based on “an ontology in which life, at least human life, occurs within the fold of an arch of certain characteristic modes of human experience that involve fear, pain, interiority, desire, and a sense of continuity linking past and future” (34). A perspective like the “cosmopolitanism of sentiments” allows us to seek understanding across difference, trusting that there are some things we share as human beings and yet refusing to make detailed assumptions about what these are.

Self-reflection also provides an avenue to greater understanding of the human condition. Our selves are the human beings with whom we are most intimately familiar, and introspection allows us to see aspects of human experience that we cannot discern from others. Learning more about ourselves through experiences of dislocation helps us better understand what is human in

us. Comparing what we find in ourselves with what we see in others can help us discover hidden similarities and also broaden our concepts of the human. Roy Rappaport delineates three levels of meaning:

Whereas low-order meaning is shaped by distinction and middle-order meaning is carried by the discovery or revelation of similarities (often hidden) among apparently disparate things, what I shall call high-order meaning (in previous publications "highest-order meaning") is grounded in identity or unity, the radical identification or unification of self with other. (71)

For Rappaport, “Whereas low-order meaning's home is taxonomy and middle-order meaning's vehicle is metaphor, participation is the way to high-order meaning” (72). Awareness of the human experience at all three of these levels of meaning is possible through experiences of difference accompanied by self-reflection. When we discover differences in our languages, food, dress, and lifestyles, we learn through low-order meaning that there are many ways of being human. As we realize that different cultural expressions often spring from the same underlying values, we learn through middle-order meaning about unexpected human similarities. When we participate in communal expressions of joy or sorrow, we feel through high-order meaning our unity as human beings. The unity of high-order meaning may seem to conflict with the importance, explained earlier, of maintaining plurality. However, these moments of radical identification are outside of ordinary time. Although action is not possible in the state of unity, these experiences do teach us important lessons about what it is to be human. As we go up through these levels, awareness becomes a more accurate description of what we gain than understanding. There is a sense in which the human cannot be described or fully known. Butler finds the human at the limits of language:

For if I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the “we” except by finding the way in which I am tied to “you,” by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to

know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know. (49)

Even visual representation of the human must fail, but in doing so makes us aware of that which it cannot contain. Butler argues, “the human is not *represented* by the face. Rather, the human is indirectly affirmed in that very disjunction that makes representation impossible, and this disjunction is conveyed in the impossible representation” (144, emphasis in original).

The intercultural experiences that Tandana facilitates make possible greater awareness of what it is to be human. When I took a group of volunteers to Kori-Maoundé, Mali, several local leaders led us on a tour of the village. One stop was the *grande famille* home, the building that represented the founders and ancestors of the village. The chief, Amadou Napo, explained that there was a stone inside the house called the worry stone. If a man had too many worries, he could sit on that stone, cover his face with his hands, and confess his troubles honestly to the ancestors. Through this act he would find relief. The volunteers each wanted to take a turn sitting on the stone, and I asked if that would be okay. Amadou agreed, and we all went outside except for Susan who would sit on the stone first. As we gathered outside the doorway, Amadou and his companion Boureima started laughing out loud. They simply could not believe that Americans would have worries too. Americans had plenty of money, and they assumed that lack of money was the source of worries. This moment illuminated something for both hosts and visitors, revealing to the Malians that money was not the only reason for worry and removing any illusions the Americans might have had about a simpler, carefree village life. It suggested to all of us that perhaps part of being human is to worry.

Both hosts and visitors who meet through Tandana express awareness of humanity through the three levels of meaning. Volunteer Pat Pahl wrote, “I have a new perception on humanity after being in Kansongo!” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). Cristina



Fuerez of Panecillo, Ecuador wrote that experiences with North Americans have taught her that many people, “are interested in learning about the many cultures that exist in the world, since this differentiates us and identifies us” (ibid.), highlighting low order meaning. J.P. Nelson from California wrote, “For people looking to greatly expand their understanding of the common bonds of humanity while learning about the Otavaleño people and their traditions and current conditions, I highly recommend Tandana” (ibid.), alluding to both low and middle order meaning. After describing what she experienced in Kansongo, Mali, volunteer Julie Lundquist suggested the first two levels of meaning, writing, “I can only hope that both the differences and similarities of our cultures enhanced each other. We are indeed one people sharing far more than I ever imagined. . . . Through my intention to learn more about the amazing people in Kansongo, I learned much about myself, about living fully and joyfully, and how thankful I am to be alive!” (ibid.). Fabian Pinsag, President of Muenala, Ecuador, said, “We understand each other. We communicate, and I think that is a great achievement for human beings, to know that even though we are from different countries, we are one” (ibid.), hinting at both middle and high order meaning. Rappaport’s high order meaning is perhaps best exemplified in Tandana experience through the welcome events that Malian hosts offered to visiting volunteers. Volunteer Carol Peddie described the experience, tearing up as she recalled its power, “When we drove up in a caravan of 4x4 vehicles, and the whole community was there with song and drums and open arms to meet us and greet us, it was overwhelming. It was emotional, it really was. . . . It was such a welcoming experience. I didn’t expect that, and obviously it’s stayed with me” (The Tandana Foundation, “Ten Years of Joining Hands”). Moving in rhythm with a large group of people to drum beats, songs, and rifle shots led to an ineffable feeling of unity.

## *Respect*

One of the moral obligations that arises from face-to-face interactions is respect for the other. When we recognize absolute otherness through the face of the other, we must show regard for the other's feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions, as we cannot fit them into a totalizing schema through which we could judge them. The term respect, however, is used in several different ways based on differential power relations, as something commanded, something earned, or something accorded. Respect, in the sense of heeding the greater power of a figure of authority can reinforce hierarchical dynamics, whereas respect accorded to those in subordinate positions, which insists on treating them as equals, can weaken the sway of power. As Levinas argues, "The face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised" (198). Choosing to accept this relation, we limit the working of power. Respecting the alterity of the other, one relates "to what is different not by denying one's deepest convictions but by encasing them in a prior commitment to a humility that trumps the certainties of reason or revelation and in doing so denies space to power" (Mehta xi). We look at "the unfamiliar from a perspective that does not a priori presume its provisionality," but rather recognizes its possibility for coherence even if understanding it proves to be difficult (ibid. 214). This perspective "places the onus on the comprehending subject and not on the studied object [and] . . . suggests a limitation on our knowledge without predicating this on the essentiality of the object" (ibid. 68). Respect asks us to seek to understand, rather than expect the other to fit herself into our familiar categories.

Respect for people and their cultures is one of Tandana's core values. We try to keep respect at the forefront of our minds, by honoring the ability of the community members with whom we work to define their own priorities, to envision ways to reach their goals, and to act

together to make positive change. The projects that Tandana supports are initiated and designed by the communities. Using their own decision-making processes, such as general assemblies and the delegation of certain details to leadership councils, communities define their priorities and make plans for how to achieve their goals. Then, they submit proposals to Tandana, and we discuss whether and how we can collaborate. In a few cases, such as the scholarship program and the health care program in Ecuador, and the women's leadership workshops in Mali, Tandana may propose an idea and seek feedback from local residents. These kinds of programs are organized by Tandana, but we only undertake them if there is real enthusiasm from community members, and we seek local input in their design. We try to make it clear that we are genuinely seeking the opinions of community members and that if they are not interested in a particular proposal that will not damage our relationship or prevent us from supporting other initiatives that they propose. Moussa Tembiné, Tandana's Mali Program Manager lauded this approach, saying, "The great success of Tandana in Mali, for me, is that it is the people of the village who initiate their own projects and the foundation accompanies them" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say"). Luis Chicaiza, a teacher in Cutambi, Ecuador, explained, "The community leaders have begun to think about how to provide for their needs and to see Tandana as complementary to their efforts" (ibid.). As Housseyni Pamateck, Tandana's Local Supervisor in Mali, said, "The beneficiaries propose the activities they can't do all on their own, and the foundation completes what is still needed, and they work together. That is what has really encouraged me. It's rare to find an NGO that works like that" (ibid.). It is so rare, in fact, that Samba Tembiné, an elder from Kansongo, Mali at first could not imagine that Tandana would actually show respect. He explained, "At first, I was against it, but after the first group visited, I understood that these foreigners are different from the others, because everything they have done

has been with our agreement, and they have asked us about everything with the greatest respect” (ibid.).

Respect also calls Tandana representatives to learn about, honor, and adapt to the various cultures that our community partners identify as their own. In Quichinche, Ecuador, a gift of food is an important sign of friendship, representing the hard work that went into cultivating the crops. Good manners call for eating it with gusto and taking any leftovers home. I have heard of other medical volunteer groups who have refused to eat food offered by the community, caring little about the offense they were causing. Tandana staff teach the volunteers to accept gifts of food with a smile and take any leftovers with them. Maria Esther Manrique, a nurse at the Gualsaqui Health Center, explained of Tandana volunteers, “Often for the foreigners, it is unfamiliar food, something they have never eaten. But they accept it with a smile, and they never get angry or look like they are in a bad mood. That gives the community more confidence, so they talk more openly and share food” (ibid.). Tandana staff and volunteers try to participate in local customs and practices as appropriate. As Moussa Tembiné explains, “for The Tandana Foundation, there is no superiority. The volunteers agree to fit in to the community’s culture. That is what gives confidence to the people” (ibid.). Respect means treating people with dignity. Segundo Moreta of Rey Loma, Ecuador, said, “Thank you Tandana for restoring people's dignity” (ibid.).

Practicing respect is particularly important for those who occupy positions of greater power in global hierarchies. Those in positions of lesser privilege tend to learn respect, in the sense of respecting an authority, as a matter of survival or as a strategic tool, whereas those in more powerful locations must make a moral decision to accord respect and “deny space to power.” Tandana’s Values Statement acknowledges the different levels of need for respect

across hierarchies, affirming, “We recognize the need to pay special attention to cultures that have historically been devalued,” and “We support the efforts of indigenous peoples to reclaim, express pride in, and strengthen their cultures” (“Mission & Values”). In practice, this respect plays out in expressions of interest in and appreciation for aspects of local knowledge, ways of doing things, histories, experiences, and cultural expressions. Learning to make bread or bracelets, following the lead of local expert masons on building projects, learning local languages, inquiring about customs and ceremonies, joining in celebrations, asking questions about hosts’ past experiences, learning to draw water from a well, learning how to milk a cow, and simply paying close attention are all ways that Tandana visitors show respect for their hosts’ cultures, which have traditionally been devalued. Esther Perugachi from Cutambi, Ecuador, who taught a group of Tandana volunteers how to make bread, bracelets, and scarves, said, “The day we made bread, the day we were here making scarves and bracelets, I really felt good. People were asking me questions, as if I were someone important” (The Tandana Foundation, “Ten Years of Joining Hands”). It is a tragic injustice that leaves Esther typically feeling as though she were not someone important, and that history makes demonstrating her importance to her even more urgent.

Respect for cultures, knowledges, techniques, and experiences is valuable, but ultimately respect for the people to whom they belong is more important. I learned this lesson through a mistake I made in working with the village of Kansongo, Mali. Local leaders had proposed planting a fruit orchard, which would need to be enclosed to prevent livestock from devouring the young trees. They had requested funds for a chain-link fence to keep the animals out. Wanting to valorize traditional technologies and ways of doing things, I proposed that instead we build a stone wall to protect the orchard, and village leaders agreed. A Tandana volunteer group

visited Kansongo and worked alongside residents to build the wall. Local men blasted enormous stones from the bedrock and rolled them into place, while volunteers and local youth carried smaller stones. After several days of work, the wall was complete, and the young trees were planted inside. It fit in perfectly with the aesthetic of the village, matching the walls that residents had around their compounds. Within a month, however, goats had climbed over the wall, and in the next rainy season, a violent storm blew over one section. After that, we replaced the wall with a chain-link fence, which has protected the garden for nine years. Instead of listening respectfully to local leaders' plan, I had tried to follow my own image of what respecting their traditions would look like. More important, of course, is actually listening with respect to people. Listening with respect does not require always deferring to others, but it means listening carefully and inquiring into their reasons for making particular proposals rather than assuming, as I did, that we know the reasons and that they are invalid. After listening respectfully, considering, and inquiring, we may still disagree, but we will have a better understanding of another point of view.

Although global hierarchies require differential attention to respect, Tandana seeks to build relationships that are mutually-respectful, endeavoring to earn, rather than command, its partners' respect. According to volunteers, this effort is successful. Volunteer J.P. Nelson reported that Tandana "enjoys massive respect and loyalty from the people in its community" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say"). Ashley, a volunteer from Massachusetts, recalled, "Tandana goes beyond just the actions of service by kindling relationships between cultures, allowing both the volunteers and the people in the community to form mutual respect and admiration for one another" (ibid.). Maria Perugachi also recounted how she and her fellow community members showed respect to the volunteers who visited: "we opened our doors to

foreign people, we gave them affection, respect, confidence.” Local staff also create relationships of mutual respect with community partners. Moussa Timbiné, Tandana’s Savings for Change Coordinator, explained that one of his favorite things about his work is, “the mutual respect between the women and me. When I go to the villages, when the women see me, they greet me, and also when I see them, I stop to greet them, so there is mutual respect between us.”

### *Responsibility*

The moral demands of the face and of promise-keeping call us to responsibility. Levinas explains of the face, “instead of offending my freedom it calls me to responsibility and founds it” (203). The look of the other, “appeals to my responsibility and consecrates my freedom as responsibility and gift of self” (ibid. 208). To hear the other’s call is “to posit oneself as responsible” (ibid. 215). Responsibility is responding to another’s need or request out of a position of freedom. It is also responding to the trust of another and maintaining self-constancy through keeping one’s word. Ricoeur explains that the moral obligation of the promise is “to respond to the trust that the other places in my faithfulness” (124). He elaborates:

Self-constancy is for each person that manner of conducting himself or herself so that others can *count on* that person. Because someone is counting on me, I am *accountable for* my actions before another. The term “responsibility” unites both meanings: “counting on” and “being accountable for.” It unites them, adding to them the idea of a *response* to the question “Where are you?” asked by another who needs me. This response is the following: “Here I am!” a response that is a statement of self-constancy. (168, emphases in original)

Responsibility involves responding to the other’s call as well as being accountable--being someone another can count on. By honoring our commitments, we become selves with identities constant through time. Ricoeur argues:

The question becomes: “Who am I, so inconstant, that notwithstanding you can count on me?” The gap between the question which engulfs the narrative imagination and the

answer of the subject who has been made responsible by the expectation of the other becomes the secret break at the very heart of commitment. (ibid.)

Responsibility allows us not only to meet others' needs but also to be truly ourselves.

