

Strengthening Resistance:

The use of narrative practices in working with genocide survivors

**A workshop facilitated for Ibuka:
The National Survivors' Association in Rwanda**

by David Denborough, Jill Freedman, and Cheryl White

On behalf of Dulwich Centre Foundation and Evanston Family Therapy Center

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BACKGROUND

From April to July 1994, a genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi people in Rwanda claimed over one million human lives. It is now 14 years later and the survivors of the genocide continue to face profound hardships in relation to housing, health, education, extreme poverty, and security. The vast majority still live in great suffering and with the nightmares of the traumatic past.

The genocide aimed to eliminate the Tutsi, and this entailed the elimination of families – fathers, mothers, and children. After the genocide, the survivors regrouped on the basis of kinship, friendship, or just kind-heartedness of spirit. Associations fighting for victims' rights are constantly committed. Ibuka is the national survivors' association in Rwanda (Kaboyi, 2007a).

about this document

In November 2007, a team from the Dulwich Centre Foundation and the Evanston Family Therapy Center (David Denborough, Jill Freedman, and Cheryl White) headed to Kigali, Rwanda, to provide support and skills training to the workers at Ibuka. Over five days, this team offered training in narrative approaches to responding to trauma to a group of 34 trauma counsellors and assistant lawyers, all of whom are themselves survivors of the genocide. The facilitators also provided a structure for the workers' knowledge and ideas to be shared and documented. The work of these trauma counsellors and assistant lawyers includes visiting, counselling, and offering legal support to those who lost family members, those who were assaulted and raped during the genocide, and those who are HIV-positive as a result of these assaults.

This document describes ways in which narrative approaches can be used to respond to individual and collective trauma. It also includes the words of the workers from Ibuka and documents some of the initiatives, skills, and knowledges that they, and other survivors, are engaging with while living in the shadow of genocide.

Another version of this document has been produced for the local workers in the language of Kinyarwanda. This version has been produced in English in order to raise awareness about the work of Ibuka, the experience of survivors in Rwanda, and narrative ways of responding to communities who have experienced significant trauma and hardship.

the continuing effects of genocide

The workers of Ibuka have a great deal to respond to. Here they describe in their own words the continuing effects of the genocide:

The effects of the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994 are not over. Many people still live with the effects of the extreme violence, killings, and degradation that took place here during those one hundred days. So many of our loved ones are no longer with us. We are a group of trauma counsellors and assistant lawyers who work for Ibuka – the national survivors' association in Rwanda. We work around our country to support and assist survivors of the genocide.

The people with whom we meet are often dealing with many different effects of the genocide. They may be having nightmares and be unable to sleep. They may experience powerful feelings of despair and hopelessness. Often they have profound sorrow, fears, or anger. Some may not know whether they wish to live or to die, which means they are negotiating with death. Some survivors experience severe headaches. Others have difficulty swallowing and may feel as if they are choking. Many survivors are very isolated, very alone. When you have lost so many people it is sometimes very difficult to have relationships with others again. Some women who were raped during the genocide are now HIV-positive and are living with the consequences of this. And then there are the problems of memory. Some survivors have lost their memories and therefore have lost aspects of their past. Others have painful memories that return again and again. What is more, some survivors may feel guilty for being alive. The genocide has made them doubt that they have a right to live. These are all effects that the genocide is still having on survivors.

There are also circumstances in the present that are very difficult to deal with. Some survivors are living in the same villages as those who killed their relations and family members. These survivors are sometimes living with continuing threats and violence to try to intimidate them not to speak of the past, not to seek justice. And when survivors do seek justice, when they do speak up, they must deal with other people's reactions. There is hostility and hatred that they have to deal with every day. Many survivors are also living in severe poverty. These are continuing obstacles to dealing with the effects of the genocide.

Children and young people are also living with the effects of the killings. Even if they were not born at the time of the genocide, they are living with the effects that these events had on their parents and relatives.

These are just some of the effects of the genocide that people are living with. These are the effects which we are responding to in our work.



Images from Bugesera Genocide Memorial Site (see page 41)

PART ONE

HOW DO COMMUNITIES REBUILD THEMSELVES?

