

**Journal Of The Association for Conflict Resolution Delegation To South Africa
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Introduction

The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) is an international organization dedicated to enhancing the practice and public understanding of conflict resolution. Through its various Sections it engages conflict resolution practitioners and researchers, not only in the United States, but also around the world. The delegation to South Africa was an important step in extending our learning and potential collaboration with our counterparts in South Africa.

In the words of David Hart, Chief Executive Officer of ACR:

“The primary objective of this delegation is to build a more peaceful world by together learning about ourselves, our cultures and how conflict resolution work is practiced in our countries. Exchanges with our South African counterparts will provide insight and information for all participants about conflict resolution in our respective countries, and will afford delegates a forum to establish lasting contacts and relationships with South Africans in our profession.”

Verbal and written comments by the delegates clearly indicate that the trip was a deeply emotional and intellectually stimulating exchange. The groundwork was laid for ongoing professional contacts that not only provided mutual learning opportunities, but holds the promise for future collaborations between ACR and our new colleagues.

Developing Community Among the Delegates

Prior to our departure some delegates were successfully able to get to know one another by participating on the group’s online forum, attending the informal breakfast at ACR’s Annual Conference in Sacramento, California and participating in two conference calls. During the few times we were able to interact with one another before our journey, we explored our individual expectations, interests and professional backgrounds. Representing every part of the United States, as well as Canada and Holland, the group discussed individual and shared interests related to our professional work. Delegates worked in a myriad of areas, including: law enforcement, family counseling, legal advocacy, environmental policy, community and organizational development, and education (from elementary through university).

We also came from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and represented a wide span of experience. We shared by a commonality through our conflict resolution work and our deep sense of excitement and anticipation at experiencing the fascinating country of South Africa first hand.

The total number of delegates included 35 conflict resolution professionals and 13 guests. Although many of the guests were not directly involved in the conflict resolution field, their participation in the group's formal and informal meetings only enhanced the quality of our experience.

Throughout the trip, delegates would informally gather in small groups in the hotel lobbies, restaurants and on the tour bus to reflect on their experiences. After visiting the Apartheid museum in Soweto, David invited the entire group for an informal debriefing session on the lawn of the Sandton Crowne Plaza Hotel. Meeting in two groups and facilitated by the group leaders, delegates and two of our South African guides expressed their feelings and thoughts about the museum visit.

“I can't believe a human being can treat another human being like that... so brutal, so systematic, my response was more intense than I would have imagined.... I cried and cried....”

Ben Reese, delegate

Almost everyone shared the experience of crying during and after the visit, of feeling deep pain and empathy for the victims (on both sides), and admiring the post-Apartheid progress ... while acknowledging the enduring challenges that remain in order to reach true equity and justice.

Apartheid Museum

Past

Tears building in my eyes
Not a beginning of understanding
Only the pain

Suffering going directly to my heart
Connecting with the pain of the people of South Africa
Is connecting with my pain

Present

Ten years later
So much accomplished
So many reasons to be proud
Still so far to go

Future

Hope is building on experience
Love is growing on conquered pain
Lessons learned, based on suffering

How is it that we can learn?
Maybe this is more than another history lesson
And maybe this is a personal learning experience.

Fred W. Van Welsem, delegate

Group meetings aside, meals and bus trips provided an opportunity for rich one-on-one sharing and turned acquaintances into friends. We learned about each other's work, personal reactions to sessions, and forged professional connections as we grew closer and more open.

Initial Delegate Experiences

Most delegates were a little groggy from the long flight when we arrived at the Johannesburg Airport on Monday evening (November 8, 2004). While we waited for all delegates to pick up their luggage, several of us exchanged dollars for something called the "Rand" ... how familiar this currency became by the third or fourth day! Once we were together as a group and had introduced ourselves to our South African guides, we left the airport for our first, of many, bus trips.

Arriving at the Sandton Crowne Plaza Hotel, a number of us remarked with awe to each other: we were really in Africa! That evening marked the official beginning of our South African experience.

