

Introduction

Restorative Justice: Taking the Pulse of a Movement

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At the opening of most restorative justice workshops people want to know in a sound bite, “What is restorative justice.” As practitioners, we know that it is impossible to communicate this paradigm shift in the first two minutes, in an hour, or even in a day-long workshop. We know that there is a gradual unfolding of what is learned and that this happens best when people *see it* in a restorative process. We take time together integrating restorative justice as a holistic way to address harm that is rooted in relationships and community. We understand that violence cannot be reduced to addressing isolated incidents. We seek to uncover a deeper root of violence that is connected to trauma, childhood, family, environment, history and social location. All of this involves the discovery that healing and accountability are rooted in restoring balance to oneself, one’s relationships, one’s community, and even with nature.

The same must be done in a book. In 2018, we have to expand out of trying to tell a singular history of restorative justice, but articulate and honor the multiple, rich roots of this paradigm shift. We have to acknowledge that restorative justice has multiple histories and various practices, and strands: restorative justice, restorative justice practices, restorative practices, peacemaking, and indigenous concepts of justice that are holistic and reparative but don’t use the wording of restorative justice. There is no one process to restorative justice either; different communities use different structures that at their best are birthed locally, be them highly

urban and multicultural, or predominantly Maori, or rural Midwestern.

In our biggest hope for what it can be, restorative justice is an alternative paradigm to build community, address violence, and repair harm that is rooted in community solutions and relationships. It is a paradigm shift, not business-as-usual or simply a new program. It requires us to care deeply for each other; to work towards our intertwined liberation; to not outsource responding to harm to “the state”; to see that when one heals and is accountable, we all become freer; to understand that violence is simultaneously interpersonal and structural *all of the time*, and that every restorative practice and mindset should reflect this inter-relatedness.

This was not always the way restorative justice was defined, particularly in the United States where it is increasingly defined as moving from a *social service* to a *movement*. The term restorative justice was popularized by Howard Zehr (1990) to give language to a growing sense that restorative justice was providing a framework for a paradigm shift (a new lens or worldview) in the way societies conceived of justice, especially in contrast to the dominant western justice system predicated on ideologies of punishment and retribution. However, parallel processes are happening across the world that are not called ‘restorative justice’ but still have its essence. To move towards the broadest inclusivity, we have to blow open any western conception of the word and adapt restorative justice to live into the biggest inclusive dream that includes practice iterations from New Zealand to the Yukon Territory, from the United Kingdom to South Africa. There are differences in our definitions, but there is a glue that holds it all together, namely a community-based practice to heal and repair harm.

Why this Anthology?

The authors of this anthology attempt to dispel the bifurcated way of seeing restorative justice. This book represents a range of people who have stepped into the movement in different ways to offer a variety of insights. They offer a widening of the restorative justice movement “tent” that rises above self-imposed, dichotomous thinking, and simultaneously embodies a transformative agenda where individual and systemic transformations are so well integrated as to become indistinguishable. This is a future vision for a transgenerational justice – a much needed corrective to a justice system that tends to singularly focus on the past (who is to blame) and the present (how do we administer pain). As an interdisciplinary movement, restorative justice offers a container for trauma and memory-healing work, a vehicle for nonviolent social and structural change, a practice for building social networks (community activism, organizing and development), and the guiding values for restorative and indigenous approaches to transitional justice at national and international levels. The restorative justice movement provides hope for a form of justice that satisfies the demands of human ‘well-being’ (e.g. the respect and equity of all groups of people), and that has far reaching potential to impact multiple practices of justice from local to global levels.

The context for this anthology stems out of a three-year, grant-funded project conducted by the Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice, a program of Eastern Mennonite University. The express aim of this three-year project was to impact the field of restorative justice by channeling our energies into framing and influencing a social justice movement. To this end, the overall project goals were:

- To facilitate dialogue between and with diverse restorative justice communities and related social justice movements;

- To influence the evolution of the restorative justice field as a social justice movement;
- To give exposure to new, innovative restorative justice approaches, applications and practices;
- To conduct a Listening Process to better understand the current landscape of the restorative justice movement.