Responsibility is another core value of Tandana's approach. In a basic sense, practicing this value is a matter of responding to one another and being ready to follow through on what we agree to do. For Tandana, responsibility also means continuing to collaborate until a project is complete and following up afterwards to see what its effects are and whether further support is needed. Sometimes in a drive to foster independence, NGOs have policies about staying only very briefly in one area. In their haste, however, they often fail to support the communities in truly taking ownership over the projects. As Moussa Tembiné said, "The Tandana Foundation is not seen as an NGO. NGOs come. If it is to build a well, they make the well and they go away. If it is a grain bank or a mill, they give it and they go away. Two or three years later, the project is no longer working" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say"). Tandana stays in relationship with the community, ensuring that local leaders are equipped to manage the project. Many community members emphasize this aspect of Tandana's approach. Oumou Kansaye said, "With Tandana, if you start to work with them, they continue and follow up." Adama Kanambaye echoed, "the foundation provides follow up of the activities, and when they promise something, they keep their promise." Ousmane Tembiné noted, "What I have appreciated is that the foundation doesn't do anything and then forget it. It follows up. Other NGOs leave and we don't see them again, and people drop it, and it doesn't continue. The foundation does follow up." An important difference between Tandana's health care program and other mobile clinic programs is the follow up that Tandana provides to patients who need continuing care. Maria Esther Manrique, a nurse working in Gualsaqui, Ecuador, noted, "the good part is that Tandana



gives follow up to the patients and there is a person in charge who keeps following up until the treatment is complete. The other NGO didn't do that.”

In Ecuador, Tandana has collaborated with several communities on major building projects, like a new community center and a new school building. Budget limitations do not allow us to take on a large project all at once, but we explain that we can help in small phases. Both Tandana and the communities have stayed focused and completed the projects, step by step. Luis Chicaiza, a teacher in Cutambi, Ecuador, pointed out, “Your philosophy is to complete a project, not leave it incomplete. I think that is the advantage that you have over other organizations” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). Matias Perugachi, manager of the UCINQUI native tree nursery in Achupallas, Ecuador, explained, “The Tandana Foundation isn't like other organizations, public or private, that maybe help one time and leave. The Tandana Foundation has done a thorough and long-term follow-up, so that things turn out for the best” (ibid.).

Part of being responsible is also basic honesty—being accountable to the trust of another. In the work of a foundation this kind of honesty is also called transparency. Sisa Panama argued:

I remember there was a foundation, . . . my sister had a sponsor. The workers weren't honest. In foundations, you have to know the people who work there, their human values, that they have the desire to help people. They have to be very honest. Without this honesty, the foundation won't continue, and neither will the students be able to continue. The people of Tandana are very good. They speak with you. You can ask them for help. They say they will help you figure things out, and they do.”

Segundo Remache similarly explained:

I have really liked its transparency. In everything that you do, you are transparent. My first experience was through photography, and the experiences I have had with other foundations, or when I have heard the word foundation, I thought of something where they ask for donations and support and then they use it for themselves instead of for the common good. This was my greatest bother, through the two or three foundations I have worked with. It has always been with personal interest, to get rich, so one of the great experiences I have had with Tandana is that it is a transparent foundation.

In Mali, a similar appreciation for transparency is also expressed. Yabiemo Tembiné said, “the Foundation tells the truth, and it requires informing everyone and transparency. Nothing is hidden. It is for the community.” Responsibility requires being accountable for the resources that are entrusted to us and ensuring that they benefit those they are supposed to benefit.

Community partners who are in relationship with Tandana also demonstrate responsibility, and Tandana expects them to do so, eschewing paternalism. Fabian Pinsag explained, “It’s one thing to ask for help and another to provide follow up and show the responsibility of the community. We have planted trees with Tandana’s help, and we put up barbed wire, so the animals won’t damage them” (The Tandana Foundation. “What Do People Say?”). Sisa Panamá pointed out one way that Tandana encourages this responsibility: “Since you give the material, we are obligated to do the project. You give exactly the product we need for our work, instead of giving money, because money is temptation.” Ando Tembiné of Kansongo, Mali also expressed the importance of following through during the closing of a workshop on how to make cook stoves, saying:

We just spent 8 days together without problems, learning how to make tools that will allow us not only to reduce excessive logging in our land, but also to reduce the workload for our women. Thanks to God, all is well that ends well. However, we must continue to work towards our goal. Each one of us present here must continue to manufacture a lot of stoves and educate our fellow villagers on how to use the stoves. (The Tandana Foundation. “What Do People Say?”)

Scholarship recipient Soraya Bolaños of La Joya, Ecuador, wrote, “I won’t let you down; I will demonstrate my responsibility and great appreciation” (ibid.). Rolando Quilumbango of Panecillo, Ecuador, also a scholarship recipient, affirmed:

What I have learned this year and that will help me go forward is that I should take advantage of the opportunity that I am given to study and because of that I make an effort every day because I don’t want to betray those who support me. . . . Also, it helps me to

be more responsible in my homework because I don't want to lose this opportunity that the Foundation is giving me. (ibid.).

Ada Kanambaye of Sal-Dimi, Mali used a metaphor to express the responsibility necessary from both sides: “We want to do many things with the Foundation, without forgetting our own efforts too. It's like the Foundation is helping us climb into a tree. When you are climbing a tree, someone can support you, but you also have to hold on tight.” Mutual responsibility informs the relationships that Tandana creates and prevents the development of dependency.

### *Caring*

Experiences of mutual gratitude bring us to care about each other. The Kansongo hosts and visiting volunteers who were filled with gratitude for one another also came to care about each other. According to Moussa Tembiné and Timothée Dolo, who had arranged the visit, “for Kansongo, you were like old friends . . . The people are asking when will be the next visit of the group” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). The volunteers showed their care for their new friends by raising money to add sixteen tons of millet to the village's grain bank to help the residents of Kansongo through a particularly difficult dry season. Caring leads to more sharing, which, in turn leads to more gratitude and more caring in a virtuous cycle. Caring about someone also gives us a desire to maintain the relationship with that person. If I care about you, I want to stay in friendship with you. That desire, in turn, provides an added impetus both to seek and to offer forgiveness when the need arises, creating another virtuous cycle.

The care that fits into this cycle is of a personal rather than an anonymous sort. Lisa Stevenson distinguishes between personal and anonymous care. She contrasts “‘biopolitical’ . . . care and governance that is primarily concerned with the maintenance of life itself, and is directed at populations rather than individuals” with “care as the way someone comes to matter

and the corresponding ethics of attending to the other who matters” (3). She calls the former kind of care anonymous, explaining, that “In a bureaucracy decisions are supposed to be based on rules rather than relationships, and decision makers are often following protocols rather than their own sense of right” (60), and that “in anonymous forms of care, personal connections are supposed to be suppressed” (85). For her, “anonymous care is concerned more with what a human being is than who” (107). In personal care, by contrast, “‘life’ as an abstraction has little value, yet specific relationships to others, both dead and alive, matter profoundly” (125). She asks, “What is friendship if not a willingness to act in an interested way on a friend’s behalf?” (76). As a face-to-face interaction is always with a particular other person, personal care always attaches to a particular friend. That person matters to us. As an organization, Tandana must balance personal care, to show its partners that they matter, with policies and criteria that offer a measure of fairness and prevent inappropriate conflicts of interest. We will examine that balance in Part Four.

### *Compassion*

Caring with respect is compassion. As Palmer notes, “Compassion means, literally, the capacity to be with the suffering of another.” (*The Active Life* 83). To be with another’s suffering, we must both care about the other enough to be willing to suffer for her sake and respect her enough to see ourselves on the same level, and thus, with her. We cannot suffer with someone from above. As Palmer argues:

That is always our temptation when we set out to do good—to do it in a way that leaves us above the fray. But our desire to stay above it all reveals our misunderstanding of right action. Action that distances us from “the other” can never be right; we cannot do good by standing back and pulling levers that drop bounty on people who need it. Right action can be only an immersion of ourselves in reality, an immersion that involves us in relationship, that takes us to our place in the organic nature of things. (ibid. 84).

Compassion “means to be there in whatever way possible, to share the circumstances of another’s life as much as one can—not to add to the world’s pool of suffering, but to gain intimate understanding of what the other requires” (ibid.). According to Palmer, “[t]here is no arm’s length ‘solution’ for suffering, and people who offer such only add to the pain. But there is comfort and even healing in the presence of people who know how to be with others, how to be fully there” (ibid. 84-85). Furthermore, in his view, “suffering can never be solved. It can only be shared in compassion, shared in community, and every effort to put ourselves in charge of the relief effort weakens the very sharing in which our hope resides” (ibid. 97). When we both care for and respect people, we refrain from attempts to fix them or be in charge of their efforts to improve their situations. Instead, we accompany them, sharing experiences and working together.

Community members who collaborate with Tandana express similar visions of compassion. Kurikamak Moreta suggested, “Compassion is not giving something to someone easily, but helping them reach an objective that they have as a person. .... Not giving them money, but saying, come let’s do this together, so the two people can both rise up.” Maria Esther Manrique said, “compassion is not like having pity. It is sharing what I have with a person who needs it.” Kessia Kouriba explained, “A Dogon adage says you know your true friend through suffering. If I have things and I’m not sick, with my friend we get along well, we are together. One day I might get sick, or I might ask my friend for something. Will my friend’s behavior change? Will it be the same? When I need him, will he help me? That way I will know if he is my real friend.” Housseyni Pamateck suggested, “compassion is helping someone who is in a difficulty, to show that you are in a difficulty and together we will help you to get out of the difficulty.”

Before even thinking about starting Tandana, I sought to immerse myself in an unfamiliar reality. I found that by spending time with my host family in Panecillo I learned a great deal. In the early years, I often had nothing really to do, and I tried to simply be with my host family, which required me to develop greater patience and jettison task-driven attitudes about “wasting time.” I found that by listening, fully present, to my host mother’s worries and sorrows, I could do nothing to solve them, but I could make them slightly easier to bear. Only after spending a lot of time with my friends in the community and learning about their goals and dreams did I start to think of ways to collaborate with them in hopes of together making things better. When I first went to Mali, I purposefully arrived without a project in mind, seeking instead to learn and get to know people and to be with them. However, it was very difficult simply to be with people without a role or structure. The people I met thought it was novel and a bit refreshing that, unlike the Westerners they were familiar with, I had not arrived with a set project in mind, a goal to fix a particular problem I assumed they had. Yet, they also did not know what to do with me, how to help me, or how to benefit from my presence. It was difficult for me to bear the lack of direction and lack of structure for interaction with people, with a simultaneous lack of any sense of value in what I was doing. It was similarly difficult for my hosts to put up with me, since I seemed to be doing nothing worthwhile. Slowly, though, we began to care for and respect each other, and eventually those sentiments developed into compassion.

Tandana continues to seek a compassionate manner of collaborating. Through their experiences with Tandana, volunteers sometimes come to a greater understanding of the importance of being with others, rather than trying to help from above. For Susie Anderson, a volunteer from Minnesota, a Tandana experience helped her learn to be with people, rather than just accomplishing things; she noted, “It has made me slow down and not to be so task driven.

Relationships are most important” (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”). J.P. Nelson felt the importance of working with people, rather than try to help them; he remarked, “I don't feel like I helped anyone else. Rather, I worked with people, and through that, we both learned, and my kids and I came away changed” (ibid.). Bob Herring concurred, “We’re with them instead of providing for them.” Maggie Kaus wrote, “The entire experience didn’t feel like I was doing volunteer work from far away, but more as if I were doing it in my own community” (ibid.). Mitzi Moye, who brought several groups of students to work with Tandana, appreciates, “the opportunity to actively support an excellent foundation that I *know* is rooted in respect and love” (ibid.). Community members also see compassion in their interactions with Tandana.

Seguemo Tembiné, chief of Kansongo, told his son as he neared the end of his life:

The Americans chose to travel millions of kilometers to come here and share their love. I am proud to leave with this good memory. My son, do everything you can with Tandana's leaders to continue the cooperation between my people and their people and to prove to the rest of the world that Tandana's love of their neighbor doesn't know any geographical borders. (ibid.)

Yabiemo Tembiné, also of Kansongo, noted, “There was a great love for each other and connection. . . . They came because they love us.” Yagouno Tembiné, also of Kansongo, echoed, “They came because of love and to help us. They came all the way from their land. That shows their love, and they helped us in our work.” Kessia Kouriba, also of Kansongo, recalled, “I said, really if we look at these foreigners, they have great love. . . . Spending money, leaving your home, going so far, to help, that shows a lot of love for us.” Mamoudou Pamateck of Sal-Dimi said, “Tandana showed love for the village, and they didn’t act different. They participated in everything. They connected and joined in. . . . Everyone is hoping the volunteers will come again. There is love.”

*Caring, Respectful, Responsible Intercultural Relationships*

Caring, respect, responsibility, and a desire to maintain relationships, when brought together, generate the foundation for Tandana's work. These relationships are both the starting point and the result of Tandana's work. The organization began with my personal relationships with leaders of just a few communities, and through the work the foundation has developed similar friendships with many more people in surrounding communities. Tandana prioritizes these relationships and allows projects and programs to grow from them. Tandana's mission is "to support the achievement of community goals and address global inequalities through caring intercultural relationships that embody mutual respect and responsibility" ("Mission & Values"). The "About" page of Tandana's website also includes, "our goal is to create and nurture respectful and responsible relationships among people of different cultures." These relationships are an *entelecheia*, in the sense that "the means to achieve the end would already be the end" (Arendt, *The Human Condition* 207). Their special nature is what leads Ecuador Program Assistant Margarita Fuerez to declare, "The family of Tandana is really like a home. It is very affectionate and beautiful. It has a unique essence that cannot be compared with any other organization" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say").

One special quality of relationships that are caring, respectful, and responsible is that they generate trust. When we feel care and respect from others and also, through experience, find them to be responsible, we trust them. This sense of confidence is emphasized by a number of Tandana's friends. Segundo Moreta, for instance, wrote, "After spending many years working with people and seeing their own way of life, their worldview, their different ways of finding solutions to their problems, and how an organization earns the communities' trust, it is very rewarding to know that there are good people out there who seek people's wellbeing" (ibid.).



Moussa Tembiné argued, “this foundation integrates with the people, and the people accept that integration, and there is confidence between the two. And the foundation maintains that confidence through its follow up of the activities. . . . The volunteers accept to conform to the community. It’s that that gives confidence to the people” (ibid.). Maria Esther Manrique pointed out that Tandana volunteers’ gracious acceptance of food offered to them, “gives the community more confidence” (ibid.). Alberto Alta, school director in Cutambi, Ecuador explained how his students developed this trust: “Ten years ago, sometimes the children would see doctors and they would run away into the valleys to escape. They were afraid and many of them would cry. Now, as you can see, it’s the opposite. They see the doctors, the people from Tandana, and they run to give them hugs” (ibid.). Tandana volunteers feel this trust as well. Carrie Starcher wrote, “Our group was accepted into the fold with open arms and overwhelming trust” (ibid.). J.P. Nelson remarked, “[i]t is clear that Tandana focuses on people first, as their success and impact is most clearly seen in the intangible and immeasurable traits of loyalty and trust that is [sic] clearly present in the relations they have with the people they work with.” He also noted, “I felt we had incredibly authentic experiences with people after only knowing them a few minutes, and this was completely due to the trust that Tandana has earned after a decade of dedicated service and nurturing respectful relationships” (ibid.).