Prior to the workshop, the facilitators consulted with the participants to gain an appreciation of which themes the workers of Ibuka would like them to address. One of the first requests from participants was to explore the question: How are other communities rebuilding themselves after terrible experiences?

This is a key question. From a narrative approach, within any community that is facing significant hardship, community members will be responding to these difficulties; they will be taking whatever action is possible, in their own ways, based on particular skills and knowledge, to try to address the effects of the difficulties/trauma/grief on their lives and the lives of those they love and care about. These initiatives that they are taking will differ depending on the context, the culture, and the history of the community. These initiatives may not be widely recognised, and they may not in themselves be enough to overcome all that is presently facing the community. But they are highly significant (see Denborough et al., 2006; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Mitchell, 2006; White, 2006).

Counsellors and community workers can make it possible for community members to identify these initiatives, and start to notice the ways people are responding to the hardships they are experiencing. Once these responses are acknowledged, it then becomes possible to identify the particular skills and knowledge that they are drawing upon. A range of different narrative approaches can then assist people to strengthen these skills, and to take further action to reclaim their lives from the effects of trauma.

linking stories between communities

In response to the request to hear about how other communities are rebuilding themselves, and to introduce the concept of 'noticing initiatives' within communities, the facilitators shared a document from Aboriginal Australians in Port Augusta. This document, entitled *Responding to so many losses* describes the profound grief experienced by the Aboriginal community in Port Augusta due to many recent deaths through violence and suicide:

Recently, there have been so many losses in our families and in our community. Some of these deaths have been particularly difficult as they have been deaths of young people, and death through suicide or violence. We have experienced so many losses, one after the other. It has been a real struggle to get through. There has been too much sadness.

The document then goes on to convey some of the special skills of the community, some of the particular ways in which they are responding to 'so many losses'. These special skills include:

***Dreams in which loved ones visit** ~ Some of us have dreams in which our loved ones visit us. Even though they have passed away, they come to us in our dreams. We dream of walking together again across the land. These images sustain us; they convince us that we will walk together again one day. Sometimes we also have a sense that our lost loved one is communicating with us – telling us that everything is all right. On the anniversary of people's deaths, sometimes our loved one comes back to us in our dreams to tell us they are going now and not to worry about them. This can lift a weight*

from our shoulders. We know they are now okay ... Even though they are no longer with us here on earth, they are still offering us comfort. Sometimes we also feel a touch on our shoulders and know it is our mother's touch. Or we feel her rubbing our back as she always did when we were children. Feeling the kindness of loved ones in our dreams or through their touch helps us to continue with our lives.

Spirituality ~ For some of us, spiritual beliefs and practices are what help us to get through. Faith that one day we will meet again with those who have passed away sustains us. Acts of prayer are also significant. Knowing that someone is listening and will answer our prayers can make a difference.

Crying together ~ When one of us is feeling low, others feel it too. We have skills in feeling each other's pain and suffering. In this way we share grief. I remember one time, I was sitting in front of a photograph of my mother and I was crying when my relatives walked in. They sat down beside me, put their arms around me and they started to cry too. 'What are we crying about?', they said. I told them and we sat in sadness together.

Remembering and staying connected to those who have passed away ~ We have developed special skills in remembering and staying connected to those who have passed away. There are many ways in which we do this. We do not forget them. We honour and respect our loved ones. Here are some of the different ways that people spoke about remembering and staying connected to those who have passed away:

'Certain smells always remind me. I seek out these smells sometimes and spend time to remember those who have passed.'

'There is one story that has always been very significant to me. This is of a particular woman here in Port Augusta. When her brother died, she used to carry his suitcase everywhere she went. This case had all his belongings inside, his clothes and other possessions, and she would carry this case with her throughout life – to the shops, to the pub, wherever she was walking. Wherever she went, this sister carried her brother with her. This was a way of honouring him. She also spent a lot of time at his gravesite.'

We all have different ways of carrying our loved ones with us.

