



A Biannual Publication of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

First Light

Winter 2012



*Apathy
to*

ACTION

Accredited member of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada



CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

[The States Parties to this Convention.](#)

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Recognizing that those rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person,

Considering the obligation of States under the Charter, in particular Article 55, to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Having regard to article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which provide that no one may be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,

Having regard also to the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1975 (resolution 3452 (XXX)),

Desiring to make more effective the struggle against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment throughout the world,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 2

- 1 Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.
- 2 No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.

An order from a superior officer or a public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture.

Article 3

- 1 No State Party shall expel, return ("refouler") or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture.

For the purpose of determining whether there are such grounds, the competent authorities shall take into account all relevant considerations including, where applicable, the existence in the State concerned of a consistent pattern of gross, flagrant or mass violations of human rights.

Article 15

Each State Party shall ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture shall not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings, except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made.



First Light is published semi-annually and is intended to inform the interested reader about torture, its effects and what we can do in aiding survivors to overcome their experience of torture and war. CCVT views itself as part of a larger global community and is committed to the struggle for human rights, justice and the end of the practice of torture. We chose to call this publication **First Light** because as the first light before true dawn, it symbolizes the first ray of hope for survivors of torture.

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Mandate

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. **The CCVT gives hope after the horror.**

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Introduction

Alison Mills

In introducing the theme of the current issue of the First Light, "From Apathy to Action", I would like to highlight contributions to past issues of the journal. There are many concepts and questions that have arisen as part of the process of examining the theme of this issue. You will see the similarities, differences and common themes among the articles that cover a wide variety of perspectives and approaches to the question of apathy. Some common concepts and themes include silence, oppression, social exclusion and discrimination. Also, what does it mean to overcome apathy? What does it mean to take action? What is the role of the individual and of the community in breaking apathy and contributing to the healing of survivors?

In the 2010 issue, "Gender, Sexual Orientation & Torture", Carmen Aristegui contributed an article entitled, "Are We Lacking Civil Courage?" (translated into English by Jennifer Arango) which called attention to the role of the media and the role it plays against perpetrators of violence. Aristegui speaks to the concept of apathy when she asks us, "How can we ignore the words of Edmund Burke? 'All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to remain silent'".

In the Spring/Summer 2006 issue, our executive director Mulugeta Abai wrote the article, "Unheard Voices: Just Another Victim" which focuses on the perpetration of rape as an act of torture. Mr. Abai describes the social stigma that surrounds sexual assault which leads to silence on the subject. Could this silence be understood as apathy? Is it sexism and the designation of woman as 'other' that causes the silence, as Mr. Abai suggests when he asserts, "If they were not women but men, if they were members of any other caste or group, their treatment would be recognized as a civil and political emergency and as a gross defilement of humanity".

In the issue of Summer 2007, long time friend of CCVT Paulina Wyrzykowski contributed the article, "Human Rights Are Not An Afterthought", in which apathy and inaction are seen as equivalent to complicity. Wyrzykowski writes, "When Canadian authorities order the transfer of prisoners knowing full well those prisoners are likely to be abused, it turns all of us from observers to accomplices, and turns Canada into the kind of society that looks the other way while its leaders engage in morally dubious activities in the name of national security." This comment continues to be relevant in 2012 due to the manhunt for 'criminals' conducted by the CBSA, the multiple deportations that have led to human rights abuses in the country of origin and as was most recently unearthed, the sharing of fingerprints of refugee claimants with other governments and private corporations.

We can also look to past publications of the First Light to help us in considering what it means to take action. Also in the Spring/Summer 2006 issue, Mr. Abai addresses

this question in the article, "Reconstitution of Family, Network & Community Systems Following Torture". He calls for action, saying, "*Our task is therefore to provide a context in which previous systems of meaning can be recovered and new ones developed.*" These guidelines set out what needs to be done in order to collaborate with others and for a community to work together in an inclusive manner, which is highly relevant to the question of overcoming apathy. This is also the model applied at CCVT to facilitate a safe and welcoming community where healing can take place.

In the First Light issue of Summer 2007, our previous Manager of Volunteers, Chizuru Nobe Ghelani, contributed the article, "Healing Social Trauma Through A Community-Based Approach" which examines the role of the community in the fight against torture. As Mr. Abai has outlined best practices for an active community, Nobe Ghelani asserts that the healing process of survivors necessitates the participation of the wider community. According to Nobe Ghelani, social trauma is the cause of apathy: "Social trauma weakens our collective resilience and our will to fight against human rights violations. The impacts of trauma go beyond individuals and families into the local, national and global communities."

In the issue of Spring 2000, current board member Dr. Susan McGrath frames responsibilities to the wider community as the proper role of citizenship: "Drawing on the findings of our study, we are proposing a practice of citizenship that emphasizes social relations as well as political identity. It is a conceptualization of citizenship that goes beyond the limited and minimal role of liberal democracy and encompasses full participation in cultural, social, economic and political life and a commitment to human rights and social justice". This definition of an active citizenship places value on the formation of social ties, such as through friendship or community networks. However, Dr. McGrath emphasizes that such relationships should be a two way process: "When relationships lack reciprocity and they look more like service or charity, the connection is less sustainable". This speaks to the idea that the best way forward is through collaboration.

My aim in the proposal of the theme of this issue was to identify triggers and motivators that cause people to move from a position of indifference to one of taking action for global human rights. Such findings would be valuable to create movement, to increase public education efforts and to help foster a society where people feel empathy towards each other and can benefit from shared humanity. I invite you to read on to engage with the theme and to consider the different viewpoints presented here. Letters to the editor are always welcome to continue the dialogue. If you are interested in taking action to help survivors of torture, please get in touch with CCVT to find out about the crucial roles filled by our dedicated volunteers and donors and how you can contribute your time and talents to really make a difference.



Press Release - Torture is Not Acceptable



CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

For Immediate Release:

Victims of Torture Speak Out Against Government Policy Reversal

Toronto, ON – The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is deeply disturbed by recent revelations the federal government has reversed the country's long-standing denunciation of using information gathered by torturing people.

As a community-based organization that works with hundreds of refugees that are victims of torture, we are compelled to demand that the federal government reaffirms our country's commitment to condemn the use of torture in any and all circumstances.

"We counsel recently arrived refugees – half of whom are children – to help them heal from the psychological scars of torture," says Mulugeta Abai, executive director of Toronto-based CCVT. "How can we explain to them the same government that granted them sanctuary now condones the very inhumanity that inflicted so much pain on them and, in many cases, cost them the lives of loved ones?"

MP Victor Toews, Minister of Public Safety, this week acknowledged his government last year told CSIS to consider information derived using torture. This decision also ignores the widely accepted view that such information is unreliable.

CCVT reminds the Canadian government it is breaching domestic legislation, its human rights obligations and its commitment as a signatory to various international laws protecting basic human rights.

We invite Minister Toews or any interested party to our offices to meet with some of the true faces of torture. Their stories offer heart-rending accounts of the brutality that he wants our intelligence service to trade in. We also have experts to discuss the laws and agreements being abrogated.

CCVT helps survivors overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre aims to successfully integrate them into Canadian society, including psycho-social support and training programs. It also raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families.

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Mulugeta Abai at mabai@ccvt.org or 416-363-1066 ext. 225.



The Hippocratic Oath

The Hippocratic Oath is one of the most widely known of Greek medical texts. It requires a new physician to swear upon a number of healing gods that he will uphold a number of professional ethical standards. This remains a common practice today. What does the oath tell us about the role of empathy? When does it necessitate action?

I SWEAR by Apollo the physician and Aesculapius, and Health, and All-heal, and all the gods and goddesses, that, according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this Oath and this stipulation --

to reckon him who taught me this Art, equally dear to me as my parents, to share my substance with him, and relieve his necessities if required;

to look upon his offspring in the same footing as my own brothers, and to teach them this art, if they shall wish to learn it, without fee or stipulation;

and that by precept, lecture, and every other mode of instruction, I will impart a knowledge of the Art to my own sons, and those of my teachers, and to disciples bound by a stipulation and oath according to the law of medicine, but to none others.

I will follow that system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgement, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous.

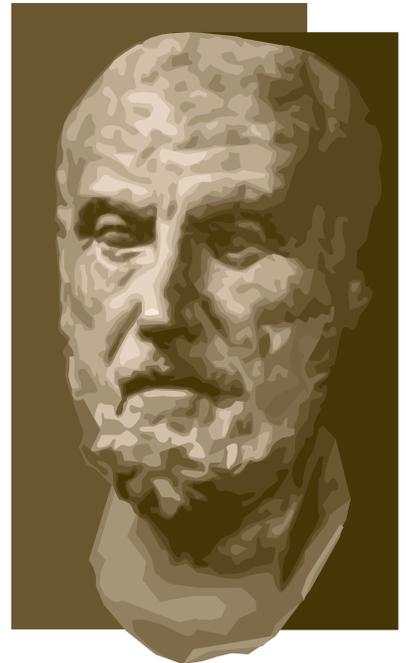
I will give no deadly medicine to any one if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; and in like manner I will not give to a woman a pessary to produce abortion.

With purity and with holiness I will pass my life and practice my Art. I will not cut persons labouring under the stone, but will leave this to be done by men who are practitioners of this work.

Into whatever houses I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of the sick, and will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief and corruption; and, further, from the seduction of females or males, of freemen and slaves.

Whatever, in connection with my professional service, or not in connection with it, I see or hear, in the life of men, which ought not to be spoken of abroad, I will not divulge, as reckoning that all such should be kept secret.

While I continue to keep this Oath unviolated, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and the practice of the art, respected by all men, in all times. But should I trespass and violate this Oath, may the reverse be my lot.



Reflections on the Psychology of Apathy

Surviving torture and war can scar a person both physically and mentally, adding trauma and stress to their daily life. To aid survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war psychiatrists at Mount Sinai Hospital have been partnering with the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT), a centre that helps refugees seek medical and psychological attention. The following round table discussion took place on December 15th, 2011 and reflects this partnership.

A Round Table Discussion

Tanya Schryer is currently enrolled in the Social Service Worker program at George Brown College working closely with Dr. Mossallanajed at the CCVT.

Dr. Clare Pain is a psychiatrist and director of the Psychiatric Trauma Program at Mount Sinai Hospital and also provides care to CCVT clients part time. Dr. Pain is on the board of CCVT and also on the health committee and she is the long time coordinator of TAAPP, a project focused on training psychiatrists in Ethiopia.

Dr. Ezat Mossallanajed is a Trauma Counsellor/Policy Analyst and Researcher working at the CCVT. He is on the board of the Canadian Centre for International Justice, is one of the editors of the Refugee Update (journal on the protection of refugees) and author of the book "Torture in the Age of Fear".

Dr. Lisa Andermann is a psychiatrist working for the trauma clinic at Mount Sinai Hospital. She provides psychiatric care to CCVT clients on a part time basis, is a former board member of CCVT, currently sits on CCVT's health committee and is particularly interested in cross-cultural psychiatry.

Alison Mills is Program Assistant for the East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership and for the CCVT.



From left to right: Tanya Schryer, Dr. Clare Pain, Dr. Ezat Mossallanajed, Dr. Lisa Andermann and Alison Mills.

Ms. Mills: The theme of this issue of the First Light is an examination of apathy from a variety of different angles. We could talk about the concept of public apathy and a culture of silence as put forth by the writer Paulo Freire. We could speak about the work of Eduardo Galliano in Brazil who wondered why death under torture doesn't always make the news. However, in this discussion, we would like to focus on one aspect: the apathy experienced by survivors of torture, perhaps due to the experience of trauma, in the framework of psychiatry.

Ms. Schryer: How would you define psychological apathy?

Dr. Andermann: As psychiatrists, we don't often talk about apathy as a construct, nor do we use the term in every day diagnostic clinical terminology. A number of symptoms could represent apathy such as lack of motivation and anhedonia (the inability to enjoy activities). You could roll all of these together to mean psychological apathy.

Dr. Mossallanajed: I have seen clients who don't care about anything, neither their lives, nor themselves, nor their community, nor their family. They live a sort of

Vegetable life – they may not go out; they do not shave or shower; they show no interest in communicating with others.

Ms. Schryer: What do you mean by a vegetable life?

Dr. Mossallanajed: I mean that the person is like a tree or a bush with no active life both emotionally, physically and psychologically.

Dr. Pain: I have had the experience of working with clients who are apathetic in this way, which could be thought of as a sort of clinical apathy. It's similar to how soldiers were "shell-shocked" coming back from World War II after being dug into trenches for months on end. This was a prodrome for PTSD. If someone is in a state of frozen fear, they can appear apathetic; they are just fulfilling the basic requirements, not really alive or vibrant or interested, but it can be part of a traumatic reaction. "Learned helplessness" is a term used by Martin Seligman who developed this idea having found that if an animal is repeatedly hurt by an adverse stimulus which it cannot escape, eventually the animal will stop trying to avoid the pain and behave as if it is utterly helpless to change the situation.

When opportunities to escape are presented, the animal doesn't even take advantage of them. This could be an animal model of how to understand what looks like apathy following trauma.

Ms. Schryer: What is the opposite of apathy? Is it love?

Dr. Mossallanajed: To me the opposite could be empathy, solidarity, love, activity or sensitivity. In a nutshell, when you appreciate life, when, with all your energy, you want to be a part of mainstream of life, when you are proactive, when you have passion and enthusiasm that is backed by hard work.

Dr. Andermann: I would say the opposite of apathy is living a fully engaged life, being mindful of what you are doing, being socially connected to other people and appreciating a range of things you can experience in life. It's about holding things in a kind of balance. Psychological treatment and group therapies can help. Positive activities can work against apathy: things that get people out of the house, sharing and appreciating each other's company, such as sharing in the Ethiopian coffee ceremony organized by the women's groups at CCVT. Even if such an activity is short-lived, it can work against apathy, isolation, avoidance and depression.

Dr. Mossallanajed: I would say it is subjective, different from person to person. In order to overcome apathy, sometimes it is necessary to go through a person's past and present, to identify and address the root causes of apathy. In some cases, clients need psychiatric treatment for their trauma and severe depression. Some clients suffer from loss. In 1996, I met a man in Rwanda who had lost 37 members of his family to the genocide. He was not apathetic despite his heavy loss. I had a client from the Democratic Republic of Congo who was raped in the presence of her husband and brothers, who were then killed. She subsequently became apathetic. What to do? How to motivate this person? It is a great challenge.

Dr. Pain: I agree, and apathy is also about meaning, it occurs when you can't find something worthwhile or meaningful in your life, sometimes this can happen whether because of street drug use or due to the experience of trauma or depression. Finding meaning again as part of a community or a spiritual practice is important. One hour of therapy only works best if it helps a client tap into those meaning-making processes that help the client to come and derive benefit from being part of a group. Other people give our lives meaning if we let them in.

Dr. Mossallanajed: This reminds me of a book (Man in Search of Meaning) by Victor Frankel who was a Jewish psychiatrist in a Nazi concentration camp. Frankel noted that any time the prisoners lost meaning in their lives, they could not continue. In my work with clients, I try to help them find meaningful participation in social life.

Ms. Mills: Why apathy? Is it a defense mechanism? Is it a learned behavior or an instinct? Could apathy be due to some physical problems such as the chemistry of the body?

Dr. Pain: Apathy can come as a result of serious trauma or of depression. It is a serious symptom contained within these conditions. If we were to speak of bystander apathy, such as people watching on and failing to intervene, I would say that is not really apathy, what we are discussing is different, we are talking about a complicated human reaction.

Dr. Andermann: Apathy provides a fake sense of self-protection and a way not to deal with the outside world. The person may think, 'I just want to go home. I don't want to deal with anything', but what this actually does is make your world smaller and smaller and the problems don't go away.

Dr. Mossallanajed: Apathy seems to be interconnected with loss. People lose their self-respect under torture. Victims of rape feel guilty and blame themselves; there is internalization. When you lose connection to your community, you also lose the ability to work, to be useful, to have a meaningful life, and there is a tendency towards apathy.

Dr. Pain: There are some physical diseases or conditions for which apathy can be considered as part of the problem, such as some types of traumatic brain injury, Alzheimers or a front lobe tumor. The frontal lobe seems to have to do with planning, organizing and putting things in order. I once had a patient who came to see me after having the worst headache of his life for three weeks straight. When I asked him what he had tried to alleviate the pain, he replied that he had tried nothing. Pain usually motivates us to take a Tylenol or go to the doctor or emergency room, but in some cases people do not take this action, the condition itself prevents this, as with dementia or other brain deterioration.

Dr. Andermann: In schizophrenia, there are positive symptoms that can be very disturbing and negative symptoms that you don't really see. Negative symptoms include amotivation and lack of interest. Positive symptoms would be something like hearing voices.

Dr. Mossallanajed: I had a client whom I visited in hospital. I was trying to bring her family to Canada and the reunification was in process. The client fell terminally ill with cancer. She was going through great pain. To relieve her, I mentioned that her husband and children were coming. She did not care. She was in such horrible pain that she could not care. It reminds me of a myth about the day of resurrection, when the sun would come close to the earth and the people were waiting for the last judgment. Jacob's favorite son was Joseph, but he shouted out to God, I don't care about Joseph, please save me. Apathy can be connected to one's physical condition.

Ms. Mills: What, if any, is the relation between medications and apathy?

Dr. Anderman: If it is clinical depression, anti-depressant medications can be used as a treatment. The anti-depressants target the biological aspects of life; things such as lack of appetite, difficulty sleeping, low energy and poor concentration. The medication does not change



the impact of traumatic news, nor does it make up for social factors, rather it targets certain aspects of apathy but use the analogy of resistance. For example, if the depression were a broken leg, the medications would be the cast and counseling, volunteering, and working would be the healing. However, getting back to life can sometimes be hard to make happen on its own without medications.

Dr. Pain: If we are talking about illicit drugs, there are two general types – those that make you more energetic, like cocaine, and those that tend to promote the opposite, like alcohol or heroin. There is also enough evidence to suggest that daily marijuana use reduces a person's drive which might be associated with this idea of apathy.

Dr. Mossallanajed: This reminds me of memories from my childhood of people smoking opium who were very involved in working against the established order. They would come up with strategies for change and revolution while smoking, and then after a few hours they would sleep and thus wouldn't care about anything.

Dr. Andermann: In terms of alcohol, people sometimes use it to overcome shyness and as a way to reduce fear, to feel liberated and interact in a "normal" way. Also, it may be notable that ongoing use of ecstasy can damage the serotonin uptake in the brain.

Ms. Schryer: Have you ever experienced apathy as a result of burn out?

Dr. Mossallanajed: I have never felt apathetic towards a client, but I have had to accept defeat, I have had to give up. In one case, I tried my best, my client was hospitalized and I came to know that nothing else could be done. I was very upset. This reminds me of Kafka's work on metamorphosis – the story of a student who changed into a spider. The sister becomes apathetic towards him because he was then a spider. Once in life, I felt apathetic towards myself. In my youth, I fell in love with a girl. We were supposed to marry and I attached a lot of hope on this. Then, a multimillionaire came along and my sweetheart left me for him. I felt, "what is the use of life? It is absurd". I stopped eating. I climbed up into the mountains for a few days alone. I considered if I had had a wise reaction. Then I went back to a normal life. I learned that love must be mutual and it cannot be a one way street. In some cases, apathy is not necessarily a bad thing. It could be a natural reaction. When you look at the totality of life, of the whole being, then you can overcome it. Apathy can also be an existential question – an apathetic view would see life as, 'we live, we suffer, we die'. If you are passionate, life is an end in itself. We must be active and enjoy every moment in life.

