



April 2006 Issue: No. 5

Dear Friends and supporters,

Another very busy nine months means that this newsletter is long overdue. My apologies.

Exactly two years on since we officially launched as a charity, **The Forgiveness Project** continues to draw a huge amount of interest through the website, word of mouth as well as a high profile in the media. With the subject of forgiveness increasingly hitting the headlines, very often **The Forgiveness Project** is asked to comment on related events. Finding ourselves appearing in the story line of Coronation Street – with the website mentioned twice! – took us all completely by surprise and seemed to prove yet again that this work taps into a deep public feeling that there is an alternative to the endless cycles of violence which are the hallmark of our times.

The main focus of our work is now developing the exhibition and seminars for faith communities, schools and conferences, as well as running our Journeying Through Conflict programme for prisons.

THE F WORD EXHIBITION

For details of where the exhibition is being held both in the UK and US please look at the website.

Some new stories have been added to the website. I recently interviewed Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele. In 1993 Ginn's daughter was killed in the Heidelberg Tavern Massacre in Cape Town aged 23. Letlapa Mphahlele is the former Director of Operations of Apla (Azanian Peoples Liberation Army) who gave the orders for the bombing. Both now work together for reconciliation. We also have Marie Fatayi-Williams' story whose son Anthony was killed on the Number 30 bus when it was blown up by a suicide bomber last July. Marie has also launched a foundation in Anthony's name to promote peace and reconciliation (www.afw.org.uk)

Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele



“Vulnerable feelings when expressed to each other have the potential to establish lasting bonds” Ginn Fourie

AMERICA

Following a pilot launch in April last year to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Oklahoma bombing, we still plan to launch a tour of the US which will include our ten new US stories which were collected thanks to funding from the Roddick Foundation and can be seen on the website.

We have also just signed a contract with a team of award-winning US film makers which is extremely exciting. Stuart Sender and Julie Bergman are a husband and wife team who have their own media consulting and production company, **Balcony Films**. Balcony Films specialises in outside-the-box media messaging, merging storytelling with policy and state-of-the-art distribution strategies for progressive issues, campaigns and documentary films.

For any inquires regarding our work in America please contact sophielevy@hotmail.com

Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon, produced a spectacular version of the exhibition. The students illuminated positive transparencies they'd made of the images, with particular emphasis placed on the text. They used wood from packing crates as frames and hung white gauze curtains between each image so viewers could have moments of privacy and meditation as they moved through the exhibit.

The F Word at PNCA



“What struck me about the opening on the First Thursday of November was how long visitors lingered in front of the images and how silent the gallery was.” Mary Slowik, organiser of The F Word at PNCA:

BRIXTON PRISON

With some funding secured from The Rank Foundation in March (for which we are greatly indebted to the trustees of Rank) we are able to continue running our Journeying Through Conflict programme at HMP Brixton. Kate Quigley, head of special projects, who was recently awarded the Butler Trust Award, and Governor John Podmore have been actively supporting our work since we first ran workshops and seminars at the prison late in 2004. Recently Princess Anne and Charles Clark visited Brixton Prison, both spending quite some time talking to representatives about our work.

In a letter of commendation governor John Podmore has said of TFP:

*“My belief and support of the Journeying Conflict Programme continues to grow as it opens doors for both staff and prisoners. The project has a high priority in this establishment and it will have my continued support both to deliver it here for my prisoners and to work with the team to access funds, which are yet to be provided centrally. It is because of my belief in this approach that I am keen to work with **The Forgiveness Project** and allow it unprecedented access to this prison.”*

We are very lucky to have Mick, a prisoner at Brixton, working with us to develop the programme. Mick attended the first Healing of Memories workshop and without his input the programme would have been difficult to get under way.

One prisoner who recently took part in the workshop we held in Brixton commented afterwards.

“I know I was born a gentle and passive child but my community remoulded me so I conformed to what they wanted me to be. Through the workshop I rediscovered the person I should have been. I have less fear of letting that gentle side of me out now instead of locking it away because of fear of reprisals.”