They are with us forever ~ Because we love them so much, we may grieve forever for those who have died. But we will never forget them. They might not be here with us but we have them in our hearts and in our minds. (For the complete version of this document see Denborough et al., 2006.)

These themes can be seen as skills of 'healing', of 'resistance', of 'response', of 'honouring', and so on. However they are named, these are significant skills that community members are engaging with in order to respond to the profound trauma and loss that they have endured. It's important to note that each of the special skills that community members are engaging with has a *history* in the lives of the individuals concerned and also in the life of the community. These skills are linked to history and to culture.

By exploring, acknowledging, documenting, and sharing these skills in various rituals, these acts of 'healing', 'resistance', 'response', and 'honouring' can become stronger. It then becomes possible for community members to put these special skills to more use in their lives. Community members also begin

to experience a greater sense of 'togetherness'. This is a 'togetherness' not only in relation to their experience of loss, but also a 'togetherness' in relation to their 'skills of resistance and response'.

After hearing the document from the Aboriginal Australians, the workers of Ibuka sent them a message:

A message from Ibuka to the Port Augusta Aboriginal Community

We are a group of trauma counsellors and assistant lawyers here in Rwanda. We work for Ibuka and for the survivors of the genocide. We would like to send a message back to the Aboriginal people of Port Augusta. We listened to your stories here in Kigali at the beginning of our workshop.

It was good to hear your stories, to share in them. While we were listening to them, some of us thought, 'This is our life'. Many things are similar between how you are responding to so many losses and how we are doing so here in our country.

We want to say to you that we are together with you in sorrow. Your sorrow is our suffering.

We want to say that we are both learning from our bad histories. We are finding ways to love each other and be committed together in powerful coalitions.

Life has to continue. We must build confidence in ourselves and in each other.

We hope that one day we will meet together, that you will meet the victims of Rwandan genocide. We must share our experiences to strengthen our power.

Listening to how you support each other makes sense to us. It is very powerful. We learnt from your words that you are like us. We also have very strong resistance to trauma.

Here in Rwanda, each year we have a mourning period. It is one hundred days long. We wonder if you also have a mourning period each year? If you do not then we would suggest this to you.

When the 7th of April arrives each year, we gather together at the places our loved ones were killed. We usually meet at the genocide memorial sites. There are different programs in different places but they often start with a mass. We also bring flowers to the memorial sites. And we hold many events, conferences, debates over the 100 days. We also bury our dead, those who were not buried in divinity during the genocide. We also visit each other, offer consolation and give testimonies. Our mourning period is significant to us.

Thank you for sharing your stories with us. We hope to meet some day.

noticing initiatives and special skills in rwanda

Having introduced the concept of noticing and acknowledging the ways in which communities *respond* to significant trauma, the Ibuka workers were then invited to consider the sorts of initiatives that they witness in their daily work with the survivors of the genocide. Time was taken to compile a thorough documentation of the sorts of skills of ‘healing’, ‘resistance’, ‘response’ and ‘honouring’ that the trauma counsellors and assistant lawyers notice in the lives of those with whom they work.

It’s relevant to note that different communities name these skills in various ways. The participants in the workshop were clear that the concept of ‘resistance’ was one that fitted very powerfully for them. Kaboyi Benoit (2007b), who was present at the workshop, has explained this eloquently:

... our people know how to live with suffering. In our culture, even if we are suffering, we find ways not to lose our integrity. Our motto in Rwanda is to struggle for life and not to lose our hope, or our way of living. Even at our lowest moments, we remember that the one who made us to be saved is still with us.

Resistance is a way of living here. If you read the history of Rwanda, every time there were wars, we were very brave. This is not to say that we love war, but we tried to save our loved ones, our security. We sought to defend ourselves even if we were suffering. There are ways of living, and ways of thinking about life that we draw upon in difficult situations. In fact, during times of life and death we start to see things clearly. Certain traditions of our people become all the more significant to us. Even if we are suffering, we use our cultural values of resistance.

There are also different ways of remembering. We do not remember in order to destroy our lives. We remember in ways that are in accordance with our culture, that assist us to face life.