Year One: In 2015, the Zehr Institute facilitated a consultation entitled, *RJ: The Next Generation*, which was attended by 36 restorative justice thought leaders who were selected from the USA, Canada, UK, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The consultation team designed a five-part process dealing with the history of restorative justice, identity, race and power issues, “best practices” of restorative justice, and finally, future scenario planning. The core outcome of the event was the utilization of a process called “Transformative Scenario Building” (Kahane, 2012) where the group grappled with a matrix of four probable scenarios for the future trajectory of the restorative justice movement, describing the maximum/minimum coherence and the maximum/minimum impact of the restorative justice movement and its progression into the future.

Year Two: In 2016, the Zehr Institute hosted a public conference attended by 170 participants entitled: *RJ in Motion: Building a Movement*. The conference expanded on the previous consultation and convened a cross-section of practitioners, activists, organizers and academics to further reflect and deliberate on the process of describing, framing and sustaining a restorative justice movement. The conference focused on the theme of building towards a restorative justice

movement. Participants were provided opportunities to reflect on movement-making as well as to learn from colleagues in the restorative justice field. The conference was structured as a uniquely decentralized learning environment for the participants. With over 50 breakout sessions, the format provided space for people to congregate on issues of interest. The conference was preceded by a one-day “Theater of the Oppressed” event, which centered on issues of race, power and privilege. Altogether, this year-two conference prioritized a diversity of ages, backgrounds and voices, specifically elevating the youth voice in the process of movement building.

Year Three: In 2017, the Zehr Institute conducted a *Listening Project* which engaged five locations across the USA and one in Canada. The intention was to get a feel for “the state of the state” of restorative justice, that is, to take the pulse of where we are now as a movement, create a shared roadmap for the future, and offer recommendations to advocates and donors on how to resource and build the restorative justice movement. Also, in 2017-2018, the Zehr Institute engaged in a content creation (writing) process to get the message out about the restorative justice movement to a larger audience through the *publication of an anthology*. Hence, the product at hand.

What did we hear from the Listening Project?

As a result of the Listening Project, it is evident that we are now in the midst of a rising tide of interest and a swirl of applied practice around restorative justice writ large, and that many academics, practitioners, educators, community activists and movement organizers across North

America are engaging in restorative justice in some manner. However, as in all social movements, the depth of understanding and coherence of practice remains somewhat elusive. With this exceptional growth in restorative justice, a significant need has arisen to channel the movement with organic visioning and collective action for it to be fully impactful. The challenge is to form structures that have systemic influence at a national, regional and local level, reflective enough to remain true to restorative justice values, principles and practices, and centering a diversity of people engaging in restorative justice, rather than asserting a top-down or power-over framework in movement-building itself.

The following seven themes emerged from the listening process and paint the general backdrop of issues to help position and frame this anthology.

1. Four Locations of Restorative Justice. It became clear that there are at least four distinct streams of restorative justice practitioners: (i) those in indigenous and aboriginal settings, (ii) those in community-based organizations or activist settings, (iii) those in schools and educational environments, and (iv) those working with or in legal/criminal systems and institutions. Each of these restorative justice locations are distinct and driven by their historical context. Definitions and practices of restorative justice, language use, and strengths and challenges flow from there, which at times leads to confusion about how to define restorative justice. A more complex and inclusive understanding of restorative justice would include all of these streams of what are variously called restorative justice, restorative justice practices, restorative practices, peacemaking, and circles. In addition, there was a strong collective voice advocating for resources to support indigenous forms of peacemaking and restorative justice.