### *Wisdom*

Greater awareness of what it is to be human increases our wisdom. Wisdom is a somewhat ineffable concept, but it seems to have to do with “knowing what is fundamental and then living well in the light of that,” and “a strategic awareness of limits and potential obstacles” (Metz). Growing in awareness of what is fundamental to the human condition and also of the

limitations facing us, then, should lead to greater wisdom. Wisdom can also be seen as the reason that grows from experience of the other. Levinas argues, “The introduction of the new into a thought, the idea of infinity, is the very work of reason. The absolutely new is the Other. The rational is not opposed to the experienced; absolute experience, the experience of what is in no way a priori, is reason itself” (219). This is not a reason that exists before experience and by which experience can be judged; rather it emerges from the experience of difference. Levinas suggests:

If . . . reason lives in language, if the first rationality gleams forth in the opposition of the face to face, if the first intelligible, the first signification, is the infinity of the intelligence that presents itself (that is, speaks to me) in the face, if reason is defined by signification rather than signification being defined by the impersonal structures of reason, if society precedes the apparition of these impersonal structures, if universality reigns as the presence of humanity in the eyes that look at me, if, finally, we recall that this look appeals to my responsibility and consecrates my freedom as responsibility and gift of self—then the pluralism of society could not disappear in the elevation to reason, but would be its condition. (208)

Perhaps this personal, experiential reason is a form of wisdom.

Partners who work with Tandana also describe an experiential wisdom that is closely related to the values of respect and responsibility. Sisa Panama emphasizes the experiential aspect; “wisdom is not like just knowledge. It is like the elder person here. They say the eldest is the wisest, through experiences. Experiences with reality is wisdom. You can have a lot of knowledge, but without experience, you can’t do anything. Through experience you learn how to do many things, and good and bad.” For Kurikamak Moreta, it is a combination of experience and knowledge; he suggests, “A wise person has experience and can justify his experiences with knowledge he has acquired.” For Ada Kanambaye, telling the truth is key:

“a wise person, the one who is listened to in the village, not necessarily by age, but someone who tells the truth and who is listened to a lot. There are women too. . . . If you tell something different to each person, people will find out and won’t trust you.

Someone who tells the truth is respected. Even if there is a misunderstanding, the wise person will clarify it.”

Moussa Tembiné suggests that respect is essential; “Wisdom is the person who respects others and is respected by others and who has consideration for the community. It is someone who tells the truth, and when people are in misunderstandings, they go to ask his advice, and what he says people accept.” Housseyni Pamateck, similarly, feels that “Wisdom is someone who is listened to, who respects the values of others, who tells the truth, who doesn’t like lies. He listens first to what people say and then responds in his manner to put them on the good path.” Moussa Timbiné offers that “a man who is wise or a woman who is wise—honesty. You have to be honest. You are respected, and you respect others. You have to be respectful, frank, worthy of yourself, control your tongue and your words, be faithful.” For Kessia Kouriba, respecting our own limitations is also part of wisdom: “Someone who is wise, his behavior toward others. He doesn’t brag. He doesn’t have pride. He is simple. That is wisdom.” For Ousmane Tembiné, the Tandana volunteers who visited were wise:

They were very respectful and wise. . . . Someone who is wise is someone who is lay, who respects his culture and respects the culture of the other like his own, and who accepts mutual help. You should respect the cultures of others, as if it were yours. Respect is wisdom. Behavior toward your host community. You can’t be wise without respecting and listening to the local people.

Many of the virtues that emerge through engagement with others from a personal perspective come together in wisdom.

### *Communities Strengthen Their Cultures*

Caring intercultural relationships allow an organization, such as Tandana, to support programs and initiatives in respectful and responsible ways. This work, when undertaken with the aforementioned virtues, can lead to positive, and sometimes unexpected, changes. For

example, when others who are different engage with communities in ways that show respect for local cultures, communities may find more courage to continue strengthening their cultures, sometimes revitalizing aspects that are being lost. When foreign visitors show interest in and appreciation for local cultures, especially those that have been marginalized in their national context, community members are encouraged to keep valuing and reinvigorating them.

In Ecuador, Kichwa Otavalo indigenous people make up the majorities, and sometimes the entireties, of the communities that partner with Tandana. As indigenous people, they have experienced a great deal of racism and disdain for their language, traditions, lifestyles, and identity from the mestizo majority. Many efforts are underway to strengthen and maintain Kichwa Otavalo customs and there is a resurgence of pride in indigenous identity, shown especially in dress and hairstyles that identify the wearers as Kichwa Otavalo, yet many people express concern over a perceived decline of interest in maintaining their culture and language. This concern was expressed by many Kichwa Otavalo people I interviewed, including some who themselves do not often wear typical dress and others who always do as they work to strengthen their culture. Maria Perugachi, who changed into typical dress for our interview, as she would for any public occasion, explained:

My culture, with the passing years, is ending. Now there are young people who don't like to use indigenous clothes; they want to use mestizo clothing. They say it's easier to get dressed and also easier to access, since our indigenous clothes are expensive. . . . There are big changes: the boys cut their hair, they don't keep their braid, they don't keep their dress. There are customs being lost. There are moments when we want to return to live these traditions, but there are some people who don't want to live in this culture anymore. 50% want to conserve and 50% want to change, saying this is the present and we need to change. But we need to keep living this, day after day.

Mónica Lopez, who did not wear Otavalo dress or hairstyle during our interview, concurred:

I think that being part of the indigenous Otavalo culture is something very important, and, sadly, today it is being lost. People are led by influences from outside and are leaving the culture. The Otavalo culture has always been important because it is a native culture that

shouldn't be lost. Its language, its dress, all of that should be strengthened, because that characterizes us, and I consider that important.

Manuel Perugachi said his culture “is being lost, and now people are trying to recuperate it. I hope we can recuperate it, how we were before.” Maria Esther Manrique suggested, “Among young people, they talk about, the style is this way. I think they let themselves be convinced, but later they regret it and return to what is ours.” Segundo Moreta, who is an intercultural educator and author, recalled learning about the indigenous political movements as a young man: “I understood that the indigenous people were gaining space and that we should start to overcome and demand our rights. Then, in the university, my ideas changed a lot, with cultural anthropology and cosmovision. They told us about the indigenous struggles.”

Interest in and appreciation for Kichwa Otavalo culture from foreign visitors supports those who are trying to valorize it and encourages them in that pursuit. It is essential, of course, that local community members define their culture for themselves and choose which aspects of it they want to promote. When visitors follow residents' lead and respond to their invitations, they can help to counterbalance the devaluation that community members experience in their national context. Josefina Torres noted, “I feel good that you take us into account. The foreigners value us more than mestizos, I think.” Segundo Moreta explained:

Personally, I think that sometimes people from other countries are more interested than we are to know and study what we are. In the communities, we are devaluing our own culture, and as an educator I realize that a lot of parents are trying to leave their culture, but I don't know where they are trying to go. There are young men who think that cutting their hair is going to the other side. But when they have an important event, like a wedding, they go with their hat and their poncho and white pants, even with short hair. So sometimes I say they just change on the outside, but inside they still are what they are. So, when there are foreigners living with us, sometimes we tell them ‘you should wear this clothing, because this is a special event, and you are part of our family.’ They have never said no. They have always been very ready and happy to use our clothing. Sometimes they also want to learn our language.

Kurikamak Moreta observed, “I feel very good [when foreign visitors show interest in my culture], because there are many young people here who don’t appreciate the indigenous culture, and it’s strange to see that foreigners are more concerned about our culture than people who live here.” Maria Esther Manrique explained how she feels when the visitors who have stayed with her have valued her culture:

They learn from me our culture. When they come here, I dress them in our dress. The women are happy about that. And that is great for me, because I feel that I and my culture are important for them. . . . I feel that I shouldn’t change, that I shouldn’t leave behind my dress. I want to be forever how I am now, and if people from elsewhere like my clothing, I who am from here, why shouldn’t I like it? I will always be indigenous.

Because they often bring greater discursive power as North Americans, visitors can counterbalance the devaluation dominant within Ecuador by showing appreciation for indigenous cultures.

In Mali, the communities that work with Tandana are almost entirely Dogon. While they do not experience the kind of oppression that Kichwa Otavalo people do in Ecuador, they speak languages that are native to relatively small groups of people. Tommo So, the language of the majority of villages that work with Tandana, has about 40,000-60,000 speakers (McPherson 2-3), as compared to about 4 million native speakers of Bambara, the most common language in Mali (Ethnologue). Their languages are thus marginalized simply due to practical and resource limitations. Furthermore, some aspects of Dogon culture, including particular dances and ceremonial objects, are being forgotten, according to some of the people I interviewed, who sometimes attribute this loss to the rise of Islam or of both Islam and Christianity. Fewer people express concern about this loss than in Otavalo, but when they see these customs and objects reappearing, many community members are impressed and feel a renewed interest in reviving them.

Community members, both women and men, express appreciation for the fact that Tandana's literacy program is conducted in Tommo So, since other literacy programs, even in the same area, have not used their native language. Boureima Yalcouyé, a founding member of the linguistic association Alpha Formation Traduction et Conception Documentaire au Pays Dogon, which partners with Tandana on the literacy program, expressed his concern about the Tommo So language being lost: "with the migration, as long as the language is not written, there is fear of losing it. That is why we think it is so important to write it ourselves. That way, the writing will remain, and people will keep using the language." Abdoué Pamateck, a male elder of Sal-Dimi, described his appreciation for the use of Tommo So in the literacy program:

Thanks to The Tandana Foundation for this great initiative of literacy in our own language, Tommo So. In this same room, men were once taught in Toro So, which is not even our language, but today our wives were lucky to have these classes in Tommo So, our own language. I am 75 years old, and this is my first time to see a booklet in Tommo So. (The Tandana Foundation, "Spacing pregnancies")

Ada Kanambaye, who began as a literacy student and then became an instructor, contrasted Tandana's program with a different literacy program, recalling, "with APH, it was Toro So, but with Tandana, it is Tommo So, our language. Tandana asked what language we wanted to learn in, and we said Tommo So." Marie Tembiné, a literacy student, recalled surprise at the opportunity to learn in her native tongue: "We didn't expect to have classes in our own language." Housseyni Pamateck expressed the importance of this valuation of the language: "In our language, there was nothing written. Now there is, and our language is valued, and that is a great success." He also recalled of the Tandana volunteers who had visited, "Even if they couldn't speak our language, they tried to learn." Kessia Kouriba remembered how the volunteers who visited tried to speak Tommo So, even if it was just the greetings, which are an important part of local culture; "when they meet someone, they greet. . . . They talk." Both

Tandana's willingness to support literacy in Tommo So and the volunteers' efforts to learn phrases support valuation of the local language.

A number of Dogon traditions are being lost, according to some of the people I interviewed, but when volunteer groups visit, they tend to be revitalized. Anouh Tembiné explained that since the last visit of a volunteer group to his village, "there haven't been any dances or performances. Even on wedding days, there isn't a village dance. When you come, you are partners for the whole village, so we all want to show you our culture." Housseyni Pamateck suggested:

If the volunteers come to my village, they [the residents] will put everything in action to show their culture and their values. There were some old cultures that they had left behind, and all of that they will take up again to show. . . . Culture also forms part of the visit. What is being lost is that some of the people who did these things are no longer here. And with the religions, people are dropping some of these customs. It is an opportunity to take advantage and take up these customs again. . . . Other than the visit of the volunteers, I had never seen the bendiés [a particular ceremonial dance]. They said in a meeting that there were these things we used to do. I said, why don't you show that to the volunteers? . . . The children who hadn't seen those things, now they will know about them.

Kessia Kouriba, similarly, noted, "there were traditional things that people in the village had never seen, but they were brought out and others saw them. It's not just the foreigners who hadn't seen them; we, too, hadn't seen them." Yagouno Tembiné also mentioned, "when the Americans come, many of our traditions, which are starting to be lost, come back, and we do them." Moussa Tembiné explained:

My community, the people of Wadouba, the people of Kansongo and Sal-Dimi, had lost their culture, their traditional dances, their old musical instruments. Personally, there are instruments that I had never seen, but when the Tandana volunteer groups arrived, I discovered these instruments. It's a renaissance of the traditional culture of our community. (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say")



The visits of foreign volunteers provide opportunities to bring back to life certain traditions that are beginning to be lost, and, once they see them, community members appreciate them and take an interest in reviving them.

### *Greater Self-Confidence*

When an organization supports community initiatives in respectful ways, following the lead of local residents and equipping them to take charge of ongoing programs, community members enhance and experience their effectiveness. As they experience their ability to create positive changes, they gain self-confidence as well. Segundo Moreta suggested of local people who collaborate with Tandana on projects, “Through these activities, I think they have more self-esteem and they value themselves and they see what they know how to do. . . . It’s important that through these activities, they value what they are and what they can do for their community.” Each experience of successful project leadership increases confidence for taking on new initiatives. Shannon Cantor, a Tandana Program Coordinator from the United States, described her observations of increasing self-confidence in the community of Agualongo, Ecuador. She recounted her view of the changes arising through the process of working to acquire the soccer stadium the community had long dreamed of:

I must admit: I doubted the relevance of a sports field, comparing all the other projects we could realize with REACH’s donation. However, this cancha [stadium] has proven a value that I never expected, a worth that is much greater than the field itself, or even the hundreds of memories that will no-doubt be formed on its surface. The *whole* community is working to realize this goal and is doing so because it stands important to the community as a *whole*. In fact, this cancha requires way more than monetary investment; it requires days-long physical labor, countless meetings and phone calls, and a learning curve that has broken every boxed-in doubt about the community’s leveraging power. The process is long, longer than any of us anticipated. But it has been successful; the community has a contract ready to sign and has submitted this proposal to multiple actors to complete the funding needed for total excavation. With this first contract, perhaps for the first time, Agualongo has believed in its ability to organize, to push, to advocate, and

to demand bureaucratically hidden—but available—resources; perhaps for the first time, Agualongo is realizing that its voice can—and deserves to—be heard. These individuals are not invisible. They have the power to ensure otherwise. (emphases in original)

In Mali, training sessions for management committees are a part of most projects that Tandana supports, while others, such as the women’s literacy program and leadership workshops are focused directly on learning. This learning increases community members’ abilities and sense of what they can accomplish. Housseyni Pamateck, Tandana’s Local Supervisor, said, “when you are in the committee, there is training, how to fill out the sheets, how to talk in front of everyone, how to use words. It goes into everyone’s hearts. And everyone realizes, this work is for me.” Kessia Kouriba explained some of the results of experience with various programs supported by Tandana:

The women who came here, they have been through training with Savings for Change, literacy, leadership. They have had many trainings, and in their villages, they are the ones who train other women on leadership. They do it all, and they are used to it. But a woman who has not done Savings For Change or literacy, if we ask her questions, she won’t speak. . . . They won’t speak in front of a group. It is SFC and literacy, and the leadership workshops that make it easier for them to speak in front of others.