Because the concept of ‘resistance’ was resonant for participants, this became the metaphor the facilitators used to highlight survivors’ responses. From the words of participants, the facilitators generated the following document:

Survivors resisting the effects of genocide

It is important to know that survivors are resisting the effects of the genocide. There are so many ways in which people are reclaiming their lives from what happened in 1994. There are also many ways in which they are resisting the hardships and difficulties that they face each day. Some of these acts of resistance may seem small at first:

One survivor encouraging another to keep going, to believe there is a future.

A worker refusing to see the effects of the genocide as an individual sickness but instead naming them for what they are – consequences of trauma.

Some survivors resisting through art, creating poems, and other artistic endeavours.

Seeking justice can be a form of resistance. A survivor who is alone in her community may receive threats or attempted bribes to stop her from testifying at Gacaca*. And yet she decides to stand up and tell the truth, to give testimony to what happened. Despite the pressure upon her, she decides not to hide the truth. Many survivors still have a language of hatred directed towards them and yet they continue to resist through seeking justice.

Parents deciding to care for orphans or even to take orphaned children into their own homes.

Working in memorial centres, honouring the memories of the victims of the genocide, and ensuring their dignity is maintained, are all acts of resistance.

Joining with others in dance, song and laughter – when you have lived through genocide, revelling and enjoying life has new meaning.

Parents naming their children after loved ones who have been lost – this is an act of love, of memory.

Survivors resisting the denial of genocide by talking about the past, talking about history, and analysing the factors that led to the killings. Resisting denial is a significant act.

Joining with others in religious activities is to resist isolation and despair.

When women have lost their husbands, learning new skills and taking up the men's duties are acts of resistance. For instance, if a husband had a car and was using this for a small business, for his wife to take up these skills and carry on the work is an act of resistance.

Wanting to learn, engaging in intellectual endeavour, is itself resistance.

Having children and caring for them is a way of looking to the future, caring about life.

When you are a victim of genocide, taking care of yourself, looking smart, and working on your appearance can be significant. It shows the perpetrators of the genocide that they have not succeeded in ruining your life. In this way, living with pride becomes an art in resistance.

Joining with others in co-operatives, in small-scale businesses, are practical acts of reclamation. They are acts of working for the future.

For those women who were raped during the genocide, and who are now HIV-positive, seeking treatment and being willing to publicly identify themselves and acknowledge what they were subjected to, are acts of resistance. They are making it easier for others who were raped to come forward.

For those who are lucky to find photographs of loved ones, having these enlarged and framed are acts of resistance. So are placing them in positions of importance. If you come to these homes, you see these photographs proudly displayed. That is a form of resistance. It says clearly, 'These people may no longer be alive, but they remain with us in our hearts and minds'.

Developing new forms of family, and caring for other survivors, is resistance too. For instance, students in upper classes act as parents to those in lower classes. Whenever there is a parental visit, the older students visit the younger; they encourage them. In these ways, survivors create new families and resist through caring for each other.

When there is only one survivor in a village and they are going to testify at Gacaca*, a survivor from another village coming to support them is an act of resistance. They stand together.

Singing can be a sign of resistance too. In South Africa, or during times of slavery, persecuted people have strengthened themselves through song. This is true in Rwanda also.

Finally, acknowledging resistance is also a form of resistance. This document is a testimony to survivors' resistance.

These are just some of the acts of resistance that survivors are making every day all across Rwanda. There are many others also. Different people have different forms of resistance. These acts of resistance can be starting points in our work. We can work together to make this resistance stronger.

* Gacaca is a traditional form of dispute resolution in Rwanda that is now being used to bring perpetrators of the genocide to some form of community justice. For more information see Omaar (2007).

This document was read back to participants (via translation) in what was a powerful collective ritual of acknowledgement. Participants had a chance to make any addition or alterations to the document. They also had the chance to offer their feedback on it. They declared:

'This is an important document. We would be honoured if you could send this to others, to your friends in other countries who are also dealing with difficulties. And to the United Nations!'

'It can be used to advocate for survivors. And we can also use it in our work with survivors. It can assist us to notice the many different forms of resistance that we as survivors are demonstrating.'