2. Naming Strengths and Being Honest about Barriers. In the work of justice and activism for social change, we tend to fall into two extremes: either to only talk about our successes and ignore our failures or to only focus on the barriers and obstacles we face and never take time to reflect on what is going well. In the listening sessions, we discovered that the restorative justice field has created the space for its practitioners to be reflective—to carefully assess both the strengths and challenges of our work with genuine honesty. These “reflective spaces” have allowed restorative justice to remain an adaptive-emergent system social system according to the following four capacities: to name the need for theory and research development as a necessary corollary to good practice; to question the cooptation of the criminal legal system and its drive for standardization, accreditation and ultimately a monetized justice process that finally benefits the elite of society; to think creatively and dream big visions of restorative justice being applied in all sectors of society; and to identify our racism, sexism and classism and the hypocrisy of ascribing to the tenants of restorative justice while treating each other in the movement in harmful ways.

3. Living our Values as Restorative Justice Practitioners and Organizations. Commonly referred to as ‘walking our talk’— this theme emerged repeatedly. At an interpersonal level, this means that practitioners must connect to self, self-awareness and self-healing as the starting points to link to others and to the work of restorative justice. At the community level, each organization must practice what they ‘preach’ and espouse restorative justice values within their organization. At a structural level, this means engaging with top-down reform and legislation

with ethical integrity, and organizing collaborative approaches to change things from the bottom-up.

4. Tensions in Scaling Up and Integrity of Practices. Considerable discussion was held around a number of issues: the co-optation of restorative justice into institutional systems (state, prison, judicial, school); concern about practitioners who are not well trained; pressure from system-based partners for restorative justice to be a quick fix rather than a paradigm shift; and how to scale up with integrity and without losing restorative justice values. The latter was discussed at great length at most of the listening sessions. A tension that captures this issue is the pressure from various stakeholders—systems partners, funders, and even those within the restorative justice community—to offer technical certification in restorative justice to meet the needs of scaling it up, which faces a strong sentiment from practitioners that certification threatens authenticity of practice. This is largely because certification access to practice can become the domain of educated professional elites which excludes marginalized practitioners, directly-impacted people and community wisdom. In other words, certification can be inherently oppressive. There was a strong recommendation to find ways to create strong practitioners without the need for formal accreditation. The positive side to this is to equally value community wisdom and the wisdom of directly-impacted people in relation to technical skills and formal education.

5. The Full Integration of Social Justice Values—Anti-oppression and Specifically

Anti-racism—Into the Restorative Justice Movement. The western paradigm of restorative

justice was not birthed out of inequity and oppression in the same manner that most social justice movements form, and so this question arises in the movement about whether restorative justice is a social justice movement. Two factors have moved restorative justice partially in the direction of social justice: the increased recognition of the indigenous roots of peacemaking as a form of restorative justice, and the adoption of restorative justice by practitioners who intersect with various social justice movements because of their identities as people of color or marginalized people. Most practitioners in the listening sessions were clear that the integration of social justice values into restorative justice must be centered by practitioners in the movement. Social justice values must become embedded at every level; the impact of oppression must be understood from every micro-interpersonal circle to the macro design of new restorative justice processes, to resourcing indigenous paradigms of peacemaking, addressing historical harms, and ensuring real diversity in national leadership structures, to name a few things.

6. Structures to Build the Movement: Partnerships, Coalitions, Regional Hubs, National Networks and a National Fund. Conversations were had at all sites around effective partnership and coalition building. Sites reflected on failed attempts to establish better partnership and coalition structures, and also envisioned successful coalition structures. There is a strong desire to have a decentralized national network that can link the local and regional work and to develop a national fund that supports mid-sized and small regional and local community-based organizations. Most important was for local and regional coalitions and national networks to be characterized as having the following: the core values of collectivity and ‘power-with’ infused from the micro to macro levels; structures that redistribute power on a

regular basis; and formations founded on mutual learning and growth among all stakeholders along the justice spectrum. Participants urged funders and all concerned to support the organic development (which is relationship-based and not institutionally mandated) of local, regional and national coalitions and networks

7. Sustainable Funding. There was less enthusiasm among the sites to engage in this topic. This could have been due to many factors, one being that participants were interested in delving into content and movement issues since the Listening Project was framed as such. Building connections and networks between funders and organizations was a recommendation shared among all sites. Possible ideas included grassroots organizations working with funders to change the RFP process, better information flow and visibility between funders and grassroots organizations, and inclusivity of the funding community in restorative justice conversations. Many participants were concerned that as restorative justice practitioners, we have not effectively framed our public messaging, and that as a movement, restorative justice needs to tell a better story not just for garnering resources, but also to the end that people (the public) could better understand its scope.

