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Article

Differing interpretations of reconciliation in South Africa: a discussion of the home for all campaign¹

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Abstract

The theme of reconciliation remains an important one in South African politics. The issue of reconciliation was recently highlighted by South African Human Rights Commission chairperson, Jody Kollapen. According to Kollapen, in South Africa we have a problematic narrow interpretation of reconciliation, one that presents reconciliation and transformation as being in opposition to one another. This paper explores some of the debates about reconciliation as a process and then relates these to the Home for All Campaign. This Campaign was aimed at encouraging white South Africans to acknowledge the injustices of the past and to commit themselves to healing divisions and reducing inequalities in contemporary South Africa. It conceived of reconciliation as a process in which the onus is on white South Africans to take the initiative in reconciling with black South Africans. The Campaign received much publicity and provoked debate but never managed to gain the support of a significant number of white South Africans. In this paper, I explore the reasons for the Campaign's failure to meet all of its objectives, relating this to contemporary South African discourse on reconciliation. I argue that the Campaign's interpretation of reconciliation was valuable and necessary and that it remains imperative in South Africa that white South Africans critically reflect upon past and present privileges and take the initiative in processes of inter-racial reconciliation.

More than fifteen years after the end of apartheid the topic of post-apartheid inter-racial reconciliation in South Africa remains pertinent. In 2008 this issue came to the fore again when a controversial racist video made by students at the Reitz residence of the University of the Free State (UFS) came

to light.² At around the same time that this video and its implications were being discussed, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) chairperson, Jody Kollapen, attracted some attention for having said that the reconciliation process in South Africa had taken place ‘at the expense of transformation’ (SAPA 2008a). He argued that reconciliation had been overemphasised during the early post-apartheid years and that South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) had focused too much on the ‘excesses’ of apartheid, failing to begin a conversation between ordinary South Africans (SAPA 2008b). Kollapen commended the Australian prime minister, Kevin Rudd, for his apology to aboriginal Australians and suggested that something similar was needed in South Africa. In response to widespread criticism of his comments, the SAHRC issued a statement clarifying what Kollapen had meant (SAHRC 2008). In this statement, the SAHRC indicated that Kollapen does not believe that reconciliation and transformation are *necessarily* in tension – indeed, they ought to be ‘complementary imperatives’; however, he believes that a particular narrow interpretation of reconciliation has taken root in some communities and that it is this narrow interpretation which is an obstacle to transformation. While reconciliation properly understood ‘would not only include apologizing for the past but also committing to making good the ills of the past’, Kollapen believes that many white South Africans favour an interpretation which is in tension with transformation and which requires little from white South Africans. It is this interpretation that Kollapen rejects.

The prevailing uses of the term ‘reconciliation’ by organisations such as the Democratic Alliance and Afriforum seem to confirm Kollapen’s sense that many white South Africans adhere to a problematic, narrow conception of reconciliation. However, as will be seen below, some white South Africans have adopted a broader understanding of reconciliation that Kollapen would not consider to be in tension with transformation. In this paper, I discuss the Home for All Campaign and its attempt to mobilise white South Africans to acknowledge the prejudices of the past and to commit themselves to healing divisions and reducing inequalities in South Africa. I contrast the Campaign’s approach to reconciliation with that of other organisations representing white South Africans. After outlining the reasons for the ultimate failure of the Campaign, I argue that its broad conception of reconciliation remains relevant in contemporary South Africa.

Talking about Reconciliation

Kollapen's discussion of reconciliation brings to mind comments made by Mahmood Mamdani (2000a) in criticism of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Mamdani cautions:

To reflect on the experiences of the TRC is to ponder a harsh truth, that it may be easier to live with yesterday's perpetrators who have lost power than to live with beneficiaries whose gains remain intact. (2000a: 183)

Mamdani contends that the TRC did not adequately facilitate reconciliation between apartheid's beneficiaries and its victims – indeed, he is concerned that it has 'drive[n] a wedge' between them (2000a: 183). His argument is that through focusing on 'individual harm and individual responsibility' (2000a: 180), the TRC exposed and invited reflection upon specific atrocities committed by 'evil operatives', but paid insufficient attention to the way in which apartheid was an evil *system* which enriched some at the expense of others. According to Mamdani, the TRC process did not sufficiently lay the ground for beneficiaries of apartheid to face up to the unearned privilege which apartheid accorded them and to accept that while they may not be responsible for the gross violations committed under apartheid, they do bear moral responsibility to redress its systemic, unjust consequences (2000a: 183). As pessimistic as Mamdani is about the prospects of the TRC bringing about reconciliation, he argues that there is a way out of this predicament:

The solution is to bring to the surface the truth that the TRC is obscuring, that it is important to teach the beneficiaries not only about abuses for which they bear no personal responsibility, but about the structural injustices of apartheid of which they are the direct beneficiaries and for which they bear a direct responsibility to redress. (2000b:19)

I am not primarily concerned here with the fairness of Mamdani's critique of the TRC process. His criticism of the TRC has itself received critical comments (see Natrass 1999 and Raftopoulos 2006). My interest here, however, is not with the TRC and so I will not engage with debates about its overall value. Rather, I would like to accept at the outset that regardless of how important and valuable the TRC process may have been, there is a need, post-TRC, for something more to be done to secure reconciliation in South Africa. For such reconciliation to take place it is necessary, as Mamdani points out, for beneficiaries of apartheid to recognise the ways in which apartheid accorded them undeserved privileges and to find ways to redress the deep, persistent inequalities which apartheid brought about.

Since 1994, what seems to be apparent is that some organisations representing white South Africans portray reconciliation in the narrow terms criticised by Kollapen. Reconciliation is portrayed in a way that sets it up in opposition to transformation and that regards any action that alienates significant numbers of white South Africans as being inimical to reconciliation. This is evident in comments made by leaders of the Democratic Alliance, the party supported by the majority of white South Africans. For example, as part of his 2005 Reconciliation Day message, then Democratic Alliance leader, Tony Leon, said that transformation in South Africa had become ‘just another form of exclusion’ and was ‘holding back reconciliation’ (Leon 2005). Leon made similar comments in a speech at his KwaZulu-Natal Farewell Function where he reminisced about the ‘majestic and graceful period of national reconciliation inaugurated by Nelson Mandela’ and described intended street name changes in Durban as being ‘the work of a council bent on undoing the careful work of post-democratic reconciliation’ (Leon 2007). Commenting on the post-TRC legal process whereby former apartheid operatives are being brought to court, Leon’s successor, Helen Zille, used the term ‘reconciliation’ in a similar way saying that this process ‘runs the risk of undoing the process of reconciliation’ (quoted in Brown 2007). AfriForum, a civil rights organisation linked to the mainly white trade union Solidarity, made comparable comments in criticism of this process, asking that all political prosecutions be halted ‘in the interests of reconciliation’ (Van Vuuren 2007).

Examples of this narrow interpretation of reconciliation also emerge in the discourse of the Freedom Front Plus with FF+ councillor Conrad Jansen van Rensburg saying that street name changes in Pretoria would ‘eliminate all hope of nation building and reconciliation’ (quoted in Hlahla 2007). Similarly, while the FF+ condemned the racist video made by students at the University of the Free State (UFS) Reitz hostel, they failed to view the incident recorded in the video as a threat to reconciliation in South Africa. However, in response to the UFS’s decision to close the hostel, the FF+ readily depicted this measure as not being conducive to reconciliation (SAPA 2008c).

A similar interpretation of reconciliation emerges in a speech on forgiveness and reconciliation by former president FW de Klerk (2005). Speaking at the closing ceremony of an Arts and Reconciliation Festival held at the University of Pretoria, De Klerk began by stressing the importance of forgiveness, describing it as necessary in order to ‘break the vicious cycle of bitterness, revenge and escalating conflict’. He went on to suggest that in South Africa,

forgiveness needs to precede reconciliation – it is ‘the beginning of the road to reconciliation’. He then discussed various interpretations of reconciliation, advocating that reconciliation is about putting the past behind us and focusing on a common future. While he acknowledged the importance of taking ‘cognisance of our responsibilities, debts and credits’, he stressed that in so doing we must avoid ‘the kind of reproach or retribution that caused our alienation from one another in the first place’. The sense that one gets in reading his speech is that he believes that inter-racial reconciliation in South Africa will only come about if black South Africans first forgive white South Africans for the injustices of the past and if all involved avoid seeking anything more than minimal redress for these injustices.

It seems, from these few examples, that Kollapen makes an important and insightful point in insisting that many white South Africans interpret reconciliation in a way that conflicts with transformation. The above comments suggest that reconciliation is, or ought to be, a process whereby white South Africans are reassured of their continued (secure, comfortable, relatively privileged) future in South Africa. Mandela is presented as an icon of reconciliation because he went out of his way to reassure white South Africans that the ANC government did not seek revenge and that whites were welcome in the new South Africa.

A recent discussion by Achille Mbembe (2008: 9) supports Kollapen’s point. Mbembe stresses that many of the ‘former beneficiaries of past racial atrocities’ assume that reconciliation means ‘blacks should forget about South Africa’s fractured past and move on’. He maintains that many whites have ‘retreated to a comfortable position of personal nonculpability’ and are unwilling to acknowledge and let go of their racially-rooted privilege.

