

# The **forgiveness** project

July 2005

Issue: No. 4

Dear Friends and supporters,

It's been another amazing and frantic six months for The Forgiveness Project, so I'm sorry we haven't been in touch more regularly. As our work continues to grow and develop apace, inevitably less urgent matters - such as a newsletter - sometimes get put to the bottom of the pile. A common problem I'm told with new emerging organisations struggling to keep on top of the workload!

Since I last wrote in February, demand to hire our internationally acclaimed F Word exhibition by conferences, prisons, schools and faith communities around the UK has continued unabated. Also, in April we launched in the United States in Oklahoma City, and in June in Northern Ireland, Belfast. Our pilot prison programme at Brixton Prison has now been completed and the Governor, John Podmore, is keen to work more closely with us and put our newly entitled Journeying Through Conflict programme on a long-term sustainable footing.

With funding received from The Body Shop Foundation, we are developing some important new relationships to help expand the story-telling and collecting area of our work. Considerable media interest in The Forgiveness Project remains evident - for instance coverage has included a five page article in the Saturday Independent Magazine featuring the American stories (then picked up in The Week); on July 10<sup>th</sup> I was interviewed for the Radio London In Spirit programme, following the London bombings; Alistair Little has also featured in a Newsnight report into the psychology of terrorism; plus the Church Times has published a substantial feature about our work.

## **PRISON PROGRAMME**

### **HMP Brixton**

At a recent event at HMP Brixton, hosted by Business in the Community and attended by Baroness Scotland, Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System and Offender Management, The Forgiveness Project was commended by the Governor and prisoners alike as an emerging and

innovative new force in successfully applying restorative practices within the UK prison system.

In collaboration with Brixton Prison, The Forgiveness Project now plans to build on the initial pilot programme, putting it on a sustainable and long-term footing by end of 2007 essentially by skilling up prisoners and ex-prisoners who wish to join forces with us.

Thus, the earlier pilot (funded by the Allen Lane Foundation) will be enhanced by three further workshops – art therapy, mediation skills training, and a Healing of Memories workshop for family members – to create an overall programme that will be known as “Journeying Through Conflict”.

Initially all five workshops comprising the programme will be run solely by staff from The Forgiveness Project. However throughout the delivery process we will be identifying suitable candidates to be trained in facilitation skills, with a view to creating a cadre of trainee prisoner-facilitators capable of gradually substituting for TFP staff .

### **Extending best practice to other prisons**

In parallel with our work at Brixton, activities on a reduced scale - pending new funding – have been started at three further prisons, HMPs Wayland, Holloway and soon Grendon Underwood. At Wayland, following the exhibition and a discussion for over 60 prisoners, governors, staff and visitors, we ran a Healing of Memories workshop in early July. The chaplain who organised bringing us to the prison sent an email the following day saying, *“thank you for the most sound provision of the workshop on behalf of the prisoners and their prison authority. I am so pleased to tell you that the immediate evaluation by all concerned was outstanding.”* We hope to continue to work with Wayland in the future.

Our prison programme is led by Alistair Little, one of our F-Word story protagonists and a leading practitioner nationally and internationally in the field of conflict resolution and reconciliation within diverse community settings.

**\*The Healing of Memories workshop was developed by Fr Michael Lapsley from The Institute for the Healing of Memories, South Africa ([www.healingofmemories.co.za](http://www.healingofmemories.co.za))**

### **EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

Our school work is still in its early stages of development. We have drawn up outline proposals and contents specs for a series of interactive multimedia teaching packs, for use with different age groups in schools and as part of the citizenship curriculum, and are also starting to explore opportunities for working with difficult-to-reach learners.

Meanwhile we are preparing to create a fuller programme for taking the touring exhibition to schools both in the private and public sectors.

## **STORY COLLECTION**

We are joining forces with Synergy Theatre to develop a play which looks at issues surrounding forgiveness and revenge. Synergy aims to aid rehabilitation and resettlement, reduce offending and support the continuing personal development of offenders and ex-offenders through the provision of theatre performance opportunity. We're very excited that the award winning playwright Shelagh Stephenson has agreed to write the play. We are also planning to work with Prison Radio to provide a badly needed audio resource to The F Word exhibition for those who have difficult reading text. Finally, we have just secured a small discretionary grant from the Oak Foundation who responded to our urgent request for collecting more stories within the Muslim community.

## **AMERICA**

### **Oklahoma**

In order to pilot The F-Word in the US, in April this year The Forgiveness Project joined forces with The POP (the People's Opinion Project, a US non profit media-based education organisation based in San Francisco) to mount the exhibit's US premiere at St Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City. On April 17<sup>th</sup> 2005 we took part in the "Beyond Retribution" events commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of the Murrah Building.

For this occasion, and with funding from The Roddick Foundation, ten American stories were added to the existing exhibition, including that of Andrew Rice whose brother was killed on 9/11 in the World Trade Centre and Bud Welch, whose daughter, Julie Welch, was killed in the Oklahoma bombing in 1995.

The exhibit and the accompanying round table and panel discussions held over the course of four days brought to middle America a dialogue that simply asked, 'What is justice?' To have Father Michael Lapsley from South Africa, 9/11 family members, Michael Berg (whose son Nick was a victim of the War in Iraq), and Oklahoma City family members in front of an audience asking the same questions was a profound experience for the several hundred people who attended the discussions.