Defining the Issues – Restorative Justice as Western and Indigenous

Even though many of the contributors to this anthology did not participate directly in the Listening Project of 2017, you will note how the seven themes listed above will all be echoed throughout the following chapters. One way to think of this collection is to see it as a window into the *growing pains* of movement that has a lot of new momentum. For this reason, we chose

the wording of “new growth and new challenges” to be in the book’s subtitle. We are at an interesting crossroads where the movement is undertaking a collective inventory of its mission and vision. One way to understand the currents of our current situation is to revisit the two primary roots of restorative justice and peacemaking, namely indigenous and western. Moving forward, it seems important for us to name and honor the multiple parallel histories of restorative justice. By examining the inter-connectivity of these two streams, we can better understand why the above seven themes are leading us to rethink every aspect of restorative justice in today’s world.

The Indigenous Roots of “Restorative Justice”

Many indigenous communities do not use the term restorative justice, but have been doing their variation of it for centuries before the West created a term for it. Indigenous people have multi-varied circle practices of their own that should not be reduced and simplified as one process. As two non-indigenous western practitioners (writing this introduction), it is impossible and presumptuous for us to know or capture the history of “restorative justice” in the indigenous context. Below is a small and humble offering of what we learned in the listening session project.

In indigenous paradigms, justice is embedded in a holistic worldview. In a holistic worldview things are not separated; peacemaking and circle processes are embedded in a way of life, and the *outcome of justice is tied to healing and restoring balance* to oneself, one’s relationships and to nature. The four aboriginal participants in British Columbia’s listening session came with a strong message that their *justice outcome is holistic healing within an indigenous paradigm*—justice and healing are deeply linked. This was best highlighted by Faith

Tait from the Nisga'a Nation of 7000 people who said, "We don't have a word for 'offender' in our language; the word we use means 'un-healed.'" A few participants in the closing circle said that this statement shifted their paradigm on restorative justice. Claire Whelan Sadike from the British Columbia Public Safety Ministry said, "This frame would change the way everyone thinks about that person (the person who has harmed). That is its ultimate overarching goal: to be about justice, repairing harm and healing people versus punishing and destroying them."

This justice paradigm has to start with healing oneself and then moving outwards. Faith Tait continued, "We have to start with our own self-awareness, which then shapes our health and wellness. We have to understand our own layers of trauma and do our own work. If an unhealed person is facilitating, what are they passing on? You cannot reach out and be a connector if you are not in connection to yourself. Everything has to be reflected restoratively; the way I talk to people and relate to my environment has to show it. Otherwise people won't feel it."

To elaborate on the impact of healing to everyone else involved beyond the person who has caused the harm, Judge Carol Perry of the Navajo Nation described how it is when "you work to repair yourself and everyone is assisting you with that, whether it's the cook who is making fry bread with you or the person helping you to wash your car. Because by assisting you, they get better, too." She went on to explain how westerners stuck in the "good-bad" dichotomy do not understand the fluidity of healing for everyone involved. In the western paradigm, our assumptions are based on a separation between "the person who was harmed" and "the person who harmed," or victim and offender, and we do not see relationships at the center of all justice and healing. Although westerners often know it cognitively, it is difficult for people to

internalize and live it in a way that healing and justice are interdependent and relational.