Dr. Pain: Perhaps apathy can apply to one thing in life and not to everything. For instance a person might feel apathetic about voting in the federal elections but not about life in general. I do agree that apathy has much to do with loss. The length of time a person is apathetic is also significant; two or three days is different from months or years. Apathy can be partial, brief or long-lasting. With regard to burn out – that can happen in any job - usually the term compassion fatigue is kept for people working in the social services. Perhaps this

is another manifestation of something that looks like apathy, it usually happens when someone is taking on a lot of clients without the support and collegiality of working in a team.

Dr. Andermann: There are always systemic issues at the hospital, at the university, rules of OHIP funding, there is always something frustrating and bureaucratic that can get in the way. Working in a team, and with the staff at CCVT helps because you can ask for help and advice. I also work with a schizophrenia team and we do one hour of rounds together every day. It is encouraging because you couldn't have seen all those patients by yourself and you couldn't do all the outreach alone. CCVT is a happy environment and provides relief. It is an environment that facilitates the process of moving one step closer towards meaningful engagement with the social community.

Dr. Pain: When assessing a client, I am not only looking for evidence of trauma, but also for evidence of resilience. Although I have noticed that apathy can be slightly infectious – when someone else is apathetic, I can take on those feelings and I need to be aware that anxiety can be infectious.

Dr. Andermann: We have some clients who are terrified of leaving their homes and I think it's important to get active even if you don't want to. We run a trauma group at Mount Sinai where there is only one requirement – to show up.

Dr. Mossallanajed: 75% of the clients I see at CCVT suffer from loneliness. They haven't developed a circle of friends yet. We know from the principles that CCVT promotes that the solution to apathy has to come from the whole community. It is important to recovery to have human beings extending humanity to each other, for clients to connect with compassionate people and to participate in recreational activities. Public education and raising awareness are very important tasks and CCVT promotes this – for clients to truly heal they have to become part of the community. CCVT clients are often the most resilient people and do well with a bit of help initially, despite the difficulties they have had.

Dr. Andermann: This is a more of a bio-psycho-social approach that takes into consideration the spiritual and social meaning in client's lives. Having a meaningful spiritual life is a good sign in terms of suicide risk. Most clients are no different to us, if we went through what they did. The CCVT clients are the most resilient people on earth, they define resilience.

Dr. Pain: By being present at CCVT as a psychiatrist, I feel impressed and moved by Martin Baro's model – the circles of silence that torture engenders can be addressed by becoming circles of trust and attention to the social conditions in which we all live. Perhaps the cure for apathy is social action, working to ban torture and to eliminate systems that are dangerous to the individual and that impede upon recovery.



“Clients opened up because they saw that I was helpful...”

Trust-building Processes between Trauma Counselors and Refugees

Maren Zeller

Introduction

The quotation in the headline was taken from a statement made by a trauma counselor during an expert interview that focused on the question of how the trust-building phase, such as it takes place in consultations, is shaped, from a professional perspective. In short: what do counselors think they do to gain their clientele's trust? In spring 2011, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight counselors and serve as the basis for this paper.

Every social worker/counselor knows about the importance – and (even) often the challenges – of gaining their clientele's trust. However, it is not always easy to find out what factors influence the trust building process between clients and professional, as a large part of it takes place implicitly. Theory suggests that there are specific characteristics as far as the issue of trust in establishing a working relationship is concerned: at the beginning of their relationship with professionals, the clients must disclose their particular existential situation or the psychological strain they are experiencing to these professionals, without knowing whether the other side is in a position to deliver on their offer of support, which initially exists only in the form of an offer of service. Trust is required in this case in order to bridge the chronological gap between the institutional promise of support services and the actual carrying-out of such support (cf. Wagenblass 2001). In addition, trust is needed in order to absorb the significant periods of uncertainty both on the part of the clients and on that of the professionals. At the same time, however, this is risky because these working relationships are marked by a fundamental power asymmetry. Trust in the fact that this asymmetry will not be exploited is one of the especially “risky advance performances” that must be brought, particularly by the clients (cf. Wagenblass 2001; di Luzio 2005). It is presumed that this risk that the clients take when they become involved with social work organizations and their skilled professionals may be intensified in the case of particular groups, such as refugees. Newcomer refugees might find it especially difficult to trust because they: (a) enter a cultural and national context that is new to them; (b) might have developed distrust of all authorities and services as well as their representatives; (c) might have to cope with the experience that their trust (for example in escape agents) has been



betrayed; (d) likely have experienced war, torture or sexualized violence.

These theoretical assumptions can also be found in the explanations of the counselors interviewed. Most of them highlighted the many negative experiences newcomer refugees have undergone, including having their trust betrayed by authorities, the public and even family members. On the one hand, these negative experiences make it hard for newcomer refugees to trust foreign and unfamiliar services. Additionally, it was mentioned that the idea of counselling in the way Western societies conceptualize it is very foreign to most newcomer refugees since it doesn't exist in their home culture. On the other hand, counselors have also observed that some newcomers – especially the ones who arrive in Canada on their own – are desperate to access services. Since everything is totally new to them, they feel forced to trust these services if they want to build a new life in Canada.

The counselor as a person, professional expertise and the agency

When reflecting on trust-building processes, the interaction between professionals and clients and particularly the question of how to build trust in people are the main focus. This tendency can also be found in the

analyzed data and the first two categories presented in this paper (“being the same and addressing clients as equal” and “making clients feel comfortable”) refer to this level of trust. However, besides developing trust in people, clients can also develop trust in professional expertise and the agency as an organization. Although the counselors did not put the main emphasis on these two aspects, they can also be found in the data. The category “using settlement counseling as a door opener” refers to trust in professional expertise while the category “offering various services to provide low-threshold access to trauma counseling” reveals efforts to gain trust as an agency/organization.

Being the same and addressing clients as equal

In general, the question of gaining trust as is influenced by the biographies of the counselors, who are themselves either immigrants or have refugee experiences. Staff members often come from the same country or region as the clientele and have experienced the same or similar conditions (e.g. some also experienced imprisonment and torture). Therefore, they can position themselves to some extent as “insiders” or “semi-insiders”. In addition, all staff members have a strong commitment to their work. This commitment is either based on their own biographical experience and the wish “to help their own people” and “to give something back” or on the fact that they deliberately chose this particular professional field and carrier path.

Besides their personal biographical experiences and a strong commitment to their work, two additional factors are important for gaining the clients’ trust as a counselor: cultural sensitivity and gender.

Sharing a common language and belonging to a specific ethno-cultural community play an important role during the counseling process. Speaking the same language as the client and coming from the same ethno-cultural community can be a huge advantage in terms of establishing trust in a counseling relationship. Clients might feel more comfortable with a counselor right away if they have the full linguistic ability to express themselves. At the same time, clients might feel very uncomfortable speaking to someone from their own ethno-cultural community (e.g. shame, guilt, fear that word will spread). All counselors emphasize that this issue should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Most counselors mention that, in general, having some knowledge of the country’s political situation and of the types of persecution(s) existing where a client came from seems very helpful. In particular, in terms of building a trusting relationship, it seems important to be curious about the client’s home country and the things that are going on there and to show them that as a counselor, one has a certain understanding of the refugee experience. This understanding also includes acknowledging the challenges and difficulties refugees face as a consequence of being uprooted.

Gender is seen as a factor which can make a difference in establishing a relationship. Some counselors reported that female clients – especially if they have faced sexual abuse – have difficulties trusting a male counselor. Female counselors also mentioned that female clients seem to trust them more easily than male clients.

In particular, during the counseling process, a two-way strategy aimed at reducing the existing power asymmetry between counselor and client seems to be used by the counselors:

Firstly, counselors stress that they try to approach their clientele not only as a counselor, but also as a person/ as an equal human being”. This includes different aspects such as trying to dress and speak in an “informal way”, being “non-threatening”/“non-authoritarian”/being “wary of interrogating”, “being honest with the client, not taking a (too) professional stance and sharing selected private information with the client.

Secondly, counselors try to address clients as “agents of their own change”. This includes trusting/believing that the client can “change” and “solve his/her problems”. It also corresponds with the idea of empowering clients in the sense of showing them different options, encouraging them to make decisions, giving them confidence and giving them control in the counseling interaction.

Making clients feel comfortable in the counseling process

On the micro level of interactions, the way counselors gain the trust of their clients is by trying to make them feel comfortable. The assumption is that unless they feel comfortable, clients won’t open up and share past experiences, which is a necessary step in the trauma counseling process. In the interviews, many ways of making clients feel comfortable are mentioned:

- Welcome clients in the waiting area and accompany them to the office
- See how clients approach you and react appropriately (e.g. shaking hands or not)
- Make the office “really homey”/a “positive space” (e.g. plants, arranging chairs in an appropriate way, etc.) and arrange the office in a way that offers conversation topics/ice-breakers (e.g. using pictures, messages in different languages), offer something to drink, etc.
- Ensure confidentiality and establish the limits of confidentiality
- Make your own actions and the services of the agency transparent and be consistent
- Be open to listen(ing)/be an “active listener” and be non-judgemental, be empathetic



- Make sure that you also feel comfortable as a counselor in the situation
- Use the intake and assessment tools in a very flexible and appropriate way (e.g. allow time for chit-chat, fulfill basic needs first...)
- Allow time for the person to feel comfortable enough to disclose and assure clients that they can always take time when they need to

Most of these aspects refer to the very beginning of a counseling relationship. Therefore, one assumption seems to be that the beginning, such as the very first meeting, is a very important step in establishing a working alliance and trust. At the same time, building trust is always seen as a process and each and every counselor could recall cases in which it took a long time for the client to be able to share his/her problems.

Using settlement counseling as a door opener

Since it is not always easy to establish a trusting relationship between a counselor and a newcomer refugee client right away, settlement counseling can be a very successful door opener. In many cases, advice about settlement issues (e.g. language skills, housing, education, employment, and family reunification) can be given before a client discloses his or her entire story to a counselor. Here are some of the aspects mentioned regarding the way to gain trust while providing settlement counseling:

- Helping with specific topics, working on a “need by need basis”, “stabilizing situations and helping with basic things”
- Providing a lot of information and connecting clients with other services CCVT provides or helping clients access services provided by other agencies/ professionals
- Providing and teaching cultural know-how; educating clients about misconceptions they might/may have regarding Canadian culture/laws
- Making things happen in various fields

In this context, counselors emphasize that in their experience, “clients opened up because they saw that I was useful/helpful...”. It seems that providing help with settlement issues gives the counselors the opportunity to show their professional competence. After experiencing a helpful process in terms of settlement issues, clients seem to assume that the counselors will also be helpful when it comes to trauma counseling. Therefore, this third category aims at establishing trust in the specific expertise of the counselor.

Offering various services to provide low-threshold access to trauma counseling

New clients – whether they seek trauma counseling or not – are encouraged by the staff members to use one or more of the various services offered by the agency. Indeed, attending language classes, skill training programs or support groups gives clients the opportunity to get to know the agency. This can happen by talking to other and/or former clients during the programs offered, as well as by talking to counselors on the way to or from programs. Counselors notice that clients develop trust by realizing that “they get all the support they need within one agency”. It seems that the holistic approach of the agency gives clients the opportunity to develop trust in the agency (organization) before actually trusting specific counselors (people).

Another way in which trust in the agency might be established is by hearing by word of mouth that it is a safe place where refugees can get protection. Former and current clients recommend the agency’s services and other professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, and social workers in shelters, refer their clients so that they can get more specific help from a trauma counselor.

In addition, the Volunteer Befriending Program at CCVT plays a particularly important role in terms of trust-building processes. To trust a volunteer/befriender is not easy and therefore quite a challenge for clients (cf. Chambon et al. 2001). Once trust is established between a volunteer/befriender and a newcomer refugee, this relationship helps to bridge their existing distrust of agencies and services.

Lastly, all counselors emphasized the agency’s “philosophy” of never closing a case. If after a while a counseling process comes to an end, this is always seen as a possibly temporary end by the counselors, since clients have the opportunity to resume the counseling process at any time. It seems that the sense of stability offered by the agency (i.e. the agency is always there to help, even if counselors might change) also helps clients to develop trust in the organization.

Factors that may be obstacles to establishing trust

In the interviews, the counselors were asked to give a case example demonstrating what they would call successfully establishing a working alliance and another case example in which either no successful working alliance could be established or it took a long time to do so. In particular, the case examples in which it took time and/or it was a challenge for the counselors to build a relationship and trust hint at factors that may be obstacles to developing trust. Here are the most important aspects mentioned:

- Mistakes that happen when scheduling an appointment and the need to reschedule a first meeting
- Taking over cases from other counselors
- Language barriers and communication barriers and/or client feels uncomfortable with/doesn’t trust the interpreter

- Previous negative experiences with professionals or misinformation and/or negative experiences with interrogation(s) by immigration authorities, especially in cases involving detention
- Too many/other professionals (e.g. shelter staff) involved in the case

In general, clients give counselors the feedback that having to tell their personal story again and again for different purposes is a huge challenge for them. Another aspect emphasized by the counselors is that trust can become an even bigger issue if clients are undocumented.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning, it is not always easy to find out what factors influence the trust-building process between clients and professionals, since a large part of it takes place implicitly. The categories that emerged out of the interviews show that building trust is not necessarily identical with building trust in people, but could also focus on professional expertise and the agency as an organization. There seem to be no rules as to who trusts in what first: there are clients who develop trust by getting advice from a specific counselor (trust in person) and others who develop trust by attending a specific program offered by the agency (trust in organization). In most cases, it is probably a mixture of all three aspects (the counselor as a person, professional expertise and the agency). In terms of trust-building processes, it seems very helpful that CCVT offers a variety of services. The fact that trauma counseling is embedded in the setting of settlement counseling and in various services offered by the agency helps to give clients the opportunity to develop trust through a variety of "access points".

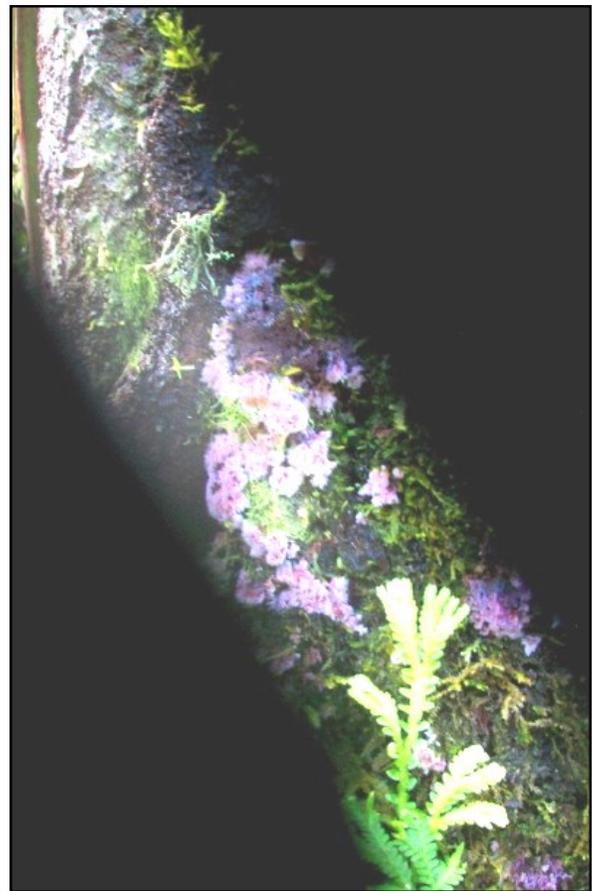
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"Light in A Dark Place" by Michele Woodey

Reflections from Ana, a Client of CCVT

I have had the honor to be a client of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) since my husband and I came to Canada in 2008.

I will never be able to explain how the CCVT changed our lives. When we went for the first appointment our expectations were low; we really didn't have any hope, wish, or reason to trust anybody. I used to stay inside my home afraid of all of the sounds that I heard, looking many times in a single day ensuring the doors were properly locked and thinking "how I could escape from the basement where we lived in case someone would come looking for us".

Also, we struggled hard on a daily basis with ourselves against the deep depression and the nightmare that our life had become since 2004, when we faced a terrible situation in our country that definitely changed our lives forever.

We fought a constant battle to open the minds of the people who think Mexico, my country of origin, has only beautiful beaches and is a profitable business partner of Canada. This battle of awareness has been so time consuming that at this point I don't believe change can be attained; I truly believe that they don't want to listen because they really don't care.

However, this was not our experience with our angel in this beautiful "Maple Land", Ms. Gabriela Agatiello, the amazing and wonderful counselor at the CCVT for the Spanish speaking community. She has taken care of us since the first moment, and was the first one who listened to us for a long time.



The high understanding that Gaby has about the situation in all countries in Latin America, as well as her generous, compassion, kindness and her ability to help others have really impressed me as a human being and I will be grateful to her forever and wherever I will be.

Today I am a completely different person than I used to be. After I met Gaby I started to regain the ability to trust people again. I am really integrated in the Canadian community and I have made so many friends.



But the most important thing that I have accomplished, with the help of Ms. Gaby Agatiello is that I was able to advance in my career; I now hold a good job as an accountant, I have had the opportunity to go back to school in the beautiful and recognized University of Toronto, and I am able to speak a language that 3 years back couldn't say more than 5 words.

Today I have hope; I can walk in the streets without fear; I believe in the value of myself and I am ready to face my future.

Definitely only an amazing person like her could be part of an amazing organization like the CCVT; which makes a big change in the lives of those who have lost everything.

Today, I am looking forward to going to a place in another country in this big world. We have to leave this beautiful paradise because of those who oppose Canadian values that we enjoyed here before.

However the peace and the hope that Ms. Agatiello and the CCVT brought to us was a heaven in the middle of hell.

I could write a book about my experiences with the CCVT but for now I only want to say that with more organizations like CCVT, this world could eradicate and prevent torture.

“Yes, And...” Transcending the ‘Incredible’ Through Humour after Torture: A Case Study of Improv Theatre Workshops at the CCVT

Lauren Spring

The question of what may encourage and inspire a move from apathy to action is a vital one for me both personally and professionally and one I have been struggling to reconcile for many years. It is this very question in fact, that first led me to begin volunteering and leading workshops at the CCVT. Professionally, I am, amongst a few other things, an actor. Personally, I have also long been concerned with issues of global justice, equality and human development. The following article traces my personal experience as I have sought to discover what it means to be an “actor” or to “take action” in this often unjust world. I’ll address here uncomfortable questions about transnational empathy and the relativity of suffering, as well as issues of representation and resilience. I will also outline the ways in which such questions led me to the CCVT where I recently facilitated improvisation theatre workshops at both the downtown and Scarborough locations. These workshops, part of a participatory action research initiative set up to explore the relationship between humour and resilience, have yielded promising and positive results and, of course, more questions.

But my own story starts more than 12 years ago.

It is 1999.

February. 2:00 am.

I am 16 years old, 68 lbs, and hooked up to a heart monitor and an IV drip in a small corner room on ward 7A of Sick-Kids hospital.

The 3 inside walls of my room are all windows. The “fishbowl” as the other girls call it, that allows the nurses to see in at all times in case I were to decide to unhook myself to do push-ups, or walk to the bathroom, squeeze my face under the faucet and drink a cup or 2 of water and not pee it out before my 6:00 am weigh-in. Those things aren’t allowed anymore, not here. They’re watching me, every minute.

I don’t remember much about being 16. I do remember feeling guilty all the time. I do remember, in the months leading up to my self-imposed starvation, that I’d awoken to the injustices in the world and that I had been writing school paper after school paper on unfair trade agreements and political prisoners. I also remember feeling like it wasn’t enough, that I wasn’t really doing anything.

Then I did. It was only in those moments of hunger high after skipping my grade 11 World Issues class to run 20 kilometers in -30 C weather that I would feel less guilty,

more in control and that I was actually taking action - that I was suffering too, like them; like all those people I’d see on the news, on telethons, the people on the other side of the world who were born into poverty and who were being tortured by their states.

“Why do I have so much when they are suffering every day?” Starvation for me was an attempt at solidarity, somehow. It was the only way I could think to renounce of my own privilege and ‘first-world’ comforts.