The narrow interpretation of reconciliation described above is not the only possible way to understand the concept. At its most basic reconciliation involves ‘coming together after a rift ... the rebuilding, or building, of a relationship in the wake of tension or alienation, often due to actual or perceived wrongdoing’ (Govier and Verwoerd 2002: 185). While all parties may agree on this basic definition, ideas about the nature of this ‘coming together’ and of the relationship that needs to be built differ, often greatly.

Reconciliation can be said to be about ‘how to recollect the past in the name of making the future’ (Doxtader 2003: 267). Some understandings focus more on the future urging us to put the past behind us and work towards a common future. Others insist that we continue to engage with the past in order to decide how to make the future. The interpretation of reconciliation

that Kollapen identifies as being in conflict with transformation is one that resists engagement with the past in favour of a future focus.

There are also disagreements about the way in which previously hostile groups which have been reconciled ought to relate to each other. Reconciliation can be defined in minimalist (or ‘thin’) and maximalist (or ‘thick’) ways (see Crocker 2000, Govier and Verwoerd 2002, Hamber and Van der Merwe 1998, and Short 2005). Minimalist approaches to reconciliation stress peaceful co-existence, while maximalist definitions stress the more pro-active building of trust and friendship between previously estranged groups (see for example Govier and Verwoerd 2002). Other understandings (see Crocker 2000: 108) fall somewhere in between, presenting reconciliation as a matter of mutual respect and some willingness to cooperate, but not much more than this. The narrow and bounded understandings of reconciliation to which I have alluded suggest that reconciliation ought to involve mutual peaceful coexistence and perhaps cooperation, but fall short of more maximalist conceptions.

While the prevailing sense of reconciliation in much white South African discourse resists engagement with the past and is fairly minimalist, there are instances of white South Africans proposing alternative interpretations. A good example of this is the Home for All Campaign, to which I now turn.

The Home for All Campaign³

According to the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation’s 2007 Reconciliation Barometer (Hofmeyr 2007), around two thirds of white South Africans agree with the statement ‘Apartheid was a crime against humanity’. Hofmeyr (2007) suggests that the TRC process was instrumental in bringing about broader white acknowledgement that apartheid had indeed been a destructive and unjust regime. According to Du Toit (2008) and Burton (2008), as the TRC process came to a close, there was a sense among some white South Africans that an initiative was needed to enable them symbolically to atone for the past as well as to do something practical to reduce the socio-economic inequalities rooted in apartheid – inequalities, beyond formal legal and political inequalities, which the peace settlement did little to remedy. Such sentiments were expressed by poet Antjie Krog (2000) in a speech at South Africa’s National Conference on Racism in August 2000, where she sparked debate about reconciliation by making a plea that white South Africans use December 16 – a public holiday called Day of Reconciliation⁴ – to make some kind of symbolic gesture towards black South Africans in order to apologise

for the past and commit themselves to a different and non-racial future.

This plea resonated with other attempts to find a way for white South Africans to make some form of reparation for the past and it was decided to launch a campaign, called the Home for All Campaign, on December 16, 2000. The title drew on a phrase used by Albert Luthuli (1963) who said that ‘The task is not yet finished. South Africa is not yet a home for all her sons and daughters’ (Burton 2008). As part of the Campaign, a document called the ‘Declaration of Commitment by White South Africans’ was launched (see Appendix 1). The wording of the Declaration is straightforward and concise: there is an acknowledgement that apartheid greatly harmed black South Africans and ‘undermined our common humanity’, an admission of the guilt of most (but not all) white South Africans in supporting apartheid, and a recognition of the continuing legacy of apartheid and of the persistence of racism in post-apartheid South Africa. This acknowledgement is followed by a statement of commitment to redressing the wrongs of the past. Alongside the Declaration, a Development and Reconciliation Fund was established through which white South Africans could make financial contributions which would then be used to promote development and reconciliation. A website was set up so that people could sign the Declaration on-line and also find out more about the Campaign. In addition, an initiative was set up whereby skills were matched with needs so that white South Africans could use their skills to help uplift poor black communities.

Mary Burton and Carl Niehaus were appointed chairpersons of the Campaign. Both are high profile figures with firm anti-apartheid credentials. Mary Burton was president of the anti-apartheid women’s movement Black Sash. Carl Niehaus was imprisoned for his anti-apartheid activities and was active within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) until his recent fall from grace. Burton and Niehaus were the official chairpersons of the Campaign, but there was a larger steering committee several of whose members were linked to the newly formed Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) which was set up after the TRC to encourage further reconciliation.