Moussa Tembiné corroborated:

In my village today, when there is a meeting, everyone knows the importance of the meeting, and everyone says what they think. Especially women. Before Tandana came, they didn’t have a group, and women didn’t speak in the meetings. Now, thanks to the animation and training of groups, women each week have a meeting, and, when there is a village assembly, they say their point of view.

Literacy students express increased self-confidence because of their knowledge. Adama Kanambaye said, “I didn’t know numbers. Now, I can go to the market alone and buy what I want, read the numbers. It was shameful for the wife of a mayor not to read. Now I am very happy.” She also recounted a powerful anecdote:

I went to the market in Sangha to sell my dried onions. The trader weighed my onions in front of me and it was 29kg. He told me, "your onions only weigh 20kg." Because he didn't know I had completed the literacy classes, I smiled and asked him if the scale could

lie. He responded, no. I said, "if that is so, the scale said it's 29kg." The trader was surprised and asked me how I read the number of kilos. I told him, "thanks to The Tandana Foundation, you can't steal from me anymore." I understood then that he had been stealing dozens of kilos from us at the market, right in front of us. As a Bambara adage says, "illiteracy is darkness." I cried with joy in front of everyone in the market. Since that day, nobody is able to steal from me at the market, and I am very happy with myself. (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say")

Kadidia Kassogu e described her confidence metaphorically: "I was in the shadow, but now I am in the light. . . . My husband was in Abidjan, and I didn't know numbers. I had my telephone, but I didn't know how to put credit in my phone or dial a number. Now, with the literacy program, I can use my phone. I was in prison, but now I am free." Tembel Bamia also expressed newfound confidence:

Here is the number [shoe size] of my shoe; it is 41. I bought this at the market just the other day. When I bought this shoe, the vendor Ambakane wanted to fool me, but I told him, I am not a woman who knows nothing. . . . I thank God for giving me this training and especially to have helped me discover the secret of the world. This meaning, to read and write in my local language. The knowledge that I have is for me, and I will die with this wisdom. (The Tandana Foundation, "Teaching Literacy to Empower Women")

Marietou Telly told of how she almost resigned from her role as president of the women of her village because she lacked confidence due to her illiteracy, but once she learned to read and write she no longer struggled with self-doubt:

I am the president of the women's association in the village, and we do a lot of things in this village. I had never been to school. At one point I wanted to resign from my post because a president who does not know how to read and write is not good. When I heard about the literacy course in Tommo So, I was ready to pay the instructor to teach me. Thanks to the literacy program, I gave up thoughts of resigning from the president's post and have had no more complications. (The Tandana Foundation, "Literacy Program Transforms Lives")

The women's leadership workshops also increase self-confidence. Oumou Kansaye said that she advised other women who might be interested in politics, "Women, too, can do things." Ada Kanambaye took this message to heart and exclaimed, "I want to be mayor!" Yabiero Tembin e, President of the women in her village, noted the difference after the workshops: "before, to get

all the women together it was hard, but now it is no problem. Now I know how to organize work and groups. I have a broader vision.” Once women experience their effectiveness in the various classes, workshops, and committees, they continue to develop their capacities on their own. Marietou Yalcouyé, President of a women’s association, explained, “Every time we meet, we draw lessons about how to struggle to improve the place of women at the level of township councils and for the overall progress of women” (The Tandana Foundation, “Six Women’s Associations”).

Positive experiences with others who are different also lead to increased self-confidence for Tandana volunteers who visit Ecuador and Mali, as well as for hosts in the communities. Volunteers report growth and increased confidence in certain areas. For example, on a post-trip evaluation survey given to volunteers, 98% of respondents say they feel the experience helped them grow in a positive way (The Tandana Foundation, “Volunteer Programs”). Several volunteers described increased confidence in their ability to communicate or connect with people despite language and cultural barriers. Matthew Rotherth reported, “We found ways to communicate despite the language barrier. I learned that a smile crosses all language and cultural barriers. So does a kind heart, and that’s what so many of the volunteers and indigenous people shared.” Joseph White, a student volunteer, recounted:

Understanding that these people were under no obligation to open themselves up to us in the way that they did, I was hit by an intense wave of appreciation. I remember wanting to express these strong emotions to one of the members of Pakarinka, but I felt as if my emotions wouldn’t carry over through translation. However, I took a chance. Although my words came through Shannon, one of Tandana’s coordinators, the weight behind them managed to come through me. As Shannon spoke to the man my words, I maintained an eye contact that I felt said what couldn’t be translated. Although things like this probably happen all the time, it was something that was truly special to me. My time with Tandana showed me that some feelings *are* capable of being expressed, even if you don’t share a common language with another person. (emphasis in original)

Zach Graves said, “what I have learned is that you can make a difference and develop meaningful relationships between people despite being completely different.” They also describe increased self-confidence in their abilities to live in different ways, work with others, and contribute to positive changes. Audrey Ling, an intern from Maryland, asserted, “I’ve learned that I can get through things that are difficult, and that things that I thought were hard or scary can become normal and be part of my everyday life.” Zach Graves mentioned growing in “confidence and believing in myself. . . . I learned that I have leadership traits. I have the ability to work with others.” Mo Penman, a health care volunteer, reported:

I’ve found in my personal life, that Tandana has been amazingly empowering. Society wants everybody to think that individuals are powerless to effect positive change and because of that, why try. Well, that’s not true. I’ve seen with Tandana a small group of committed individuals, and I can see what they are able to do. And I realize that what they have done might be diminished if I weren’t there. So, I know that my contribution has value, and that empowers me every day of my life. (The Tandana Foundation, “What People Say”)

Not only volunteers, but members of host communities also sometimes develop greater self-confidence through experiences with visitors from different cultures. Margarita Fierrez of Panecillo, Ecuador, explained, “I am timid, shy, but with the [volunteer] groups, when I participate, I have opened myself more, to speak without fear and relate to them.”

As communities continue to strengthen and value their cultures, members also have more confidence in themselves. Segundo Remache expressed:

When I started to value my culture, I started to have confidence, to appreciate my own identity. If you don’t know your own identity, you don’t know what to be. When I arrived at the university, I didn’t want to cut my hair or say that I was from Quito. I never had the idea to lie or say I was rich to include myself in a certain social status. Having a clear identity gives you confidence, and you aren’t afraid of people who might put you down.

Feeling pride in his culture gives Segundo confidence in himself.

*People Contribute More to Their Communities*

As people's self-confidence expands, they sometimes contribute more to their communities. Yagouno Tembiné, when she began working as a Savings for Change replicator, said, "Since the arrival of The Tandana Foundation, I've benefited from many advantages that have helped raise my standard of living. Now it's my turn to share those benefits with other people through my work for the foundation" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say"). She also noted that, thanks to her literacy skills, "In Savings for Change, I can write down the money that comes in and goes out, and I can calculate the interest. In the cotton bank, I can also record and calculate the entries and exits." Marie Tembiné reported that she uses her literacy skills to serve as birth registrar for her village. Sisa Panama explained that her experiences exchanging with visiting students made her aware of other ways things can be and motivated her to change things: "I really like it because they tell me what their university is like and I tell them about mine. There are many differences and things that we would like to change. It gives me motivation. If I like something from their experience, it motivates me to improve things and to be able to do something." She also recalled that before she applied to Tandana's scholarship program, she was impressed that students already in the program were enthusiastic about doing community service: "when the doctors came to Padre Chupa, I realized that some of the scholarship students were there, and I saw that it wasn't just an obligation. They also had the desire to help, to other communities as well as their own." Thanks to the education she is pursuing with help from a Tandana scholarship, Mónica Lopez serves as Secretary of her neighborhood: "I have been Secretary, and I still am. . . . I have to be with the President and have the dates for any activity, type up the minutes from the meetings, do the papers for the neighborhood." Segundo Remache is determined to use the multimedia production skills he is

acquiring with Tandana support to make a positive difference not just for his community but for his culture. He explained:

my dream is to make short films that can motivate people in our culture, as our indigenous identity is being lost, and this is the richness we can offer to the world. So, one of the objectives I have is to do a short film where we can reflect that we lose our soul when we leave our culture and try to look like others, join the mass where everyone looks the same. The second part is that I am Christian, and I think that I can teach not from the Bible, but values, respect, mutually, can be conserved through cartoons and films, so children can think about what does it mean to be indigenous. And my other goal is to be a professional in my field and succeed, not to make myself well known, but to reach people with my messages, and I always think about the common good, not my own.

Volunteers also resolve to contribute more to their communities after their awareness and confidence has expanded through participation in Tandana programs. Don Gustafson returned from his Tandana program ready to volunteer more. He said, “As I write this blog, my retirement is a mere few weeks away. I have always intended to do volunteer work once I retire, and this experience has only solidified that desire. . . . I look forward to other opportunities to ‘give back’!” When Zach Graves first participated in a Tandana program, he had already co-founded with his siblings a non-profit organization called Tools with Impact, dedicated to helping schools in other countries with fewer resources than his suburban Ontario school system. Through working with Tandana, he learned about ways to do that work better: “What changed my life was learning that if you want to help someone you have to listen to them and help in the way they see is best fit. So, we changed Tools with Impact to change our mission, not to think what they need but to speak with communities and communicate with them and learn from themselves.” Bob Herring decided to be a stronger advocate:

We’ve always tried to be very conscious of not using more than we need, and even with that approach, compared to what I’ve experienced here, that needs to be rethought. Use of materials and resources, take a look at what that means in our community and as much as we can influence the local citywide level, state level, national level, be more of an advocate. A stronger advocate for responsible use of resources.

After volunteering with Tandana in both Ecuador and Mali, Kelly McCosh began to volunteer with refugees in her home community. She explained:

I feel my experiences with Tandana have carried over to my own community here in Maine--one which is a haven for refugees from Somalia, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others. I have volunteered with a population within the Somali community and more recently have provided friendship and aid to a Burundi refugee.

As people contribute more to their communities, the communities, in turn, continue to improve on their own terms.

### *Global Inequalities are Slightly Reduced*

Global inequalities are vast, and personal actions are unlikely to have a large effect on them. However, each shift of resources from where they are more plentiful to where they are scarcer, and each strengthening of a culture that has been devalued historically can make a difference, ever so slight, in these vast inequalities. As communities improve on their own terms, they reduce the lacks they perceive in comparing their status to those of wealthier communities. For example, members of the community of Agualongo, Ecuador have dreamed for many years of having a soccer stadium “like the cities have” (Perugachi, Humberto); “all the young people and the parents wanted a modern soccer field” (Perugachi, Maria). Humberto Perugachi explained, “We haven’t been able to have that because we haven’t had support from the Province, the City, or the Parish. But, year after year, we have been working with the Foundation, which has helped us with 70% and the Parish Government with 10%, and our goal is to advance 100%. . . . maybe in one more year we will have the stadium we have dreamed of.” Having this stadium completed will eliminate one kind of inequality between the community and



the cities; local residents will be able to play on a “modern” field and host tournaments with pride.

Strengthening cultures and identities that have historically been marginalized also reduces, ever so slightly, inequalities at the level of discourse. Local efforts are underway to reduce racial and ethnic inequalities, and as community members strengthen their cultures, they have more resources and more confidence to pursue these struggles. Josefina Torres noted, “Before, mestizos used to scold us, but not anymore. Now we are almost equal.” Maria Perugachi explained:

In a group, there are a few people who look well at indigenous people and there are a few who do not. There is racism, where they say “You are an Indian. You dress like that.” There are people who look at you with great pride, and others who look down on you. . . . I have heard people say behind our backs, “You are Indians.” Yes, with pride we maintain ourselves. We are indigenous with pride, and that is what I have always said. Yes, we are indigenous. Our culture identifies us from other people and helps us be better people, we have said many times.

### *People Relate Better to Others Who Are Different*

As volunteers’ awareness expands and as communities continue to strengthen their cultures, people can relate better to others who are different. Volunteer Laura Nichols asserted, “There has not been another organization or person in my life that has better helped me to understand and live alongside the Other. I wish everyone could have the same experience that I have had through Tandana because this ‘gathering together’ is what we need in our communities” (“Gathering Together”). Zach Graves explained that he intends to continue learning about and appreciating different ways of being: “Tandana has given me something that for the rest of my life I am going to seek out opportunities like that, seek out opportunities to meet new people, different cultures, different ways of living, and appreciate the differences that

people have.” Matias Perugachi argued that knowing one’s own culture is important for relating to others: “We need to know our customs to work with those of other groups and nationalities. It’s important to know; if we don’t know, we can’t relate, we can’t exchange, we can’t work.” Segundo Moreta asserted, “I think that I don’t need to be different or look like others to be able to relate to them. I think other people should understand and value that if I try to stay how I am, they will say he isn’t ashamed, he never feels less than us, so they will value me more, rather than if I tried to be like them.” Segundo Rémache explained that his confidence in his own indigenous identity helps him relate to others: “I need to feel secure and value myself first, that I have value and can get anywhere without having to look like someone else. . . . Even mestizos, I relate to them by saying a word in Kichwa, and they ask me, ‘what did you say?’ and they become curious.”

### *People’s Lives are More Meaningful*

When people have more self-awareness and when they contribute more to their communities, their lives are more meaningful. Emily Esfahani Smith argues that knowing ourselves better leads to greater opportunities for meaningful action. Smith argues that, “Researchers at Texas A & M University have examined the tight relationship between identity and purpose, and they’ve found that knowing oneself is one of the most important predictors of meaning in life,” and that, “Being reminded of your authentic self, even subconsciously, makes life feel more meaningful” (85). Self-knowledge is important because, “Each of us has different strengths, talents, insights, and experiences that shape who we are. And so each of us will have a different purpose, one that fits with who we are and what we value — one that fits our identity” (ibid. 84). As we know ourselves better, through reflection on experiences of dislocation, we are

more likely to be able to act in meaningful ways. Reflecting on my discomfort with being asked for money in Mali helped me to differentiate between situations when I felt it was appropriate to give money and situations when I felt it was not appropriate to do so. With better discernment, I was able to act more freely by giving when I felt called to give.

When people contribute more to their communities, they increase their opportunities for meaning in the senses of both belonging and purpose. A study by Roy Baumeister revealed that “Leading a meaningful life, by contrast [with happiness], corresponded with being a ‘giver,’ and its defining feature was connecting and contributing to something beyond the self” (Smith 15). Contributing more to one’s community can also enhance one’s sense of belonging. Smith asserts that:

Research has shown that among the benefits that come with being in a relationship or group, a sense of belonging clocks in as the most important driver of meaning. When people feel like they belong, according to psychologists, it’s because two conditions have been satisfied. First, they are in relationships with others based on mutual care: each person feels loved and valued by the other . . . . When other people think you matter and treat you like you matter, you believe you matter, too. Second, they have frequent pleasant interactions with other people. (49-50)

When one contributes more, one is likely to be appreciated and thus to have pleasant interactions with others and to feel valued by others. Smith argues that, “meaning largely lies in others. Only through focusing on others do we build the pillar of belonging for both ourselves and for them. If we want to find meaning in our own lives, we have to begin by reaching out” (72). In this sense, belonging is also connected to purpose as a pillar of meaning. Purpose “require[s] a critical step beyond self-knowledge: using that knowledge to figure out how [one can] best contribute to society” (Smith 90). When self-awareness combines with contributing to one’s community, it gives purpose. Zach Graves finds meaning in this combination. He said that “it is especially meaningful” to have “an opportunity to step into a role and try to make a difference in

people's lives," and also that learning that he could connect with people who are both similar and different "is meaningful to me; I'm only 20, and thanks to these trips my eyes have really opened up."