Until.

“You’ve tortured yourself long enough. You’re very, very sick and you’ll be on absolute bed-rest for at least a month.”

It ended up being 8 weeks bed rest. I was not even permitted to sit up. I was flat on my back on an all-liquid diet of high-calorie vanilla, chocolate or strawberry liquid “Resource” drink.

Even that decision was sometimes too much for me.

“What flavour would you like for your 2:00 pm snack?”

My only response was to weep.

The nurse would choose for me then - vanilla: into the IV bag, through a tube shoved down my nose into my throat because I couldn’t bear to hold the straw to my lips and consume. It was torture. To feel the calories I didn’t deserve dripping down the back of my throat. Torture.

I scoffed when the doctor first called it ‘anorexia.’

Impossible, I thought.

Anorexia was a middle-class white girl dis-ease that was.... that was just...so... privileged.

It was that February morning though, at 2:00 am on ward 7A- hooked up to a heart monitor and being force-fed through a tube in a hospital, in a city in a country with cutting edge medical technology and nutrition to spare that I realized that’s exactly what I was. Privileged. Hot tears streamed down my cheeks. It was time to accept - accept who I was and where I was from. It was time to accept, as I was trained to do in improv classes in theatre school, that when I felt most lost and alone and afraid on stage, that was the time to accept and then ask “what happens next?”

In good improv, you accept the given circumstances, you accept what has happened, even if you regret it, even if you’re embarrassed and afraid, and then you advance the story, somehow. Hard as it may be, you say “yes, and...” what happens next?



I started this story in 1999, not because I want to claim that my self-imposed starvation or suffering is in any way comparable to the experiences of torture that clients of the CCVT have survived, but instead because I think it best to disclose at the outset that my foray into development work has not been, I admit, an innocent nor purely selfless thing. I would be lying if I said I went into development work or began volunteering at the CCVT solely because I wanted to learn from others who have experienced unimaginable trauma, to offer my friendship, or to assist refugees in the re-settlement process.

No. Recovering from anorexia, I initially went into development work because I needed a new way to take action, a new way to pacify the gnawing, unrelenting guilt I felt for being 'privileged' in this world in a way that was constructive and, well... didn't involve destabilizing my vital signs in the process.

That being said, I also believe that my own lived experience to date, both personal and professional, has equipped me with a unique sense of self-reflexivity, empathy and a capacity for working with people as well as the critical thinking skills necessary to make positive contributions to, and draw links between two fields of study I appreciate very much - those of theatre and development. Research shows that there is a lack of effective assessment and treatment approaches

"How do some people manage to 'move on,' demonstrate resilience after torture/trauma, while others are swallowed up by, or remain forever victim to the experience? What differentiates these people from one another?"

specifically for refugees who have experienced torture and also that some of the most promising approaches to date are "multi-systemic" (Kira, 2002). These may include a combination of cognitive behavioural exposure therapy or trauma counseling as well as alternative techniques such as personal testimony, non-verbal body-work and movement and a variety of arts-based approaches that address a person's biological, psychological and social needs (Callahan, 1993; Dietrich, 2000; Herbst, 1992; Kira, 2002; Moreno, 1999; Prip, 1985).

My early experience with and recovery from anorexia taught me much about resilience and sparked a fascination with the subject that continues to this day. Because it played such a key role in helping me re-gain my physical and emotional health, I have since continued to explore the ways in which theatre can be used as a tool to help individuals transcend a traumatic event that has marked both the mind and body.

The most profound question for me is, how do some people manage to 'move on,' demonstrate resilience after torture/trauma, while others are swallowed up by, or remain forever victim to the experience? What differentiates these people from one another? This idea is eloquently illustrated in the writings of professionals like Eli Weisel in his works about the Holocaust and Femi Osofisan on the post-colonial condition in Nigeria (Olaniyan, 1999; Wiesel, 1982). Both writers argue that after trauma or torture, in this case on a collective level, there is a necessary moment of pause, of 'taking stock.' Osofisan has labeled this moment the "Incredible"

"The incredible inscribes that which cannot be believed - what is too improbable, astonishing, and extraordinary to admit of belief."

Osofisan makes clear that the "incredible" is not intrinsically negative, as the silence and the crisis of it may serve as a prelude to "the (re)constitution of a more enabling social and symbolic order." The danger, he argues, lies in the fact that the incredible as an interval is intoxicating and seems, in some cases, to be becoming the norm for several African societies. Both Osofisan and Wiesel argue that to remain in this silence is akin to choosing indifference, apathy and surrender to a "crisis as norm" mentality, which can only be transcended if those who have suffered find their voice and gain ownership of their stories (Olaniyan, 1999; Wiesel, 1982).

I can't help but think that this idea comes into play on a more individual level as well, that each person, after experiencing torture or trauma must either transcend or remain entrapped in the "incredible." What is it within a person, or outside of them, that inspires them to towards resilience and an advancement of their own story, to reject the 'crisis as norm' mentality and rather to seek to gain ownership over their past, dark as it may be, to claim the present and to de-fine one's self anew?

An actor by trade, and as someone who has never been particularly religious, I have often in times of difficulty turned towards the aforementioned 'golden rule' of improvisation theatre for guidance: "Yes, And..." Accept and advance. My research led me to wonder whether the tool box of the actor might be somehow applicable to the lives of refugees at the CCVT. Studying theatre and acting professionally for over 10 years and having had experience facilitating improv-based theatre workshops with a wide variety of people, from corporate executives in bank towers to priority youth in prisons, I was pretty confident that improv exercises could be made accessible and could prove valuable to the lives of actors and non-actors alike. Improv theatre exercises, when properly facilitated, almost instantly help build trust, confidence, deep listening and communication skills, encourage non-threatening risk-taking, mind-body connection, commitment and status-awareness amongst participants. All of these things are brought about in adherence to the guiding principle of "Yes, And..." This principle is something much better experienced than described, but below is

a brief overview of how it works:

For example, if person A and person B enter the stage, one must begin the story by making an offer.

A: Lovely weather out today isn't it? I'm glad to be on the beach.

B: Yes, it is lovely.

In this case, B has accepted A's offer (said "Yes") so both players as well as the audience have their bearings in the scene: we know the weather is nice and that the characters are on a beach, but B has failed to 'advance' the story and has not offered anything new. Now, if B were to opt to apply the principle of Yes And:

A: Lovely weather out today isn't it? I'm glad to be on the beach.

Person B now has several options. B may block this offer:

B: No way! It's cold, and we're on the top of a ski hill.

This option obviously would confuse player A (as well as the audience if there was one) and inspire distrust.

B may instead opt to accept this offer:

A: Lovely weather out today isn't it? I'm glad to be on the beach.

B: It is lovely- but don't speak so loud, remember we're not supposed to be on this beach, it's the private one!

In this case B has both accepted the offer at hand and managed to advance the story which makes things much more interesting.

I was curious to see if participants at the CCVT who would practice this principle of "Yes, and..." in regular weekly improv workshops, through a variety of verbal and non-verbal exercises, would find it a useful tool to apply to their everyday lives and if so, in what ways. How, I wondered, could improv theatre help facilitate the process of resilience?

Another key element of improv theatre is that it is a lot of fun. It just is. Building a story with others in the moment inspires a lot of laughter. This was also key for me while facilitating, not only because it meant participants were more willing to take part in the workshops I was offering but also because, as a facilitator who myself had never experienced torture or displacement, it brought me closer to the group. When one thinks of "a refugee who has experienced torture" the mind's eye conjures up a particular image. It is the sort of image that we see all too often in the media in fundraising campaigns, an image that was worlds apart from our reality at the CCVT during these workshops when we were standing in a circle, laughing hysterically as a group as we tried to figure out the mimed object that was being passed around. Theatre itself can be a powerful post-trauma tool, but in this case, the humour that accompanies improv was essential.

I have been witness in the past to too many poorly executed theatre workshops and shows involving 'vulnerable' people. I have been disturbed by facilitators who were obviously more interested in their own notoriety (or grant renewal) than creating something with participants that is relevant and beneficial to their lives. I have also been dismayed by theatrical experiences that proclaim to 'empower participants by telling their stories' (often to a paying public) but end up displaying tired and inaccurate stereotypes that represent participants as little more than sorry victims of circumstance or injustice. This is participation and fun were the goals of these workshops and not a means to an end but the end in and of itself. I had no interest in dwelling on the past, in encouraging participants to tell and re-tell their stories of home and of all they had overcome. Rather, we focused on the present, and had a lot of fun. From my perspective, this process meant that I became witness to the 'unmaking' of fictional representations.

I was curious to see what both I, as facilitator, and participants would get out of these weekly workshops. From my perspective, this process meant that I became witness to the 'unmaking' of fictional representations of the 'other', and rather I began to see the group as they actually were.

Participants at both the downtown and Scarborough locations responded enthusiastically to the workshops. Not only did they report looking forward to attending each week, but many were able to describe in detail the ways in which they applied certain principles introduced and practiced in the workshops to their every day lives. Some results were tangible; for instance, one middle-aged participant reported that he changed his body language when going for a job interview based on the 'status' and confidence work we had discussed in the previous workshop and ended up interviewing well and getting the job. A female participant reported that our discussion and practice of 'non-threatening risk taking' encouraged her to attend a book club meeting in west Toronto. She had been turning down the invitation for several months, too afraid to venture across town. She was proud of herself for having decided to go and now had the confidence to continue to attend. Another female participant told me that the workshops helped her relate better to her grandchildren; she had never thought herself capable of making funny noises, and moving her body in silly positions, but she had had such fun doing so in the workshops that she taught the improv games to her grandchildren and was able to play along with them in a way she would have previously felt too shy to do. She said that these moments of playing and having fun together greatly improved her relationship with her grandchildren.

Other results were more subtle. Many participants reported that they had been hesitant at first to participate in the workshops, but a few minutes in felt comfortable and soon looked forward to coming every week even if they couldn't identify exactly why.

For example, one woman told me:



"I have a problem with my back and it gives me headaches all the time... all the time- headaches. Every day, all day. But I come to your workshop and I have a bad headache and then in the middle of the workshop, it disappears. My headache disappears for the whole day. It comes back the next day but it is the only day in the week that I have no headaches! This is why I like the workshop. I really like the workshops. And it makes me laugh."

Word seemed to spread quickly around CCVT and soon participants were asking if they could bring friends along to take part who were refugees but who had never visited the CCVT. When I inquired as to why they thought their friends would like the workshops, a common response was, *"It's just so funny. A lot of times people in this city, in Toronto, don't know how to laugh. In our home countries most of us laughed a lot and we miss that. I know my friends would have so much fun and just- they'd be good too! They are not afraid of using their bodies and telling stories- they'd be really good! They just need a place to do it."*

Other participants seemed impressed to see their fellow classmates in a new light in the workshop:

"You see her? She never speaks in English class. She can't even really speak English but it's good you know, that here she can understand because you don't need real words just miming with your hands and making a sound. I never seen her be so excited before. Someone just translates the rules for her and then she can participate like everyone else- no difference. She was so happy in the circle."

For some elderly participants, certain exercises proved challenging, such as standing in a circle for an extended period of time. Often accommodations would be made, but I remember one particular day when an elderly female participant decided to sit out of a circle activity. When I approached her after the workshop to make sure she was ok, she replied by telling me that on top of bad pain in her knees she had received some very sad news from her family that morning and that she wasn't even going to come into CCVT that day. Then she said,

"but then I remembered that we would have the workshop today. Even though I don't feel good, I knew that I should come for the workshop. I was in too much pain to stay standing but I wanted to stay in the room. Even though I was too sad to participate today I had a very fun time watching everyone else. I wanted to stay in the room that is why I sat here to watch instead of going to the kitchen or to the other room. I laugh even just watching from my chair. It was what I needed to do today. To laugh. And to hear other people laugh. This is important what we do here. I can't really say why but I just know it is. I never really did anything like this before. I didn't know this existed. But it's good. This is why I came even today."

I learned so much while facilitating these workshops at the CCVT and I look forward to continuing them in the new year with an increasing number of participants. As facilitator, I became comfortable spontaneously adapting the planned exercises according to participants' desires and language

Levels. The group members constantly impressed me with the support they showed for one another and their collective willingness to take risks and open up that was evident throughout the workshop series.

I suppose my experience also culminated in a particular realization: during an interview with one staff member who has been working at the CCVT for more than a decade, I had asked a question to the tune of, "what to you, are indicators of resilience in CCVT clients?" She responded by smiling and saying, "Well, the first indicator is that they are here. In this country. That they had the courage and the strength to survive a very difficult situation and start their lives again." Her response stuck with me. It was true, all participants at the CCVT had already exhibited tremendous resilience and an ability to take action. They have arrived in a new country now; many have managed to find jobs, housing, and are in the process of building new social networks. These things are vital and supporting refugees to meet these basic needs is the focus of many local and international development and community agencies, but there is more to being fully human than food, water, shelter, is there not?

I remember being struck as well by the name of the Centre for Victims of Torture. 'Why not call it the Centre for Survivors of Torture?' I wondered when I first began volunteering. After conversations with staff and service users though, I think the CCVT name is apt. It's a way of honouring the lived experience, a way of remembering those who didn't survive, and a way of ensuring that the past still weighs on the future. I suppose I feel similarly when I speak with the women I met in treatment for anorexia. We, though healthy now, still call ourselves "recovering" rather than "recovered" – a way of acknowledging that the shadow is always there. It takes the form of those of us who didn't make it. (My friend Amy for example, who's thrice daily purging habit threw off her heart rhythm and killed her one afternoon at age 18). Resilience isn't about forgetting the past, it's about taking action in the present and living well in honour of those who can't. Once we start to take action, once we are properly fed, sheltered, safe and all the other basic needs are met, the question remains...

What happens next?

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"Fragile" by Michele Woodey

A Psychosocial Analysis of Apathy towards Victims of Torture

Alison Mills

Why is apathy so widespread? One perspective is because awareness can be painful. Once your eyes are open to tyranny you engage, you have an analysis, a perspective and a comprehension. You start to see that oppression is rampant and seemingly inescapable. By engaging you may enter a state of shock and anguish which can be overwhelming. You can feel like a deer in the headlights, frozen in fear and sensing impending death.

It becomes supremely tempting to close your eyes and deny what is true; to lie to yourself and maybe even to convince yourself that these victims are not human beings who are being tortured, but are instead animals or savages. For you cannot see the victim without seeing the torturer, the violence, and the nauseating reality.

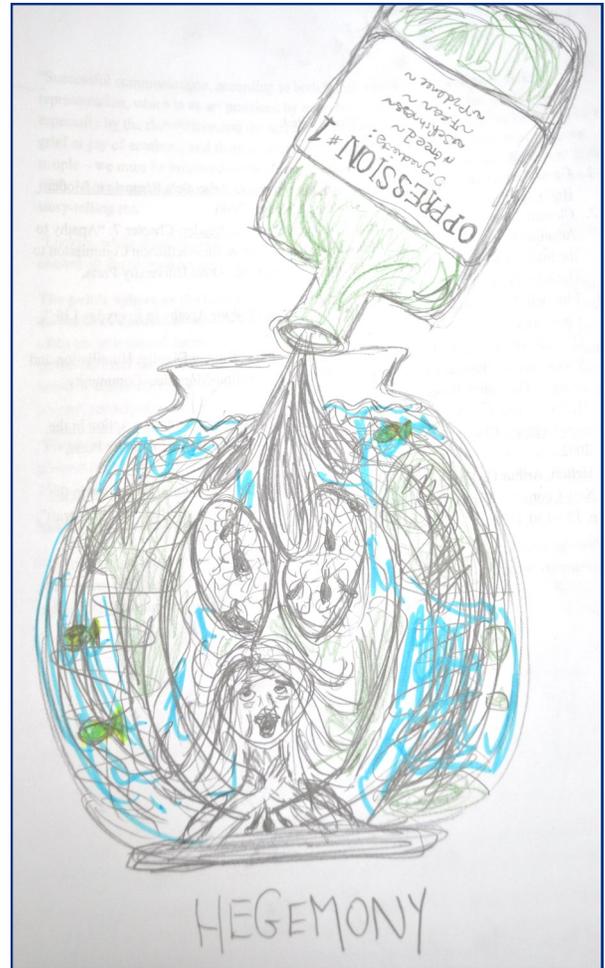
It is easier to believe that you are safe because of your superiority, your heightened sense of civility, and that YOUR reality does not have such a level of heinous violence. It is easier to take a nationalist perspective, to think of other countries as other planets with aliens, to pompously declare that "we" should take care of our "own people" first and foremost, what about the homeless, here in Canada?', but then funnily enough never to act on this statement.

It's easier to think of politics as "for the politicians", a narrow, fat cat world of red tape and greed - you can't be bothered with playing their game, and haven't you "earned" your money? Haven't you "worked hard"? Aren't you entitled? Those bums should stop being lazy and get a job, it's not that hard, right? It is much easier to think of politics as a little pocket of the world, than to be aware that it is dispersed through all atoms and elements, that there's no person or corner it does not touch, that it is not separate but within and around us.

There is an apathy epidemic. It may give the illusion of ease and of happiness in a vacuum, but apathy does not really offer protection from the violence in the world. It does no good for the psyche and is constructed as an illusory short-cut. Apathy is a way of securing one's own happiness and wellbeing which, in reality, is a false promise. Apathy does not lead to a peaceful state of mind.

Why is apathy such a widespread response to exposure to violent realities? My hypothesis is that, in a North American context, society encourages and fosters apathy by placing a great amount of emphasis on independence as an individual, rather than on interdependence and community building. Through the non-critical employment of a dominant discourse that includes words like "post-feminist" and "post-colonialist" (as though racism and sexism were things

of the past), and by creating an illusion of safety, democracy, and of superiority, it is suggested there is no need for action and no need for civic participation.



Apolitical Individuals:

In the article "Homeless/Global Scaling Places", Neil Smith presents a theory of scale to measure the impact of actions for change, and asserts that the higher the scale, the higher the impact. According to Smith, the individual begins at the bottom of the scale and increases to the level of the community, then to the regional level, the national level, and eventually to an international level.

Smith's theory of scale can successfully be applied to a study conducted by Nina Eliasoph, who examined apathy and activism among volunteer groups. In *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*, Eliasoph engaged in a 1 year research study that involved participating in a number of volunteer groups with the aim of identifying when and why volunteers appeared more apathetic or more active. Eliasoph notes a trend of volunteers acting as individuals, as opposed to acting as members of a community. She notes that, "In all the groups were many members and who never came to meetings, but sent messages offering to help out with tasks. Volunteers did not think of themselves as doing good as groups, but as individuals" (Eliasoph, 28). Taking action in this way freezes civic engagement at the scale of the individual and hinders the process of increasing the scale of the action to the level of the community and beyond, which is more effective – there is power in numbers.

The scale of action and results at the individual level is small; it can lead to feelings of powerlessness and the belief that taking action is pointless. Eliasoph describes some of the assumptions made by the volunteers, stating, "We were all presumed to know the solution: that everyone should be more like Julie, the extremely dedicated, gentle, full-time volunteer" (Eliasoph, 61). Volunteers would often make assumptions about their abilities and work ethic if things weren't going as planned. There was a lack of dialogue and communication which are essential to the formation of community and to identifying common goals. However, these volunteers did not even communicate enough to identify solutions to the problems faced by their communities. Instead, they assumed that the problem was at the individual level and to achieve results there was a need to work harder and give more.

Acting at the scale of the individual is also less political than acting as a community. Eliasoph comments on how politicians encourage citizens to act at the individual level; she writes, "These officials ask apolitical citizen-volunteers to fill in for under-funded charity and welfare agencies, saying that such 'citizenship' is more necessary now in times of cutbacks. But the politicians do not ask the citizens to discuss the political decisions that made the cutbacks" (Eliasoph, 13). The political issue is swept into the unconscious mind turning the individual apathetic. How are citizens to be motivated to contribute without understanding why it is needed in the first place?