Responses to the Campaign

The Campaign attracted some positive attention and several prominent white South Africans came forward to sign the Declaration. Included here were the author André Brink, several South African rugby players, Constitutional Court Judge Richard Goldstone, cartoonist Zapiro and

prominent anti-apartheid cleric Beyers Naudé (Malan 2000, SAPA 2000a). The response from black South Africans and from political parties representing mainly black South Africans was positive, with the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) all welcoming the initiative (Khumalo 2000). The ANC-aligned Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) also endorsed the Campaign (SAPA 2000b) and President Thabo Mbeki (2001) mentioned it favourably in his 2001 State of the Nation Address.

The response from the general white South African community was overwhelmingly negative, however. The political parties which represent most white South Africans all came out strongly opposed to the initiative. South Africa's largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), accused the Campaign of fuelling racial polarisation (SAPA-AFP 2000). Then deputy DA leader, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, declared that 'White South Africans must not be reduced to hand-wringing apologists' (quoted in SAPA 2000c) and that the Campaign 'engineer[ed] collective white guilt as a form of permanent psychological enslavement' (quoted in Nagy 2004: 720). Douglas Gibson, at that time chief whip of the DA, dismissed the Campaign as 'that white guilt thing' and DA stalwart, Helen Suzman, refused to give her support saying that she had nothing to be apologetic about (Isaacson 2000). The *Afrikaner Eenheidsbeweging* (Afrikaner Unity Movement) (AEB) also rejected the Campaign declaring it to be insensitive to Afrikaners (SAPA 2000d), while the Freedom Front Plus accused the Campaign of being propaganda for the ANC (Isaacson 2000). Former South African president FW de Klerk joined those rejecting the Campaign, arguing that the Declaration presented an 'over-simplistic analysis' which would effectively label white South Africans as 'morally inferior' (SAPA 2000e). The Declaration was also rejected by the mainly white Mineworkers Union (MWU)⁵ which accused it of being 'unbalanced' in that it only focused on racism and discrimination of the past ignoring 'current racism and discrimination against whites' (SAPA 2000e). What was also noteworthy was that some white South Africans who had actively opposed apartheid also rejected the Campaign. For example, the poet Breyten Breytenbach, who like Niehaus had been imprisoned for his opposition of apartheid, said that after reading the Declaration he went to the bathroom 'for a quiet and sad puke' (Hawthorne 2001).

These prominent members of the white community seemed correctly to

gauge ordinary white South Africans' feelings towards the Declaration as there was no great attempt on the part of white South Africans to join the Campaign. The condemnation of the Campaign by such high profile individuals probably also caused the Campaign to be rejected by some who might otherwise have supported it. The Declaration was eventually signed by around 2,000 people, which is only a tiny fraction of the white South African population which numbers over four million (Statistics South Africa 2001). The launch of the Campaign was attended by around 200 people, only half of whom were white. If this attendance is contrasted with attendance on the same day of the annual commemoration of the Day of the Vow at the Voortrekker monument, which attracted 1,500 people, we get some idea of the paucity of support for the Campaign (Ehlers 2003). A further indication of general white opposition to the Campaign was that the conservative trade union, the Mineworkers Union, released a statement in opposition to the Home for All Declaration and claimed that their statement had attracted 7,600 signatories within three days (Floris 2000).

What was striking about the reaction of white South Africans was that the Campaign was not simply ignored or treated with apathy, but that it was met with great hostility. The statements from white South African opinion leaders quoted above are quite strongly negative towards the Campaign. Other comments were equally negative and even insulting – for example, the DA's Dene Smuts labelled the gathering to launch the document as 'a sad little assembly of sidelined white African National Congress members' (Sylvester and Phahlane 2000). Prominent right-winger Dan Roodt (2006) said that the Campaign involved whites 'lowering' themselves before blacks to beg for forgiveness. White South Africans polled for their opinions of the Campaign described it as 'absolutely absurd', 'a witch hunt', 'liberal, sanctimonious, holier-than-thou %*&t' or insisted that they personally had nothing to apologise for or that they personally had not benefited from apartheid (Praeg 2001, Jacobs 2000).

Another noteworthy feature of the way in which South Africans responded to the Campaign was that the media frequently used the terms 'apology' and 'guilt' in describing the Campaign, with headlines like 'White South Africans still divided over "guilt list"' (SAPA-AFP 2000), 'Miners reject "white guilt"' (Floris 2000), 'Van Schalkwyk, De Klerk reject white declaration of apology' (SAPA 2000e), *Wittes Gevra: Bely en Betaal!* (Whites Asked to Confess and Pay!) (Waldner 2000), and "'Tuiste vir Almal" skuld-belydenis' ('Home for all' confession of guilt) (Jacobs 2000). The organisers had carefully avoided

including words like ‘apology’ and ‘guilt’ in the Declaration in favour of words like ‘acknowledgement’ and ‘regret’, yet it was presented in the media as being an admission of guilt or an apology on the part of white South Africans.