*The World Becomes More Just*

As inequalities are reduced, the world becomes ever so slightly more just. These changes are not on a grand scale but a personal one. Bilgrami describes an idea of equality that emerges when the goal of an unalienated life is made central. He argues that, "[w]hat we aspire to, when we seek a socially unalienated life with one another, is the realization of the ideal that *nobody in society is well off if someone is badly off*" (*Secularism, Identity, Enchantment* 165, emphasis in original). In this view, "the person who is well off in fact also suffers or experientially partakes of a kind of *malaise*, when others are not well off" (ibid. 166, emphasis in original). It is not clear exactly what he means by a society, or why a society is the salient unit of analysis. It would seem that the relevant group would tend to expand toward encompassing the entire world. Even if it is taken to be at the level of the nation-state, it seems that to try to act on this ideal we are forced to retreat to a level of abstraction in which actions taken to achieve the well-being of others "would be not immediate but conceived in abstract terms that would never come to fruition in actually fulfilling their needs" (ibid. 143). Nevertheless, at the level of a small community, this idea of equality can work. Humberto Perugachi described the malaise that residents of Agualongo felt when half the community had running water and the other half did not:

We had a problem with water. The people up here had water, but the people down below didn't have water. This was a bad feeling for the whole community, we all felt bad, how could it be fair for one part of the community to have water and the other part not to have it? The foundation helped us with maintaining the tank and putting in pipes and we saw

that it was a true solution, and thus the people were more motivated to work with Tandana. . . . We were bothered, the people from the top and the people from the bottom. We asked support from the water board, but they didn't have resources to give us a solution. . . . It was a big bother for us, but the foundation helped us with two improvements, and thus our water system was 100% improved. Now, 13 years later, we all have water, and we don't suffer.

The whole community felt the pain of the injustice. The solution, however, required resources from outside the community. Because Tandana entered into relationship with the community, the organization was able to alleviate the inequality within the community. This step was infinitesimally small in terms of reducing the inequality between the foundation's donors and the community, but it did help them to see themselves as more connected and thus to want to reduce that inequality. A group of North American and European retirees living in Ecuador have recently begun to take a similar view. They learned that the community of Gualapuro, not far from where they were living, had a major problem with water, and they resolved to donate and raise money to enable Tandana to work with the community to build an entirely new water system that would satisfy the residents' needs. Several of these supporters alluded to the malaise they felt knowing that they had clean water while their neighbors did not. Linda Blizzard, a U.S. Citizen residing in Ecuador, said, "The thought of the community with babies and children . . . I turn on my faucet and I have clear water. I turn on the faucet to take a shower, and it's clean water" (Clean Water for Gualapuro, "Linda Shares"). Dual citizen of Ecuador and the United States Beverly Fessenden, similarly, noted, "We here in Cotacachi enjoy fresh water from the mountain. Why are they not?" (Clean Water for Gualapuro, "Beverly Explains"). A U.S. citizen named Kathy pointed out, "I just can't even understand how they can live this many years without clean water. And once we know that, you can't not see it. You just can't. You have to do something if it's within your power. And call it for the common good, but once you walk

away you can't go home and take a clean shower or drink a clean glass of water without thinking of this place" (Clean Water for Gualapuro, "Kathy & Mike Talk").

By engaging with others across inequalities, we can become connected enough to realize that none of us is well off when some are badly off. Perhaps if we then remove the boundaries between our personal and our collective frames, we will see inconsistencies and change the ways we address larger collective issues. Mónica Lopez believes that personal changes can, in fact, contribute to a more just world. She suggests, "I think that when we start to change ourselves, we can also change the world. Many times we wait for the world to change, but we are actually our own world, and we need to learn to recognize what we are doing wrong, and this will help us change and that will help other people do things better, and we can create a more just world."

### *The World Becomes More Peaceful*

As people relate better to others who are different, and as the world becomes more just, the world also may become slightly more peaceful. Laura Nichols suggests, "every time someone better understands the person next door, across town, across the country, or across the world, we are one person closer to unity" ("Gathering Together"). Alberto Alta, the school director in Cutambi, Ecuador said after a group of volunteers worked with his students to create a garden, "I wish there were more programs like this, where people from different parts of the world come together to work on a project, like our garden. This is a way of building peace" (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say"). Dick Duval, one of the volunteers who worked with Alberto and his students, concurred: "If more programs like this existed, there wouldn't be wars" (ibid.). Ousmane Tembiné also sees Tandana's work as a route to peace. He explained, "with

the Foundation, it's integration. In my view, it's serious integration. It's hand in hand, to be all together and work to overcome conflicts and to have peace."

Niebuhr suggests that justice is a prerequisite for true peace. He posits "the ideal of a just peace, from the perspective of which every contemporary peace means only an armistice within the existing disproportions of power. It stands for the elimination of the inequalities of power and privilege which are frozen into every contemporary peaceful situation" (235). For Neibuhr, true peace is an impossible dream, and yet it is an important one because holding it leads us toward an approximation of peace. He argues:

So difficult is it to avoid the Scylla of despotism and the Charybdis of anarchy that it is safe to hazard the prophecy that the dream of perpetual peace and brotherhood for human society is one which will never be fully realised. It is a vision prompted by the conscience and insight of individual man, but incapable of fulfillment by collective man. It is like all true religious visions, possible of approximation but not of realisation in actual history. (21-22)

Perhaps through small acts, and by relating better to each other one relationship at a time, we can move slowly in the direction of peace.

### *Fruits of a Personal Orientation*

Although, as we saw in part one, development often expands bureaucratic state power and helps to entrench the status quo by naturalizing moral premises, community work undertaken from a personal perspective can have salutary effects. When we encounter another person face-to-face, we find that we have moral obligations to that person. Seeing the other's need, we are called to sharing. Recognizing the other's alterity requires that we treat her with respect. Hearing the other's call, we see ourselves as responsible. A personal approach also maintains a plural space, which is necessary to meaningful action. Engaging with others who are different from a personal perspective gives rise to "live encounters," with unpredictable outcomes.

Engaging with communities of different cultures, economic situations, and lifestyles causes us to experience inequalities and difference. Both meaningful action and live encounters have unpredictable outcomes, which make promise keeping and forgiveness important. Experiencing inequalities and difference leads to self-reflection and greater awareness of what it is to be human. Sharing and forgiveness result in experiences of gratitude, which in turn lead to caring and a desire to maintain the relationships with the people we care about. All of these values result in greater compassion, greater wisdom, and the formation of caring, respectful, responsible intercultural relationships. Caring intercultural relationships allow an organization, such as Tandana, to support programs and initiatives in respectful and responsible ways. When others who are different engage with communities in ways that show respect for local cultures, communities may find more support for their efforts to strengthen their cultures. When an organization supports community initiatives in respectful ways, community members enhance and experience their effectiveness. As they experience their ability to create positive changes, and as visitors have positive experiences with others who are different, they gain self-confidence as well. As people acquire more self-confidence, they sometimes contribute more to their communities. Global inequalities are reduced, ever so slightly, and people can relate better to others who are different. People's lives also become more meaningful. As global inequalities are reduced, the world becomes ever-so-slightly more just. When people relate better to others who are different and the world is more just, the world may also become more peaceful.

As Segundo Rémache pointed out, each project also plants a seed for further changes. Action starts limitless processes, which we cannot predict or control. Sometimes the effects may be harmful, but often they are beneficial in unexpected ways.



#### **IV. Bringing Together Aspects of Personal and Detached Perspectives**

##### *Balancing Act*

Because a detached perspective is dominant in approaches to collective life, an organization seeking to do unalienated work must emphasize the personal in order to counterbalance that dominance. At the same time, it cannot take a purely personal perspective, or it risks falling into converse excesses of pettiness and parochialism. Instead, it can seek to integrate elements from both perspectives, generating productive tensions that can enrich its work. A personal approach keeps us in touch with our humanity, with each other, and with the world in which we live. However, personal responses are not always positive. Taking a personal perspective gives us the opportunity to respond to moral calls and to act in meaningful ways, but it does not automatically lead to the best actions. Communities are rife with conflicts, gossip, and disrespect, in addition to beautiful expressions of connectedness, sharing, and compassion. An organization must stay out of such conflicts and strive for the best aspects of what a personal relationship offers. While a personal perspective may lead us to cooperation with those closest to us, it may not prevent us from seeing those a little farther away as less worthy of consideration or even from participating in intercommunal conflicts. Taking a detached perspective temporarily can enlarge our understanding and inoculate us against parochial limitations.

The view from a more distant point can offer very useful information to inform our actions. The key is to return to a personal perspective in order to act, rather than trying to manage and control from above. A topographic map is an abstracted representation of a satellite view of a particular part of the Earth, much like the abstracted depictions we get when we take a distant view of human affairs. A map is a very useful tool, giving us valuable information

regarding landforms we might encounter if we walk in particular directions and suggesting where we might find water, a pass between the mountains, or a flat campsite. We use the information it provides to locate ourselves in our environment and to inform our choices of which direction to go. If we were to walk while looking only at the map, though, we would stumble and fall, unable to see what is immediately in front of us. We look at the map to learn what we can from its abstraction, and then we return to our personal perspective to respond to what is right around us as we walk.

Sometimes elements from the different perspectives may fit together well. Other times they are in tension. There may be no perfect balance or neat way to integrate them. Nevertheless, bringing them together can help us improve our work.

### *Group-Level Relationships*

Individual, personal relationships may function smoothly if taken separately, but the reality is that there are many of them enmeshed in thick webs of relationships. This interaction among multiple relationships generates complexities that often involve envy, resentment, and exclusion. Relationships formed at the group level can moderate individual jealousies and competitions, but they may lead to similar issues between groups. When I first took foreign volunteers to Kansongo, Mali, many individual residents brought gifts for particular visitors, desiring to “weave a friendship” with those individuals. The volunteers, of course, wanted to reciprocate by giving gifts to their new friends, which encouraged more residents to weave friendships with volunteers. The volume of exchange quickly became a distraction from other aspects of being together, learning from each other, and working together and began to create jealousies and concerns. Before the next visit of a volunteer group, we discussed with the village

assembly the idea of treating the whole group of volunteers as a friend to the entire village. Rather than weaving individual friendships, we could develop a group-level relationship. Remarkably, this idea caught on. Residents pooled their resources to buy an indigo cloth for each of the volunteers. Grateful for the generosity of the village as a whole in sharing so many experiences with their guests, the volunteers went in together as a group to buy additional millet to add to the stock of the village's grain bank and subsidize its price to help their friends through a difficult year. This sense of a group friendship that functions much like an individual friendship continued through the years. Anouh Tembiné explained, "When you come, you are partners for the whole village." Collective friendships between a village and a group of Tandana volunteers are treated as individual friendships would be.

Later, residents of Kansongo were offended that Tandana staff planned for a group of volunteers to visit a different village before theirs, since Kansongo was the first and closest friend of Tandana in the area. The group friendship was not large enough to avoid jealousies between villages, but it did serve to eliminate them within the village. Similarly, the group-level relationship with Tandana is not enough to prevent competitive behavior between communities in Ecuador. Maria Panamá of Motilón Chupa explained that initially her idea to approach Tandana for help was not supported by the teacher working in her community, because the teacher working in the neighboring community had discouraged her:

I said, "in Padre Chupa, The Tandana Foundation helped a lot." The teacher said, "no, I don't think they will help, because years ago I asked the teacher from Padre Chupa about it, and she said, no, their help is only for us in Padre Chupa." She said "I'm embarrassed to go. They might scold us." I said, "let's go anyway. Even if they scold us, so what? Since we aren't going to see them every day, it doesn't matter."

When Maria persisted and convinced the teacher to go with her to meet with Tandana representatives, she discovered that the information from the neighboring community was false

and designed to keep Motilón Chupa from competing with Padre Chupa for Tandana support. Sometimes it is important to take a more distant view to abstract from even the group-level relationships and promote cooperation and harmony between communities. Supporting the formation and growth of the Olouguelemo Environmental Association in Mali has been one opportunity to promote cooperation where formerly competition was the primary mode of interaction. Moussa Tembiné explained:

There were villages that didn't speak to each other. For example, between Kansongo and Nounou, there was a conflict over the environment. But thanks to this association, all of the villages work together in one group. It started with 8 villages, and now there are 14. It's the first time in our Township that 14 villages get together and sit down together to discuss, how are we going to protect our environment. Everyone gives his point of view, and they listen to each other. (The Tandana Foundation, "What People Say")

By abstracting from individual friendships to create group-level relationships, we can moderate individual jealousies, and sometimes it is necessary to abstract further to reduce conflicts between communities.

It may seem unlikely that a relational style could work between an NGO and a community, but it does in my experience. As an organization, The Tandana Foundation maintains some important aspects of a face-to-face relationship. One of the criteria Tandana staff use in selecting proposals to support is whether the project forms part of a reciprocal relationship between Tandana and the community or organization. When a particular community gives generously to Tandana volunteers and staff, the relationship strengthens and Tandana recognizes a call to give back to that community. Conversely, when a community does not follow through on its part of a collaborative project, Tandana waits longer and requires the community to complete the previous project before it will support a new one. Similarly, scholarship recipients must maintain a good relationship with Tandana as an organization by communicating when there are changes or difficulties in their studies and following through on

their responsibilities, such as turning in their grade reports to Tandana and, for post-secondary students, writing a letter each year and participating in community service each semester.

Tandana staff get to know community members well and use this knowledge to inform the relationships between the organization and the communities.

At the same time, though, an organization cannot act in entirely personal ways. It must avoid the conflicts of interest that could be created by relationships held by its leaders. I have encountered this difficulty first-hand, as one of my Ecuadorean god-daughters sought to circumvent a requirement of the scholarship program by appealing directly to me instead of the Scholarship Coordinator and seeking to rely on our personal ties for preferential treatment. The Scholarship Coordinator herself also encountered a very challenging situation when she discovered that her cousin, who was receiving a scholarship, had been dishonest regarding her educational expenses. In these kinds of cases, it is essential to bring in more members of the team and focus on a person's relationship with and obligations to Tandana as an organization, rather than its staff as individuals. Having a Scholarship Committee with a majority of members who are board members living in the United States also provides a group that is one-step removed from the personal relationships and thus can help to avoid both the appearance and the reality of favoritism based on personal connections with staff members. The situation of the student who had misspent scholarship funds quickly became even more complicated, as the student's father was an administrator at a local school and was leading a construction project that Tandana was supporting. Suddenly, his attitude changed, and the collaboration became much more difficult. As Tandana representatives, we had to take care not to treat him differently due to the situation with his daughter, but at the same time to hold him responsible for his commitments regarding the project. Because, ultimately, he did not follow through on what he

had promised, we ended up taking a long break from work with that school after completing the project that was already in progress. On the other hand, when a person or community maintains a very strong relationship with the organization as a whole, rather than seeking to rely on personal ties to particular staff members, we do sometimes bend the rules. For example, some scholarship students have informed us openly about struggles they are facing temporarily, and we have been glad to show understanding of their situations and make exceptions to the grade point average requirements for staying in the program. Focusing on the group-level relationship over the individual ones has helped to navigate around personal conflicts of interest while also being flexible enough to respond to particular realities.