The most common forms of indigenous “restorative justice” known to westerners are in the format of peacemaking circles. Examples include circle processes originating from the Tagish and Tlingit peoples of the Yukon territory as popularized in the western context by practitioners like Kay Pranis, Family Group Conferences that originate from the Maori in New Zealand, and circles from the Sioux and Great Plain Indians. Peacemaking is the traditional Navajo way of addressing harm and resolving conflict. As one of the peacemakers, Thomas, explained, “Peacemaking can be problem solving, conflict resolution or dispute resolution; it can be before, during, or after a conflict.” Peacemaking is steeped in Navajo thinking. There is a philosophy, with strategies and practices, that peacemakers learn in order to facilitate these conflicts; these teachings are rooted in the Navajo worldview which is based on their traditions, beliefs, customs, stories, and songs. Peacemaking is happening as referrals from courts, in schools, and for individual family members.

Indigenous communities characterize their own practices in a variety of ways. Peacemaking is not even an agreed upon term. As Judge Perry of the Navajo Nation said, “Peacemaking is not a Navajo word but a word from the Seneca Indians.” She said the Navajo word would be the equivalent of “Talking Something Over.” Indigenous people have multi-varied, complex and particular circle practices of their own that should not be reduced and simplified as one process. For example, peacemakers in the Navajo Nation do not use a talking piece and neither do the Maori in New Zealand, while the Tagish and Tlingit do. All three are doing circle that is specific to their community.

Moving into the future, it is useful for western practitioners to understand that the circle process originating from the Tagish and Tlingit is one form of circle. If westerners use some other form of circle, they are not “doing circle or restorative justice the wrong way.” There is a tendency in the western mindset to learn a practice or skill and then assert that it is *the* way or *the* model. This replicates a colonial mindset and erases the many traditions and nuances of different indigenous circle traditions. It fails to see that at the heart of circle is not the assertion of a model, but a *way of being together* that is non-hierarchical, interdependent, and holistically embedded in a way of life.

Colonization and Cultural Revival

It is impossible to talk about restorative justice in the indigenous context in the Americas without talking about the impact of genocide on the indigenous life-way. In the Navajo Nation listening session, participants spoke deeply about the impact of genocide and colonization on the Navajo people. The Navajo Nation participants agreed that the Fundamental Law of the Diné (Navajo thinking) needs to be infused in every aspect of Navajo life from coloring books to the law school, and that colonization has created major disruption to knowing the Fundamental Law of the Diné. Roger Begay, a peacemaker, said peacemaking is embedded in them from the beginning in the creation stories. Circle and peacemaking are embedded in the Fundamental Law of the Diné.

Gertrude Lee, Chief Prosecutor of the Navajo Nation said, “It seems like peacemaking should come in early, go outside the court and go into schools and be a permanent active

program, because there are so many people who don't have this background. Their background is coming from cell phones, TV and music, and they are not learning this; it is not something that grounds them as a person. So just sticking peacemaking in the court system is just a band-aid. We need to get in there ahead of time. Young people are hungry for it.”

Melissa Jackson, a Navajo Technical University (NTU) law student expressed her personal experiences. “I don't think that people really look at how much the treaty [of 1868] pulled the rug from under us. We don't even have coloring books that tell us about the Fundamental Law of the Diné. You have to teach us like we are 5 year olds.” Melissa went on to share how circle transformed her. “I've been at NTU for three and half years. I was considered the white girl, since I don't speak Navajo. I was a straight-A student. I used to sit in Justice Yazzie's class and he'd draw the circle and I didn't get it. I'd just say 'I didn't get it, I didn't get it.' Then one day I started to understand it. Once I really understood fundamental law, it changed my life forever, and I take it now to my beadwork and to everything I do. The circle saved my life when my sister died; it was the only thing that got me through. I realize that it's not something you just do but it's something that you become inside of yourself, and all your experiences.”

Restorative Justice as a Western Paradigm in North America: Social Service, Paradigm Shift, or Social Movement?

Restorative justice, in its western paradigm origins, was primarily conceived of as a *social service* – a legal diversion process aimed at transforming individuals entangled in the

criminal justice system, and with the possible by-product of change within families and communities, too. The reasons for this perception of restorative justice as purely a social service are many: the singular focus on improving practice and its application, little theorizing and research undertaken at the time, and its marginal status in the mainstream of the criminal legal system and society at large.