Eliasoph also comments on common apolitical beliefs of the volunteers she encountered, "Volunteers' beliefs included an effort at convincing themselves that they lived in a democracy, and an orientation toward talk it-self" (Eliasoph, 20). Challenging the status quo or talking about "politics" was considered to be bad manners, but as Eliasoph points out, "When good manners prevent publicly minded speech in the public sphere, the public sphere has a problem" (Eliasoph, 7). Eliasoph notes a tendency of volunteers to be political behind the scenes, but hide their opinions and analyses in public, particularly in front of journalists.

Some volunteers explicitly describe politics as separate or unrelated to their lives: "They [...] experienced the world of politics, in contrast, as an inert, distant, impersonal realm, a boring and scary jumble of facts that did not really touch life" (Eliasoph, 131). This understanding of politics was linked to the fact that most volunteers generally avoided confronting large scale problems. The volunteers, "[...] made a huge effort to convince themselves that they preferred what they thought they could realistically get [...]" (Eliasoph, 82) and "Volunteers assumed volunteer groups exist to show that regular citizens really can make a difference, and that talking about these [larger scale] problems would sink the buoyant feeling of empowerment" (Eliasoph, 21). "An issue that is 'rhetoric', that is not do-able, is not close to home, and talking about a problem like torture or war would only discourage people and distract them from the work they can do. Drawing attention to a problem without solving it was considered immoral" (Eliasoph, 78).

Eliasoph sums it up best when she says,

"We often assume that political activism requires an explanation, while inactivity is the normal state of affairs. But it can be as difficult to ignore a problem as to try to solve it; to curtail feelings of empathy as to extend them; to feel powerless and out of control as to exert influence; to stop thinking as to think. There is no exit from the political world, no possibility of disengagement; human, political decisions permeate human life, whether we like it or not" (Eliasoph, 6).

Oppression and Apathy:

A good way of understanding the all-reaching influence of politics is to examine the hegemonic discourse of society. North American discourse has often been composed of a multitude of inaccurate dichotomies, or opposites. There is apparent safety in classifying everything as one of two opposites: black OR white, male OR female, good OR bad, passive OR active, rather than seeing the continuums of possibilities in between. These inaccurate classifications form the basis for the logic of exclusion and an excuse for being apathetic towards those who are different who we have labeled as "other".

In the article, "Apathy to Accountability: The Challenge of South Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission to the Intellectual in the Modern World", Jacquelin Rose troubles the binary of activism/passivism: "[...] the idea of apathy as purely passive should make us suspicious – as Freud once famously commented, it requires a great deal of activity to achieve a passive aim [...] what you don't do as a subject can have effects, might be as important in the



transformations in the world as what you do [...] The implication would be that, for anyone struck with apathy in a situation on historic injustice, there is a partial recognition, not just of the suffering of others, but of what it would do to you, just how far you might have to go, to make the link” (Clemens and Naparstek, 157, 159, 169). Eliasoph’s findings reflect the concept of apathy as active put forth by Clemens and Naparstek; she writes, “Simple apathy never explained the political silence I heard. Inside of ‘apathy’ was a whole underwater world of denials, omissions, evasions, things forgotten, skirted, avoided and suppressed [...]” (Eliasoph, 255). St. Augustine defined apathy as, “[...] a condition of moral depravity, a defiant retreat from the world of God and humankind” (Gross, 51). All three writers employ a definition of apathy that is characterized as active, conscious and productive: a “defiant retreat” that is produced with concerted effort.

Due to the psychosocial dynamics of emotions, there is a link between those in power having control over the “emotional economy” and the relation of apathy to politics and society. As Gross explains, “The monarch’s anger has a significantly disproportionate effect on the emotional economy writ large. Its capacity to become reified in the institutions and practices of government – from the dictates of law to the body of the executioner – determines disproportionately the emotional economy of the monarch’s political subjects and greatly exceeds the capacity for anger afforded the subjects themselves” (Gross, 71). In other words, the psyche of politicians and other public figures shape the public sphere. Emotions are not solely private, individual feelings, “[...] emotions are not essentially universal traits of our biology expressed by individuals, but are, rather, contested terms negotiated in a public sphere where power is distributed unevenly” (Gross, 110).

Gross comments in more detail on the influence of oppressive systems on human emotions when she writes, “The contours of our emotional world have been shaped by institutions such as slavery and poverty that simply afford some people greater emotional range than others, as they are shaped by publicity that has nothing to do with the inherent value of each human life and everything to do with technologies of social recognition and blindness” (Gross, 4). Gross describes a reaction of apathy as a kind of blindness towards the ‘other’. How we respond emotionally to the plight of another is shaped by society. I tried to remind myself of that recently when I was attending a comedy show. The comedian on stage made a lot of jokes about rape, and the audience responded with laughter. To me, this reaction reflects the social blindness that exists towards sexism and violence against women.

It is not only in recent thought that such assertions about apathy have been made. Aristotle defined emotions in relation to the public sphere, asserting that, “Anger is a deeply social passion provoked by perceived, unjustified slights, and it presupposes a public

stage where social status is always insecure” (Gross, 2). A familiar feminist phrase comes to mind: ‘The personal is political’. While emotions have historically and discursively been relegated to the private, feminine sphere, scholars as far back as Aristotle have noted that emotions are connected to the wider world – emotions are a psychosocial phenomenon. They can be shaped and interpreted according to dominant norms, including racism, sexism and xenophobia. For example, xenophobic messages in the mainstream media can quell feelings of empathy for refugees. However, there is hope that emotional connections to others can still be established outside of the dominant discourse and emotions such as angry indignation can fuel social responsibility.

In, *The Price of Indifference: Refugees and Humanitarian Action in the New Century*, Arthur C. Helton argues that people are apathetic when they personally feel insecure. He explains, “The terrible evil which produces refugees can be insulated from remedy by an indifference that arises from personal insecurity” (Helton, 12). Citizens distinguish themselves from those they consider “other” as a way to justify and maintain their own privileges and also in order to ignore the problems of “others”. Those who benefit from current power imbalances fear losing their privileges, which they likely feel entitled to. Helton predicts that, “Wrangling over privilege and justice will be a hallmark of humanitarianism in the new century” (Helton, 15).

Fear of the other fosters apathy. Governors of power foster citizens’ fears of losing safety and economic privileges through xenophobic political campaigns as well as by other means; refugees can be made to represent uncertainty, fear of the future and chaos. Conservative televised advertisements broadcast during the federal election campaign in 2011 showed images of the MV Sun Sea while touting concerns for border security. These advertisements presented the arrival of refugees as something to fear - that refugees are coming to take over, coming over by the boatload and it’s a matter of national security!

In summary, apathy arises as a result of the fear of losing one’s current privileges and social position, as well as being a result of historically rooted institutions of oppression, including slavery, colonialism, sexism, racism, and xenophobia. Apathy comes from a binary mode of thinking which brings profit to those in power and brings apathy to all those who could be abjected as “other”.

Consciousness-Raising:

When first interpreting for CCVT clients at their appointments with the psychiatrist, my eyes were opened. I think this is an important experience for volunteer interpreters. You leave with that knowledge, that truth. You hear first-hand of the global realities of violence and atrocious acts perpetrated against innocent survivors. I hadn’t really thought much about refugees before that, but then, subsequently, there were occasions when it caused me to act. Whenever I heard anti-refugee discourse, I didn’t feel apathetic, instead I felt angry.



Coming to CCVT, going to meet a client for ESL tutoring or escorting often was the greatest source of happiness in my life when I began volunteering at CCVT. I was struggling to get out of bed and I had been missing classes. I felt locked in stillness, but having a tutoring appointment at 9:00 am on a Friday - that was a real reason to get out of bed. While there was the shock of hearing accounts of torture when I was interpreting, my other volunteer work gave me pleasant astonishment: our clients are often so appreciative of support; they are warm, friendly and resilient. Despite having suffered directly and having been survivors of the most atrocious kind of human behaviour, the clients I met were able to smile, to laugh and to keep moving forwards. This experience provided the blessing of hope. Survivors inspire hope. The ability of humans to overcome adversity can be amazing, and these stories have the potential to change the discourse attached to refugees. Helton describes the resignification of refugees in the words, "Refugees thus can be a source of hope and a flesh-and-blood reflection of a tenacious life force" (Helton, 8).

Another experience that provided hope as a result of engaging and participating is working with and getting to know the staff of CCVT. Particularly when all staff are in the same room, I feel my own resilience build just looking at a roomful of people passionately caring for other people. It is motivating.

HOPE: Triggers for Action

For anyone interested in bringing about social change, the emotional response of apathy can be very frustrating. However, Gross makes a good point when he explains, "So according to Nussbaum, the cognitive element of emotion is indeed highly malleable, and therefore it is also disproportionately subject to manipulation by the rhetoric of 'sympathetic entrepreneurs' such as politicians and journalists" (Gross, 74). It is true that politicians and journalists can have a strong influence on citizens' and consumers' emotional reactions; however, the important thing is that emotional responses are malleable and changeable. Emotional reactions can be influenced by awareness-raising, new language, new imagery and new rhetoric around refugees.

A common marketing strategy of not-for-profit organizations is to appeal to people's emotions as this has been an effective way of raising funds. The good thing about emotions is that they are not biological and they are not static; the meaning of emotions is continually molded and shaped by the sum of the public sphere. Just as the politicians and journalists can facilitate apathy, activists can facilitate action. Successful communication, according to both Smith and Aristotle, demands vivid representation, which is an art practiced by everybody who communicates, but mastered especially by the rhetoricians and the authors of fictional narrative. "In order to be moved by the grief or joy

of another – and there is ultimately no purpose for emotion other than to move people – we must be informed of the cause and be familiar with the relevant characters" (Gross, 173). In other words, if we can successfully appeal to people's emotions, we can diminish the response of apathy and encourage citizens to instead take action in the face of vile realities.

What does it mean to take political action? How can the cultivation of feelings of empathy be translated into social change? I assert that building community is a most important task in this regard. As Neil Smith points out, action has a greater impact at a higher scale, such as at that of the community. Eliasoph believes that, "[...] participation in the public sphere helps cultivate a sense of community, so that people care more, and think more, about the wider world; and second, participation becomes a source of meaning-making power" (Eliasoph, 11). Eliasoph situates this meaning-making power as a cultural kind of power. She explains that, "The potential power generated in the friction of the public sphere [...] is a cultural kind of power, the power to open up public contexts for citizens to question, challenge, debate; the power to become a different kind of person, to create new meanings and ask new questions, to inspire" (Eliasoph, 14).

I will also assert that in order to build community, both a local and global lens must be applied. In order to speak as a community, there must be accountability and responsibility in identifying and naming internal oppressive practices including sexism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia. In order to form a powerful community in a diverse city like Toronto, all members must pay attention to the varied experiences of the group's population, which will often mean paying attention to political crises and problems around the globe, as well as here in Canada. Employing a localized place-based perspective is necessary to examine the local context and issues which may be characterized in different ways. It is also necessary in order to ensure that meaningful, equitable connections are sustained on the ground in the surrounding physical community.

In 2012 and beyond, it is important to not only consider the local issues and challenges, but also to keep in mind the global context. In her book, "Asylum, Migration & Community", Maggie O'Neill describes an image of inevitable global citizenship when she writes, "[...] global interdependence forces humankind to face its global challenges, both ecological and social, as a shared responsibility that has to be shouldered jointly" (O'Neill, 248). Seeing one's self in a national context and taking action as a citizen of Canada can reinforce the practice of 'other'-ing of non-citizens. Because our social systems are built on the concept of nationalism, it is often necessary to take action at the national level, however, in order to decrease social blindness towards non-nationals, it is useful to think of the individual as taking action as a citizen of the world, a position that can be occupied by human beings everywhere.

As is clear from Eliasoph's study of volunteers, developing one's own and other's awareness and knowledge is a worthwhile and necessary form of taking action.



Helton agrees, asserting the importance of, “Sharing responsibilities in crisis situations, trying to prepare and putting resources into developing a nuanced understanding of the political, economic and social situation” (Helton, 16). Examination of the political situation is essential, and therefore should count as action. Sharing accountability is good for everyone. As Helton says, “Achieving human security for others is a way to ensure our own human security. The enhancement of human dignity is thus a proper subject of statecraft” (Helton, 120).

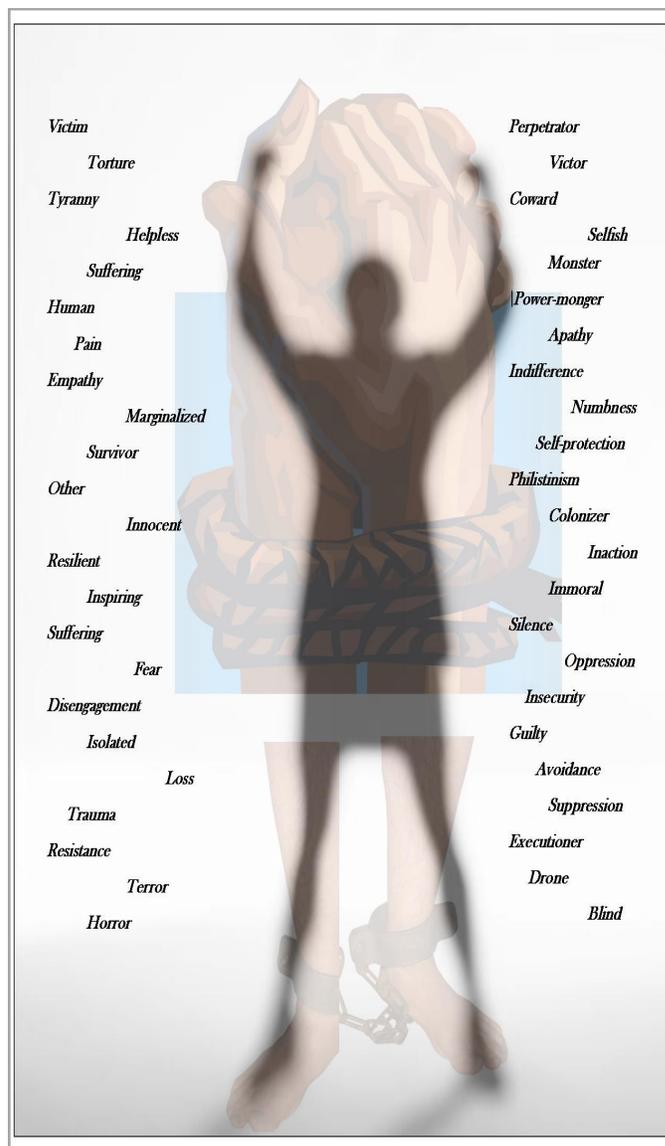
To me, hope lies in the fact that the majority of the world’s population have common interests: access to healthcare, safe and secure housing and financial security. If human beings around the globe can find a way to collaborate to take action, social change can occur and human rights can be upheld. Collaboration is a challenge, especially when stakeholders are highly diverse. It is not easy to bring a group of people to consensus, but I believe it is possible. As Eliasoph writes,

“Luckily, while those in power can monopolize wealth and material production, nobody can control all the tongues in the world” (Eliasoph, 232).

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Sunny's Moment

Poornima Ranawana

As Sunny walked through the halls of York University, they were all around him. "Everyday," he thought to himself, "every, stinking day." Student protestors with their picket signs and petitions, trying to get somebody to sign something, or just listen. All riled up over who-knows-what. Just wanting to be part of the pack, really. Who cares.

Sunny knew how to get through this crowd without having to stop and talk to anyone. Earphones, head down, no eye contact, speed up his steps, he'll make it through the hall in no time - until he sees her, that chick from SOC 2910, standing at the main table, looking like the single sunflower in a field of grass. This could be a good way to get her number.

"Hi," he says, "we're in SOC together, aren't we?"

Her smile really lit up her face. "Sunny! I'm so glad you stopped by the booth. I would love to hear your thoughts on the issue."

He realized he had been so intent on avoiding the scene that he hadn't even read a single sign.

His least favourite topic: Sri Lanka.

Of course, she would be one of those gung-ho Tamils intent on spreading the message about Eelam. Just his luck.

"I've always wanted to know your opinion," she continues, almost shyly, "because you're Sinhalese, aren't you?"

Confused, he just stares at her. How did she even know?

Sunny preferred not to talk about his ethnicity, preferred not to even associate with Sri Lankans in general. After all, it was just too much work – too much to constantly explain that yes, he was Sri Lankan and Sinhalese, but no, he did not support the war, and no, he was no LTTE supporter, and yes, he lived in Sri Lanka till he was fourteen, a Sinhalese-privileged boy in the south whose parents had a cook and a driver, and yes he had Tamil friends and no he didn't think they were any different to him and yes of course they were aware a war was raging in the north but it was more like a myth, a fairytale, like the loch ness monster. Once in a while a suicide bomber would attack the city but again that was just a part of normal life and he didn't ever have to think about the Tamil perspective until he moved to Canada and went to York University where everyone threw it in his bloody face.

"So this is Sunny, Sunny, this is Nav."

Oh great, now she's introducing him to people.

"Hi Sunny, it's so nice to meet you. Thanks for stopping by our booth, we love having the opportunity to introduce our cause and perspectives to other Sri Lankan Youth."

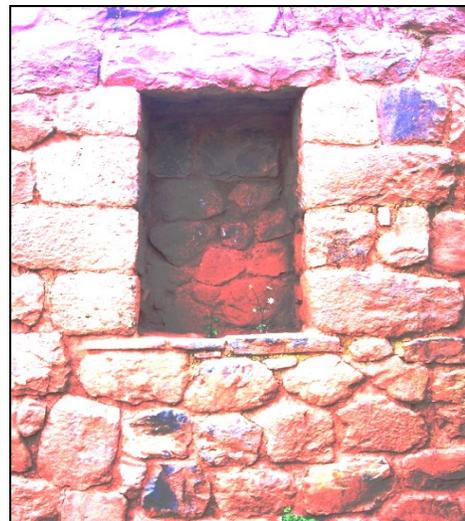
And he realizes that they are staring at him, with expectant smiles, and that he is supposed to engage in some debate about the atrocities of the war and have some sort of intellectual opinion on it.

His mouth goes completely dry. His stomach is queasy, and all he can think about is running through Achchi's house chasing Aiya, the black polished floors and Ethel Achchi sweeping, climbing up the guava tree and pretending he's in his own secret garden, and laughter and singing and mangoes and cricket and all those things he misses and all the moments he'll never get back and how he knows its wrong that he lived in a different Sri Lanka, a Sri Lanka he cant explain to any of you, and how he feels guilty and stupid and angry and he doesn't want to think about the ugly, ugly truths.

"I have to go to class."

And he turns and walks away. Earphones, head down, no eye contact, speed up his steps - he'll make it through the hall in no time, but as he walks away, its so hard not to cry, because he does care, and could care, he just can't do it.

Born in Sri Lanka, Poornima Ranawana migrated to Canada with her family in 2003. She now holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from York University and a Graduate Certificate in Corporate Communications from Seneca College.



"No Window" by Michelle Woodey

Bystander Apathy

Elena Solokhina

Psychologists believe that a little psychological knowledge can minimize the risk of bystander apathy experienced by an individual. Bystander apathy can be experienced not only by a witness of troublesome situations but also by the victim himself/herself. In both cases, individuals who are well informed about the phenomenon are able to combat bystander apathy in real-life circumstances.

One may ponder about the reason as to why bystander apathy exists. According to some scholars, this phenomenon exists because of human nature. Sigmund Freud's crowd behavior theory asserts that the interaction between two persons in a crowd is different from the interaction of two people in an isolated environment. The latter is an environment which supports the rational thought of the individual. In a crisis, if two persons do not take any action, the third person is very likely to follow suit. This is not because the third individual is evil, but rather it is an illustration of "normal" human behavior. A different outcome will only occur if the witness has experienced a similar situation and knows first-hand the importance of taking action.