The communities and local organizations that are in relationship with Tandana have their own internal dynamics that include hierarchy, discord, and competing interests. As Martha Nussbaum argues, “A ‘group’ is, then, not a fused organism but a plurality of individuals, held together in some ways but usually differing in many others. The voices that are heard when ‘the group’ speaks are not magically the voice of a fused organic entity; they are the voices of the most powerful individuals; these are especially likely not to be women” (109). At the same time, small communities often do a fairly decent job of including most voices in discussions, with the exception of gender-based exclusion in certain cultural contexts, because interactions are so directly face-to-face and the group is not large enough to allow a particular faction to gain too great a dominance. It is not always clear to what degree Tandana should treat communities as monolithic entities that simply are the other party in relationships, and how much we should seek to make more voices heard or to account for hierarchies within communities. We seek to respect communities’ decision-making processes when they are reasonably representative of the various views held by different members, and, at the same time, to encourage inclusiveness and

participation. When meeting with village assemblies in Mali, in the early years of our collaboration, we found that women sat off to the side or in the back, did not speak, and got up to leave before the meetings were finished in order to attend to their many household tasks.

Wanting to hear their ideas, we began to organize separate meetings of just women. In that context, they were ready to share ideas, jokes, and opinions, and several women's programs were born, including a cotton bank, Savings for Change groups, and a literacy program. Experience with these kinds of programs, in turn, led to more participation by women in mixed-gender meetings. According to Housseyni Pamateck, after participating in these programs, some women have even spoken publicly to the mayor to demand inclusion: "Even at the mayor's office, there were women who took the microphone and told everyone that, 'now we have training and are doing these activities, and you need to inform us of everything and involve us.'" We have sought to promote greater inclusion and greater equality within communities in gentle ways but not to sow discord or amplify conflicts. This balance is always delicate, and there is no clear-cut answer to the question of how much standing to give to communities as group entities versus how much to focus on individuals and their differential power within the communities.

Communities also must delegate certain people to lead and manage projects, and these leaders must be held accountable by the community as a whole. In Ecuador, these are typically the community council members, led by the President, who are elected for one- or two-year terms. These frequent changes in leadership sometimes disrupt ongoing collaborations. Occasionally, if we are unsure whether the majority of a community supports the President's plan, we may ask to attend a community assembly, so we can hear from more people and find out if there is broad support for a proposal. If community members other than the leadership council propose a project to us, we ask them to bring a letter signed by the president and another

council member to be sure that the members making the proposal are going through the proper channels and informing the elected leaders. There have been a few occasions when we have been frustrated by an irresponsible community President and waited a year or two until a new one was elected before partnering with that community again. In one case, the community President lives in Quito, which is more than a three-hour drive from the community, and does not work well with some of the more dynamic residents living at home. Maria Panamá explained:

There are a few people who want us to look bad, but we don't let them. As you know, the President doesn't live here, and he tries to make us look bad, but those of us who live here, we know what we need. . . . The one who doesn't live here, even if he scolds us, those of us here are always organizing. . . . They have envy, so they want us to look bad, and they elected him against us. Sometimes they say, you guys go ahead working, the President said you are in charge this time.

In this case, the President did not agree with the plans a previous President had developed and proposed to Tandana, but, after an argument, he delegated the former President to take charge of the project. Since the President had delegated responsibility to his rivals, and they were very motivated and responsible, we were able to develop a successful partnership with the community, but the situation was not ideal. In cases like this one, we have favored community leaders who seem more responsible and motivated, and these are subjective evaluations. There is no clear-cut formula for ensuring that those responsible for a project represent the will of the majority, or even that the will of the majority is a reliable guide. Like personal relationships, group-level relationships are messy and subjective.

In Mali, most often committees are chosen particularly to take charge of specific projects, and they typically serve three-year terms. Tandana staff emphasize transparency and encourage the committees to report clearly to the entire village about the challenges and progress of the project. They also encourage everyone in the village to ask questions and to demand information if the committee is not forthcoming. Housseyni Pamateck explained that committee members



learn that “Everyone has the right to ask questions, and the response you have to give according to the data.” He said that committee members, “If they make a mistake, they will apologize. They learn not to listen to critics, but to give the correct information in their report. Then, when people realize they are doing a good job, they will apologize for criticizing [the committee].” Tandana can encourage project leaders to be transparent and other community members to request information, but we cannot ensure that they do so.

Tandana itself is also made up of individuals and must find a balance between unity that allows it to function as one entity in group-level relationships and freedom for its members to act and to respond to the live encounters they experience as people. Tandana has an organizational hierarchy, but it does not have rigid and bureaucratic procedures and policies. When acting as one party to a group-level relationship with a community, we must ensure that all Tandana representatives present a united front. To do this, we usually discuss among the various team members who have relevant knowledge or who might be involved in representing Tandana to a given partner and come to an agreement about how to act as an organization. On the other hand, within the organization, we encourage team members to bring new ideas and to follow lines of work inspired by their personal interactions with community members, as long as they cohere with Tandana’s mission and values. To evoke this sense of unity without mechanical rigidity, former Ecuador Program Manager Herman Snel described Tandana as a living organism:

I’m starting to consider Tandana as a living entity. Tandana is not Anna, Tandana is not me, Tandana is everybody who starts to form part of Tandana. And everyone who forms part of Tandana starts to nourish it. . . . I’d like to invite you to keep on being part of what Tandana is and keep nourishing this body. Because without all of you, without all of us, Tandana is not what it is. It’s thanks to all of you and what all of you bring to this wonderful being.

By working together in the manner of a living organism, those of us who make up Tandana can present unity to our partners and make the organization into a “who” that others can be in

relationship with, while at the same time encouraging each other to respond in organic ways to our experiences and interactions. Again, there is no clear way to differentiate between ideas and opportunities that we should support various team members in pursuing and those that stray too far from our mission or current operations. Nevertheless, it is important to consider both unity as an organization and freedom for the individuals who make up the organization to act meaningfully and start new processes.

Group-level relationships between communities and Tandana serve to moderate individual jealousies and competitions and avoid personal conflicts of interest. At the same time, the groups cannot be treated entirely as unitary entities. Sometimes both communities and the Tandana team need encouragement both to function in a unified manner and to heed voices that have been ignored in the past. As an organization, we can seek to use group-level relationships to moderate the pettiness of personal ties, and at the same time we must pay attention to the conflicts within and between groups. Individual, communal, and intra-communal levels of analysis are all salient. Sometimes we must abstract from our personal relationships to see the broader picture more clearly.

### *Fairness and Personal Care*

An organization working with multiple people or multiple communities must have policies and selection criteria that give a sense of fairness. Tandana's approach has been to fold the primacy of relationships into these policies and criteria. In Ecuador, we share the following criteria for project selection with community leaders:

Projects to support should, in general:

1. Benefit the majority of the population of the community.
2. Be based on a demonstrated reality.
3. Fit with the values of The Tandana Foundation

4. Adhere to the laws of Ecuador and internal regulations of the community.
5. Be sustainable over time and with a long-term vision.
6. Form part of a reciprocal relationship between Tandana and the community or organization.
7. Be realized on community property, or property of the school or organization.
8. Incorporate a contribution from the community.
9. Include participation by the community.

The criteria are publicized and can provide understandable reasons for cases when Tandana does not agree to support a particular project. Within them is contained the sense that a reciprocal relationship is vital to the collaboration. Similarly, the scholarship program has requirements and policies that offer a measure of fairness between students, and among them are requirements that the student communicate with the Foundation regarding changes and show a respectful attitude toward Tandana and its representatives. Interestingly, many community members see scholarships as a family-level benefit more than an individual-level benefit and have sought to prioritize fairness between families over fairness between individual students. For example, as some families came to have three or four children in the scholarship program, other families complained that it was unfair for some families to receive support for so many children while other families received none. When Ecuadorean staff communicated this concern to the U.S. board members on the Scholarship Committee, the North Americans saw the scholarship as an individual benefit and felt that it would be unfair to deny a scholarship to one student just because his or her siblings were already receiving scholarships. After explanation and discussion of the community perspective, they understood and agreed to a compromise position proposed by the Scholarship Coordinator: when three students in one family are already receiving scholarships, the fourth sibling can receive only 50% of the usual support, and a fifth sibling would not be eligible. When Tandana sets up mobile clinics in Ecuadorean communities, fairness must govern the granting of appointments for medical, dental, and vision care. There are

too many particular needs and unique stories to accommodate exceptions to the first-come, first-served manner of allotting turns. Stories that imply urgency are too common and too difficult to evaluate to be allowed to weigh on the decisions of who will be seen first. It can be very difficult and sad to turn away patients who want to see a doctor, but, in this case, we have found that if we do not adhere to fairness, the results are mass complaints and general dissatisfaction.

Rule-based fairness is frequently in tension with the personal care that emerges from face to face relationships. As Stevenson argues, friendship is “a willingness to act in an interested way on a friend’s behalf” (76), and yet, it is not appropriate to act in an interested way for a particular friend when there are other friends of the organization for whom we cannot show the same preference. Sometimes we do bend the rules, when a person or community maintains a strong relationship with Tandana as a whole, but we cannot make exceptions based on personal connections with our staff members. It is not always straightforward to distinguish between these two kinds of situations. Furthermore, it is important to show people that they matter, that they are not anonymous beneficiaries but particular people about whom others care. We have seen in Part Three how important it is to many community members to know that they are recognized as people and cared for by Tandana. On occasion, when this tension between fairness and personal care has run particularly high, I have upheld fairness from Tandana and then helped a friend personally, emphasizing that it is me individually, and not Tandana, providing support in a unique situation. There is not a neat solution, but a messy combination to be wrought.

Fairness and personal care sometimes conflict with each other, but both are essential to an organization working from a personal perspective. Both are important to community members who partner with Tandana. Sometimes the importance of relationships can be included

within criteria or policies. At times, rules can be bent to accommodate the necessity of showing someone that she matters and is understood. In other cases, policies must be applied evenly, and fairness must be emphasized. Sometimes pragmatic concerns guide these decisions of when to prioritize fairness and when to follow relational specificity. Both fairness and friendship must be considered, and the tension between them held, in order to do our best work.

### *Instrumentality and Compassion*

While the decision to work together on a particular project or program is taken in the mode of action, once a goal is agreed upon, the mode of fabrication often organizes the work toward that particular end. For example, to build a community center, particular means are required that include materials, technical knowledge, and labor. In a construction project, typically Tandana provides most of the materials while the community provides the technical knowledge and labor. Tandana volunteers might contribute labor as well. However, the end of the building itself is not permitted to take precedence over the values that emerge from personal relationships. The process of working together on the construction, rather, is taken as an opportunity to actualize the principles of respect, responsibility, caring, etc. The fabrication of the building remains subordinate to the action of relating to each other. While it cannot supersede Tandana's guiding values, the instrumental thinking of fabrication is quite important to accomplishing projects well. Without it, we may become friends, but not much would get done. The work that we agree to do together must be completed in order to justify the investment of donors' funds and community and volunteer effort. At the same time, we must be very careful not to get so caught up in the instrumental thinking that we forget to be present with each other. Compassion requires being "with others, . . . fully there" (Palmer 85). When we are

focused narrowly on the goal of completing the project, we are not fully present with each other. I have found that as Tandana grew and took on more and more goals, I have become more oriented to the instrumentality of the mode of fabrication and have spent less time being present with people. A friend in Agualongo, Ecuador once remarked that I did not smile anymore. She had noticed the change in my level of presence as I had become too concerned with accomplishing the many tasks I had committed to doing. I have had to intentionally take time to refocus on simply being with people.

An experience with a volunteer group in Kansongo, Mali taught me about finding a balance between task-orientation and simply spending time together. Residents of Kansongo and visiting American volunteers were working together to build a storehouse for a grain bank. We were all carrying stones from where residents had broken them out of the bedrock to the building site. Local masons were dry-stacking them to create walls and showed the volunteers how to chink the cracks with small splinters of stone. Then, we mixed mud plaster inside the structure and threw it onto the interior of the walls. The volunteers, with their instrumental orientation, wanted to keep working to make as much progress as possible each day. Residents proposed taking time out to share handicrafts with the visitors and show them some other sites in the village. The goal foremost in my mind at that moment was for the volunteers to have a great experience, and I allowed instrumental thinking toward that end to sway me toward encouraging our hosts to work longer hours. They obliged the volunteers' desire and kept going. Suddenly, the back wall of the structure collapsed. Fortunately, the few masons who were inside the building could jump out of the way to avoid being hurt by the falling rocks. The leaders of the project organized a meeting to make a new plan. They explained that we had built too quickly, adding too many layers of stones before the plaster could harden and support the lower rows.

They suggested that we start again and just work more slowly, taking afternoons for cultural sharing activities. We agreed, of course, and the rest of the week proceeded in that manner. The building was not yet complete when the volunteers left, but the intercultural sharing had been astonishing. Local residents did complete the building later, and it has been serving its purpose well for ten years. I learned that it is important to attend both to the work at hand and to just being with each other. In fact, too much focus on accomplishing tasks can be counterproductive.

At the same time, failure to attend to the practical necessities of a project can be equally damaging. When supporting an Ecuadorean organization in building a water tank to be used for irrigation, the Tandana representatives involved did not pay close enough attention to the details of the plan. We did not consult the Logistics Manager, who had the most relevant knowledge and experience to evaluate the plans, instead glossing over the details as the President of the organization outlined the design to the lead mason. When the tank was completed, it had no outlet to let water flow by gravity down to the tree nursery, which we had supposed was its main purpose. The organization President had envisioned acquiring a pump to feed the water into a large irrigation system for farming the open land but had not communicated this vision to Tandana staff, who were under the impression that the purpose of the tank was to provide water for the tree seedlings in the nursery below. After that experience, we created clearer guidelines for having the Logistics Manager inspect each project site and go over the plans and material list carefully. The inattention, in this case, to the instrumental requirements for reaching the goal also hurt the relationship between Tandana and the organization, as we felt the President had not been frank about his plans, while, at the same time, Tandana representatives had not made sufficient inquiry.