"At the hotel we enjoyed a sponsored buffet. The buffet was excellent, featuring a wide variety of salads, deserts, roasted pork and lamb. We managed to eat in spite of the fact that we had already consumed three well-proportioned meals on the plane. Finally, we returned to our room and were in bed by 10 pm. In spite of it being a very long day, the mood of the group remained upbeat and positive. We had been without sleep for the better part of 24 hours, yet we all seemed no worse for the wear."

Ray Terhorst, delegate

Delegates came to South Africa with a wide range of assumptions and preconceived notions, some informed by extensive reading, others by the media or casual conversations over the years, but all of us seemed open to gaining a deeper, first hand experience.

"I came to South Africa having read very little about the country, so I was open to the experience and had very few preconceptions. Knowing a bit of South African history from our media and discussions back home, I was most eager to understand how the

TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) had affected the Country and how much progress had been made to empower the Black population.”

Peggi Chute, delegate

Our first morning following breakfast, the delegation was given a power point orientation and cultural briefing on South Africa. We listened to a brief history lesson and events leading up to the system of Apartheid. Important to that system's success was the classifying of human beings into groups by the color of their skin. There were the whites, the blacks, and the coloureds. It was explained that “coloured” didn't have the same connotation it does in the Unites States and is accepted simply as a description of those individuals who don't fall into the other two categories. Such a justification, however, hardly lessened the bitter significance of keeping people separate...and unequal.

It is also interesting to note how some delegates fit this trip into other major life experiences. For example, Reverend Alvarez frequently commented on connections he was making between South African historical events and present conditions with his trips to Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, as well as parallels with the Latin American experience. Cheryl Gireaux and Ben Reese saw connections and contrasts with their historical experiences of American Blacks in the United States. The major societal shifts in South Africa are so recent and so extreme that whatever individual assumptions we came with, those assumptions were subject to modification, amplification or radical change. South Africa is so in flux, it simply cannot fit into neat, preconceived notions.

Journal Themes

During the first couple of days of our trip, delegates were asked to write personal journal entries that highlighted their assumptions about South Africa prior to entering the country and to note what assumptions had changed as a result of their experiences. It was anticipated that this format would enable the delegation to create a useful and interesting journal. A few delegates did submit written comments, but it quickly became apparent during our meetings and discussions that several common themes were surfacing that went beyond assumptions.

By day three, we realized that a theme-centered journal would be a more useful way to think about and catalogue our experiences. Although many delegates kept their own personal journals, everyone was asked to think about and submit journal entries that were organized around the following themes:

1. **Power Shifts/Social-Cultural Change** – Your thoughts, comments, revelations about shifts in power pre-and post-Apartheid.
2. **Disparities** – Both visible and invisible.

3. **Impact** –What is the personal impact of this trip?

Conversations focused on the changes or shifts in power pre- and post-Apartheid. In spite of significant social upheavals and a new government and Constitution, delegates frequently commented on the significant economic and educational gulf that clearly remains between social classes an imbalance often defined by race. It became obvious that poverty is the greatest threat to racial progress, not just in South Africa, but globally. Probably the most challenging discussions centered around just what all these observations in South Africa meant for our practice of conflict resolution back home.

Through the sometimes intensely emotional and intellectually stimulating days of the trip, many delegates submitted eight to ten line notes or two to three pages with reflections or poems that managed to fit into the suggested themes. Submissions were also used for a daily running log that was posted on the internet to be read by friends and family who were following our trip from home.

In the following pages, we have tried to capture the substantive thoughts and feelings of the delegates. We recognize that no summary document can accurately convey the detail and depth of emotion of each submission, but we have attempted to convey the collective sense of the group with ample references and quotations from individual delegates.

Power Shifts/Social-Cultural Change

During conversations on the bus, in clusters in our hotel lobbies, and over meals, delegates exchanged thoughts about how such an economically wealthy country was brought to its knees by the weight of internal and external pressure and the relentless pursuit of fairness and equity by activists.

“Power shifts occur in every society, more slowly in some than in others. During the years of struggle against Apartheid, when groups to which I belonged talked about divesting themselves of all South African related assets as our contribution to the effort, there were always voices proclaiming that South Africa was such a powerful nation, economically and politically, it could hold out indefinitely against sanctions and divestitures. But the government’s power base was obviously not strong enough to withstand concerted internal and international political and economic pressure.”