PART SEVEN

MESSAGES TO THE WORKERS OF IBUKA

During the workshop, the workers of Ibuka asked: 'How have the Jewish people dealt with the problem of memory after genocide?' This was a question that was taken very seriously, so much so that the facilitators wrote to a range of Jewish colleagues in different parts of the world and asked them to respond to it. Three of these responses have been included here:

messages to Ibuka from Jewish colleagues in different parts of the world

Today the counsellors of Ibuka explicitly requested to hear more about how Jewish people have dealt with the 'problem of memory' ... how Jewish people have remembered and honoured the horrors of the holocaust and yet at the same time been able to honour the 'resistance' of Jewish people. By resistance they don't only mean resistance during the holocaust but more so about the resistance of the effects of the holocaust. They are interested in the future and in life going forwards – and how do you do this at the same time as remembering what happened in the past.

connecting with what they stood for

Ruth Pluznick (Toronto, Canada)

I opened my email this morning to find your document. You ask how Jewish people have dealt with the problem of memory: how to remember and honour the horror of the Holocaust and at the same time to honour the 'resistance' of our families and community to the effects of the Holocaust. In short, how to never forget the past and yet move forward in our lives. I am quite confident, in reading the document you have sent me, that the Rwandan people are finding ways to do this. But I am happy to share anything that might be of help from our own experience.

I think the survival of Jews in the world, despite the Holocaust, is possible because ... for the most part ... Jews look after each other. Wherever I go, I can expect to be treated by other Jews as 'one of their own'. And, if I need help, I believe they will help me if they can. The same will be expected of me. When we help each other, we remember (and are reminded) that we are part of something greater than our own lives and families: we are part of a community. Reading of the efforts of Ibuka, I felt a kinship with their purpose and a hopefulness that members of their community would find sustenance in each others' care and concern.

As a daughter of a father born in Poland, whose family and community were murdered by Nazis, I also learned to stand for social justice for all people. In my life, 'Never Again' has meant that I will do what I can to reduce the likelihood of anyone experiencing discrimination, hatred, or harm simply because of who they are. This commitment has shaped my career and life and helps me both to remember and move forward. When I read the book, *The sunflower*, by Simon Wiesenthal (who lost 89 relatives in the Holocaust), I was reminded that we are more than 'victims' to our

experiences; we can also do great social good because of what we have learned from these experiences. In this way, the suffering of those who perished 'will not be for nothing'. Taking what we learned from their experiences and using it to make changes in our own communities and the world is a way to honour the lives and deaths and suffering of those we love.

For this reason, it was particularly significant to me that an effort is being made to tell the story of what happened in Rwanda. I don't know why, but immediately following World War II, there was very little said about the Holocaust. When survivors finally began to speak, almost a generation later, healing within the community began. Now Holocaust survivors are telling their stories at community gatherings and in schools. The survivors' stories give evidence of what is possible when hatred for others is deliberately or inadvertently encouraged. The survivors also teach us that it is possible to rescue lives and relationships from great troubles and move on with our lives.

Last, but not least, is a story about one of my favourite ways to remember. This is a tradition started by one of my friends, also a daughter of Holocaust survivors. At Passover, which is a Jewish celebration of freedom from slavery, we read poems written by Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland. During Passover, the Jews of the ghetto launched a well-planned military action against the Nazis. Although they were unsuccessful, overpowered by the vastly superior might of the Germans, and the Ghetto destroyed with death to all its inhabitants, 60 years later we remember their courage that night. Reading their poems connects us with what they stood for and gives great meaning to a celebration of freedom.

I close with heartfelt thanks to our friends and colleagues in Rwanda for sharing their stories with us in ways that remind us both of the harm we can create in our worlds and our skills and knowledge to overcome and create something better. I feel joined with you in our mutual suffering and survival.

religious forms of remembrance

Yishai Shalif (Jerusalem, Israel)

There are many ways to remember and protest as well. At a Bar Mitzva of a nephew of mine, I walked out of the hall to breathe fresh air. This ceremony was at a Jewish community looking out over the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. As I was walking outside, I met my brother-in-law's father (the grandfather of the 13-year-old boy) and we had a small chat. He was an Auschwitz survivor. He told me, 'When we came out of the concentration camp we thought no Judaism was left in the world, we thought we were very few survivors and that all our traditions, religion, and culture have gone for ever. Standing here with you at the celebration of another grandson (he had more than ten of them) is my/our victory. Hitler did not succeed. This gives me a feeling it was not all in vain'.