Another area of consideration is the study of how bystander apathy is manifested. Following the infamous case of the twenty-eight-year-old Catherine Susan Genovese's murder in New York City in March 1964 in which there were thirty-eight witnesses who neglected to help her in the duration of thirty five minutes, two experimental psychology researchers, John Darley and Bibb Latane of Columbia University, wanted to discover if 'not helping' - bystander apathy - was a common occurrence and to explore its implications. They conducted several psychological experiments. The analysis of the data collected confirmed that a person facing trouble alone is more likely to act than a person facing trouble together with other people or a person who is aware of the presence of other witnesses. In the event that in a group of people we are witnessing the same crisis, we wait for someone to tell us what to do as opposed to having the initiative to take action.

"Statistically, it is safer for an individual to collapse in front of one or two people than in a crowd of onlookers." (Mark Tyrrell)

Additional information gathered from the experiments shows that people who witness an epileptic seizure generally express fear, anxiety and discomfort. Although none of the subjects were apathetic or indifferent, most of the individuals failed to take action. However, 85% of the subjects of the experiment would seek help if they were the sole witness. Further research has shown that social affirmation even wins over self-preservation. Subjects of the experiment put in a life threatening situation failed to

take action when they were accompanied by two other people acting as though the situation was completely normal.

Now that the causes and implications of bystander apathy have been explained, one may ponder upon what changes can be implemented to try eliminating this phenomenon. All this information can rather be disillusioning, however, there is still hope. The social scientist Arthur Beaman recently conducted another experiment. This experiment found that when he educated people about social cues and bystander apathy they were more likely to take action. He said: "It appears that knowing about this phenomenon may protect you from actually becoming that apathetic bystander." This brings me back to basics: public education. Should the social phenomenon of the bystander apathy be taught at high schools and should we consciously make extra-efforts towards social awareness?

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By **Mark Tyrrell**

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"Coil" by Michele Woodey

Apathy in Society and Towards Victims of Torture: A Personal Reflection

Susanna Boureima

When thinking of apathy in connection with victims of torture, several different scenarios come to mind. When asked where I work, the majority of the general public responds in shock and/or with a blank expression followed by a quick change of subject. Most people seem to be incapable of dealing just with the name of my work location: the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. I believe that, in this Canadian society, people are not used to dealing with harsh realities that exist in many places around the world. They appear apathetic, to have a lack of emotion or interest which I think is really their inability to face anything unpleasant.

Since having moved to Canada, I have often found that Canadians often seem to try to avoid facing realities of truths that would be openly confronted and dealt with in modern-day Germany, my country of origin. I suppose that this is probably the flipside of the otherwise so pleasant and enjoyable politeness and friendliness I love so much about Canadians. This avoidance of confrontations might be related to the fact that there has never been a war on Canadian soil (other than Aboriginal conflicts), which means the majority of the population has never had to deal with the unpleasant consequences and harsh realities of war and related "casualties" such as rape, prisoners of war and their often inhumane treatment.

Over the years, I have noticed in many different situations that people who ignore a problem often hope that it might disappear or go away on its own. In my experience that doesn't usually work, problems tend to build and get worse if not dealt with properly. It could also be related to the need of many people to put on a mask and pretend that their life is perfect. It takes strength and a lot of honesty to admit to yourself first and then to others that there might be a problem in your life. People often worry about losing their reputation and respect from others, they fear being judged; yet, they forget that NOBODY's life is perfect. Often, those people who judge you the least are the ones who have already faced their own issues and understand that we're all just human.

However, it is harder to understand how people can commit horrible war crimes and don't seem to feel any remorse. That is a different kind of apathy, a lack of emotional involvement through detachment. Psychological studies have been done that when people followed orders and the superior took the responsibility for it, people's personal moral objections disappeared and they were able to commit horrible acts of torture and/or violence towards others, but what about those superiors? How were they able to live with that burden on their conscience? I suppose they might not have

actually watched these horrible acts being committed, so by having a physical detachment, it might not have seemed that real. Therefore, their detachment enabled them to be apathetic where normal human-beings would have been consumed and overwhelmed with emotions. Although in mass genocides, I believe, there is usually also brainwashing involved (e.g. in Hitler's case) where the majority of the population is convinced that a certain ideology (hate propaganda) is right and a certain group of the population or ethnic or religious group is suddenly not considered human anymore and needs to be erased. Unfortunately the majority of the population does not have the strength and independent minds to disagree with ideologies that the masses follow. Most likely, people are just concerned with their own safety and stop caring about others. That's what I would like to call *survival egotism*.

A third angle is the so-called bystander effect or Genovese syndrome. This is a socio-psychological phenomenon that refers to cases where individuals do not offer any means of help to the victim in an emergency situation when other people are present. It refers to the phenomenon where the chance of help for the victim decreases the more bystanders there are. The mere presence of other bystanders greatly decreases intervention. People think "it's not my business", rather than putting themselves in the shoes of the victim. I heard of one experiment where they played the sounds of a small child crying and being severely beaten in a second-floor apartment, which could be heard from the street. 6 out of the 10 passerbys didn't even stop, 4 stopped and looked up and only 2 of those 4 called 911. I believe it's this apathy towards what happens to others that allows a lot of horrific acts to happen right around us, because no one interferes and stops them.

Genovese Syndrome: The Bystander Effect

A socio-psychological phenomenon that refers to cases where individuals do not offer any means of help to a victim in an emergency situation when other people are present; the victim's chances of getting help decrease the more people there are around.

First Light

Further, I was told that in fundraising for CCVT it is more effective to talk about “victims of torture” and not “survivors of torture”, even though ultimately the victims are all survivors, otherwise they wouldn’t be alive. People do feel more empathetic towards victims, especially if they know a personal story rather than abstract statistics. This is reflected in a lot of fundraising appeals where they talk about one or two personal stories to move people’s hearts and pull them out of their apathy. It has to be made real for them, otherwise there’s a detachment which will be reflected in an apathetic response.

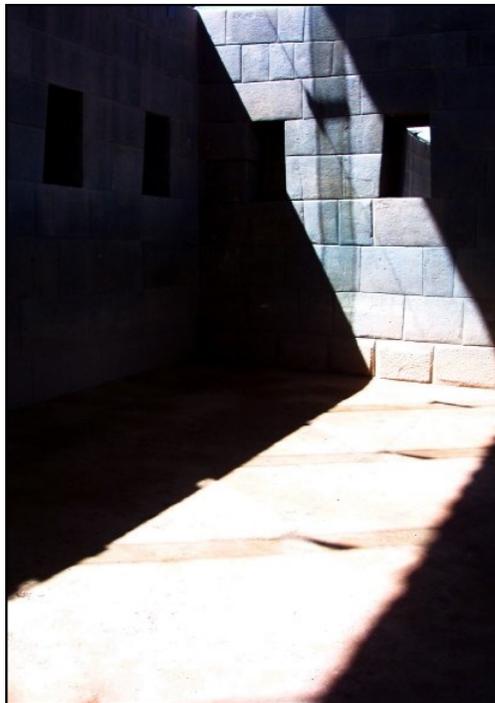
Often, a geographical and/or cultural distance will contribute further to the detachment. For example, how many North Americans really care about the hard life of unmarried (widowed) women in Afghanistan who weren’t allowed to work under the Taliban? How could they survive without making a living? How about the Rwandan genocide? It was the movie “Hotel Rwanda” that made it real for us. I’m sure most people didn’t concern themselves with the genocide in Rwanda before the movie came out. On the other hand, we can also have an overload of bad news from around the world that makes us apathetic as well. We might think for a moment, “Oh my gosh, that’s terrible” and then we forget about it and focus on our own lives. If we have too many of our own worries and problems, we might not have the emotional space or capacity to concern ourselves with others.

In order to stop apathy, we have to make the problem real and bring it close to people. Hopefully they haven’t been too desensitized yet by the flood of violence we’re confronted with every day through the media.

And last, but not least, we can also find apathy – although a different kind of apathy – in victims who have lived through hell. For them, shutting off their emotions can be a survival mechanism. Once you’ve lived through horror, your emotions may have been destroyed in the process and it will take a lot of time, love, peace and respect to restore them and allow healing.



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“Light shaft” by Michele Woodey

I Live to Testify

Marina Nemat

This article was first published in the Globe and Mail and is reprinted here with kind permission.

When I was 16 years old, in January 1982 in Evin Prison in Tehran, two men took me to a small room and tied me to a bare wooden bed. I was lying down on my stomach. One of them, Hamehd, lashed the soles of my feet with a length of cable. With every strike, I felt like my whole nervous system would explode and then would magically be put back together again, ready for the next strike. I hoped to lose consciousness, but it never happened. After a few strikes, they untied me and made me walk. It was painful and difficult. Why did they do this? Walking makes the swelling go down a little. If they continue beating prisoners for too long, the skin would rupture, and, as a result, the prisoner could die relatively quickly from bleeding or infection. This staggered method of torture helps torturers maximize the amount of pain they can inflict. Torture is not designed to get information; it is designed to break the human soul.

On February 6, at the Canada Reads debates, Marie-France Goldwater called my first memoir, *Prisoner of Tehran*, untruthful. It's so easy to point a finger at another human being, claim she has not told the truth, and walk away. But what if that person, the bullied, is a survivor of torture? Claiming that an account of torture and imprisonment is untruthful is like picking up the lash and beating the victim again. My feet literally hurt as I heard Ms. Goldwater's comments. I have been called a liar, a traitor, and a whore before, but on those occasions, I knew exactly where those comments were coming from; I could understand their origins. They either came from the agents of the Iranian regime, a regime that has a long history of running smear campaigns against dissidents abroad, or from members and supporters of extremist Iranian political groups. By writing *Prisoner of Tehran*, I stepped on many toes, and it was only natural to get a reaction from those who saw me as a threat for political, religious, or ideological reasons. But why was Ms. Goldwater calling me untruthful? I couldn't see a reason for it. No reason at all. She was a Canadian lawyer. She was supposed to protect the innocent – or so I thought.

While I was in Evin, my parents came to the prison for limited and very brief visitations once a month. They sobbed as they looked at me from behind the thick glass barrier in the visitation room. I smiled. I had to hold back my tears, because if I showed any sign of distress, I would be tortured or maybe even executed for it. There were (and are) thousands of prisoners in Evin prison, and, in the 80s, the vast majority of us were teenagers.

One of the priests from my Catholic church in Tehran brought a copy of the Bible to the prison gate, but the guards refused to take it and deliver it to me. I had been disconnected from the world and was drowning in a black



hole of despair, injustice, and pain. In Evin, I broke under torture. I signed every piece of paper they told me to sign, because I just wanted to go home and sleep in my own bed. I was only 16 years old. They told me that I had to marry my interrogator or my parents would be arrested. I complied. They told me I had to convert to Islam. I did. Then they changed my name from Marina to Fatemeh. I had lost my family, my religion, my freedom, my dignity, and even my name. How much can you take away from a person before she crumbles into dust?

It took me about 20 years to be able to look back at my past and write about it. It took me 20 years to discover that the Marina I was before Evin had died and that the new Marina I had become was a witness. No more. No less. I live to testify. Without it, my life loses all meaning.

Canada took me when I had nowhere to go. It allowed me to gradually find my way back to myself and to the reality of the person I have become, a woman who breathes because she has a story to tell, a story that is not only hers but, in a humble and imperfect yet honest way, is also the story of thousands of others who have been terribly wronged. People are being tortured and executed in many countries as we speak because they have dared speak against oppressive regimes and demand the freedoms that many of us take for granted.

Dear Ms. Goldwater: the witness is the cornerstone of the justice system. If we throw stones at her, we have taken a step toward burying freedom and democracy. Canada and Canadians deserve better than this.

Marina Nemat is a writer and a scholar living in Toronto. She is a board member of CCVT.

The Prisoner's Dilemma

Ava Emaz

In the hypothetical prisoner's dilemma, posited in game theory, we are asked to imagine a quagmire involving two prisoners and a clever prosecutor. The two prisoners are placed in separate isolation cells so they cannot communicate with one another. The prosecutor, who does not possess sufficient information for a conviction offers both the same deal. They both have the option of cooperating with prison authorities or betraying them. Cooperation entails making a confession against the other prisoner, while betrayal means remaining silent. If one prisoner confesses and the other remains silent, the one who confesses will be released immediately while the other will be held for twenty years in prison. If they both confess, they will each be imprisoned for ten years. If neither confesses, each will be held in prison for two years. Not knowing whether the other prisoner has confessed and fearing the twenty year sentence, each prisoner is tempted to confess. Yet the outcome obtained when both prisoners confess is worse for each than the outcome they would have obtained if they had both remained silent. Paradoxically, pursuing one's self interest could lead to a worse outcome for both the group and for each individual.

Now let us now turn to a different scenario. You are arrested at your home by undefined officials, who blindfold you and take you to a notorious prison. You suspect that you may have been arrested for your involvement with an opposition organization, but you know that the guards do not possess sufficient information for a conviction. Upon arriving at the prison, the prison authorities begin to torture you and demand that you provide them with information about your accomplices. At first you resist, but the guards threaten to use harsher methods of torture, and the pain becomes unbearable. You are faced with a dilemma: should you repent and implicate your acquaintances in order to reduce your own torture and possibly reduce your sentence? Or should you endure through the torture and remain silent? With the added element of torture, the difficult, albeit hypothetical prisoner's dilemma begins to resemble just one of the complex, actual dilemmas that many prisoners are confronted with.

The ramifications of remaining silent in the actual prisoner's dilemma are far greater than in the hypothetical one. In addition to having to serve a longer jail sentence, remaining silent means tolerating more interrogation sessions, bearing more torture, physical and emotional pain, and possibly facing execution. The only factors that would deter a prisoner from cooperating with prison guards would be a strong commitment to one's values and a firm refusal to harm another individual by implicating him or her in a similar situation.

However, faced with the threat of torture, commitment to these beliefs becomes increasingly perilous and difficult, and the urge to act in one's own self interest becomes greater.

In their narratives, three Iranian political prisoners: Azadeh Agah, Sousan Mehr and Shadi Parsi describe the role of *tavvabs* in their cells. The word *tavvab* means a repentant, in the context of Iranian prisons, repentants become informants who collaborate with prison authorities. In the process of becoming a *tavvab*, one is "forced to denounce [one's] politics and be somebody other than [oneself]: an interrogator, a pious [being], a spy.

"By categorizing political prisoners as infidels and sinners, authorities not only feel apathetic towards them, but also feel they are fulfilling a duty and ridding society of terrorists and sinners when torturing prisoners."

Although the phenomenon of using torture to extract information, and the subsequent creation of informants is not unique to Iran's prisons, "this process takes a particular religious political and ideological form in [Iran's] Islamic regime and religious morality is enforced through the creation of informants." In the 1979 revolution, Khomeini, the first Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran declared that all anti-Islamic activists who entered Iran's prisons would leave as supporters. As such, prisoners who enter Iranian prisons are encouraged to befriend the prison authorities (by becoming *tavvabs*). Declining this offer of friendship means that one has chosen to remain a traitor and thus an enemy, not just of the prison authorities but of Islam and God. When addressing prisoners who have refused to repent, prison authorities use words such as *kafar* (an infidel or non-believer), *monafeq* (a hypocrite/someone who is only pretending to be a believer) or *mohareb* (anti-Allah). Newspapers refer to political prisoners as "anarchists" and "terrorists." Torturers often use euphemisms to refer to acts of torture, for example, flogging the soles of the feet is frequently referred to as a form of *ta'zir* (religious or divine punishment). By categorizing political prisoners as infidels and sinners, authorities not only feel apathetic towards them, but also feel they are fulfilling a duty and ridding society of terrorists and sinners when torturing prisoners. The dichotomies that currently exist within Iran's prisons, between pure and impure, friend and enemy, believer and infidel exacerbate the apathy of guards towards prisoners, and allow prison authorities to torture prisoners without feeling guilt or remorse.

Prisoners who accept to become *tavvabs* gradually become the marionettes of prison guards, initially obeying their orders for the sake of survival, then gradually becoming brainwashed and losing their previous identities. In the course of becoming a *tavvab*, one is forced to forget genuine beliefs, to accept the offer of friendship with prison guards on the basis of fear, to betray one's friends, to implement the very rules that at one point one challenged, to become the very being that one once feared, and to become apathetic towards the suffering of others, all in the name of Islam and purification. The range of responsibilities that are conferred upon *tavvabs* vary widely, often as more prisoners cooperate with prison guards, the scope of the *tavvab's* responsibility also grows. Recalling her personal experience in Evin prison,

Shadi Parsi explains that initially, it would have been sufficient for *tavvabs* to provide prison guards with names and addresses of friends but gradually, more was expected of *tavvabs*, as more prisoners complied with the initial task. She explains that some *tavvabs* began to assist in the interrogation of prisoners; they helped interrogators create organizational charts of various opposition parties. The charts became increasingly detailed and expanded as the number of *tavvabs* increased. Other *tavvabs* set up appointments with their unsuspecting friends and accompanied by prison officials, watched them get arrested. Shadi Parsi provides an account of a *tavvab* whose unbearable pain and suffering prompted her to implicate her own mother. *Tavvabs* also check on prisoners to ensure that they do not talk, laugh or exchange information, and as such, make other prisoners more mistrustful of one another, and add to the general anxiety and paranoia that is particularly pervasive in Iran's prisons.

Though they usually receive preferential treatment from prison authorities, *tavvabs* become increasingly isolated while serving their sentences and do not benefit from the genuine friendships that are established among other prisoners. They lose the trust of others by betraying them and instead become friends with their former torturers, while at the same time remaining their victims. Some *tavvabs* gradually become so indoctrinated that they take pride in their cooperation with torturers. Most appalling of all, some *tavvabs* even participate in the executions of prisoners to prove that they had fully repented.

In many ways, the collaboration of *tavvabs* has allowed the Iranian government to arrest so many people in short periods of time. Some prisoners have been able to withstand torture and punishment and have refrained from incriminating anyone else, but as Shadi Parsi explains, this was very cumbersome and the *tavvabs* exhibited the dark side that could potentially surface in each prisoner, especially when under immense physical and emotional pain. She adds that *tavvabs* demonstrated the tendency to preserve one's physical and emotional well-being at any cost.

The aforementioned hypothetical prisoner's dilemma has the aim of demonstrating a conflict between individual and

group rationally. Members of a group concerned purely with rational self interest could end up worse than a group whose members act against self interest. The real prisoner's dilemma actualizes the hypothetical prisoner's dilemma and demonstrates how prison authorities in Iran have used the concern for one's self interests to their advantage, gradually persuading victims to turn into victimizers. The actual prisoner's dilemma demonstrates lucidly that in addition to being a cause of torture, apathy could also be an effect of torture. Furthermore, the actual prisoner's dilemma reminds us that "it is simplistic to think that torturers are a bunch of sadists", "that quite ordinary people could become the cruellest torturers, and that "anybody is capable of torturing others if he stops seeing them in their human calibre."

Most importantly, however, the prisoner's dilemma demonstrates how it is still possible, even in the gravest circumstances, where one's life is in danger, to maintain a commitment towards the essence of one's being and towards the well-being of others. The actual prisoner's dilemma demonstrates how through the establishment of genuine friendships, victims of torture have been able to help one another withstand torture and avoid turning into victimizers.