An imbalance either way between instrumental thinking and attention to relationships can be detrimental both to achievement of the goals and to the health of the relationships. For an organization working from a personal perspective, it is important to combine the instrumental thinking of fabrication with the simple “being with” of compassion. The drive to accomplish work is important for moving projects forward, but it cannot be permitted to destroy the potential for compassionate presence.

### *Universalism and Context-Specificity*

Arendt argues that the notion “That all men are created equal is not self-evident nor can it be proved. We hold this opinion because freedom is possible only among equals, and we believe that the joys and gratifications of free company are to be preferred to the doubtful pleasures of holding dominion” (*Between Past and Future* 247). If it is not self-evident and cannot be proved, the idea of equal worth and dignity of human beings must be arrived at through abstraction. I impute the dignity I feel that I have to others, and not just those closest to me. I universalize this sense of moral worth to all human beings. As Arendt points out, it is not necessary to universalize equality in order to act in freedom; it is only necessary to create a realm in which a set of equals can interact. She argues that in ancient Greece, the “equality of the political realm has very little in common with our concept of equality: it meant to live among and to have to deal only with one’s peers, and it presupposed the existence of ‘unequals’ who, as a matter of fact, were always the majority of the population in a city-state” (*The Human Condition* 32). Nevertheless, the idea that human dignity is universal and that people should be treated as having equal worth arises in many contexts. Nussbaum argues:

Human beings have a dignity that deserves respect from laws and social institutions. This idea has many origins in many traditions; by now it is at the core of modern liberal



democratic thought and practice all over the world. The idea of human dignity is usually taken to involve an idea of equal worth: rich and poor, rural and urban, female and male, all are equally deserving of respect, just in virtue of being human, and this respect should not be abridged on account of a characteristic that is distributed by the whims of fortune.  
(5)

We have seen how important being treated as equals is to community members in both Mali and Ecuador who work with Tandana. Like Maria Perugachi, they often emphasize that what they appreciate is that Tandana representatives “don’t treat us as less. We are all equal, and they treat us as equals.” Levinas argues that, “universality reigns as the presence of humanity in the eyes that look at me” (208). For him, “The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no ‘interiority’ permits avoiding. It is that discourse that obliges the entering into discourse rationalism prays for, a ‘force’ that convinces even ‘the people who do not wish to listen’ and thus founds the universality of reason” (201). A sense of universality can thus arise from the face-to-face encounter with another.

Universality is an important abstraction, and yet we must use it carefully. Universalism, and similarly, demands for context, can operate in many different ways and at different levels with strikingly divergent results. Treating as universal the particular experiences, norms, and socialized traits of a dominant group makes those of other groups appear deficient or aberrant. Similarly, universalizing a particular teleology of civilizational progress justified imperialism and continues to undergird the development project with its ambivalent results. On the other hand, universalizing interiority, coherence, and the capacity for self-representation is important to the “cosmopolitanism of sentiments” that Mehta describes (21) and that is essential for any effort to understand another. Universalism, it seems, must be applied at the deepest and most general levels. Universal attributions of interiority or the ability to speak for one’s self seem to be of a more basic variety than claims that all civilizations’ histories follow a universal

trajectory, because they have less specific content. Universalism at a deep level sometimes requires attention to context at the surface. Iris Marion Young, for example, argues that, “far from implying one another, the universality of citizenship in the sense of the inclusion and participation of everyone, stands in tension with the other two meanings of universality embedded in modern political ideas: universality as generality, and universality as equal treatment” (118). When differences lead to group disadvantages, “fairness seems to call for acknowledging rather than being blind to them” (ibid.). In this case, universalism at the level of moral worth and of rights to full inclusion and participation in society requires attention to particular differences. Conversely, universalism at the level of specific treatment actually undermines efforts for universal inclusion.

In the case of an organization like Tandana, the idea of universal dignity and equal worth of human beings requires taking into account the differential power relations involved in our work. The North American representatives of Tandana bring greater power than the Malian and Ecuadorean community members with whom we collaborate. We must consciously try to undermine that power and refrain from exercising it in harmful ways. Accounting for it requires deep and attentive listening, a reticence to propose ideas, and intentional valuation of local knowledges, wisdom, traditions, customs, and techniques to the extent that these are valuable to local residents. It may be impossible to equalize ourselves in interactions across great global hierarchies, and yet the conviction that we are all of equal worth calls us to attend to the differences in power between ourselves and our interlocutors. There may be no clear way to adjust for these differences, but we can attempt to amplify the voices of those traditionally marginalized, listen carefully, and wait before speaking. We need not always defer to the less-

powerful party in a relationship, but we should listen carefully and consider the reasons behind their proposals by looking into them deeply.

A deep understanding of universality also undermines the interpretation of a passage from Herodotus that takes it as an illustration of moral relativism. Herodotus relates the following anecdote about Darius:

When he was king of Persia, he summoned the Greeks who happened to be present at his court and asked them what they would take to eat the dead bodies of their fathers. They replied that they would not do it for any money in the world. Later, in the presence of the Greeks, and through an interpreter, so they could understand what was said, he asked some Indians, of the tribe called Callatae, who do in fact eat their parents' dead bodies, what they would take to burn them. They uttered a cry of horror and forbade him to mention such a dreadful thing. One can see by this what custom can do, and Pindar, in my opinion, was right when he called it "king of all." (203-204)

While the customs of the two groups are directly at odds, both customs are attempts to show respect for dead parents. Both follow, in different cultural contexts, from the more basic imperative: show respect for your dead parents. As this example shows, universal principles can lead to different, even opposing, specific actions in different cultural settings and in different particular situations.

Experience with Tandana's programs similarly shows that when values are understood at a deep level, there is considerable sharing and overlap. Values may find different expression in different cultural contexts and yet reflect the same underlying commitments. We have seen in Part Three how a number of values are recognized by Ecuadoreans, Malians, and North Americans who are involved with Tandana. Sometimes these values find different expression in various contexts. For example, community members in Quichinche, Ecuador, typically prioritize the aspect of responsibility that involves responding to the emerging needs of people with whom one is connected, whereas North American staff and volunteers often prioritize the aspect of keeping one's word and showing up when one said that one would. This difference of priority

leads to many planned meetings where Ecuadoreans do not show up while North Americans do. To avoid frustrations, both need to understand each other's interpretation of responsibility and seek to accommodate it by, perhaps, communicating if plans change on the Ecuadorean side and relaxing expectations of timeliness on the North American side. Gratitude also finds different kinds of expression in various contexts. In Bandiagara District of Mali, when one receives a gift, the polite response is to show it to others as a way of honoring the giver. The same behavior in Quichinche, Ecuador, meanwhile, would generate envy and not be appreciated. If the gift is food, the requirements for showing appropriate gratitude are even more precise. In Quichinche, a grateful recipient of food will eat it all or take any leftovers home, whereas, in Bandiagara, she will leave some food in the bowl to show that she was satisfied and that the quantity given was sufficient. There, whatever is not eaten should be left for someone else to enjoy. Tandana representatives must pay attention to these differences at the level of expression in order to communicate their underlying sense of gratitude in different contexts. A commitment to universal values at a deep level requires attention to context at the level of specific expressions.

## V. Bringing the Personal to Public Life

### *Organizations Can Facilitate Acceptance of a Personal Vocabulary in Public Discourse*

The Tandana Foundation is just one example of an organization using aspects of a personal approach to enrich collective work. Many other organizations, both transnational and domestic, can similarly apply relational morality to their work and create plural spaces for meaningful action. Not only non-profit organizations, but also institutions and businesses are already bringing together personal and detached perspectives in constructive ways in a wide variety of contexts.

For example, Abigail Echo-Hawk, chief research officer at the Seattle Indian Health Board and director of the Urban Indian Health Institute, describes her work as “decolonizing data” by bringing indigenous concepts to the development of databases and data collection systems (Secaira). She connects technical terms from a detached perspective with personal actions, noting that, “The words ‘public health’ are a Western concept, but my parents were the first public health practitioners I knew. They always took care of people, they took them to doctor's appointments, they fed them, they got a roof over their head” (ibid.). She focuses on the personal concepts of stories and responsibility, asserting that, “I always think about the data as story, and each person who contributed to that data as storytellers. What is our responsibility to the story and our responsibility to the storyteller? Those are all indigenous concepts, that we always care for our storytellers, and we always have a responsibility to our stories” (ibid.). She argues that, “everybody deserves to tell their story to somebody who will believe them, and somebody who won't judge them. . . . They deserve to have their stories told, because they're more than a data point,” and at the same time, data is important for asserting the importance of American Indians: “When we are invisible in the data, we no longer exist. When I see an asterisk

that says ‘not statistically significant,’ or they lump us together with Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans — you can't lump racial groups together. That is bad data practice” (ibid.). Echo-Hawk brings together the personal perspective in which stories, a space of appearance, and recognition as people are important with the detached perspective that can abstract to aggregate data in a powerful effort to improve the situation of urban American Indians.

In Cincinnati, meanwhile, Cohear is a business bringing a focus on personal connections to the work of public agencies. Dani Isaacsohn, Cohear’s founder, challenges the notion that technocratic solutions and traditional expertise are sufficient to address human issues. He argues for a different concept of expertise that values personal experience, noting that, “Our work is based on the idea that living an issue makes someone an everyday expert, and that we need to listen to and learn from that expertise if we’re going to make progress” (Isaacsohn). He admits, “I am as guilty as anyone of seeking clean, technocratic answers to hard, complex human questions. But this work has taught our team that if you bring the right people together, there is tremendous wisdom in one another, even if it means not knowing how the solution will take shape at the outset” (ibid.). Through openness to live encounters with unpredictable outcomes, the Cohear staff have found new wisdom and also recognized the vital importance of relationships. Isaacsohn reports, “We have learned that people don’t describe just wanting access to programs, but access to people. When we ask everyday experts for solutions, they talk about support, mentorship, guidance, friendship – the human connections that we all rely on to be our best selves.” Cohear brings “everyday experts” into conversation with policy-makers who lead government agencies, utilities, hospitals, universities, and foundations, providing a bridge between a personal vocabulary and the detached one used by these institutions. Isaacsohn suggests, “If you give grants, this could mean supporting relationship-building in your target

populations or asking your donors to open their Rolodexes as well as their wallets. If you employ people, we've had folks suggest incentivized carpooling or shared responsibility for onsite childcare." By bridging these two vocabularies, and most importantly, bringing people who, in their professional lives, often operate from a detached perspective face to face with people who emphasize the importance of personal connections, Cohear can facilitate the development of positive initiatives that address urban challenges.

There are many ways that personal and detached perspectives can be brought together to yield fruitful collaborations and generate effective work. Echo-Hawk, Cohear, and the many others bringing relational concepts and personal vocabularies into public life are shifting public discourse in important ways. The more institutions, organizations, and businesses use these concepts and terms in their collective efforts, the more validity aspects of a personal approach will be seen to have for public life. This shift will enlarge the opportunities for bringing creative responses to human challenges and working together to make lives more meaningful and the world more peaceful and more just.

### *Bringing the Personal to the Political Level*

In some cases, personal actions and values can be applied at the level of an entire polity, enriching the possibilities for the future. A striking example of the salutary potential of such an approach is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. The Commission was created to find a "third way" for going forward in the wake of apartheid and the innumerable atrocities committed during its reign. This way was, "a compromise between the extreme of Nuremberg trials and blanket amnesty or national amnesia. And that third way was granting amnesty to individuals in exchange for a full disclosure relating to the crime for which the

amnesty was being sought” (Tutu 30). The leaders who authorized it were taking a risk. Tutu explains, “We happened to have been blessed with leaders who were ready to take risks—when you embark on the business of asking for and granting forgiveness, you are taking a risk” (268).

Tutu, who led the Commission, explains the personal nature of this approach:

One might go on to say that perhaps justice fails to be done only if the concept we entertain of justice is retributive justice, whose chief goal is to be punitive, so that the wronged party is really the state, something impersonal, which has little consideration for the real victims and almost none for the perpetrator.

We contend that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment. In the spirit of ubuntu, the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense.

This is a far more personal approach, regarding the offense as something that has happened to persons and whose consequence is a rupture in relationships. Thus we would claim that justice, restorative justice, is being served when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiving, for reconciliation. (54-55)

As we have seen, the need for forgiveness arises from the irreversibility of action, and forgiveness is a personal value that promotes the restoration of relationships as well as the freedom to act in the future. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s hearings created a plural space of appearance, in which victims of the most hideously dehumanizing crimes could be recognized as people. As Tutu points out, “Now they would be able to tell their stories, they would remember, and in remembering would be acknowledged to be persons with an inalienable personhood” (30).

Because it was undertaken at the level of an entire nation, the Truth and Reconciliation process could not be comprehensive. It had to set limits for what kinds of acts, committed during which time period, could be addressed by its work. Tutu recalls, “Sensibly, those who were negotiating the delicate business of the transition from repression to democracy opted for a limited and thus manageable exercise” (104). It could not possibly include each person who



wanted to tell his or her story. Only one in ten witnesses who made statements were able to testify in a public hearing. Others who could not testify, and the many who were wounded in ways outside the purview of the Commission, had to find vicarious healing through the recognition of stories like theirs and the vindication of the sufferings of people like them. They had to abstract from the reconciliation occurring between individuals in a public forum to find the ability to go forward as a nation.

The Truth and Reconciliation process was not perfect or neat. It could only address a small percentage of cases to offer a national narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation. It was marred by disagreements and occasional failures. Yet despite all these imperfections, it worked.

Tutu asserts:

I have said ours was a flawed commission. Despite that, I do want to assert as eloquently and as passionately as I can that it was, in an imperfect world, the best possible instrument so far devised to deal with the kind of situation that confronted us after democracy was established in our motherland. With all its imperfections, what we have tried to do in South Africa has attracted the attention of the world. (281)

There was not the mass violence that surely could have been expected to erupt in the aftermath of such a regime change. Tutu recalls:

The world had expected that the most ghastly blood bath would overwhelm South Africa. It had not happened. Then the world thought that, after a democratically elected government was in place, those who for so long had been denied their rights, whose dignity had been trodden underfoot, callously and without compunction, would go on the rampage, unleashing an orgy of revenge and retribution that would devastate their common motherland. Instead there was this remarkable Truth and Reconciliation Commission to which people told their heartrending stories, victims expressing their willingness to forgive and perpetrators telling their stories of sordid atrocities while also asking for forgiveness from those they had wronged so grievously. (260-261)

It was a miracle in the sense of the unexpected event that disrupts an automatic process. This example demonstrates that it is possible, in some contexts, to bring important personal actions

and values to the level of a nation. Perhaps there are many more opportunities to enrich political life with practices drawn from the personal perspective.