Explaining the Reaction of White South Africans

As mentioned above, the general reaction to the Campaign on the part of white South Africans was antagonistic. There is nothing in the Declaration that immediately explains this hostility – indeed some supportive commentators note that the Declaration is ‘almost a statement of the obvious’ (Friedman 2001) and that it ‘was no more than an acknowledgement of what black people take as a truism’ (McGreal 2000). It is very difficult to describe the Declaration as being radical or extreme in any way. The wording was carefully chosen with the aim of being as inclusive as possible. Thus, it is difficult to explain the hostility of white South Africans with reference to the wording of the Declaration or by saying that the Declaration aimed to appeal only to ANC supporters or those to the far left of the political spectrum. Furthermore, the Campaign received a fair amount of media attention and there was a flurry of speeches and radio interviews about the Campaign so the poor response was not simply a result of lack of awareness. Rather, it seems that white South Africans did not identify with the Campaign and did not feel compelled to sign the Declaration. Why was this the case?

One way of explaining the reaction is to say that it is an indication of how conservative white South Africans are and of the extent to which white South Africans remain unwilling to face up to any responsibility for the wrongs of the past. Laurie Nathan (2008), who served on the Home for All’s steering committee is of this view, commenting that the hostility shown to the Campaign is an indication of the conservatism of the general white South African community and the unwillingness of many white South Africans to admit that they benefited from apartheid.

Another commentator, anti-apartheid theologian Piet Meiring (2008), provides a similar, but slightly more sympathetic explanation. He argues that the TRC caused something of a crisis among white South Africans because it revealed to them many of the horrible acts that were perpetrated in their name. Meiring makes reference to the stages of grief described by popular psychologist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (denial, anger, bargaining, despair and finally acceptance), saying that just as individuals have to move through these stages when faced with a crisis, so do communities. According to

Meiring, at the time of the launch of the Home for All Campaign, the white South African community was in crisis and few white South Africans had moved past the first few of the above-mentioned stages, hence the hostile reactions to the Campaign. Launching the Campaign so soon after the TRC may in fact have been ill-advised as the TRC had already forced many white South African to radically change their views on the past already and perhaps what the Home for All Campaign asked them to do was just one step too far for many people at the time.

In an article written shortly after the launch of the Campaign, Steven Friedman (2001) also blames lack of support for the Campaign on characteristics of the white South African community, but his concern is particularly with the DA. He argues that to understand the reactions to the Campaign we must not look at what the Declaration says but at ‘what it means, which in politics is not always the same’. The Campaign signalled the willingness of some white South Africans to step outside their ‘laager’ and take the initiative in trying to bridge the divisions of the past rather than waiting for other groups to be the first to stretch out a hand. According to Friedman, parties like the DA are opposed to initiatives such as this one because ‘a creative liberal response to majority rule was far less profitable and more difficult than whipping up minority angst’. He argues that racial polarisation is a kind of ‘comfort zone’ for many white South Africans and the parties that represent them, hence the hostility towards the Home for All Campaign which, despite its moderate language, is radical in its suggestion that the onus is on white South Africans to reach out across racial divisions. Bam (2001) presents a similar analysis, arguing that along with acknowledgement of being beneficiaries of apartheid comes an implicit acceptance of material responsibility for redressing the wrongs of the past. It is this acceptance of responsibility that makes many white people wary of declarations such as the one launched as part of the Home for All Campaign.

Another factor mentioned in explanation of the failure of the Home for All Campaign is the media’s portrayal of the Campaign in sensationalistic terms (Burton 2008, Du Toit 2008). As mentioned above, the Declaration was reported in the media as being an apology or admission of white guilt, whereas in fact the more moderate terms ‘acknowledgement’ and ‘regret’ were used. It is not clear why the media chose to report the Campaign this way, although Friedman (2001) speculates that the media, like the DA, is more comfortable with racial polarisation than with attempts to bridge divisions, hence this reportage. Mary Burton (2008) suggests that perhaps one reason

so few white South Africans signed the Declaration was that rather than reading the Declaration itself, they relied on media reporting of the Campaign which prejudiced them against it.

