

Conrad Hunte
Healing the Wounds of History
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My name is Conrad Hunte. I'm a lucky man. I have residences in four countries on four continents. I don't mean I have a home, a house, in all those places, in fact I have only one in South Africa, but I have the privilege of being able to live indefinitely in four countries. I'm Barbadian by birth, I'm British by adoption, I'm American by marriage and I'm South African by choice. It is also my privilege to be the Chairperson of this session of our conference, *Healing the Wounds of History*.

I would like to begin by quoting from the inaugural address by our President Nelson Mandela on the 10th of May 1994. This speech was carried to millions of people all around the world on TV, by radio and by the press. The distinguished representatives of whom were all present in Pretoria, the capital when he made this address. I've taken a few snippets, excerpts from it. At the beginning he said, "Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud." In the middle of his speech, he said, "The time for healing of the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. The time to build is upon us. We must act together as a united people for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water, and salt for all." And he ended on this note, "The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement, let Freedom reign, God bless Africa."

"The time for healing of the wounds has come" is the theme for this session of our conference. In calling for healing the wounds of the past, I think that Nelson Mandela was calling attention to a fundamental aspect of history. Recent or ancient the history of yesterday or the history of long ago, I think that the fundamental aspect is this; The doors to the future we all long for are barred and blocked by the unhealed wounds of the past. And let me put it another way, in order for all of us to go forward together as human beings there is a need for forgiveness of those of us who have suffered at the hands of oppressors and there is a need for repentance of those of us who have caused such suffering. When forgiveness meets repentance, or the other way around, a new energy, a new dynamic and creative synergy is released that the world has scarcely begun to tap.

In my view, underlying, the economic, political, social, ethnic and ideological divisions of our times, inside nations and between nations are Seven Rivers of Hate. They originate back and back in history. Very often many have forgotten where and how they began. In this context, I want to draw your attention to another definition of hate. In the definition we are accustomed to it means I wish you, my enemy, to disappear from the face of the earth. This other definition includes that but it also adds this one; I wish to separate myself away from you although you may still live on earth.

The Seven Rivers of Hate are:

1. The Industrial Revolution, which in practice made the rich richer and left the poor poorer.
2. The Trans-Atlantic trafficking of slaves between Europe, Africa and the new world of the America and the Caribbean. This historic act made a gulf out of the gap that already existed between the races. It is now an unbridgeable gulf except by divine intervention.
3. The legacy of Colonialism and Imperialism which treated some men as gods and some as dogs.
4. The Western Nations wrong treatment of China. Notably the the Opium Wars.
5. The breakup of family life and the alienation of the different generations.
6. The deep divisions between men of faith.
7. The elevation into philosophies of Right or Left, of man's ever-present inclination to reject God.

Two aspects of this long journey of these rivers of hate through history are worth examining closely. Number one: at sometime or other along the banks of these rivers some people who were formerly victims turned around and later victimized others. And the second aspect is: that the unhealed memory of past wounds causes us to be more conscious of how and where others hurt us and are hurting us. At the same time this lack of healing blinds us to how and where we have hurt others, where we are hurting others.

I think that this has created a cycle of revenge. And the cycle goes something like this: those in power suppress those under them and because the human spirit will never be permanently suppressed, creates suffering and out of that suffering will come struggle, and out of that struggle can come success, and out of that success, can also come suppression. So there's a complete circle that goes on and on through history. I think that that circle can and must be broken.

These Rivers of Hate can and must be blocked. We must become turbines who would turn this raging fury into a power, to shed light where there is darkness, forgiveness where there's injury and repentance where there's pride. We can be an instrument of such peace and nation building when as individuals and then as representatives of our own ethnic groups and our nations we acknowledge our hurt or our guilt, accept forgiveness, or give it, and create a new synergy together. The embryo of a new beginning, a new chapter in a new history.

This is a very broad and very general analysis of history and an insight of an answer. I need to assure you that these thoughts didn't just come out of some theory, they're part of my own real and concrete experiences, for after all, I come from a people who have throughout history been enslaved. And we carry the memory with us. For some of us that memory has not been healed, but in my case I can say that I, through these ideas of MRA and many faithful friends, have experienced healing. Later on sometime today or tomorrow I will share some of these experiences with you. We have in this house men and women who's experiences give legs to these ideas. We will hear from them now.