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The Philosophy of Philistines

Ezat Mossallanajed and Tanya Schryer

In his masterpiece “The Bridge over the Drina”, the Yugoslav novelist Ivo Andric, speaks of a Turkish foreman who orders a death sentence by means of horrible techniques of torture against a Bosnian worker due to his alleged rebellious attempts:

“Everything must be made ready so that at noon that same day he should be impaled alive on the outermost part of the construction work at its highest point, so that the whole town and all the worker should be able to see him from the banks of the river...so that midday all the people might see what happened to those who hindered the building of the bridge, and that the whole male population, both Turks and rayah, from children to old men, must gather on one or other of the banks to witness it” (Andric, p.46)

His order was carried out by a professional torturer, named Merdžan, who crucified the poor victim and prolonged his torture despite his constant pleas to accelerate his death. Merdžan takes pride in his apathy to the victim and in obeying the order of the powerful foreman. It took three days for the worker to die.

It is reputed that the Persian king Abbas I used to keep five hundred professional executioners in his royal court including two man eaters who were assigned to eat prisoners of war alive. The king’s head of the executioners was a person named Ahmad Agha who was once sent to the Northern Province of Gilan to suppress a popular revolt. He went there with iron fists and stayed for one year and massacred thousands of poor and mostly innocent people indiscriminately.

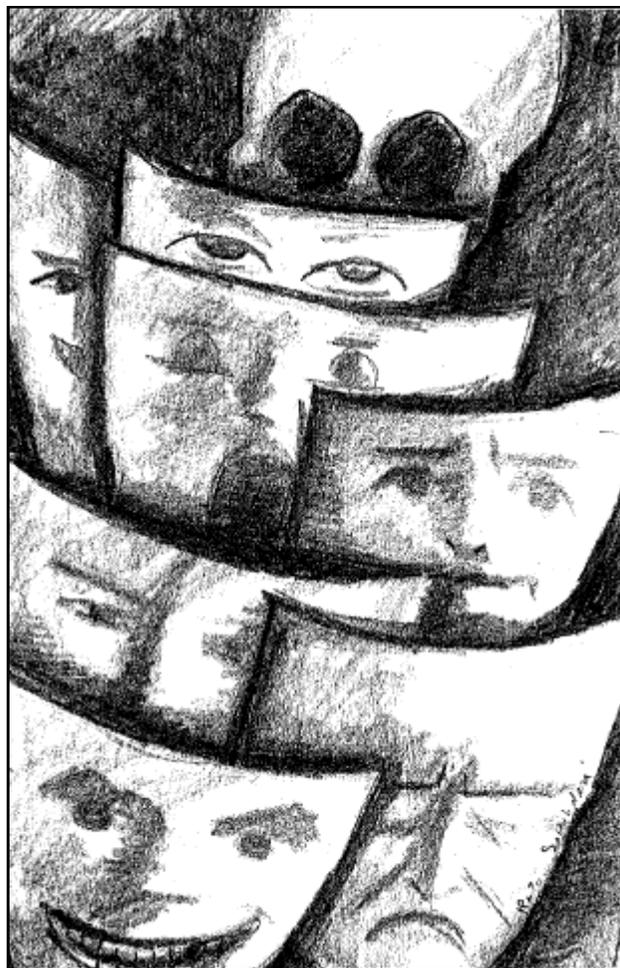
It is unfortunate that in the second decade of the 21st century there is no shortage of human butchers like the king, the foreman, Merdžan, Ahmad Agha, and the man eaters. It is surprising to a decent human person how one can be reduced to a beast that is absolutely apathetic to the horrible suffering of fellow human beings even if they are enemies. It is our contention that the perpetration of atrocities as such, among others, needs a certain level of philistinism.

Nowadays we read quite a few reports about torture, genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity across the globe. In many cases, these crimes are perpetrated by collective actions of military people or ethnic groups. There are horrible cases of public executions or stoning that are watched by thousands of ordinary people. The feelings of apathy in the aforementioned examples are impossible without the existence of philistinism. It can manifest itself in various forms such as solipsism, pedantism,

shallowness, narrow-mindedness, and vulgarity.

Philistinism is defined as apathy or hostility towards cultural values including altruism, aesthetics, love, and compassion. Philistines are devoid of delicate feeling with no appreciation of the nobler aspirations and sentiments of humanity. Hubbard, author of *Philistine: A Periodical Process*, interprets the idea of philistinism as: “[...] a little of the wild beast in a man, a something that is fascinated by suffering, and that delights in inflicting pain [...]” (Hubbard & Taber, p.78).

The above definition is true about torturers who normally go through regular training and systemic indoctrination on the ideology of torture: chauvinism, social Darwinism (the existence of struggle of survival in human society), absolute loyalty, sacredness of performing duty, significance of their jobs, etc. There is a level of blatant ignorance a torturer experiences when inflicting such a level of pain onto



another human being. They often justify their crimes by mentioning that they had no choice but to obey the orders and perform their duties: "and if I didn't do that someone else would have done it."

All philistines suffer from solipsism; they don't see anybody in the world except themselves. They see themselves through a magnifying mirror and others through a microscope. Philistines take their illusory magnified pictures as real. They become giants to themselves and approach others as dwarfs. They all suffer from what is referred to in psychology as megalomania (an inflated sense of self-esteem). To maintain this position they need power – real or delusional, which is a dangerous situation that leads to tyranny and torture.

Ignorant and omnipotent persons who set themselves above everything and everybody are capable of committing multiple crimes including torture to "others" whom they consider their worthless enemies. Hitler considered himself Führer (leader) – a living god sitting in a throne above all persons with a "mission" to exterminate Jews, gypsies, communists, and homosexuals. The Hutu genociders in Rwanda referred to their Tutsi victims as *Inyenzi* (a Kinyarwanda word meaning 'cockroach'). In August 1979, the Iranian philistine, Ayatollah Khomeini, declared himself the commander in chief of Iranian Armed Forces and ordered the Iranian Army and parliamentary forces (*pasdaran*) to attack Kurdistan. He called his opponents "corrupts on Earth and belligerents to God". Following his religious verdict thousands of philistines marched in different cities with the following chant, "my beloved Khomeini! please allow me to shed blood!". The invasion of Kurdistan by Khomeini's army and parliamentary led to the massacre of Kurdish people and the perpetration of multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Philistines like Hitler, Khomeini, or Hutu genociders are intoxicated by power. There is no flexibility and tolerance in their outlook and practice. Opponents should be suppressed and not be allowed to live. Nothing is more enjoyable for them than to see their potential or actual enemies weak and subordinated. They love to be flattered but pretend that they are humble. This closeness is a green signal to torture and tyranny. According to the Iranian writer and ex-political prisoner Ms. Monireh Baradaran:

"It is simplistic to think that torturers are a bunch of sadists. There might be quite a few sadistic people among them, but experience has shown that quite ordinary people could become the cruelest torturers. Anybody is capable of torturing others if he stops seeing them in their human caliber. What provides a torturer with capability of committing the crime of torture is his unquestionable power as well as his closed ideological world outlook." (Baradaran, p. 31-32)

Philistines' megalomania does not prevent them from following a culture of servitude. It is astounding that philistinism can combine two opposites: domination and subordination. Philistines are small with the big and big with the smalls. While they consider themselves king of cats, they are incapable of making definitive decisions without a command from above. Their narrow-mindedness and vulgarism lead them to love a culture of subordination and indoctrination that can include them as both giver and receiver.

"They [torturers] develop an attitude that is well described by Erich Fromm as a type of psychological necrophilia. It is a, "character rooted passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive"

A tyrannical system that warrants torture propagates philistinism as one of its techniques of survival. Torturers are recruited from among philistines in the rank and files – especially those with a strong tendency for subordination. As mentioned before, the system takes them through regular training and systemic indoctrination. The closeness of a tyrannical system makes these philistines perpetual captives of their own philistinism with no opening to the world of beauty, arts, wisdom, humanism, love, and compassion. They are brainwashed to consecrate their subordination and justify their crimes in the name of 'obeying the orders'. They are taught to bestow hierarchy as the highest merit. They develop an attitude that is well described by Erich Fromm as a type of psychological necrophilia. It is a, "character rooted passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive" (Aggrawal, p. 30). A necrophilic philistine reduces all human persons to commodities that they can shape and own.

Another characteristic of philistinism is a strict allegiance to the practice of utilitarianism. Philistines are so involved in their petty practical businesses that they do not bother themselves to think, read, or listen unless these serve their immediate needs. They love abstract figures and famous quotations that they can use in almost all occasions in order to receive tangible benefits in a short period of time. They have no time or interest to analyze statistics or verify the accuracy of their own statements with examples from experience.

Philistines are proud of their little knowledge and pretend to know everything. They have no hesitation to resort to plagiarism and demonstrate discoveries of great thinkers as their own. The philosophy of philistines, therefore, is the caricature of other people's thoughts.



Philistines are always motivated by their blind faith rather than by knowledge. They develop an irrational passion for their actions and never engage in critical thinking. The passion as such leads them to make a tyrannical system that should stay eternally. It is a well-known fact that faith without reason and passion without wisdom can give *carte blanche* to torture and tyranny. Making a religion out of their sheer sentiments, philistines commit all sorts of crimes in the name of good against evils. According to the celebrated philosopher, Blaise Pascal, "men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction" (Gilbert, p. 34).

Philistines are not consistent in their thoughts and actions. They go with the current and are always overwhelmed with the petty problems of daily life. They are highly opportunistic with a tendency to change their loyalty overnight. Depending on the situation they may change from secularism to religious fundamentalism. It is, therefore, not surprising to hear about torturers who served opponent regimes or communist politicians in the former Soviet Union who became staunch supporters of religion in post-Soviet era in order to maintain their power.

Philistines normally lead a double-standard life. While they take good care of their own skin and that of their close family members, they are apathetic to the suffering of others. They are caring people at home and human butchers in torture chambers or war zones. What will follow is taken from Eduardo Galeano's masterpiece, *The Book of Embraces*:

"...he and he are not the same person.... after all, he is an official who goes to work on time and does his job. When the exhausting day's work is done, the torturer washes his hands. Ahmadou Gherab, who fought for the independence of Algeria, told me this. Ahmadou was tortured by a French official for several months. Every day, promptly at 6:00 P.M., the torturer would wipe the sweat from his brow, unplug the electric cattle prod and put away the other tools of the trade. Then he would sit beside the tortured man and speak to him of his family

problems and of the promotion that didn't come and of how expensive life is. The torturer would speak of his insufferable wife and their newborn child who had not permitted him a wink of sleep all night; he railed against Orán, that shitty city, and against the son of a bitch of a colonel who ...Ahmadou, bathed in blood, trembling with pain, burning with fever would say nothing." (Galeano, p. 106-107)

In summary, philistinism is one of the worst evils that can inflict upon an individual, a community, or an entire society. Solipsism, vulgarism, narrow-mindedness, and apathy to culture, love, and compassion can lead to hate, to torture, and to tyranny. The prevalence of collective philistinism has led our humanity, on more than one occasion, into a state of fascism. From the regime of Benito Mussolini to the actions of Hitler during WWII to the current events within the autocratic Middle East and Guantanamo Bay, we can easily observe the upper hands of philistinism.

The tyranny and philistinism come hand in hand; one cannot exist without the other. When philistines rule then torture and similar heinous crimes will surely ensue. The synergy of these two evils produces a vicious circle that is hard to escape. This never ending circle can only be broken with the use of public awareness towards philosophical enlightenment, humanism, and cultural progress. These have the potential to promulgate the feeling of empathy, love, compassion, and humanity. There is an urgent need to fight against philistinism in today's alienated world that suffers from all sorts of fanaticisms and obscurantism.

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Religion and the Cruel Return of Gods

Ezat Mossallanajed

Religion and the Cruel Return of Gods is a philosophical journey around the world for those looking for enlightenment as to why religion can turn violent and what we can do about it. It is the latest book to be published by CCVT's Settlement Trauma Counsellor and Policy Analyst, Ezat Mossallanajed. You can purchase your copy online at www.zagroseditions.com when it is released in early March, 2012.

During the period after WWII and particularly in the 1960s a truly optimistic intellectual cultural environment developed as improvements in education and welfare seemed to promise that society would at last come to its senses and avoid the conflicts brought about by the twinning of dogma, political or religious, with imperialistic ambitions – conflicts that have plagued the human race since the dawn of civilization. As we reached the end of the 20th Century and now start the 21st this dream has been well and truly shattered and it is now seen as impossibly Utopian. Ezat Mossallanejad, in his book "Religions and the Cruel Return of Gods" has employed an objective and philosophical approach to enable us to better understand why human violence can be justified by religious belief. He illustrates the ugly face of today's religious revivalism and reveals the root causes and exemplifies all that is best in the struggle for secular human rights in fighting for our humanitarian freedoms. Ezat points the way towards peace, harmony, global enlightenment and the emancipation of our fellow human beings from all types of oppression by those who claim authority on the basis of mystical philosophy.

Professor Sir Harold Kroto;
Educator and Enlightener, Secular Humanist, Scientist - Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry 1996
Francis Eppes Professor of Chemistry, The Florida State University.



Book Synopsis: *Religion and the Cruel Return of Gods* will provide a holistic approach to religion as a form of social consciousness. It will explore the good and evil ideas and practices in different religious traditions. It also endeavours to understand the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of today's religious revivalism. My intention is not to give credit to religion nor discredit it. Religion is linked with faith and obedience. It is suffused with human sentiment. However, as long as you consider yourself an insider, everything seems perfect, but the moment you step outside, you encounter a dilemma. Mark Twain was right when he said that there are many true religions in the world, and most of them insist on the deceitfulness of the others. Throughout my study, I will employ an objective and philosophical approach to the phenomenon of religion and human violence all the while trying to remain non-judgemental, holistic and interdisciplinary.

Religion and the Cruel Return of Gods is composed of thirteen separate yet interrelated chapters. I will explore the challenge of defining religion, a vast and complicated subject that one can hardly give a definition without facing multiple exceptions. I base my studies on two categories of religion – western prophetic religions and eastern religions, thus paving the way towards an understanding of various theories on the roots of all religions.

I examine the concepts of belief, holiness, identity, ritual and liturgy. I will discuss the doctrine of salvation, religious myths and codes of conduct as well as demonology, angelology, and miracles. I will explain a pyramid of theories – theological, agnostic and atheistic – on the origin of religion. Learn of the historical developments of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Ba-ha'ism, Hinduism, Sikhism plus Eastern Buddhism, Jainism, Shintoism, Daosim and Confucianism. My research took me traveling across the globe to study the phenomenon of religious revivalism of the present day. The Cruel Return of Gods is examined in the Moslem world, in Africa, Europe, USA, India, the Far East as well as Latin America. Engage me in a thorough analysis of the Arab Revolts. The prospect of the domination of Islamic fanaticism is investigated in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain.

Special attention is paid to the nature and characters of today's violence. I confess that despite my non-judgemental approach, I do intend to condemn violence, as the main cause of human backwardness and enslavement.

In an attempt to be as objective as possible, I have remained agnostic throughout my work. My agnosticism does not, however, prevent me from maintaining my personal integrity as a secular humanitarian and human rights advocate. I do not accept any fixed ideas or predetermined realities and I always keep the famous dictum of "doubt everything" in mind.

Kidnapping Nazanin

Soheila Pashang

From the dynasties of Hotaki and Durrani,
To the war imposed by the British-
The reign of Nadir Shah
And the defeat of Soviet Communists-
Leading to the up rise of the Taliban
And the invasion of imperialists
Plying the sky, dropping bombs
Under the guise of war on terror,
And a moral mission to rescue women
From the Hijab
And the oppression of Islam-

Oh, women of Afghanistan

Housed in a ruined town far from the apple tree,
Sunshine and red fish-
Who is to claim your imposed silence, your miseries?
Your captured bodies, buried in dark holes?
Beaten, raped, stoned
For holding the dream of learning how to read?

It is not just the Taliban
As the West coerced us to believe-
The gender war had begun long before,
When you had no choice but hiding your son under your burqa
And veiling your daughter from sight
Shielding her from the soldier's lust-
Drinking Pepsi Cola and Sovietsky Vodka

Yes, you resisted-
When you witnessed
Armed men grabbing your Tannaz,
Throwing her scrawny body to the ground,
Squeezing her infantile breasts,
And gang-raping her, one by one.
There is resistance
In meeting horror with resilience
And continuing to draw breath.
You close your eyes
No longer able to bear the shame
Of bleeding Afghanistan

**There is resistance
In meeting horror with resilience
And continuing to draw breath.**

You resisted-
When they poured boiling water
On your chest and genitals-
You asked your neighbor to heal the open wounds
By washing them with salt-
There is resistance in ablutions
When they are your choice.

But,
They come back en mass
And broke your husband's arms and legs
Before kidnapping your twelve year old-
Months later she reappeared at your door
With swollen womb,
Her body bleeding life into her murderer's child-
Her crime being refusal to dance bare
Before the armed men, laughing in the grey smoke
Of the poppy fields.
Mere days after CIA agents
Cast the body of Bin Laden to the sea!

Oh, Afghanistan!



Apathy with regard to torture in Catholic thinking

Father John Perry

The Norwegian resistance fighter Peter Moen, a Christian, wrote the following description of a religious experience he had in the Victoria Oslo's Terrasse Prison in 1944 while he was undergoing torture by his Nazi captors:

This is a real experience.
 On my cell I caught a glimpse
 Of Christ's head – crowned with thorns –
 His stilled pain had given way to deep
 peace
 And he seemed to say mutely: all is
 atoned.
 You, God and man, willed to die
 And to suffer the bitter pain of innocence!
 Did the blood flow less red
 In your heart than it does now in mine?
 Oh, no – but by the power of your sacri-
 fice
 You would stop the suffering of the world
 And in your words: It is finished
 Give sinners pass to heaven.
 Oh, Christ – let me call you
 My brother in need and pain!
 Show me by your grace the way to salva-
 tion
 From fear and sin and death!!

Peter Moen did not experience any apathy from his vision of Christ regarding him in his prison cell as he suffered torture. However, many Catholic Christians have had the experience of apathy, or worse, not from Christ but from fellow Catholics as they faced their ordeals of torture. This is a generalization that admits of many exceptions but in our security conscious world interrogational torture can be part of some Catholics' thinking and practice even when they at the same time uphold human rights.

The most important meaning of apathy is freedom from passion or feeling. However, it is a secondary meaning that will be important for what follows. Apathy is indifference to what is calculated to move feelings or to excite interest or action. The opposite of apathy is empathy.

Torturers in Brazil during the military dictatorship there (1964-85) commonly employed a method of torture called the parrot's perch (*pau de arara*). According to Human Rights Watch the perch "is a bar on which the victim is

suspended from the back of his knees, with his hands tied to his ankles. Once on the perch, the victim, usually stripped naked, is subjected to beatings, electric shocks and near-drowning..." All of this is excruciatingly painful for the victim. But experienced torturers look on the agony of their prisoner with apathy. For other observers what is happening is an unmitigated travesty of humanity.

According to the Brazilian Constitution, torture is a heinous crime not bailable or subject to grace or amnesty. In 1997, the National Congress passed a harsher legislation against the crime of torture than they were obliged to when it ratified the 1984 "International Convention against Torture."

However, an important report from Amnesty International says the following: "Torture and ill-treatment continue to be used by elements within all Brazil's police forces as a means of investigation and to extract confessions... Although the federal government launched a campaign to combat torture in 2001, prosecution figures under the 1997 Torture Law continue to be extremely low given the endemic practice of the crime." Many police precincts include a torture room where the *pau de arara* is used.

In 1992 uniformed military police in the Carandiru prison massacred 111 inmates. A survey done only a few days after the massacre indicated that 60 percent of the public approved of the police action. The same survey also revealed that 56 percent of the interviewed thought that the value of human rights should not be extended to certain types of criminals, particularly murderers and rapists.

One of the many disturbing things about all of this is that most victims and torturers in Brazil are Catholic. Many Brazilians claim they are committed to Jesus of Nazareth who, at the end of his life, suffered severe torture leading to his death on a cross. Every year on a day called in a somewhat ironical way Good Friday Jesus' sufferings and death are re-enacted in a ritual way. Despite their sincere sorrow and sadness about the sufferings of Jesus, Brazilians are willing to perpetrate outrageous acts on other Catholics or to approve of these when done by others.