*Enriching Approaches to Collective Work with Personal Actions, Values, and Experiences*

During the European Enlightenment, some significant shifts took place that shape the dominant approaches to collective life in modernity. While these shifts brought important benefits, including the ideas of universal human dignity and freedom, they also brought an excess of detachment. Seeing ourselves, and the human affairs in which we are embroiled, from a very distant perspective may provide useful information, but we cannot act from such a viewpoint. From such a distant perspective, all human activities appear as processes, and there is no possibility for meaningfulness. Furthermore, a detached viewpoint enables attempts to dominate and to instrumentalize all that is seen, addressing human affairs in the mode of fabrication rather than the mode of action. Development is one field that is highly dominated by the language and approach of a detached, instrumental perspective. As a result, it often has highly ambiguous effects, including extension of bureaucratic power and frequent disappointment for those its interventions are supposed to benefit.

While an excessively detached perspective dominates modern approaches to collective life, there are many virtues that can temper its excesses, which are available within the personal perspective that many of us take in our daily lives. A personal viewpoint gives rise to experiential moral obligations that arise from encounters with others. It also makes possible meaningful action by maintaining a plural space that offers opportunities for self-revelation, by allowing consequences to reverberate through webs of relationships long after an original act is complete, and by providing opportunities to actualize principles, to act with purpose.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult to apply a personal approach directly to a large polity.

Organizations can provide a mediating level to assert the validity of personal morality and of the mode of action for public life.

The Tandana Foundation is by no means the only organization applying a personal approach to collective action, but it is the example I am most familiar with, and I have shared many experiences and the testimony of many people who are involved with Tandana in order to illustrate some of the ways that a personal approach can be brought to an organization's work with salutary effects. When a personal approach is combined with a willingness to engage with others who are different, it gives rise to particular experiences, actions, and values. Relational moral obligations call for sharing, respect, and responsibility. Meaningful action, with its unpredictability and irreversibility, calls for promise keeping and forgiveness. Experiences of inequalities and difference lead to self-reflection and greater awareness of what it is to be human. Sharing and forgiveness give rise to experiences of gratitude, which in turn generate caring and a desire to maintain relationships. These values and experiences bring about greater compassion, greater wisdom, and caring, respectful, responsible intercultural relationships. When these relationships are prioritized in an organization's work, they can support collaborative progress on a variety of community initiatives. As these initiatives become reality, community members enhance and experience their own effectiveness and communities improve on their own terms. At the same time, volunteers' awareness expands and communities continue to strengthen their cultures. Through these experiences, people gain self-confidence, and they often contribute more to their communities. Global inequalities are reduced, ever so slightly, and people can relate better to others who are different. People's lives become more meaningful. At the same time, the world shifts in tiny ways toward justice and peace.

Because detached approaches are so dominant in public life, organizations seeking to do unalienated work must emphasize the personal aspects of their approaches. At the same time, they must balance the personal with the abstract in order to avoid converse problems of pettiness and parochialism. They can abstract from true personal relationships to form group-level relationships that can moderate individual jealousies and competitions. At the same time, they must integrate fairness with personal forms of care. Organizations must use the instrumental thinking of fabrication to accomplish goals, without letting that instrumental focus undermine the ability to be present with people in compassion. Universalism at a deep level calls for context-specificity at higher levels, and organizations must take both of these into account.

Organizations, including not only NGOs or non-profits, but also institutions and businesses, can draw on the many valuable experiences and practices from a personal perspective to enrich their work. In some cases, personal acts and values can be applied directly at the level of a polity. Bringing personal elements into approaches to collective work is essential in order to reclaim relational morality and opportunities for meaningful action. Our approaches to human affairs are greatly improved when they combine personal connections with broader understandings of the world. As we dissolve the boundaries between personal and collective frames, the virtues of a personal approach can be brought to bear on collective challenges. We must bring together the best elements of personal and detached perspectives if we hope to lead meaningful lives and to make the world more peaceful and more just.

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## Appendix

I want to express great gratitude to the many people who agreed to share their insights, experiences, and reflections with me through interviews. Their wisdom and their openness about their experiences have made this thesis possible. Below is a brief introduction to each of these generous people.

	<p><b>Tembel Bamia</b></p> <p>Tembel is President of the women of the community of Assa, Mali. She has participated in Savings for Change, literacy classes, and a women's leadership workshop with The Tandana Foundation.</p>
	<p><b>Humberto Burga</b></p> <p>Humberto is President of the community of Muenala, Ecuador. He hosted a Tandana volunteer in his home and led the painting of the community center in collaboration with The Tandana Foundation.</p>
	<p><b>Adrián Córdova</b></p> <p>Adrián is a secondary school student in The Tandana Foundation's scholarship program. He and his family live in Panecillo, Ecuador, where they have hosted visiting Tandana interns from the United States. Adrián has also been an active participant in Tandana's summer school program.</p>
	<p><b>Margarita Furez</b></p> <p>From Panecillo, Ecuador, Margarita was the first student in Tandana's university scholarship program. After graduating with her degree in accounting, she began to work for the Foundation as Accountant and Program Assistant. Margarita has hosted a Tandana intern in her home and participated in activities with many visiting volunteer groups.</p>






	<p><b>Peter Graves</b></p> <p>A Physician from Ontario, Peter has volunteered four times in Ecuador with The Tandana Foundation, often bringing many members of his family with him.</p>
	<p><b>Zach Graves</b></p> <p>Zach is a medical student from Ontario. He has volunteered three times in Ecuador with The Tandana Foundation. He also co-founded and led Tools with Impact, a non-profit organization that collaborated with The Tandana Foundation to support projects for schools in both Mali and Ecuador.</p>
	<p><b>Bob Herring</b></p> <p>Bob is Director of the Pre-International Baccalaureate Program and Global Programs at Purcell Marian High School in Ohio. He led a group of students to volunteer with The Tandana Foundation and the community of Agualongo, Ecuador.</p>
	<p><b>Fatouma Kamia</b></p> <p>Fatouma is a member of the indigo bank management committee in Indellou, Mali. She is also a student in The Tandana Foundation's literacy program and a member of a Savings for Change group.</p>
	<p><b>Ada Kanambaye</b></p> <p>Ada is administrative secretary of the cotton bank of Sal-Dimi, Mali, the civil status agent of her community, and president of the women's association Moue toumon yaan. She was a student and then became an instructor in The Tandana Foundation's literacy program.</p>






	<p><b>Adama Kanambaye</b></p> <p>Adama lives in Kani-Gogouna, Mali. She participated in The Tandana Foundation's literacy program and is a member of a Savings for Change group.</p>
	<p><b>Oumou Kansaye</b></p> <p>Oumou serves as a township councilwoman for Wadouba Township, Mali, President of the women of Wadouba, member of the township organization commission, and President of a political party known as UM RDA. She was a student and then became an instructor in The Tandana Foundation's literacy program.</p>
	<p><b>Kadidia Kassogu�</b></p> <p>Kadidia lives in Orsongho, Mali. She participated in The Tandana Foundation's literacy program and is a member of a Savings for Change group.</p>
	<p><b>Kessia Kouriba</b></p> <p>Kessia is from Kansongo, Mali. She works as a literacy instructor and Program Assistant for The Tandana Foundation, collecting feedback and stories from many people who have collaborated on or participated in programs with Tandana.</p>
	<p><b>Martha Lanchimba</b></p> <p>Martha is a past President of the community of Muenala, Ecuador. She led the community in many projects, including improvements to the community center in collaboration with The Tandana Foundation. She also hosted a Tandana volunteer in her home.</p>

	<p><b>Audrey Ling</b></p> <p>From Maryland, Audrey was a Public Health Intern with The Tandana Foundation in Ecuador. She lived with a host family in the community of Panecillo and worked alongside the Patient Follow Up Coordinator to help patients access the health care they need.</p>
	<p><b>Mónica Lopez</b></p> <p>Mónica is Secretary of the neighborhood of Pastaví in Quichinche, Ecuador. She is studying law as a participant in Tandana’s scholarship program. She and her family have also hosted many Tandana volunteers in their home.</p>
	<p><b>Maria Esther Manrique</b></p> <p>Maria Esther is a nurse at the health center in Gualsaqui, Ecuador. She has hosted many Tandana volunteers in her home and worked alongside Tandana volunteers in many mobile clinics.</p>
	<p><b>Carmen Morán</b></p> <p>Carmen lives in Muenala, Ecuador. She has worked alongside Tandana volunteers and taken advantage of the medical care offered through the Foundation’s mobile clinics.</p>
	<p><b>Kurikamak Moreta</b></p> <p>Kurikamak, or Kuri, is from Rey Loma, Ecuador. He and his family have hosted many Tandana volunteers in their home. Kuri also assists the dental team during Tandana’s mobile clinics and helped to coordinate the visit of a Tandana student volunteer group.</p>








	<p><b>Segundo Moreta</b></p> <p>Segundo teaches at a bilingual, intercultural elementary school in Gualsaqui, Ecuador. He has hosted many Tandana volunteers in his home and has collaborated with Tandana on projects, including creation of a computer lab, for the school where he teaches. He also wrote a trilingual children's book that expresses his culture, which Tandana published.</p>
	<p><b>Housseyni Pamateck</b></p> <p>From Sal-Dimi, Mali, Housseyni is The Tandana Foundation's Local Supervisor in Mali. He coordinates with community leaders on all of the projects for which they request support from The Tandana Foundation.</p>
	<p><b>Mamoudou Pamateck</b></p> <p>Mamoudou, from Sal-Dimi, Mali, is Vice President of the Olouguelemo Environmental Association, representing nineteen villages in Wadouba Township. He also worked alongside Tandana volunteers when they visited his community.</p>
	<p><b>Alberto Panamá</b></p> <p>Alberto is past President of Motilón Chupa, Ecuador. He has led his community in the construction of an irrigation system, collaborating with The Tandana Foundation on some phases. He has also hosted Tandana volunteers in his home.</p>
	<p><b>Maria Panamá</b></p> <p>Maria is a community leader in Motilón Chupa, Ecuador. She has hosted Tandana volunteers in her home and also led many cultural activities for visiting groups.</p>

	<p><b>Sisa Panamá</b></p> <p>Sisa is studying mechatronic engineering as a participant in The Tandana Foundation's scholarship program. She and her family have also hosted Tandana volunteers in their home in Motilón Chupa, Ecuador.</p>
	<p><b>Eduardo Pazmiño</b></p> <p>From Panecillo, Ecuador, Eduardo has seen The Tandana Foundation evolve from its early seeds. He has hosted Tandana interns in his home, and his son is a participant in Tandana's scholarship program.</p>
	<p><b>Humberto Perugachi</b></p> <p>Humberto is a past President of Agualongo, Ecuador. He has been very involved in many community efforts, especially the construction of a soccer stadium. He has also hosted Tandana volunteers in his home.</p>
	<p><b>Manuel Perugachi</b></p> <p>Manuel, a past President of Agualongo, Ecuador, has led his community in many projects in collaboration with The Tandana Foundation. He has also hosted Tandana volunteers in his home.</p>
	<p><b>Maria Perugachi</b></p> <p>From Agualongo, Ecuador, Maria graduated from university as an administrative secretary, with support from The Tandana Foundation's scholarship program. She and her family have hosted many Tandana volunteers in their home.</p>

	<p><b>Matias Perugachi</b></p> <p>Matias, from Panecillo, Ecuador, was formerly the manager of the UCINQUI native tree nursery in Achupallas, Ecuador. In that capacity, he collaborated with The Tandana Foundation on many projects, and he has continued to lead Tandana gardening volunteers in their work throughout Quichinche Parish.</p>
	<p><b>Segundo Remache</b></p> <p>From La Compañía, Ecuador, Segundo is studying multimedia production as a participant in The Tandana Foundation's scholarship program. He has also done photography and videography for the Foundation.</p>
	<p><b>Sarah Rothschild</b></p> <p>From Washington state, Sarah is a Program Leadership Fellow with The Tandana Foundation. She lives with a host family in the community of Panecillo, Ecuador and works with the Program Coordinators to prepare for, lead, and follow up after the visits of volunteer groups.</p>
	<p><b>Elé Samakan</b></p> <p>Elé, from Yarou Plateau, Mali, is a teacher in his community's elementary school, with support from both the parents and The Tandana Foundation. He is in charge of the school garden that Tandana helped to create. He also assists the Savings for Change groups and the cotton bank committee in his community.</p>
	<p><b>Anouh Tembiné</b></p> <p>From Kansongo, Mali, Anouh has served on the management committees for many projects, including his community's grain bank and orchard. He is an instructor in The Tandana Foundation's literacy program.</p>

	<p><b>Biné Tembiné</b></p> <p>Biné, an elder from Kansongo, Mali, has served as an advisor on the management committees of several projects, including the community orchard. He has also made a special effort to share his knowledge and culture with Tandana volunteers.</p>
	<p><b>Marie Tembiné</b></p> <p>Marie, from Kansongo, Mali, is Secretary of the cotton bank in her community and participated in the literacy classes and leadership workshops sponsored by The Tandana Foundation. She also cooks for visiting volunteer groups as well as for other meetings and events.</p>
	<p><b>Moussa Tembiné</b></p> <p>From Kansongo, Mali, Moussa worked for a number of other NGOs before becoming The Tandana Foundation's Program Manager. He leads all of Tandana's work in Mali.</p>
	<p><b>Ousmane Tembiné</b></p> <p>Ousmane, from Kansongo, Mali, is a teacher at the elementary school in Kani-Gogouna. He is Secretary of the Olouguelemo Environmental Association representing nineteen villages. He is also a member of AFTCD/PD, the linguistic association that partners with Tandana on the literacy program.</p>
	<p><b>Yabiemo Tembiné</b></p> <p>Yabiemo is President of the women of Kansongo, Mali. She has also participated in the literacy classes and leadership workshops sponsored by The Tandana Foundation and has served on the management committee of the community's cotton bank.</p>

	<p><b>Yagouno Tembiné</b></p> <p>Yagouno, from Kansongo, Mali, has participated in the literacy classes and leadership workshops sponsored by The Tandana Foundation and has served on the management committee of the community's cotton bank. She is also a Savings for Change replicator, and she cooks for Tandana volunteer groups, meetings, and events.</p>
	<p><b>Moussa Timbiné</b></p> <p>From Ondogou Dah, Mali, Moussa serves as second deputy Mayor and civil registrar of Ondogou Township. He is the Savings for Change Coordinator for The Tandana Foundation, creating, training, and supporting savings groups.</p>
	<p><b>Josefina Torres</b></p> <p>Josefina, from Agualongo, Ecuador, has hosted many Tandana volunteers in her home and also shared about her lifestyle and community with volunteer groups. Her children have participated in The Tandana Foundation's scholarship program.</p>
	<p><b>Maria Torres</b></p> <p>From Agualongo, Ecuador, Maria has hosted many Tandana volunteers in her home. Her daughter participated in The Tandana Foundation's scholarship program.</p>
	<p><b>Boureima Yalcouyé</b></p> <p>Boureima is a co-founder and Treasurer of AFTCD/PD, the linguistic association that partners with The Tandana Foundation on the literacy program. He is an accountant from Nalou, Mali.</p>

**Kadidia Yanogué**

A leader in Dana-Guiré, Mali, Kadidia is a member of the management committee of her community's cotton bank. She also participated in literacy classes and a women's leadership workshop sponsored by The Tandana Foundation.