Marjorie H. O’Reilly, Esq., delegate

We observed many obvious and visible shifts. After the brutality and inequities of Apartheid, people talked of a government of freely elected leaders, new policies, diverse groups of people socializing together and a constitution that puts forth rights for *children* as well as adults. We were told of the growing Black economic and political power in some of the urban areas, although many rural areas seem frozen in abject poverty and political powerlessness.

It seemed almost symbolic of the social/cultural shift in South African society that after the heartrending walk through the Apartheid Museum, the gift shop would be selling copies of their new constitution ... one of the signs of a transformed nation. One delegate commented how making the building of the Apartheid Museum such a priority showed the country's commitment to remembering the past so it would never be repeated.

"What I find most difficult to understand is how people could so completely negate their own humanity. Inside, there must have been some small voice screaming, 'this is wrong!' "

Peggi Chute, delegate

(Untitled poem)

Walls torn down
Dismantled
Brick by brick
The heart of the country
Slowly softening
From stone to feather
The heart of the people
Opening
Welcoming the brilliant
African light
The heart of the continent
Calling: come home.
For here you started,
All one people
So here you return,
Own your brotherhood,
Sisterhood,
All one people,
Yes,
Again.

Chris Carlsten, delegate

A frequent refrain among our group became, "... and they did all of this in ten short years!"

Many delegates commented on the national pride and upbeat feeling of so many of the people that we met. Even as a torture victim recounted her painful ordeal during our visit to the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, she talked of her healing work with other victims.

The Institute is doing remarkable memory work as well as curriculum development for Cape Town schools, including publishing a new South African History series that

includes and recognizes for the first time the anthropology of the indigenous people of South Africa. As one presenter put it, “We are learning to teach in a new way ... hearing *all* voices. Under Apartheid we were taught in only one dominant voice.” Against the backdrop of this promising social shift, is the clear sense and visibility of what one speaker, Zubeida Jaffer, called the “Apartheid Architecture.”

“ I think of my own mediation practice and clients while witnessing the South African courage to speak the truth about the past. I learned more about the TRC’s work which embraced the cultural roots of the remarkable South African concept of “Umbutu” (which I’ve heard translated as “I am who I am because of other people” or more simply, “I am because we are”). Seeing their commitment to face conflicts openly and change their own traditions and practices less they dishonor the profound sacrifices made by so many and jeopardize the hopeful future they claim collectively as a nation makes me humble. I remember what a personal challenge it has seemed to bring a room of five people involved in a dispute through a similar process of conflict resolution....Ha!”

Carrie Johnston, delegate

“I am so in love with the people – they are so open, authentic, joyful and beautiful. The South Africa we have seen so far is full of hope and commitment for their future. What they have accomplished in 10 years is extraordinary.”

Gail Ervin, delegate

“Ordinary people doing extraordinary things.”

Ben Rothfield, delegate

Our visit to the Western Cape Education Department and our sojourn to township schools made it clear that the educational resources and economic power has not fully shifted nationally or locally in urban areas; wealth makes a huge difference. More wealthy parents of public school children are able to “purchase” additional teachers, technology and supplies to maintain an advantage similar to schooling under Apartheid.

The constraint of limited government funds makes rapid educational change more of a hope and expectation than a current reality. Matthew Goniwe Memorial High School is a stark reminder of the school’s difficult task to lift up their student body’s hope that education is the way out of poverty when these students come from a township where “informal houses” (houses made of cardboard and tin) are the norm, built barely on the other side of the school’s fence.

We were encouraged by projects such as the Safe Schools program of the Western Cape Education Department. They not only provide funds to increase security in schools that apply for grants, but work with teachers, parents and students to get at some of the root causes of violence. In spite of the sometimes-enormous financial and security challenges, we witnessed schools with incredibly motivated teachers and administrators and students eager to learn and eager to grow to become significant contributors to a new South Africa.

“I’m now present to the commitment of many to cause what seemed most impossible, to become possible ... a reality. I’m also present to the fact that this is only a beginning for South Africa ...”