For example, in the early decades, restorative justice meetings between crime offenders and victims were focused on misdemeanor legal offenses and primarily valued as a more effective mechanism to gather restitution than court-ordered fines, as opposed to restorative justice processes being seen as setting a framework for changing social narratives and building stronger communities in order to transform structures. Or, another example would be how in the early decades, restorative justice in schools primarily focused on using a particular practice as one of a number of approaches to choose from in response to student discipline or misconduct issues, as opposed to being seen as a framework for changing whole school systems, policies, pedagogy, and ultimately educational outcomes. There remains a significant number of professionals in the field who would hold to the definition of restorative justice as one more technical skill-set on the menu of multiple social service options and as such *limiting the focus of restorative justice to interpersonal transformation and thereby disregarding its potential for effecting structural change*.

With the publication of *Changing Lenses* (Zehr, 1990), a seminal work on the theory of restorative justice, the idea of a “paradigm shift” (Kuhns, 1962) was introduced into the field. Zehr and other key leaders in the field began to conceive of restorative justice practice as having the full potential in its theoretical underpinnings, values, principles and practices to evoke a

philosophical transformation of how the criminal justice system responds to harms. However, at this time the concept of a paradigm shift was locked in a modernist worldview that understood change as a linear, mechanical process of developing a logical “blueprint” that methodically detailed the transplanting of an entire system and all its elemental parts by another completely different system and all its elemental parts. This change process was seen as universal, monumental and cataclysmic for the criminal justice system being discarded.

The consequences of this idea resulted in a deep polarization within the restorative justice field between those who believed that change could only happen from the inside of the system (reformers) and those who believed that change could only happen from outside of the system (revolutionaries). Reformers concentrate their efforts on new legislation that enables restorative justice to be practiced in the criminal legal system more effectively and efficiently, or they may put their energies into changing legal policies and procedures to be more ‘restorative’ in nature such as programs that tout “restorative prisons” or “restorative courts.”

Revolutionaries, on the other hand, focus their efforts on providing complete diversionary or alternative justice processes that are not dependent on the criminal legal system for sustenance. For example, consider urban restorative justice youth projects that refuse to take any referrals or funds from the courts, or the setting up of police-free zones for youth to settle their own conflicts without any interference from state justice authorities. As a result, each of these groups of self-proclaimed restorative justice change-agents have seen the other as “sellouts” (betrayers of the cause), and as a consequence have often refused to work together. In the end, both of these approaches ultimately failed to delink their identities from the criminal legal system as either a complementary or contrasting response to its change as an institution.

In the last decade, another iteration has occurred where upon restorative justice has evolved into a *social movement* in the United States, recognizable by the populist momentum that is giving meaning to it as a frame for social change and cohesion. There has been a recent explosion of new research, theory publications, and practice applications coupled with the voices of communities that were previously marginalized which are now entering the conversation with power and clarity. The restorative justice movement embodies a relational justice lifestyle that invites people to live-right, do-right and make-right through human connection and community for the sake of the “common good.” And, the restorative justice movement now reaches far beyond the conventional criminal legal system with new applications being made in all sectors of society, including family, education (Ginwright, 2016), community, religion, business, governance, media, and in expressions of arts and culture. *The focus of the restorative justice movement is to hold in tension both interpersonal and institutional change while at the same time moving towards a cultural shift or societal transformation of how justice is understood and practiced for the future.* This vision proffers a form of justice that refuses to be configured around punishment and state-sanctioned violence as a means for social change. Instead, it embraces a future view that requires justice to be socially constructed in relationships defined by accountability, reparations and healing.

Amidst this evolution, a growing set of voices like Dr. Fania Davis and Dr. Scharrar (2017) have been evoking restorative justice as having the potential to grow into a *social justice movement* – a transformative force that addresses healing and accountability at personal and structural levels of society, and not only as applied in the present reality of injustices, but also in dealing with the legacies and aftermaths that have transpired as a result of historical harms in the

past (Hooker & Czajkowski, 2012; Hooker, 2016). The intent is to integrate social justice and anti-oppression values at every level of restorative justice from its values, to theory, practice, and design. It includes a wide range of interventions from factoring in the impact of oppression as a causative factor of interpersonal harm, to truth and reconciliation processes for racial justice at the structural level, to centering indigenous paradigms of peacemaking and community approaches to wrongdoing that precede western conceptions of restorative justice.