It is also possible that the Campaign was rejected because it seemed to some to suggest that white South Africans had given up very little at the end of apartheid and ought to be pushed to give up the privileges they had managed to retain. The voluntary transfer of political power and the sense among many whites that they had become an increasingly marginalised and powerless minority was experienced by many as a significant and difficult loss. Perhaps many whites felt that they had given up a lot and that this Campaign failed to acknowledge this. Furthermore, the Campaign did not call upon black people who had collaborated with the apartheid regime to sign this acknowledgement, but rather focused exclusively on white people which may have alienated some possible signees.

The Campaign's failure to attract the support of high profile white South Africans may also indicate a strategic mistake on the part of the organisers. Human Rights Commissioner Leon Wessels (2008) suggests that some high profile South Africans did not support the Campaign because, while they were invited to be involved in it and to sign the Declaration, they were not consulted during the conceptualisation of the Campaign. Prominent white South Africans may have been reluctant to rubber stamp something they had not helped conceive.

The failure of the Campaign to achieve its objectives was not only a result of poor response on the part of white South Africans. One of the most important reasons for the inability of the Campaign to keep going was simply that running the Campaign was a great organisational burden and that there were disagreements within the steering committee about whether or not full-time staff ought to be employed to handle some of the day-to-day running of the Campaign (Nathan 2008). These organisational difficulties, alongside the poor response from the white public, resulted in the failure of the Campaign to make a noticeable impact on reconciliation in South Africa. Nevertheless, those involved stress that they do not believe the Campaign to have been a complete failure. Antjie Krog (2008a) argues that the Campaign was successful in stimulating debate and prodding white South Africans to reflect on where they stand. Furthermore, both Krog and Laurie Nathan (2008) point out that the Campaign was positively received among black South Africans and the South African government and that this in itself was valuable. The Campaign did have some successes in its initiative

to match skilled white South Africans to community organisations in need of the skills in question (Burton 2008). Thus, it cannot be said that the Campaign was a complete failure. However, the Campaign ultimately failed to secure the support of the general white South African community.

Reconciliation as understood by the Home for All Campaign

Unlike many other organisations representing white South Africans, the Home for All Campaign interpreted reconciliation in a way that placed emphasis on the need for white South Africans to acknowledge the injustices of the past and to take the initiative in rebuilding relationships between white and black South Africans. Rather than seeing transformation as a threat to reconciliation, the Declaration presents the two as symbiotic processes, saying that the white community's 'failure to accept responsibility for apartheid has inhibited [both] reconciliation and transformation'. Reflecting on the Campaign, some of those involved emphasise the importance of rejecting 'cheap' or 'easy' reconciliation (Meiring 2008, Du Toit 2008). The Home for All Campaign did not present reconciliation in sunny language about forgetting the past and being accepting of each other's differences, nor did it point fingers at those who seek reparations for past injustices. Rather, it placed the burden of initiating reconciliation upon the shoulders of the white South African community and suggested that further acknowledgement of and engagement with the past and attempts to address persisting racial inequities were required for lasting reconciliation.

The conception of reconciliation promoted here is a far more maximalist one than the one emerging from many other organisations representing white South Africans. It is also a conception of reconciliation that resists the temptation of 'putting the past behind' in favour of acknowledging and engaging with the past, while simultaneously trying to find a way to build a shared future.

What now?

The Home for All Campaign was launched and concluded a good few years ago now. One could thus wonder whether such a campaign would receive the same negative response today as it did a decade ago. There are some indications that it is unlikely that the white South African community would be more welcoming of such an initiative today than it was at the time of the Campaign. Take for example the response to a more recent initiative to encourage white South Africans to acknowledge past injustices: the apartheid

apology blog recently set up by white South African Karl Gostner. Gostner started this blog in response to Jody Kollapen's call for an apology for apartheid. He writes:

Apartheid was a terrible crime. Its effects continue to plague our society in every conceivable way. It might have been taken out of legislation in the early 1990s but you cannot eradicate the effects of decades of systematic abuse in 13 short years. It will take time, effort and commitment from all of us. I am sorry that it happened. I am sorry that I didn't help to make it end sooner. I am sorry that today I don't do enough to counter its effects. Perhaps this is a small start... (Gostner 2008)

His apology blog received a fair number of visitors and was also discussed in an article in the *Saturday Star* (Thakali 2008). Of the 68 comments on his apology blog, 50 of them were opposed to it, many in very strong terms, while 11 comments were neutral or unclear. Only seven supported his initiative, at least two of whom were black South Africans. The blog continued for a while, but failed to attract more than ten apologies in total, instead attracting a plethora of offensive, racist vitriol directed against Gostner and black South Africans.