Ben Rothfield, delegate

Some schools are also reaching out to the community to make learning a priority beyond the school walls. They have schoolyard gardens to teach students and how to grow vegetables and they offer adult education classes for members of the community to develop their employable skills.

Disparities

Most of us were prepared to experience the class differences that are observable in most societies. There are always differences in income and wealth and various gradations of housing. Few of us, however, were prepared for the extreme disparities we observed in education, employment and housing.

Monday, November 15 was the first and only free day the delegates would have to themselves. The delegation leaders had arranged for those who were interested to visit the historical Robben Island Prison Museum. Most of the delegates did participate in the Robben Island Tour, but a few did not and independently arranged to visit Langa, one of the local townships. The following is based on their experience:

We left a marble decorated palatial hotel that was a short walk from a modern, bustling waterfront shopping center to be driven to Langa, a large Black township outside the city limits of Cape Town.

Langa is a spiritually rich and vibrant but economically poor township. Tin roof two room shacks were in sharp contrast to our hotel and the modern, multi-room houses behind fenced walls that we passed on our van route to the township. Although there is proud acknowledgement of the Mandela Houses – four room, sturdy homes built by the government for the homeless and residents of the townships – the waiting list for one of these homes can be many years.

“Those who were the ‘have-nots’ under Apartheid have waited, somewhat patiently, for ten years to become at least ‘almost-haves.’ Much has been accomplished, but Blacks in particular continue to live in sub-standard housing in large numbers. In addition, the overall unemployment rate in the country is over 40%, with the rate for black South Africans living in the townships rising in some instances to 60%. These figures are particularly stark when placed in the context of a population that is 79% Black, 9% Coloured, 3% Asian (primarily Indian), and 9% White.”

Marjorie H. O’Reilly, Esq., delegate

At the Cape Town Waterfront and in the adjacent downtown business district, shopkeepers, shoppers and executives mingled on the tree-lined streets and in the fine

restaurants. Just a short bus ride away we observed residents, virtually all Black, in tattered clothes selling very-used mufflers and tailpipes from roadside racks. We were told that the underemployment problem among Blacks is just as severe as unemployment. Most Coloureds appeared to live a somewhat better life, having found low paying jobs in the workforce.

We also learned that unemployment and underemployment is a serious issue among former combatants. Many of these people are also suffering from various stress related conditions. At the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, one of the researchers, Sasha Gear, talked about some of the psychological and emotional issues facing ex-combatants.

“Based on personal interviews of combatants who defended and attacked the South African Apartheid System, the report captured vividly the sense of betrayal and anguish the system produced. For example, Ms. Gear cited a combatant’s feelings about his church and Apartheid to illustrate betrayal.

The church says after 48 years, we have been wrong, Apartheid was wrong. It was a sin. ‘I ask them, ‘if you (the clergy) can just tell me who will go to heaven...those who died before 1994 (the end of Apartheid) or those who died after 1994?’

They say that I mustn’t think like that. I say, well, I do think like that because You – the church – taught me what was right and what was wrong, and now you change.”

Charles Kelly, delegate

The Rev. Deacon Sal Alvarez sees a clear disparity between the treatment of ex-combatants in South Africa, and veterans of combat in the United States.

“...the blatant lack of benefits for ex-combatants such as provided WWII veterans in the U.S. and elsewhere: housing, mortgage assistance and educational financial assistance. What is being discussed is counseling that would help veterans adapt to a life of underemployment thereby leading to conflict and alienation with the new government. The new Constitution and Bill of Rights calls for equality in education, but seemingly not for veterans.”

Rev. Deacon Sal Alvarez, delegate

Concerning other disparities, from our first briefing to local news reports to candid conversations with our guides, we learned that the equal status of women in this country is still a challenge. Violence against women is pervasive in all classes, races, and sectors of their society. A staff member from an organization we met with stated that “1 in 5 women in South Africa had been raped”.

According to one of our guides, paying a dowry for a wife is still practiced among some African communities throughout the country, in both the Townships and in the rural areas. The perception that this payment is a contracted transfer of property between families, and particularly that it transfers the right of ownership to the new husband, is not always subtle. Instead, it is a clear and socially acceptable practice of the social status of women among Africans.