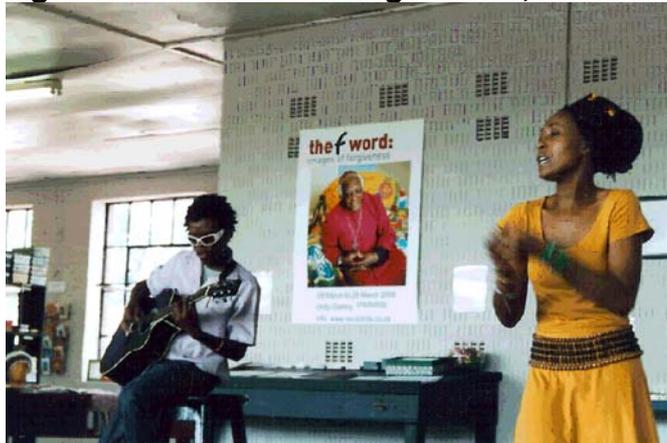
OTHER PRISON WORK

We also ran a workshop at HMP Wayland last year and the exhibition has been shown at Warren Hill Young Offenders Institute in Suffolk, HMP New Hall, West Yorkshire and HMP Armley, Leeds. At the **Prison Chaplaincy Conference** in March, where The F Word exhibition was on display, the chaplain of Wayland, Nic Tivey, gave a talk about our work. He said that of the many projects and workshops he brought into the prison this had been about the most effective, not least because we approached the subject of forgiveness “without an agenda”.

SOUTH AFRICA

In March I visited South Africa where The F Word was the focal point of a Festival of Forgiveness at the Unity Gallery in Johannesburg, alongside story tellers, healers and artists. This was the brainchild of Mandy de Waal who runs **The Soul Circle**. SoulCircle [www.soulo.co.za] facilitates learning experiences to help people live their best life at work, home or at play. Mandy de Waal with her assistant Cath Silver secured massive media coverage for what turned out to be a very successful and meaningful event. Fr Michael Lapsley was able to speak at the launch, as were Ginn Fourie and Letlapa.

Opening of The Festival of Forgiveness, Johannesburg



*“The power of this work is because the heart and the soul recognise that which is authentic, because **The Forgiveness Project** holds a space that speaks from truth and objectivity and not dogma or the need to fix. Because it holds a crucial tension.” Mandy de Waal:*

SCHOOLS

Camilla Carr and Alistair Little took part in a very successful seminar at Tonbridge Boys School for the second year running. Alistair also spoke to St Simon Stock Catholic School, Maidstone. In March, alongside Ruth Scott (one of our trustees), he ran three workshops at Littlehampton Community School's "One World" Conference. The school was very enthusiastic about the positive response from pupils to this workshop and we have been invited back next year.

FUNDING

Apart from the Rank Foundation funding, we would like to offer special thanks to one of the trustees of the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation who from a discretionary fund awarded us £10,000. We have also been awarded £5,000 from Awards for All to run a workshop in the community and a subsequent training of facilitators, plus a small grant from Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, and from Canada House Arts Trust. We are extremely grateful to all our funders.

Funding remains a major issue for the project. While we are confident that our prison programme will receive significant funding within the year, core costs are far more difficult to secure.

PRISON RADIO

With **Prison Radio** (Radio For Development) we have created an audio facility of all the text from The F Word exhibition. The words are spoken by Emma Thompson, Imelda Staunton, David Horovitch, Conlith Hill, Jack Klaff, Debora Weston, Janet Macteer, Chipu Chung among others. Some of the recordings took place in a West End dressing room, others at Wandsworth prison.

Following recording the stories for us, Emma Thompson said: *"The testimonials in this project have taught me a great deal about forgiveness, which I think I thought was something rather easier than it is. They make me weep and they make me really think about what it is to forgive and what it is to try and understand someone instead of demonising them. I think this is probably one of the most important projects in the world today and I hope people will feel able to support it."*

OTHER NEWS

Our thanks to the **Media Trust** and particularly Keith Rogerson for creating a 4-minute promotional film about our prison work.

We have been trying to make contact with Gordon Ramsay to play on his guilt for having swiped the F Word title, but despite a letter written to him by a prisoner at Brixton, we have as yet received no reply!

On 29-30th March – TFP took part in a break out best practice workshop at the Winchester Group **Restorative Justice Conference** in London. Alistair Little, Marian Partington and John Podmore led the workshop. (read about it on <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4878834.stm>)

We were much saddened to hear of the news of the death of **Duma Kumalo**. Who has died aged 48 in Johannesburg. Duma was best know as one of South Africa's "Sharpeville Six". He attended The F Word launch in January 2004 in London and his story can still be read on the website.

Duma Kumalo



AND FINALLY A VERY BIG THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FOR GIVING SO MUCH OF THEIR TIME AND SUPPORT TO THE PROJECT.

Sarah Green, Kate Birk, Grant Stapleton, Andrew Balcombe, Kevin McGrath and Louise Gubb

With very best wishes

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