In our current reality, restorative justice is being lived as all of the above— a social service, a paradigm shift, a social movement, *and* a social justice movement. Some treat restorative justice as a tool to address interpersonal harm that is not embedded in a structural and historical analysis of inequity. At the same time, there is a growing momentum to live out restorative justice as a social justice movement.

What Have We Learned From Other Criminal Justice Reform Movements?

Studying restorative justice in light of penal reform movements in United States history can be quite illuminating. Dr. Dana Greene (2003 & 2013) conducted a ground-breaking research study comparing restorative justice with three major reform efforts in the US: the penitentiary, adult rehabilitation, and parole reform movements. What she discovered was startling. Each of these reform impulses when compared with restorative justice, carried a similarity in the sense of urgency, well-articulated vision, populist language, and commonly designed project/program ideas to test their innovations. However, each of these major movements, unlike restorative justice, unwittingly became an extension of the current criminal legal system and its expansion of social control within a decade of their emergence. Why?

According to Greene, there are two distinctions that have kept restorative justice from being totally co-opted by the system. Firstly, restorative justice has brought in the voice of victim-survivor (harmed) communities, whereas the other three movements focused almost exclusively on the crime offender. Secondly, all three of these other movements were translated into broad-based, comprehensive legislation at a national level within a 10-year period of their inception, whereas restorative justice has not been legislated at a national level and therefore it has been able to retain its autonomy and innovative expression albeit on the marginal edge. Thirdly, we would add that another fundamental difference from past reform efforts has been the sustained and deliberate attention to principles and values as opposed to reliance on technical “quick-fix” formulas. In fact, the two points that Greene makes actually flow from this focus on principles and values. In sum, the centrality of the victim-survivor’s voice, the lack of uniform national legislation, and the intentionality in maintaining the integrity of ascribed principles and values are three distinctives that have allowed restorative justice to emerge as a social movement as opposed to being incorporated into the dominant criminal legal system. And, as the movement grows it would behoove us to hold onto these distinctive elements.

Not only have these identified “distinctives” kept restorative justice from being co-opted by the criminal legal system, but they have also inadvertently allowed restorative justice to exercise its ‘bottom-up’ approach to justice, to stay in conversation with other social justice movements (e.g. racial, transformative justice), and build relationships and partnerships with indigenous communities that are shaping cultural change and delivering a holistic justice that could be sustained for years to come.

Structure of the Book

This anthology exposes the reader to a cross-section of the restorative justice movement and the voices it is magnifying at this current moment in time. In many ways, the garnering of different author identities, ideas, writing styles, sectors of work, language and cultural worldviews, represents the diversity of the movement in all its color, creativity and at times, chaotic complexity. And, like all social movements it is bound to morph and change in significant ways in years to come. We liken this collection of writings to a “snapshot” or some sort of temporary container which is holding multiple, yet disparate narratives of the movement in this iteration of its evolution. This anthology is meant to stimulate debate and dialogue, not to bring consensus or agreement on the issues at hand, and it is into this contested space that we invite you as the reader.

Chapters 1-6 integrate topics of movement building, racial justice and restorative justice in both educational and community settings. **Chapters 7-10** present a series of critical issues such as restorative justice and the natural environment, addressing gun violence, violence reduction in war zones, and meeting the needs of victim-survivors.

The stage is set and the backdrop unfurled with the opening chapter as authors Rose Elizondo and Jovida Ross engage in a powerful and optimistic conversation that frames a hopeful vision of restorative justice as a healing force that transforms individuals and structures alike, and beckons us into the flow of restorative justice as a social movement that imagines a “bigger we” – the space where restorative justice values, principles and practices nourish the “common good.”