“I sensed that there is a new social revolution coming. South African women seem to be starting to organize themselves to address the issues of their gender. They have spent decades successfully supporting social change in all sectors of their society, but have not made their gender specific issues a priority. I was very impressed with the courage, character, and vitality that I saw not only in the professional women I met during our briefings, but also in the young and older women I spoke with in the Townships.

Carrie Johnston, delegate

We visited the Gauteng Province the South African Police Services (SAPS) headquarters in Johannesburg and were received by the Chief Commissioner and a number of his senior officers. Our police hosts treated us to lunch before beginning our formal meeting, and apologized for the late start due to the shooting of one of their colleagues. The meeting formally started after members of the delegation and the SAPS were invited to join in a prayer offered by one of the deputy police commissioners.

The Chief Commissioner told us that ex-combatants, in this case police officers who had served under Apartheid, were either still in the police department and following a ‘code of conduct’ or were no longer a part of the department. He stated that only those police officers who could treat everyone with respect remain. Admittedly, it took a while to reach this level of disclosure and discussion.

Delegates Paul Hames, Chief Constable from Victoria, BC, Canada, and Lieutenant Steve Odle of the Indianapolis Police Department were instrumental in opening up a broader and more self-disclosing conversation. Many of the Commissioners, mostly at the prompting of the Chief Commissioner, emphasized the importance of community policing as a key strategy to engage residents in a prevention partnership and crime fighting.

It is a miraculous evolution of a police service – they no longer use the word “force” – considering how the department evolved from all Whites to completely integrated. One Commissioner explained that all persons in uniform are required to take a sensitivity/diversity training. Unfortunately, time did not allow us to learn the particulars of this training. Still, the conversation was far-reaching and very informative and without exception, all delegates were impressed with the exchange and the generous time these senior officers had given to our group. We left, feeling fortunate that this meeting had been included in the itinerary. It should be noted that, prior to our meeting with the SAPS, some members of the delegation openly wondered why a conflict resolution delegation would meet with the police.

“The discussion began with a focus on procedural police matters, but gradually led to an open and sometimes personal discussion of inspirational leadership and experiences that have led to a more respectful and collaborative relationship within SAPS and between SAPS and the community.”

Barbara Robinson, delegate

"I was touched by the fact that the Police Chief Commissioner kept his appointment to meet with our group, even though an unfortunate shooting incident had just taken the life of one of his men. As our conversation began to deepen, the delegates and the officers spoke from their hearts. I wasn't prepared to hear some of their responses to our questions regarding the Post-Apartheid blending of two very different police organizations. The power of listening to one another's stories seemed to be a prime element on many different levels. Dialogue and communication can begin after the listening. This is the start of transformation."

Jane Parrish, delegate

"What are they (our own police) expecting from us ... and we from them?"

Joan Shapiro, delegate

"Visiting with the SAPS was the most tense part of the trip for me. I never would have imagined that I would be meeting with members from the SA police force in a professional matter. Although it was obvious that some of the officers present were new to the SAPS, it was clear that some of the white officers had been members of police force for the majority of their adult lives. I would of liked to ask them where were they during the 1979 Soweto Student Uprising."

Anonymous

Steeped in Apartheid resistance history, we began our tour of Soweto at the Regina Mundi Church. This church, which seats thousands on its long benches, still has bullet holes in its walls and a cracked marble alter from the butt of a security official's riffle slamming down on its surface during a raid. Michael, the quiet guide who had experienced the uprisings and riots in Soweto firsthand, told the stories of the church through his own lens of pain and remembering. On one wall hangs a huge portrait of the Black Madonna and upstairs was a photography exhibit that captured the tumult during the Apartheid resistance.

"I had read about and seen photos of the painting "The Black Madonna (and the Child of Soweto)"....and here it was right in front of me, inside this church on the right side of the altar. I was very moved.... Michael's explanation of the symbols and history depicted in the painting was wonderful."