The comments expressed in response to this on-line apartheid apology may not be representative of white South African attitudes as a whole, but they do provide some evidence that there remains significant resistance to the idea of apologising or acknowledging the injustices of the past. The response of the FF+ to news of this apology also reveals continued resistance to the idea that white South Africans should reach out and take the initiative in reconciling with black South Africans. FF+ spokesperson, Willie Spies, insisted that there was no need for more apologies, saying that we should now leave the past behind us (Thakali 2008). Furthermore, a survey by the Institution for Justice and Reconciliation presents some worrying statistics regarding white South African attitudes to apartheid (Hofmeyr 2007). According to this survey older white South Africans were more likely to agree with the statement 'In the past the state committed horrific atrocities against those struggling against apartheid'. Only 50 per cent of young white South Africans (age 16-34) agreed with this statement while 59 per cent of older (age 35+) South Africans agreed.⁶ This suggests that the next generation of white South Africans may be less rather than more willing to acknowledge the wrongs of the past.

Conclusion

The response to the Home for All Campaign and to more recent attempts to encourage white South Africans to acknowledge or apologise for the injustices of the past suggests that many white South Africans are hostile to processes of post-apartheid reconciliation which require acts of contrition on the part of white South Africans and some form of reparation for the injustices of the past. What implications does this have for reconciliation in South Africa?

Writing on forgiveness, reconciliation and *ubuntu*,⁷ Antjie Krog (2008b) responds to criticisms of the TRC's emphasis on forgiveness. She argues that many of the criticisms have misunderstood what the victims testifying at the TRC meant when talking of forgiveness. She contrasts 'Christian forgiveness' with forgiveness informed by *ubuntu*:

Christian forgiveness says: I forgive you because Jesus has forgiven me (*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespassed against us*). The reward of this forgiveness will be in heaven... The interconnected [*ubuntu*] forgiveness says: I forgive you so that you can change/heal, then I can start on my interconnected path towards healing. The effort is towards healing on earth, the wholeness of full personhood should be achieved on earth. This means that forgiveness can never be without the next step: reconciliation, and reconciliation cannot take place without it fundamentally changing the life of the one that forgave as well as the forgiven one. (Krog 2008b: 357, emphasis in the original)

Krog speaks of a recent 'groundswell of anger and frustration' on the part of victims of apartheid, some of whom had shown such willingness to forgive at the time of the TRC. She says that this anger should not be interpreted as an indication that victims of apartheid were pressurised into forgiving during the TRC and have now become resentful. Rather, this anger should be understood as a response to the way in which this forgiveness was received by the perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid. Krog says:

Interconnectedness [*ubuntu*] made victims forgive, but because no reciprocal sign of change and *wiedergutmachen* [recompense, reparation] came from the interconnected perpetrators, victims NOW become angry. (Krog 2008b: 364)

Krog's interpretation is supported by recent comments by Desmond Tutu, former Anglican archbishop and chair of the TRC. In an interview with the BBC, Tutu expressed regret for the lack of appreciation on the part of white South Africans for the 'incredible magnanimity of those who were the major

victims of a system from which [whites] benefited so much' (quoted in Biles 2006). What Krog and Tutu suggest is that along with the forgiveness extended to particular white perpetrators and the general attitude of forgiveness extended towards apartheid's beneficiaries at the time of the TRC, came an expectation that white South Africans would gratefully embrace the hand of reconciliation that had been extended and would reciprocate in some way. Now, more than a decade after the TRC, it may be that there is an increase in anger towards unrepentant and still privileged white South Africans on the part of black South Africans.

It may then be argued that for deeper reconciliation in South Africa, something more is required from white South Africans than a simple willingness to coexist peacefully with black South Africans. Thus minimalist, forward-looking understandings of reconciliation are inadequate. The Home for All Campaign presents an alternative conception of how white South Africans may contribute to building reconciliation in South Africa, but it seems unlikely that a Campaign along the lines of the Home for All Campaign would be any more successful today than it was several years ago. Indeed, it may even be that the political climate then, with the TRC recently having been completed, was more conducive to such a Campaign than is the current situation. There is an urgent need to contrast the narrow interpretation of reconciliation promoted by organisations representing white South Africans with alternative understandings which invite white South Africans to engage with the past and to take the initiative in making still-needed reconciliatory overtures in South Africa.