Next, in chapter two, Mika Dashman and five other co-authors articulate a clarion charter, calling all white restorative justice practitioners to take seriously the task of dealing with their own white privilege and how they benefit from dominant systems of white supremacy in this nation. The need for white restorative justice practitioners to educate their own communities to embrace racial justice could not be more relevant, and the authors insist that this internal work will bring the critical consciousness necessary to sustain the restorative justice movement into the future.

Looking to the past, Jill Strauss then takes the reader on a journey, outlining how restorative justice gives credence to the processes of collective memorialization, healing and transforming of historical harms. Using the ‘Coming to the Table’ (CTTT) movement as a model of engaging racial justice in a restorative manner, Strauss outlines how the ancestors of those who were enslaved and those who enslaved them have come together to face the past, build relationship, collectively heal and take joint action to deal with the persistent legacies and aftermaths of slavery in the United States.

Providing an example of strong practical application, Daniel Rhodes outlines how he utilizes restorative justice frameworks and practices as a liberatory pedagogy for teaching social work students in the Academy. Using the seminal work of Paulo Friere, the author shows how the use of embodied learning results in emancipatory outcomes and is a form of resistance to the traditional “banking system” approach to education where students are seen as empty vessels just waiting to be filled, as opposed to activated agents of change in the world.

In a fast-paced, radical critique of the conventional educational structures as we know them, Jonathan Stith, in chapter five, centers youth organizing and activism as powerful forms of

restorative justice practice at a systemic level. Stith challenges us to think “Bigger than a Circle” in our understanding of the socio-political impact of restorative justice, and he calls us to enter into a social healing justice where whole educational systems are transformed in legislation, policy and funding as youth take the lead.

Moving on, Katherine Evans and her co-authors introduce an application of critical race theory in restorative justice education. The authors offer definitions of the concepts of justice and equity as central pillars to the work of restorative justice in school systems. Defying the current and often singular focus on individual student misconduct, the authors instead propose a model of systems analysis that interrogates the structural impediments that keep students from being educated in a holistic manner. The authors provide concrete examples of what a restorative justice educational setting could look like.

Valerie Serrels applies restorative justice thinking and action to our relationship with the natural environment, ecological destruction, and climate change. She works with the term “radical relationalism,” and asks us as readers to imagine with her what it would be like to think of the earth and all living plants and creatures as connected and networked. In this way, all living matter could be seen as critical stakeholders in the restorative justice movement. In other words, how could or should we include the natural world as a “victim-survivor” of human harms?

Next, Ethan Ucker introduces his chapter on gun violence harm reduction by naming the “overgrown NGOized landscape of restorative justice.” Fully aware of the way restorative justice has been co-opted by professionals who can “own conflict” and market resources for addressing harms, the author explores a decolonizing strategy for a firearm harm reduction model in the setting of urban Chicago. As a public health issue, harms stemming from gun violence could

benefit from community-based services that operate similar to safety-based harm reduction models related to drug use.

Folding in an international application of restorative justice, Mulanda Juma presents a research study on the movement of local peace committees that spread across Burundi. While predominantly using the language of conflict transformation and peacebuilding, Juma makes a case that the establishment and ongoing presence of these Peace Committees functioned as a restorative justice approach in preventing and intervening in layers of harms experienced by local communities in that post-war context.

Finally, authors Ted Lewis and Mark Umbreit take us back to a central question in restorative justice work: Are we serving the victim-survivors of harms well? This contribution continues the important discussion surrounding the historical and current efforts to ensure that all those harmed by others are being centered in the restorative justice movement. On one hand, institutionalized forms of restorative justice tend to be offender-centric within a framework of case management. On the other hand, recent trends to broaden out victimhood to communities and offending persons may have unintended consequences for some victim-survivors of serious crimes or harms. What needs more consideration is the question of how the restorative justice will interface with victim movements and services, be them within the traditional justice system or within realms of restorative work.

We trust you will enjoy this reading journey into the burgeoning restorative justice movement.

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