Similar results come from the United States. A 2005 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press conducted among 2000 adults found that in responding to the question "Do you think the use of torture against suspected terrorists in order to gain important information can often be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified?" 21% of the Catholics answered "often"; 35% answered "sometimes"; 16% "rarely" and only 26% "never". This means that three out of four Catholics justify torture under some circumstances. In the general population of Americans the same survey showed the proportion justifying torture is less; only two out of three would allow it in some circumstances.



Catholic social teaching consists in the following values, all of which relate to how Catholics should approach the institution and practice of torture without apathy: human dignity, the common good, the recognition of both rights and duties, option for the poor, care for creation, solidarity, subsidiarity and participation, good governance, and the promotion of peace.

We reject the idea that anyone can stray beyond the boundaries of our concern for them for any reason, and even that there are any such boundaries at all.

Human dignity is fundamental to the Catholic's call to repudiate any form of apathy face to face with torture. After having Jesus scourged, the Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate brought him out of the torture chamber bleeding and suffering and said to his assembled enemies: "Here is the man" (John 19:5). Created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) every human, not to mention Jesus himself, deserves our utmost respect.

The common good refers to our use of reason to discover what elements in our world support and foster integral human development and what don't. In concert with the world community and the United Nations, Catholics would strongly assert that torture is uniquely evil. With Jean Améry in France we would say that "whoever has been tortured stays tortured", and for this reason should never be used for any reason.

The recognition of both rights and duties would be one way Catholics would approach the complexities of national security with its legitimate demands with the duty to protect the human rights of all.

By the option for the poor, Catholics make the claim that God is definitively on the side of the poor, as opposed to the powerful and rich, and the suffering of torture renders a person poor and defenceless, irrespective of the person's gender, religious affiliation or lack of it, political beliefs or race.

Care for creation usually refers to our environment and while these figures do not necessary display American Catholic apathy towards torture, they do suggest that these believers do not subscribe to the current Church teaching on torture in the 1965 Vatican Two document "The Church in the Modern World" and Pope John Paul Two's 1993 encyclical letter "The Splendour of Truth that torture is everywhere and always "intrinsically evil" and can therefore never be justified under any the respect due to it by humans. It is closely related to solidarity, a rich concept for Catholics, which demands that we reject the idea that anyone can stray beyond the boundaries of our concern for them for any reason, and even that there are any such boundaries at all.

Subsidiarity and participation would say that torture

is all our concern, and not merely that of government officials or military authorities. When Joe Darby, the Abu Gharaib whistle blower, saw the photos on the cd given to him by the prison guard Charles Graner, he knew he had to do something about the torture and humiliation they depicted, even though this would be at a serious cost to himself and his Army career.

Good governance and the promotion of peace suggest that apathy with respect to torture have cost us a great deal in credibility and future prospects for settlements in many conflicts in our world.

Speaking historically, the Catholic Church unfortunately does not have a robust record of opposition to torture. One thinks of the Spanish Inquisition, for instance, or, more recently, of the amicable and supportive relationship between the majority of bishops in Argentina with the military junta during the "Dirty War" there from 1976 to 1983 when torture was widely used prior to the disappearances of more than 20,000 people. What seems important to stress is that this apparent apathy in face of the practice of torture is not true for many Catholics throughout the world and is in no way congruent with contemporary Catholic thinking.

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Gaudium et spes, 27, *Veritatis splendor*, 80.

Améry was the nom de guerre of Hans Meyer, an Austrian-born Jew who became the pioneer of the Holocaust survival literature, Irene Heidelberger-Leonard, *Jean Améry Revolte in der Resignation* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004).

*John Perry is a Jesuit priest and the Director of the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice. He also serves as a board member of AICAC (Association of Catholics against Torture). He has written a book on torture entitled *Torture: Religious Ethics and National Security* (Novalis, 2005).*



Reflections on *The Jesus of Golden Cemetery*

Shahla Pezeshkzad

Noghrekar, M. (2010). *The Jesus of Golden Cemetery: A novel about patients and employees being victimized in mental institutions*. Baltimore: PublishAmerica.

This book is a personal reflection of Dr. Masoud Noghrekar who has practiced in a US mental health facility of years. It is the true story of his patients who suffer from various mental health complications ranging from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to depression and bi-polar disorder. Most of these patients (and some staff members of the facility) are victims of racism, harassment, and stigmatization at various levels. In the introduction, the author shares his motivation about writing such a compelling book on limitations of western approach to the treatment of mental health patients:

"In this novel, I have tried to show the role of money and power mongering in patient care, problems in regard to mental illness care, defamation of character in the work place and unethical behaviors in the work place. My sole purpose for writing this series of books is to help correct and improve conditions for patients (residents, staff, and therefore companies that run hospitals and facilities in the psychiatric field."

Dr. Noghrekar was employed in a mental health facility named Golden Life Centre that is located in the Golden Cemetery Street – hence the author analogy in choosing a title for his book. There are approximately sixty patients there who are taken care of by three medical personnel in each shift.

Golden Life Centre can be taken as a microcosm of many other mental health facilities in the USA and possibly in Canada. The first problem is the inadequacy of staff and the ineffectiveness of the care needed by patients suffering from deep depression and severe trauma. It is upsetting that more often than not patients are left to themselves when they are desperately in need of medical care. Another problem is the incompetency of the staff and their lack of professional knowledge. The hospital is overcrowded and there is total lack of recreational and entertainment activities. The author witnesses the tragic death of two patients due to high blood pressure, being overdosed and lethargy within a short period of two months. The institution's authorities spare no time to cover up the incidents.

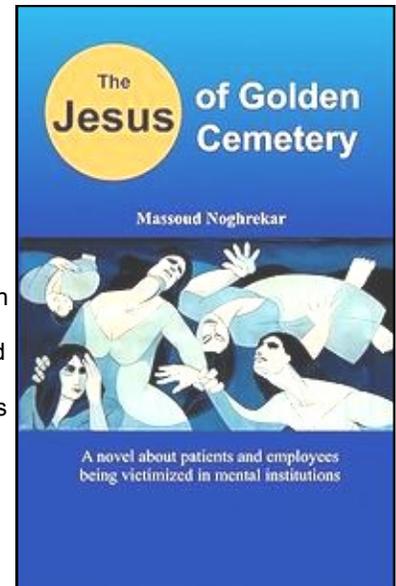
Dr. Noghrekar goes beyond his way to provide care for dysfunctional patients. Instead of appreciating his efforts, hospital authorities reprimand him and insist that he

observes the facility's bureaucratic requirements.

The Jesus of Golden Cemetery is not only a novel; it is also a vivid documentation of difficulties related to the western model of medicalization of human persons. In this model, doctors and medical personnel approach their patients as simple pawns that can be moved arbitrarily. They hardly bother to consider them as human person equal to themselves. They never ask for their patients' feedback and rarely extend a humanitarian behaviour towards them. The emotional problems resulting from the isolation and seclusion of mental health patients do not normally bother their care-givers.

The main character in *The Jesus of Golden Cemetery* is a woman named Hilary who suffers from severe physical and mental complications. She has become almost dysfunctional due to her multiple health problems in the face of inadequate care. She feels discrimination and stigmatization and is vocal against these evils. Following is a poem composed by Hilary:

*We are victims of our illness
Ladies and gentlemen
And it is enough for us.
We victimized even by beautiful birds
Who wake us up every morning.
I am talking to you
Yes, to you
Are you listening bonehead?
Let us live with our stigma
Which is better than being victimized for our money and
Your hunger for power.*



Shahla Pezeshkzad is an activist involved in promoting community support for mental health patients in Toronto.

Film Review: Incendies

Monica Encinas

Incendies is an original, award-winning Quebecois play written by the Lebanese author Wajdi Mouawad. The play was adapted for the screen and directed by Denis Villeneuve. You may recall that Denis Villeneuve also directed *Polytechnique*, a film about the Montreal Massacre of 1989. *Incendies* was an Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film. It has also won Best Canadian Feature Film by the Vancouver International Film Festival and the Toronto Film Critics Association (among others).

Incendies opens with a brother and a sister –twins who have travelled home (and I use the term ‘home’ loosely) to Quebec after receiving news of their mothers death. They quickly discover that their mother, Nawal, was a woman of many secrets. Nawal left her children, Jeanne and Simon, a will which is veiled in mystery about the family’s past and her journey to Canada. Jeanne and Simon, begin a journey back to the Middle East in search of answers about a family, a ‘home’-land, and a mother it seems they never knew.

Jeanne and Simon embark down separate roads. They were not on equal emotional standing with their mother before she died and have different attitudes about uncovering their mother’s secret history. Jeanne, Nawal’s daughter, is anxious to explore the depths of her mother’s past. Jeanne begins the journey alone and it is only later in the movie that Simon decides to join her.

It takes a lot for a movie to impress these days; in fact there are several movies which I have seen twice because I forgot I had seen them the first time. I have seen *Incendies* twice but not because it wasn’t memorable, quite the opposite. *Incendies* is a movie that will leave you reflecting on what you’ve just seen or, at the very least, on the current circles of violence taking place around the world. I can tell you now that I would recommend *Incendies* to everyone.

I will warn you that I have not read or seen the original play so I am not prepared to compare the two against each other. One critic commented that much of the original story was lost on screen.

To begin with the plot is interesting and keeps you enthralled the entire two hours and ten minutes. Fortunately for us, the director does not rely on the interesting story line to carry the movie. There is an intriguing use of the camera which I feel gave the movie an added depth. Scenes from the past and present are intertwined throughout the movie as parallels are made between the landscape and political environment which has changed over the lapse of time. Jeanne and Simon are catapulted into an emotional, and perhaps unsuspecting, journey of self-discovery as

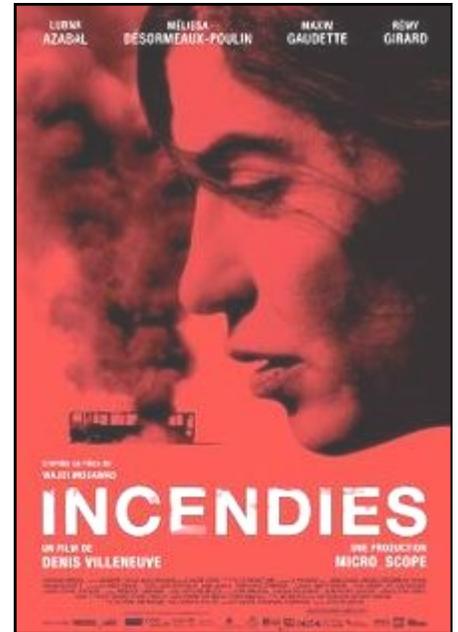
Where the dialogue is intentionally lacking the cinematography takes its place. The camera guides the audience through the nostalgia, memory, and senses of belonging that the characters experience while facing the violent horrors of their mother’s past.

The movie is not without its flaws.

In the film it is hard to differentiate some of the actors from one another. The actress who plays Nawal looks very similar to the actress who plays Jeanne. While the resemblance adds a realistic factor since the actresses play mother and daughter, it would have helped if they weren’t dressed in nearly identical, navy blue button down blouses for almost the entirety of the movie. As the movie jumps between past and present it becomes difficult to keep up with the changes in time and the shifts in points of view. I suppose, when dealing with films that integrate scenes from the past and present we take some of our cues from the differences in styles of clothing however; in *Incendies* the western clothing choices only subtly change over time.

Once again, it is hard to differentiate some actors as the movie bounces back and forth across time and space. This is especially true as the camera does not linger on the horrific, traumatic scenes which depict acts of torture or abuse. At times it becomes hard to catch a full glimpse of the faces of the abusers and victims. Add to this the fact that the movie never reveals any dates, years, or ages of the characters at any point in time; we are not even told exactly what country in the Middle East the entire journey takes place, nor are we told what civil unrest is specifically being referenced. It is in this respect that the film can be a bit frustrating as you have to trust your own estimates and use your own, perhaps sometimes faulty, understanding of Middle Eastern politics and history when jumping across space and time.

Several critics have speculated that the film depicts scenes from the Lebanese Civil War however the



movie never directly confirms this. I did see an “I love Palestine” banner which would remain consistent with the references to ‘refugees’ and the glimpses I caught of Syrian flags. There is mention of a town called Daresh and a refugee camp called Deressa however it is my understanding that these are common names. If you can read Arabic you will be at an advantage. If I could read Arabic I would have been able to make out what university Nawal was attending and the origin of her passport although, I’m not sure how much we can rely on her passport to tell us where she is from. It is never clear if or how many times Nawal had to cross borders or to what extent she had to compromise her true citizenship in order to make it into Canada.

In some aspects it is interesting that the movie purposely withholds information from the audience. Jeanne and Simon know nothing about their family history or the country from where their mother fled...and neither do we. Their past is just as blurry to them as it is to us. The fact that exact dates, years, ages, and people go unnamed allows us to discover as the characters discover, enter new situations and places just as the characters do, and permits some insight as to what questions they could have explored before any secrets were revealed to them. It can get frustrating as I found myself clinging on to obscure details that, in the end, were probably meant to be nothing more.

In relation to torture, we witness Nawal endure beatings, confinement, and sexual abuse. It is hard to elaborate on her abuse without giving too much of the film away (an unsettling thought, I know). One thing that is evident however, is the emotional toll that the torture took on her life, especially once she was in Canada. This is juxtaposed to the young Nawal: the Nawal whose strong will fought to survive and keep her children safe. Her resilience under the circumstances of torture and impending execution threats was quite remarkable. Her strong will does prevail and you can admire that in many of the movie’s characters, particularly the women.

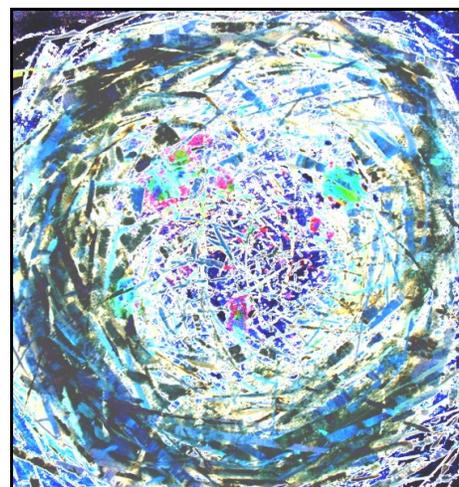
Nawal’s life in Canada seems to have encompassed a different sort of survival. Even once Nawal made it to Canada the abuse she experienced haunted her. Jeanne and Simon recall instances when their mother seemed out of sorts, unable to fully detach herself from certain memories. In several scenes you can sense the delicacy with which the children treat their mother. From a young age it appears they viewed their mother as fragile and “absent”.

Still, there are other scenes which are hard to swallow: children being trained to fight with weapons for causes which they have yet to fully understand, the coolness with which children kill others, and the ease in which certain ideologies can trump familial bonds. As one online review put it, “you can see how the violence ripples and affects everyone it touches”.

At some points in the film I got the feeling that Nawal had far too much luck. She escapes death several times and her life is spared without explanation twice. She is fortunate to come into contact with civilians or employees who are willing to risk themselves to offer kindness. In one instance she lies about her relationship with a young girl in an effort to save her. When the truth comes out the young girl is executed and Nawal is spared. At that moment I wondered why she was afforded the chance to live; if she had lied about one thing, why hadn’t the militia men questioned her professed religious beliefs...or killed her based the mere fact that she lied. As Nawal was a vocal political student, a woman, an enemy, and a Christian I was surprised with the amount of luck Nawal had come her way. Nevertheless, I am certainly glad she did.

Most critics of *Incendies* said the ending was too predictable. I, on the hand, was completely shocked by the ending and thought the plot took an unexpected twist. I read several other reviews which summed up *Incendies* in one word: disturbing. Those authors felt no other elaboration or commentary was needed. I disagree with their curt analysis which made me feel the film’s themes were given the cold shoulder as they were too heavy or, as one author put it ‘over dramatized’. Yes, the movie has several disturbing, horrific, tragic scenes. Regardless, we can’t turn a blind eye to the realistic nature of the subject matter being depicted. We can’t turn our backs on those who are victims of injustices around the world. As Tom Long from the Detroit News described the movie, “may there be a day when such works seem less relevant”.

Monica Encinas is a volunteer with the CCVT. She recently graduated with a degree in Diaspora and Transnational Studies from the University of Toronto.



“Bird’s Nest” by Michele Woodey

CCVT Letters

The Right Honorable Stephen Joseph Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Langevin Block, 80 Wellington Street,
Ottawa, ON. K1A 0A2

March 18, 2011

Dear Right Honourable Harper,

We, at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) are highly concerned about the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East – Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya. We admire you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your indefatigable endeavour in evacuation of Canadian citizens from dangerous hotspots in Egypt and Libya.

We strongly believe that with her brilliant record as a global human rights leader and with her longstanding position as an honest broker, Canada is in a unique position to contribute towards a peace and security in this turbulent region. We urgently appeal to you to rely on the moral authority of the Canadian society and utilize all bilateral as well multilateral means to stop the present conflicts and prevent atrocities at a massive level in future. We are particularly concerned about escalating violence in Libya.

We are shocked by the death of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of around hundreds of thousands inside and outside Libya. Please Mr. Prime Minister, act in these critical moments when the global peace and security is at stake.

We also join thousands of Canadians, including those who have experienced the scourge of torture and war, to ask for your immediate intervention for relief and humanitarian aids to victims of the present conflict.

Mr. Prime Minister! Our experience as a Centre helping survivors of war and torture has shown us that in a state of war, where certain people are regarded as enemies, torture, war crimes and all sorts of crimes against humanity are justified and even sanctioned by belligerent forces. War has always acted as the cruelest absurdity in human history. It creates social polarization and drives people to “opposite extremes”. A contaminating hatred is produced with the unfortunate capacity of being dragged decades after the termination of armed conflict. Thus, the basis for peaceful co-existence may irreversibly be disappeared.

What we are facing today in southern Lebanon is the sinister domination of the culture of death with the dangerous capability of spreading to the whole region. The continuation of the

CCVT Letters

war will produce more destruction, more poverty, more deprivation, and all sorts of epidemic diseases. Humiliation and the insecurity of life have provided terrorist leaders with a rare opportunity to recruit youth for suicide missions. Where human life loses its value, death emerges as an unquestionable demonstration of honor, courage, loyalty, and moral character. It intensifies the circle of violence.

What is at stake today is safeguard of our fundamental system of human values. With the passage of time, it might be possible to reconstruct war-ravaged areas or compensate for the war's human and material damages. It is, however, impossible to repair the universal values that once united us. With the continuation of violence, the war-ravaged area has, unfortunately, been reduced to a gigantic slaughterhouse devoid of all recognizable human values.

The ongoing massacre of vulnerable civilians; women, children and elders alike, and the destruction of houses, crops and livestock are justified by both sides as "collateral damages," or the inevitable price that must be paid for "self-defense." There is almost no respect for customary international law.

Mr. Prime Minister, please act before it will be too late. The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) has always collaborated with the government of Canada by providing it with written and verbal feedback on global human rights developments. We are willing to help you in addressing the present crisis in the Middle East and in finding a durable solution.

As you may be aware, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is the first of its kind to be established in North America and the second oldest in the world. We are called upon by other agencies, locally and internationally, to share our expertise with them on a regular basis. Last year alone, we provided our holistic services to 1002 survivors of torture and war coming from 72 countries (459 women, 329 men and 214 children). CCVT aids torture survivors to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Working with community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families.

Canada has accepted the greatest challenges in global human rights leadership. We expect your government to protect Canadian values and play a leading role in putting an immediate halt to the present conflict in the Middle East. Please help us to continue adhering to these basic principles that make Canada admired and respected.