As religious Jews, we have a few ways of remembering that all are also forms of resistance to the main aim of Nazi Germany to erase Jews and Jewishness from the world:

- We learn a set amount of Jewish teaching every day in the remembrance of the six million who perished.

- A lot of people have published religious texts and books. They write the names of all their dear ones in the books and they feel this writing is in their memory.
- There are plaques in the synagogues in memory of dear ones. Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem) is trying to collect as many names as possible of the six million who were killed. They have got about 3.5 million today but are still searching through the books and the synagogues for more names.
- There are many religious institutes and academies named after communities that were destroyed by the Nazis.
- Many Israelis go on 'roots' trips with the schools or with their families of survivors to their places of origin in Eastern Europe. Often they are also involved in research about those communities, homes, and families.
- We have a day of commemoration once a year for the holocaust.
- Religious people also honour a day of mourning once a year for the destruction of the two temples. There are special additional prayers that tell the story of the holocaust and the significance to Jewish people of the establishment of the Jewish community in Israel.

Hope some of this could be of help.

humbled by your invitation to speak

Kaethe Weingarten (Massachusetts, USA)

You who are so remarkable as to care about the thoughts of Jews in the diaspora, so far from the nightmare of the genocide you have just lived through:

First, I am humbled by your invitation to 'speak' to you and awed that you see a connection between me – a third-generation survivor – living in Boston, USA and you. My location in relation to the Holocaust is not simply put, but to simplify: more than half of my family on my mother's and father's side perished in the Holocaust. The last family members who survived the camps both died of cancer in the last few years. Their children are younger than I am. I currently treat two families whose mothers are survivors of the Holocaust. These are three generation families that are both very successful and also deeply troubled. I have also studied the Holocaust for decades.

Second, I have learned a great deal that has been of use to me in the circumstances in which I find myself. So I have no idea if whether what I feel I have learned will be of use to you in Rwanda, but here goes ...

1. Most Jews left Europe after the Holocaust. Only a tiny percentage went back to the communities in which they had lived prior to the war. Although the lives of those who left were profoundly disrupted by this, they did not have to deal with seeing their perpetrators or being triggered by the very place they lived. Although they had to make new homes for themselves, they were eventually able to call another place home. Home was not the same place in which their loved ones had been murdered and they were nearly so. This makes the task of coping profoundly different.

2. Most Jews who survived gave testimony to show that it was 'blind luck' not 'moral strength' that led them to survive. Of course, the Holocaust went on for years, not 100 days, and this may not be so of survivors in Rwanda. For decades, people wanted to make the Jewish survivors into heroes and this was actually bad for them. It still happens. Many survivors have had to resist this perception being foisted on them.
3. Jews have resisted by making a good life for themselves and their children. They have resisted by being politically active. Many Jews endorse the idea that genocide must never happen to anyone ever again. Some Jews take the position that this must never happen to Jews again. I endorse the first view and worry about the second.
4. There have been extraordinary achievements of thinking about and writing about the Holocaust. Very little good writing has been done by people who survived because as they have said, there are no good words to describe what happened in the camps. Spoken testimony of survivors has been richer than the written word. The preservation of testimony is something that has become very important as the last survivors are growing old.
5. As it has been written, survivors inhabit two worlds, then and now. 'You do not choose memories; memories choose you.' A life with memories is the only kind of life Jewish survivors had. It was particularly difficult for women who thought having children would erase the pain or erase memories. This rarely happened. It often made things worse because they did not feel the joy they wanted to feel and were 'supposed' to feel. It was difficult to talk about this. But some women resisted by talking about it. Their sharing validated the experience of so many women and was a gift.
6. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, commentators have noted a 'conspiracy of silence'. What the perpetrators have done is 'undiscussable' and what the victims have suffered is 'indescribable'. Resistance is to break the conspiracy of silence in any way possible.