Susan Edwards, delegate

As our journey continued, we spent an emotional afternoon in the Othandweni Children's Home, an orphanage. Although a few of the delegates expressed that they didn't see a connection between this visit and the field of conflict resolution, the visit did give us an opportunity to see another aspect of the South African community. Infants

to teenagers were housed in a series of cottages. Some of the children were rescued from homes of parents who were involved with drugs or alcohol abuse, others were from parents who were victims of AIDS. Thus, the term “orphan” took on a broader meaning beyond children without parents. Many of the children were placed there because their living parents could not care for them. Many of us had rich and moving personal encounters that we’ll never forget.

“ I met a young man who was 16 years old and presently in Grade 10. I asked him how he felt about having all of these visitors. He said the he liked it a great deal because he knew that everyone had come from a long way away and that everyone was interested in learning what happened in Soweto. He was glad to see us. I was reminded of how much life was really about sharing, understanding and a simple smile.”
Paul Hames, delegate

“Before we knew it we had been claimed by several of these children who had touched our hearts and souls.”
Ray Terhorst, delegate

“In the infant’s residence, one baby just lay flat and still, looking at nothing. Some of us held and interacted with the babies. I hope that they touched our hearts so much that we responded in some real and tangible ways.”
Joan MacMillan, delegate

“For me the most significant moment came when I met three teenage girls from one of the dorms who had waved at us as we stood in the courtyard. The oldest girl shared that her time there was coming to an end – children are expected to leave at age eighteen – but she and her brother couldn’t return home because her mother is an alcoholic. She told me she loves to sing and agreed to sing for me and Chris Carlsten and Kathy Clark, also present. Her soulful voice wafted all the way out to the courtyard. Another girl with the brightest smile that lit up the entire room read stirring poems she had written. We left knowing we had made a connection and a commitment to these girls. We will stay in touch.”
Peggi Chute, delegate

“My interpretation of the openness and friendliness of the children in the orphanage was that they were not afraid ... I attributed this to the care of the staff.”
Sherry J. Rothfield, delegate

One evening in Cape Town, all the delegates and guests were invited to a casual, yet gracious dinner at the home of the Shiraaz Sindhi family. Fay Shiraaz somehow had managed to cook a delicious meal for the entire delegation! Not only were we able to share and learn about the experiences of this Muslim, Coloured family involved in the tourism industry, but they also had invited their friend, Nelson Mandela’s past Warden on Robben Island, who spoke with pride about his lasting friendship with his prisoner. That evening we heard further anecdotes demonstrating that the history and experiences of all three ‘racial divisions,’ Black, Coloured, and White, remain as distinct

as they are arbitrary, yet, obviously, their futures are just as interdependent and intertwined as their past.

The pride and hopefulness of the South African people was evident in both the wealthy and economically poor communities, among couples and families and among children in the orphanage, but there is much work to be done in shaping a truly open, equitable and transparent democracy.

Impact

All of us were impacted by the reality of the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. One startling demographic statistic that was shared among the delegates was that in 10 years, the current national population is not expected to grow, but instead is anticipated to drop by as much as 20 percent because of the HIV pandemic. Many of us bought beaded AIDS ribbon pins for ourselves, for gifts and for raise funds back home. The money would go to the AIDS cause.

Many of the delegates spotted the numerous and different AIDS educational murals on school and community walls. For example “My friend who has AIDS is still my friend” was painted on an Elementary School playground wall in Soweto. A billboard read, “Safe Sex Saves Lives, Be Wise.” Others of us discussed the open availability of free condoms and AIDS literature in some bathrooms. Although social conflicts exist concerning the familiar debate of abstinence education vs. the “pushing of condoms and sex education on 12 year olds in the Townships,” as expressed by one community leader, the severity of the AIDS problem shortens the length of any compassionate debate.

“I am concerned about the tremendous present and future challenge HIV will be for a society that is already struggling to maintain its progress through the difficult past legacy of Apartheid. I am struck by how much easier our national challenges seem by comparison.”

Carrie Johnston, delegate

Our tour of Robben Island made a deep impression on everyone, and gave us all something to reflect upon. It is clear that Nelson Mandela’s life and work has made an imprint on the world. His small cell and being a political prisoner for twenty-seven years did not break him. The impact of his struggle and his leadership example, experienced by those imprisoned at Robben Island with him, and then by his entire nation, sets a new standard for leadership. He demonstrated a strength of character rarely seen in any man, and yet he suggests that every man can find this same strength within himself.