### **Next Steps in the US**

We want to be able to respond immediately to requests to hire the exhibition from organizations/establishments who have heard about The F-Word through the website, word of mouth, or seen it in the US, UK or elsewhere. We are also investigating organisations that will provide a

fiscal sponsorship corridor to enable us to establish a presence in the US and accomplish The F- Word tour for early 2007. The 5-10 city tour will be set up in collaboration with key established organizations working in the fields of conflict resolution and restorative justice, who already have strong local community networks that we can leverage

### One of our new stories from North America



*"Part of being human is rolling up your sleeves and taking an active part in repairing harm."*

Katy Hutchison.

On New Year's Eve 1997, Katy Hutchison's husband, Bob, was beaten to death while checking on a party being thrown by his neighbour's son. In the small town of Squamish in British Columbia, a wall of silence soon grew up around the murder. It was four years before Ryan Aldridge admitted to having delivered the fatal blow. Ryan was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years in prison. Since then Katy has reached out to Ryan in the spirit of forgiveness.

### **NORTHERN IRELAND**

In collaboration with Training for Women Network (TWN) we launched The F Word exhibition on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005 at the Institute of Governance in Belfast with an invited audience from a range of relevant organisations and the press, including the major daily newspapers of Northern Ireland and television and radio stations. Also in attendance were individuals connected to the Northern Ireland context whose stories appear in the exhibition: Alistair Little, Pat Magee, Jo Berry and Margaret McKinney.

As part of TWN's work addressing the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland and in association with the Institute of Governance at Queen's University Belfast they hosted a series of seminars to explore issues affecting victims of the conflict. The F Word provided a catalyst for discussion regarding the human impacts of conflict and was used as a medium for introducing difficult issues to the process of post-conflict

debate. Alistair Little and Mary Blewitt, on behalf of TFP, took an active role in facilitating and contributing to the seminars.

### The F Word at The Institute of Governance



**the f word:**  
images of forgiveness

### UK EXHIBITION TOUR DATES

#### Scotland

- **2-4th August** - The F Word will form a literal and metaphorical backdrop to the workshops at the World Youth Congress Stirling University, Scotland which is to be attended by 600 dynamic young activists in the field of sustainable development from 120 different countries. Further information contact Simon Jaquet, [cjaquet@beeb.net](mailto:cjaquet@beeb.net)

#### Kent

- **Sat 17- Sat 24 Sep** - St Francis of Assisi, Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham, Kent. For times contact Canon Merv McKinney – [mervmckinney@btinternet.com](mailto:mervmckinney@btinternet.com)

#### Hampshire

- **27 Sept - 4 Oct** - Lymington Quakers, United Reform Church, High St, Lymington, Hants. For times contact Jan Rimbault - 01590 677298

## Surrey

- **Sat 1<sup>st</sup> – Sun 9 Oct** - Leatherhead Festival of Faith, St Mary and St Nicholas Church, Church Road, Leatherhead. 10am-4pm. Contact parish office, 01372 362544.

## Worcestershire

- **Sat 8 - Sat 15<sup>th</sup> Oct**, Bewdley Arts Festival, St Anne's Church, Load Street, Bewdley, Worcestershire. Opening hours 10am - 4pm. Contact [keith.james2@btconnect.com](mailto:keith.james2@btconnect.com), 01299 402275

## Leeds

- **Sat 5- Sat 19<sup>th</sup> November**, Leeds Together For Peace Festival. For more information contact Mike Love – [mike@mikelove.co.uk](mailto:mike@mikelove.co.uk)

## West Yorkshire

- **Mon 7-Fri 14<sup>th</sup> November**, Almondbury Methodist Church, Huddersfield are organising an integrated community event around the exhibition. (for opening times and information contact [paulabee88@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:paulabee88@yahoo.co.uk))

## Cambridge

- Tues 22nd - Fri 25th November and Monday 28th Nov - Friday 2nd Dec. Times 10.30am – 3pm each day. Emmanuel United Reformed Church, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RR. Tel 01223 351174 or email [office@emmanuelurc.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:office@emmanuelurc.freeserve.co.uk)

## OTHER NEWS

### New Trustees

We are delighted to announce the appointment of three new trustees whose skills and experience will be valuable in helping to take the organisation to its next stage of development: **Ruth Scott**, a vicar in Richmond and broadcaster who works with many religious communities promoting interfaith communications; **Mark Engelman**, a barrister-at-law specialising in intellectual property matters; and **Martyn Evans**, who heads up Origin, a niche PR and communications consultancy. We are also actively searching for new trustees with an affinity for our work who have experience in: restorative practices, especially in the fields of criminal justice and education; charity funding; and charity finances. If you feel you can help, or know anyone else who can, then we'd like to hear from you.

## Funding

We have recently completed our three year business plan, which is available on request. In it we indicate that our key priority now is to secure core funding for our three principal staff, each of whom has responsibility for leading one of The Forgiveness Project's key programmes: Rob Lamond, Director, also responsible for **Education**; Alistair Little, who manages **Criminal Justice**; and myself, Founding Director also leading on **Outreach**.

If you can help in anyway, do please get in touch, emailing us at [info@theforgivenessproject.com](mailto:info@theforgivenessproject.com); telephoning 0208 964 4034; or writing to PO Box 50769, London NW6 9AZ.

Meanwhile we would like to thank our existing funders for their generous support up until now:

The Allen Lane Foundation, Anita Roddick Books, The Body Shop Foundation, CIT, Clicks (South Africa), The Findhorn Foundation, The Forster Company, The Funding Network, Manny Cussins Foundation, McGrath Charitable Trust, The Oak Foundation, Passion Pictures, UnLtd Millennium Awards Scheme.

One final thing - we are looking for anyone who might be willing to donate a little bit of office space in central London. Ideally we need somewhere for at least a year.

With very best wishes

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