I have read many books about what happened in Rwanda and I have often placed myself into the situation and imagined whether I would be able to wake up each morning and go forward. Where would I look for hope? I think about hope in this way:

- Hopeless: my act of resistance would be to resist isolation
- Witness to those who are hopeless: my act of resistance would be to refuse to be indifferent.

If I could do that every day or once a week, I would be so proud of myself and it would give me hope. If I could do one kind act for someone each week, I would feel it was worth living. I think. I hope.

Thank you for giving me the chance to share some thoughts.

Other responses were offered by Saviona Cramer, Yael Gershoni, Rick Maisel, Paul Browde, Jeff Zimmerman, Ron Schweitzer, Amaryll Perlesz, David Moltz, Eve Lipchik, Murray Nossel, Jonathan Morgan. All of the responses were translated and sent to the Ibuka workers.

messages from Australia and the USA

Messages of support were also sent to the workers of Ibuka from a range of practitioners in different countries. Two of these have been included here:

dignity and pride

Barbara Wingard (Murray Bridge, Australia)

My thoughts have been with you all ever since I read your words in *A testimony of resistance: Survivors resisting the effects of genocide*. I am an Aboriginal woman and my name is Barbara Wingard. I have worked for many years now as part of a team from Dulwich Centre and our work has taken us to many Aboriginal communities in Australia during their time of many losses, grief, and trauma. The people in these communities have shared many stories with us. They feel like misplaced people in their own country but they also share stories of their history, hopes, and dreams. As I read your words about many forms of resistance, they reminded me of the stories of Aboriginal people.

Joining with others in dance, song and laughter – when you have lived through genocide, revelling and enjoying life has new meaning.

Joining in dance, song and laughter has been a way for Aboriginal people to bring the past, present, and future together. Laughter is a big part of our culture. It takes away the pain. Most times people can hear our laughter from a long way away and think we are too loud. I hope that your laughter is as loud as ours. What a strong way to resist.

Survivors resist the denial of genocide by talking about the past, talking about history, and analysing the factors that led to the killings. Resisting denial is a significant act.

We are also constantly sharing stories about the past and our history. Remembering is so important. And those who cannot remember can listen to the stories and play a part in keeping memories alive.

When you are a victim of genocide, taking care of yourself, looking smart, and working on your appearance can be significant. It shows the perpetrators of the genocide that they have not succeeded in ruining your life. In this way, living with pride becomes an art in resistance.

Living with pride becomes an art in resistance! What a statement! I love it to bits. Our pride as Aboriginal people comes from a knowledge of hard times. It is a pride of knowing what we have been through. It is a pride of knowing our stories and finding ways of sharing them with others who want to hear. Pride is a lovely word; it has brought us to where we are today, and it will take us into the future.

I have wonderful memories of how our old people dressed with dignity. Pride is something that I live with. I hold it dearly because whatever happens, I know it is something that no one can take from you.

In closing, I thank you for allowing me to hear your voices through your document. My response comes from my voice and the Aboriginal communities' voices as well. In reading your words, I started to recognise the skills and knowledges that you workers have. I also started to think about how lucky the people are to have you all to really listen to their stories. I would like to think that you will all continue to be strong and support each other in your future work.

acknowledgments

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For more information about the genocide in Rwanda, see the work of African Rights:

<http://web.peacelink.it/afrights/homepage.html>

contact details

Dulwich Centre Foundation

Hutt St PO Box 7192
Adelaide, SA
Australia 5000
Phone: 61 8 8223 3966
Fax: 61 8 8232 4441
dulwich@senet.com.au
www.dulwichcentre.com.au

Evanston Family

Therapy Center
820 Davis Street, Suite 504,
Evanston, IL 60201, USA
Phone: 1 847 866 7879
Fax: 1 847 328 1212
narrativetherapy@sbcglobal.net
www.narrativetherapychicago.com

Ibuka

Ibuka can be contacted
via Kaboyi Benoit
Email: bkaboyi@yahoo.com