

## The Meaning of Reconciliation

### Required Reading

Bloomfield, David. 'Reconciliation: An Introduction' in David Bloomfield et al., eds. *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict*, pp. 10-18.

### Highly Recommended Reading

Du Toit, Fanie. *Learning to Live Together: Practices of Social Reconciliation*. Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2002, pp. 295-305. 'Cycles of Reconciliation'.

### Further Reading

Bland, Byron. 'The Post-Troubles Trouble: The Politics of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland' Unpublished paper.

Bar-Simon-Tob, Yaacov, ed. *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Cecelia Clegg, 'What is Societal Reconciliation?' Unpublished paper. [Please do not circulate]

Lederach, John Paul. *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998.

Kelly, Gráinne and Brandon Hamber, eds. *Reconciliation: Rhetoric or Relevant*. Democratic Dialogue Report 17. Belfast: February 2005. Available as PDF at <http://www.brandonhamber.com/publications/report-dd17.pdf>

Schaap, Andrew. *Political Reconciliation*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Villa-Vicencio, Charles. and E. Doxtader, eds. *Pieces of the Puzzle: Keywords on Reconciliation and Transitional Justice*. Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2005.

### Possible Films

*Battle of Algiers*. (1965) 136 mins. Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Dramatization based on France's response to the Algerian uprising in 1954-57 and its willingness to meet terror with torture.

*Munich*. (2005). 164 mins. Directed by Steven Spielberg. The response to the killings of 11 Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich 1972 and its consequences.

*The Terrorist*. (1998) Directed by Satosh Sivan. The story of a young Sri Lankan woman who is chosen for a suicide mission.

[Slide 2] **Definitions of Reconciliation**

*Dictionary defn.:* The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) refers to: ‘The action of reconciling persons, or the result of this; the fact of being reconciled’.

This is fine as a definition if you know what ‘reconciling’ means but otherwise it doesn’t give much help!

[Slide 3] *Latin etymology:* ‘Calling together again’ or ‘Calling back together’; *Re* ‘again’; *conciliatio* ‘bringing together’ or ‘assembling’ (derived from *con* = together and *calo/calare* = to call or summon)<sup>1</sup>

[Slide 4] *Simple definitions:* ‘Reforming relationships’. ‘Reforming’ can cover both ‘re-forming’ relationships (ie re-establishing a good relationship that went bad) and ‘reforming’ ie changing and transforming a relationship that has always been bad.

[Slide 5] *Fuller definition:* ‘Restoring and transforming relationships that have been harmed by conflict so that they reflect a shared humanity and seek a shared future based on truth, justice, mercy and peace’

[Slide 6] *IDEA Handbook definition/description:* [Reconciliation is] ‘a process through which society moves from a divided past to shared future’.<sup>2</sup>

[Slide 7] *John Paul Lederach definition/description:* ‘Reconciliation can thus be understood as both a focus and a locus. As a perspective, it is built on and oriented toward the relational

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<sup>1</sup> *conciliatio* -onis f. [a bringing together , uniting, conciliating, causing of good-will]; *conciliator* -oris m. [one who brings about a result]; *conciliabulum* -i n. [a place of assembly]; *conciliatrix* -icis f. [she who unites]; hence [a match-maker]; *conciliatu* abl. sing. m. , [by union, by connection]; *concilio* -are [to bring together , unite, reconcile, win over]; hence of results, [to bring about, cause]. Hence partic. *conciliatus* -a -um, [won over, inclined, favorable]; *concilium* -i n. [bringing together , connection, assembling, union]; esp. [an assembly for deliberation, a council]; see Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid, University of Notre Dame <http://www.nd.edu/~archives/latgramm.htm>

<sup>2</sup> David Bloomfield *et al.*, (eds) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook* (Stockholm: IDEA, 2003), p. 12.

aspects of a conflict. As a social phenomenon, reconciliation represents a space, a place or location of encounter, where parties to a conflict meet.<sup>3</sup>

[Slide 8] *Byron Bland definition/description*: ‘reconciliation is ultimately about learning to live together again’.<sup>4</sup>

[Slide 9] *Democratic Dialogue Working definition*: ‘Our working hypothesis is that reconciliation is a necessary process following conflict. However, we believe it is a voluntary act and cannot be imposed. It involves five interwoven and related strands: [Slide 10] developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society; acknowledging and dealing with the past; building positive relationships; significant cultural and attitudinal change; substantial social, economic and political change.’<sup>5</sup>

[Slide 11] ***Reconciliation at different levels of society***

Reconciliation can apply to different levels of social encounter, from the highly personal to the most broad structural.<sup>6</sup>

[Slide 12] Personal/Small scale (Micro)

Psychological	Within the individual
Personal	Between individual people

[Slide 13] Group/Medium scale (Meso)

Family and Kin Groups	The family unit and kinship networks
Institutional and Organizational	Within institutions and organizations

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1997), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Byron Bland, ‘The Post-Troubles Trouble: The Politics of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland’ (unpublished paper).

<sup>5</sup> Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, *A Place for Reconciliation? Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland* (Democratic Dialogue Report 18. Belfast: September, 2005, p. 49. See also Appendix D (p. 90).

<sup>6</sup> Some would add further levels, which might include a wider context of ecological and/or theological relationships. See, for example, the working definition offered by Doug Baker and Cecelia Clegg.

Local communities	At local community level
[Slide 14] Structural/Large scale (Macro)	
Ethnic	Ethnic communities
Religious	Religious traditions
Political	Political parties and institutions
National	Nations and states
Economic	Economic and class relationships

Although it is important to distinguish these different levels of social reconciliation they should not be seen as occurring in isolation. For example, large-scale social conflicts often involve most, or even all, of the structural factors indicated above. Likewise, it is very rare for small scale conflicts to occur without any large scale context or vice-versa. Any serious attempt at reconciliation is therefore likely to need to address both structures and people.

### ***Developing some conceptual clarification on what reconciliation involves***

[Slide 16 ] a. Reconciliation is usually both a *goal* and a *process*<sup>7</sup>

[Slide 17] b. Reconciliation usually involves *multi-dimensional* relations. Reconciliation usually involves different dimension of new relationship, and is attentive to:

*Behaviour and actions*

*Attitudes, intentions and values*

*Organisations, institutions, structures*

[Slide 18] c. Reconciliation is usually a *spectrum* within each level

[Slide 19] Personal eg for individuals in the aftermath of estrangement

Minimal: Able to attend the same events

Moderate: Willingness to speak together and/or work together

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<sup>7</sup> 'Reconciliation is both a goal and a process'; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Truth and Reconciliation Report* (Cape Town: Juta and Co, 1998; London: Macmillan, 1999), I, p. 104.

Maximal: Positively valuing others and enjoying relations with them

[Slide 20] Structural eg for societies in the aftermath of armed conflict

Minimal: Acceptance of Co-existence

Moderate: Mutual Co-operation

Maximal: Positive Commitment to Sharing Society

The move from minimal to moderate and onto maximal cannot be rushed. Progression beyond minimal co-existence has to be based on consent; people cannot be forced into greater reconciliation against their wishes. However, the importance of moving beyond minimal reconciliation must be acknowledged. There is a danger that societies are too easily satisfied with the supposedly 'safer' option of settling for the minimal level. The argument for going beyond minimal political reconciliation and consolidating a wider social reconciliation is not just good-intentions but hard-headed realism. A minimal state of reconciliation is rarely the safe option because it is usually uneven and unstable. Furthermore, it has no safety net. Any lapses lead straight back into outright conflict.