A brief caveat is necessary here. While I have commended the Home for All Campaign for suggesting that the onus is on white South Africans to take the initiative in processes of inter-racial reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa, I do not mean to suggest that white South Africans ought to lead transformation processes in South Africa or that the complete liberation of black people in South Africa is somehow dependent on white people's initiative. Here, I would agree with Biko that 'blacks do not need a [white] go-between in this struggle for their own emancipation' and that 'what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come is a very strong grass-roots build-up of black consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim' (Biko 2004[1970]: 27, 22). However, while the ongoing fight against white racism must, necessarily, be led by black people, I would argue that it is strange to think that black people should be the ones to reach out a hand of reconciliation to white people in post-

apartheid South Africa given that the alienation that we seek to overcome was principally caused by the actions of white people. Thus it is fair to say, as Kollapen does, that white people need to be willing to make the first reconciliatory overtures in inter-racial reconciliation even while the overall project of transforming South Africa – which encompasses more than just inter-racial reconciliation – is clearly a project that cannot be led by white people.⁸

Finally, the rejection or the disinterest shown by the general white South African community of the Home for All Campaign's interpretation of reconciliation poses important challenges for thinking about justice and transformation in South Africa. The Home for All Campaign suggested that in order to achieve lasting reconciliation, white South Africans need to actively support transformation. What is implied is that it cannot be expected that black South Africans will accept and embrace white South Africans if current levels of racial inequality persist and the apartheid legacy of white privilege is not confronted. Thus, transformation is a condition, ultimately, for complete reconciliation. However, in a context where a significant proportion of white South Africans is unwilling to accept the need for transformation as a precondition for lasting reconciliation and indeed feel alienated by many attempts at transformation; it does indeed appear that transformation and reconciliation are placed in contradiction to one another and that the pursuit of a just and transformed order in South Africa may require the alienation of some white South Africans and, thus, the apparent undermining of inter-racial reconciliation in South Africa.

Appendix one: full text of the Declaration of Commitment by white South Africans

We acknowledge that apartheid inflicted massive social, economic, cultural and psychological damage on black South Africans. It undermined our common humanity. We acknowledge the white community's responsibility for apartheid since many of us actively and passively supported that system. Some white people were deeply involved in the struggle against apartheid but they were very few in numbers. We acknowledge our debt to fellow black South Africans since all whites benefited from systematic racial discrimination.

We acknowledge that the damage caused by apartheid has not been overcome. The legacy of racial discrimination remains evident in the acute deprivation experienced by most black people and in the privileged lives of most whites.

We acknowledge that racist attitudes of white superiority and black inferiority continue to shape our lives, communities and institutions.

We acknowledge that our failure to accept responsibility for apartheid has inhibited reconciliation and transformation.

We deeply regret all of this.

We therefore believe that it is right and necessary to commit ourselves to redressing these wrongs. We pledge to use our skills, resources and energy, through individual and collective action, to empower disadvantaged people, eliminate racism and promote a non-racial society whose resources are used to the benefit of all its people. To these ends, and in recognition of the need for restitution, various initiatives will be undertaken, including the establishment of a Development and Reconciliation Fund.

Notes

1. I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers and my friend and former colleague, Chandra Kumar, for their comments on an earlier version. I would also like to thank all those who were willing to be interviewed about their participation in the Home for All Campaign.
2. The video depicted white students ‘initiating’ black workers into university life. The message of the video was strongly against the racial integration of residences at the University.
3. The Campaign was originally called the ‘Home for All’ Campaign (*Tuiste vir Almal* in Afrikaans). However, the organisers found that people found the name misleading in that they interpreted the Campaign to be about housing – about providing ‘homes for all’. Thus, later on the Campaign’s English name became ‘Home to All’. However, because the Campaign is still better known by its original name, I will refer to the ‘Home for All’ Campaign throughout.
4. During apartheid, December 16 was a public holiday called the Day of the Vow. On this day white South Africans celebrated the victory of the Afrikaner *voortrekkers* over the Zulus in the Battle of Blood River. The decision post-apartheid to retain the holiday, but to call it a ‘Day of Reconciliation’ is thus deeply symbolic.
5. This union is now known as Solidarity/*Solidariteit*, but at the time of launch of the Home for All Campaign, it was still known as the MWU.
6. It should be noted, however, that a significant number of young white South Africans ticked the box ‘Don’t know’ rather than indicating disagreement with the statement. The survey showed that 23 per cent of young white South Africans were unsure about whether or not atrocities were committed and 27 per cent insisted that such atrocities were not in fact committed. It should also be noted that the same survey showed that 68 per cent of white South Africans agreed with the statement ‘Apartheid was a crime against humanity’, suggesting that some respondents felt that while apartheid was a crime against humanity, the state did not commit horrific atrocities in its defence.

7. Krog uses the term 'interconnectedness-through-wholeness' in her paper as an alternative to the better-known term 'ubuntu'. However, I will use *ubuntu* which is usually translated as 'humanness'.
8. An anonymous reviewer's comments on this issue motivated this caveat.

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