“The moment when we sang Happy Birthday to our guide, a former political prisoner at Robben Island, brought tears to his eyes and ours.”

Susan Edwards, delegate

Over the two-week period, the delegates learned about the many ways the South African Conflict Resolution experience is reflected in their past, present and their future. Conflict resolution and reconciliation permeates through their policy issues, interpersonal conflict issues, social and cultural issues, and by the restructuring of their government and major institutions. There was much to learn, and so much more worthy of following up, that would expand our comprehension, and enable us to apply what we gathered from this opportunity to our own lives and politic.

This trip was the kind of experience that touched people in a variety of ways. For all of us there were moments, encounters, and conversations that will stay in our hearts and minds forever. It was certainly the trip of a lifetime for many of the delegates, and for others it seemed to just be the beginning of a new journey in their practice.

“It was difficult to just ‘be with’ the experience (Apartheid Museum). It brought to mind many historical comparisons of man’s inhumanity to man....I also remember the attitude verbalized by one of the policemen I spoke to: ‘this is my country I am not going anywhere else. We will make it work.’”

Sherry J. Rothfield, delegate

“I have started the task of reevaluating my life. Do I still hold a prejudice against anyone? Are people suffering anywhere because of my behavior? In my quest to be a man of peace, have I stepped on others or caused pain to groups or individuals? Do I allow the love of God to shine through me to others? Do I really practice forgiveness?”

Ray Terhorst, delegate

“I will remain in touch with the girls from Othandweni. They are now a responsibility to follow up!”

Peggi Chute, delegate

“It was a powerful and emotional experience for me and gave me an understanding of a personal need for urgency in my living a life of transformation and to enroll others in the opportunity to commit to a world that works for everyone and everything ...my personal commitment to the planet.”

Ben Rothfield, delegate

“Working as a Civil Rights Director will never be the same for me after my visit to South Africa ... I am filled with so much compassion for the difficult lives of Black skinned South Africans.”

Cheryl P. Greaux, delegate

“One of our guides reminded me how important ‘Community’ really is. He said in his Township no one ever goes to sleep hungry, that they all care for each other, and that the only time he was ever hungry was when he was sent away during Apartheid to the University for Blacks. The physical, mental and spiritual health derived from

community based support is so important for sustaining their courage, hope, and success.”

Carrie Johnston, delegate

“Dialogue and communication can begin after listening. It sounds so simple!”

Jane Parrish, delegate

“ This experience instilled in me a more profound desire to share what I have witnessed in the Latino community, seeking greater understanding of the human condition, and the movement of the holy spirit of God to give rise to a prophet community in Africa.”

Rev. Deacon Sal Alvarez, delegate

“How much can we learn from them about establishing healthy boundaries and sharing common ground (Kruger Park). It is clear that both patience and integrity are required to promote an atmosphere conducive to open dialogue (Robben Island).”

Barbara Robinson, delegate

“For a jaded American, this was a breath of fresh air since they all were so frank about the horrors that they had been through and the beneficial experience they were having in rejoining the world.”

Linda B. Miller, delegate

“Back in California, Thanksgiving has come and gone. Not one of my neighbors greeted me, nor did I greet them on that holiday. We live our fenced lives. But I am finding myself smiling and greeting homeless people and I wonder how they can manage with just a shopping cart or plastic bags of material goods.”

Joan MacMillan, delegate

“All of us can eloquently convey the intellectual gain from this experience; it’s much more difficult to share what’s now a part of our heart and soul.”

Benjamin D. Reese, Jr., delegate

[Title unknown]

They drew a circle to shut me out,
Heretic, Rebel, a thing to flout,

But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took them in.

Poet: Edwin Markham

Brian McCarthy, delegate

South Africa's, vibrant flag represents a citizenry made up of all colors coming together to create an inclusive society. This country is a beautiful land, full of a scenic beauty and a spiritual beauty of a people determined to aspire to be their best selves. This country has inspired us all.