With best wishes and in the hope of more co-operations in future,

Yours sincerely,

Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director

CCVT Letters

The Right Honorable Stephen Joseph Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Langevin Block, 80 Wellington Street,
Ottawa, ON. K1A 0A2

March 22, 2011

Dear Right Honourable Harper,

We, at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) are highly concerned about the escalation of hostilities in Libya. We admire you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your indefatigable endeavour in evacuation of Canadian citizens from dangerous hotspots in Libya.

We strongly believe that with her brilliant record as a global human rights leader and with her longstanding position as an honest broker, Canada is in a unique position to contribute towards peace and security in this turbulent region. We urgently appeal to you to rely on the moral authority of Canadian society and utilize all bilateral as well as multilateral means to stop the present conflicts and prevent atrocities at a massive level in future. We are particularly concerned about escalating violence in Libya.

We are shocked by the death of hundreds of civilians and the displacement of around hundreds of thousands inside and outside Libya. We have been monitoring the UN backed intervention in Libya, imposing the no-fly zone against Gadhafi's forces with Canadian involvement. We are disturbed by media reports about civilian casualties as a result of uncoordinated efforts to attack military targets on the ground.

We join thousands of Canadians, including those who have experienced the scourge of torture and war, to ask for your immediate intervention for mobilizing the international community in terms of relief and humanitarian aid to victims of the present conflict. Besieged cities need food and medication on an urgent basis.

Mr. Prime Minister! Our experience as a Centre helping survivors of war and torture has shown us that in a state of war, where certain people are regarded as enemies, torture, war crimes and all sorts of crimes against humanity are justified and even sanctioned by belligerent forces. War has always acted as the cruelest absurdity in human history. It creates social polarization and drives people to "opposite extremes". A contaminating hatred is produced with the unfortunate capacity of being dragged decades after the termination of armed conflict. Thus, the basis for peaceful co-existence may irreversibly be disappeared. We expect you to work hard with the international community towards an immediate ceasefire as a prerequisite for durable peace. With the continuation of the war in Libya, there will be more massacres, more injuries, more cruelties and human suffering. Please try your best to bring peace to Libya and bring Canadian intervention to an end.

What we are facing today in southern Lebanon is the sinister domination of the culture of death with the dangerous capability of spreading to the whole region. The continuation of the war will produce more destruction, more poverty, more deprivation, and all sorts of epidemic diseases. Humiliation and the insecurity of life have provided terrorist leaders with a rare opportunity to recruit youth for suicide missions. Where human life loses its value, death emerges as an unquestionable demonstration of honor, courage, loyalty, and moral character. It intensifies the circle of violence.

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What is at stake today is safeguard of our fundamental system of human values. With the passage of time, it might be possible to reconstruct war-ravaged areas or compensate for the war's human and material damages. It is, however, impossible to repair the universal values that once united us. With the continuation of violence, the war-ravaged area has, unfortunately, been reduced to a gigantic slaughterhouse devoid of all recognizable human values.

The ongoing massacre of vulnerable civilians; women, children and elders alike, and the destruction of houses, crops and livestock are justified by both sides as "collateral damages," or the inevitable price that must be paid for "self-defense." There is almost no respect for customary international law.

Mr. Prime Minister, please act before it will be too late. The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) has always collaborated with the government of Canada by providing it with written and verbal feedback on global human rights developments. We are willing to help you in addressing the present crisis in the Middle East and in finding a durable solution.

As you may be aware, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is the first of its kind to be established in North America and the second oldest in the world. We are called upon by other agencies, locally and internationally, to share our expertise with them on a regular basis. Last year alone, we provided our holistic services to 1002 survivors of torture and war coming from 72 countries (459 women, 329 men and 214 children). CCVT aids torture survivors to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Working with community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families.

Canada has accepted the greatest challenges in global human rights leadership. We expect your government to protect Canadian values and play a leading role in putting an immediate halt to the present conflict in the Middle East. Please help us to continue adhering to these basic principles that make Canada admired and respected.

With best wishes and in the hope of more co-operations in future,

Yours sincerely,

Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director

CCVT Letters

The Hon. Jason Kenney
Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Jean Edmonds South
365 Laurier Ave. West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

12 July 2011

Dear Hon. Kenney,

We, at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT), are very concerned about the safety and protection of the Benhmuda family. We join our voice to that of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and other agencies in requesting the resettling of the Benhmuda family in Canada. The Benhmuda family, including two children born in Canada were deported to Libya in 2008. Upon their arrival in Libya, Mr. Benhmuda endured imprisonment, frequent experience of torture, threats, harassment and deprivations, having to flee with his family to Malta where they received temporary protection.

We appeal to you, honourable Minister, to intervene in giving every humanitarian consideration to the resettling of the Benhmuda in Canada. This family have suffered for a long time since their deportation to Libya, a country notorious for its gross violations of the fundamental rights of humankind.

Hon. Minister, we would like to bring it to your respected attention that the CCVT will be pleased to collaborate with the government towards the effective resettlement of Mr. Adel Benhmuda and his vulnerable family including providing them with our holistic rehabilitation services to overcome the sinister after-effects of torture and trauma.

Hon. Kennedy, you are well aware of the fact that as Canadians we are very proud of our humanitarian and compassionate traditions and our respect for human rights and justice. We need to continue with this leading role at the global level, defending the principles that make us admired and respected worldwide. It is in the spirit of the Canadian values that we are kindly requesting you to grant the Benhmuda family the opportunity of a life without fear in Canada.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director

CCVT Letters

The Honorable Deb Matthews
Minister of Health and Long Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80, Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

July 15, 2011

Dear Ms. Matthews,

We are disturbed about the transfer of the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office of Ontario (PPAO) under the administrative control of the Canadian Mental Health Association. It is upsetting that, according to a report from the Toronto Star, a significant decision as such was taken without advanced consultation with the stakeholders. It is reported that the agency and hospitals were informed by a simple memo regarding the change.

We are concerned that the integration of PPAO into the Canadian Mental Health Association would create a serious conflict of interest problem. There is a hardly any doubt that the PPAO as a patient's advocate agency cannot raise the voices of mental health patients' vis-à-vis an organization to which it belongs. After 28 years delivering an outstanding service on behalf of mental health patients, the PPAO would have a limited scope of action as a result of this new integration of health services, being downgraded into a branch of a mental health provider.

We strongly believe that an independent PPAO is a great benefit to the mental health patients and their families. This is especially true with those patients who are survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity.

We expect you, Hon. Minister, to continue with your role as the guardian of Ontarians with mental health disorders and protect the independence of the PPAO. Please let the PPAO continue with its present mandate as a truly independent advocacy agency protecting and promoting the fundamental human rights of the otherwise voiceless mental health patients.

I would like to end by mentioning that since its inception in 1977, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) has provided services to over 18,000 survivors of torture, war and organized violence from 136 countries. The Centre is the first of its kind to be established in North America and the second such facility in the world. Working with the community, the Centre supports survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. CCVT's mandate is to provide its clients with "hope after the horror".

The Centre offers survivors and their families such services as the Volunteer Befriending Program, Mutual Support Groups, Art Therapy, a children's program, a drop-in counselling program, and ESL classes. It also offers co-ordinated Professional Services, including specialised medical and legal support.

Thank you for your consideration and I am looking forward to hearing from you.

If there is any question or concern please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director



CCVT Letters

His Worship Mayor Rob Ford
The Mayor's Office
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2M2

19 August 2011

Dear Mayor Ford,

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt congratulations to you as the distinguished Mayor of Toronto. The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) has been monitoring your endeavours with great enthusiasm since your election as our beloved mayor. I am pleased to invite you to visit our Centre at your convenience. This would be a great encouragement to our clients, staff, Board Members and Volunteers.

I am writing to you regarding the news about privatization and possible closure of public libraries in Toronto. Some of my clients at the CCVT have received the news with unbelievable discomfort. They have told us that as newcomers to Canada, they consider the local library as their home, their sacred place of refuge, a welcoming place for learning, a safe space for inter-cultural communication, and an excellent atmosphere for their children. "Without libraries" a newcomer friend told us, "my life becomes barren and I have to suffer from the agony of loneliness." This is a statement from another client of the CCVT: "To survive we need food, both material and intellectual; it is through the libraries that we can get the latter."

Mr. Mayor please note that for the people of Toronto, the public library is an irreplaceable source of information and resources and is a safe and accessible space for learning and self-improvement. More privileged local residents with access to the Internet may turn to Google more often than not for information. However, as high school teachers and university professors alike often attest, the Internet can provide very poor quality of information. Users need to develop the ability to critique and verify sources and it is difficult and time consuming to navigate. It is incomparable with the assistance a trained librarian can offer in accessing high quality, accurate information.

I sincerely appeal to your worship, Mr. mayor, to support the continuation of the Toronto libraries. This will serve the needs of the poorest in the city – those that cannot afford such luxuries as a computer and Internet access, those with no extra funds for post-secondary education or other academic upgrading, those who are new to Canada who require ESL resources and who benefit from conversation circles at the library, those survivor of torture and war (specifically youth) who cannot study at home and who cannot afford to pay for coffee every time they need to complete their homework.

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From both global historical and local contemporary perspectives, the preservation of libraries must be a priority. All evidence shows that the closure of public libraries would be a detriment to the development and empowerment of children, youth, adults and seniors of the City of Toronto.

Canada has accepted numerous challenges in global human rights leadership, especially children rights and the right to education. We request that you do your best to continue ensuring the protection of these rights. History has laid before us a great mission and a heavy responsibility. Your endeavors as the great mayor of Toronto will have a crucial impact and lasting legacy on the cultural progress of this metropolitan city. In these challenging times, we need to protect our multicultural values as an example for other cities and countries to follow. Please help us continue our adherence to these most basic principles that make Canada admired and respected throughout the world. We are looking forward to carrying on our mission with your support, and maintaining our collaboration with you in the future.

I would like to end by mentioning that since its inception in 1977, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) has provided services to over 18,000 survivors of torture, war and organized violence from 136 countries. The Centre is the first of its kind to be established in North America and the second such facility in the world. Working with the community, the Centre supports survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. CCVT's mandate is to provide its clients with "hope after the horror".

The Centre offers survivors and their families such services as the Volunteer Befriending Program, Mutual Support Groups, Art Therapy, a children's program, a drop-in counselling program, and ESL classes. It also offers co-ordinated Professional Services, including specialised medical and legal support.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to our collaboration in the future.

Thank you again for accepting to serve as our honoured Mayor of Toronto. With best wishes and in the hope of more co-operation in future,

Yours sincerely,

Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director

CCVT Letters



City of Toronto

Mayor Rob Ford

September 1, 2011

Mulugeta Abai, Executive Director
Canadian Centre For Victims of Torture
194 Jarvis Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M5B 2B7

Dear Mulugeta,

Thank you for your letter of August 19, 2011 sharing your thoughts about Toronto Public Libraries and the options presented in KPMG's Core Service Review Report. I appreciate hearing from you.

As a civic government, we need to live within our means- we got into this financial mess from years of overspending. To address Toronto's 2012 budget gap of \$774 million, City Council launched a review of all of its services and implemented a multi-year financial planning process. The Core Services Review is just one stage in this process.

City finances need to be sustainable, viable and realistic. The Core Services Review is one component of the broader Service Review Program, which also includes the User Fee Review and Service Efficiency Studies. The KPMG review identified a number of potential opportunities for City Staff and Council to consider in the 2012 budget process. All will require careful review. This is just data for consideration. The final decisions will be made by City Council as part of the 2012 budget process which will be finalized later this year.

There are many ways to reduce our budget – such as better purchasing, reducing back office staffing, etc. However, some services that are not as important to the public may be reduced to maintain funding for services that are important. This report validates the city's move to outsource garbage collection and suggests it is the way forward for savings to taxpayers.

I would like all departments to identify standards and set targets this year - we must be able to measure results.

Thank you again for your valuable input on this very important issue to our city. It is greatly appreciated – because we are all in this together. Please feel free to contact my office again at any time.

Yours truly,

Mayor Rob Ford
City of Toronto
/pm

City Hall ■ 100 Queen Street West ■ 2nd Floor, Office of the Mayor ■ Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Tel: 416-397-FORD (3673) ■ Fax: 416-338-7125 ■ E-mail: mayor_ford@toronto.ca



CCVT Letters

The Right Honorable Stephen Joseph Harper
 Prime Minister of Canada
 Office of the Prime Minister
 Langevin Block, 80 Wellington Street,
 Ottawa, ON. K1A 0A2

02 November 2011

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

Re: Canadian citizen in Bahrain: [Mr. Naser Bader Al-Raas](#)

I am writing to you with regards to the Canadian citizen, Mr. Naser Bader Al-Raas, who was incarcerated in Al Qala prison in Bahrain for a period of 31 days in March of 2011 with no knowledge of criminal charges and no *habeas corpus*. He is at risk of being imprisoned for a term of five years for a crime he did not commit. The Bahraini authorities have attracted confessions from him that, according to reports from many authentic sources, was taken through coercion by the use of notorious technique of abhorrent torture.

It has been brought to our attention that Mr. Al-Raas suffers from heart and lung problems. He has had multiple open heart surgeries and is in need of medication and medical assistance, which are denied to him. During his imprisonment he was taken to Bahrain Defense Force Hospital four times due to the physical torture he experienced. It was reported, by Doctors Without Borders, that Mr. Al-Raas experienced such infamous techniques of torture as mock executions (in three occasions), beatings with fists and bars, and electric shock. It is imperative that Canada, as the global pioneer of human rights, takes a firm stand against torture and insists on the immediate release of its vulnerable citizen.

Let me bring it to your respected attention that regardless of Mr. Al-Raas's origin and residency in Bahrain, he is a Canadian citizen and therefore deserves the same rights that every other Canadian citizen is entitled to, both at home and abroad. It is within Mr. Al-Raas's rights as a Canadian citizen to be protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms from the risk of experiencing torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatments or punishments. We expect that your esteemed government uses all unilateral, bilateral and multilateral means – economic, diplomatic and others - to pressure the government of Bahrain to facilitate the return of Mr. Al-Raas.

Please, Mr. Prime Minister, do your best to protect Mr. Naser Bader Al-Raas from re-experiencing imprisonment, torture and maltreatment. We also urge you to

CCVT Letters

officially object to the practice of torture, arbitrary detention, and other cases of human rights violations in Bahrain and elsewhere in the Middle East.

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is a non-governmental charitable organization that helps survivors of torture to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Since its inception in 1977, the CCVT has provided services to over 18,000 survivors of torture, war, and generalized violence from 136 countries. The centre is the first of its kind to be established in North America and the second such facility in the world. Working with the community, the centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war. It provides “hope after the horror.”

The centre offers survivors and their families a wide range of holistic services in the broad areas of settlement, mental health, and child/youth programming. It also offers coordinated professional services, including specialized medical and legal support. These programs are currently supported by 250 volunteers, most of them serve as befrienders, escorts, interpreters, event organizers, newsletter editing or English as a Second Language tutors to survivors of torture, genocide, war and crimes against humanity.

Thank you for your attention to this concern and I am looking forward to your compassionate intervention.

Yours sincerely,

Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director

CCVT Letters

Office of the
Prime Minister



Cabinet du
Premier ministre

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A2

January 5, 2012

Mr. Mulugeta Abai
Executive Director
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
2nd Floor
194 Jarvis Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5B 2B7

Dear Mr. Abai:

I would like to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence regarding the arrest and detention of Mr. Naser Bader Al-Raas in Bahrain. I regret the delay in replying.

Thank you for sharing your concerns with the Prime Minister. You may be assured that your comments, offered on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, have been carefully reviewed. I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of your letter to the Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who, I am certain, will also appreciate being made aware of your interest in this matter.

Thank you again for writing to the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely,

M. Bredeson
Executive Correspondence Officer

Canada



CCVT Programs & Services

Mental Health

- To assist in developing trust and promoting healing through a strategy of re-empowerment.
- **Counselling**
- **Individual and Group Therapy**
- **Crisis Intervention:** suicide prevention, breakdowns, family problems, etc.
- **Coordinated professional services:** The centre coordinates a medical network of experienced physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and other specialists, lawyers, social service workers who provide treatment, documentation and legal support. Referrals of survivors of torture are accepted and the staff will arrange for a client assessment.

Settlement Services

- Including: information/orientation, interpretation/translation, counselling, employment-related issues and referrals to resources relating to the economic, social, cultural, educational and recreational facilities that could contribute to the initial settlement of the client.
- Language instruction and skills training specially designed to address the needs and realities of survivors of torture (concentration, memory, depression, triggers),
- Computer training: basic and intermediate levels,
- Senior/women programs

Children/Youth Program

- Intake/assessment, settlement services, mental health services, recreational and empowerment activities that incorporate conflict resolution, mentoring, peer support and story-telling.

- Homework Support

Volunteer Program

- Befriending to assist survivors in rebuilding their connections to others as well as to the greater community.
- ESL Tutoring and Conversation Circles to help students learn and practice their English.
- Escorting and interpreting for survivors at different appointments (medical, legal, social).
- Office support, organizing social events, volunteer news letter and Fundraising

Public Education

- Responds to numerous requests for information, education, assistance and consultations on torture and its effects by delivering workshops, seminars and presentations. Also regularly produces resource materials, undertakes research and publishes a semi annual publication, "First Light", to inform the public about torture and its effects.

Refugees in Limbo

- Services to refugees in limbo that include counselling, assisting in sponsorships, family reunification and other immigration-related issues.

International Projects

- CCVT is associated with a coalition of Centres which support victims of violence, repression and torture, in exile or in their own countries.

**Any comments or thoughts about *First Light*
We warmly welcome letters to the editor!**

Just mail your comments to:
CCVT
194 Jarvis St. 2nd Floor,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2B7
Canada

Or email them to: The Editorial Committee c/o mabai@ccvt.org

and we'll do our best to publish them in the next issue. We reserve the right to shorten any letters due to space requirements.



YES!

I want to help CCVT respond to the needs of survivors of violent oppression who have sought refuge here in Canada.



- \$20 \$40 \$50 \$150
- \$250 Other

Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

194 Jarvis St. 2nd Floor
Toronto, On M5B 2B7

Tel: (416) 363-1066
Fax: (416) 363-2122

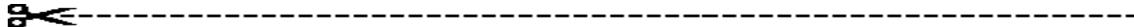
Name _____

 Address _____

 Telephone _____



Donate Online!
Visit www.canadahelps.org



CCVT MONTHLY GIVING PLAN

You can pre-authorize small monthly deductions on your credit card. It's so convenient, most of our Monthly Giving members hardly notice their small monthly donation, but it allows them to contribute more. CCVT can plan better knowing how much money to expect each month. And, because we save on paper and postage, more of your contribution goes directly toward helping torture survivors.

Yes I'd like to join the CCVT Monthly Giving Plan by making a monthly donation of:

- \$10 \$15 \$20 Other \$ _____

Please charge my: VISA MasterCard

Card Number: _____ Expiry: _____ Signature: _____

I understand that payments will continue automatically until I notify CCVT of a change.

I'd prefer to spread out my gift by using post-dated cheques.

I have enclosed _____ (number of) post-dated cheques each in the amount of \$ _____

Thank you for your support!

Charitable Reg. 13332 7908 RR0001



Goal Contemplation

By Mohan P. Kharel

My goal is a big bungalow
A large LCD TV
A magnificent car
And parties as often as I fancy!

I asked my friends and neighbours:
What's your goal?
'Almost the same as yours,' they said
How long can you wait
To achieve the goal you set?
We cannot wait for long
'Neither can I', I said

Then I met this man
And asked him his goal
'To DETEST
This wretched existence!
To hate war and torture!
To see more and more people
Loathe it!
To bemoan this disintegration!
To condemn this dislocation!
Raise a strong collective voice
To dismantle this thick wall of
APATHY'
And how long is your wait for this?
'Until I live...'

