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Book Review

Lederach, J. P. and Lederach, A. J., 2010, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: journeys through the soundscape of healing and reconciliation* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

ISBN: 9780702237669

This book is part of the University of Queensland Press's series on new approaches to peace and conflict. The foreword by Judy Atkinson, head of Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples at Southern Cross University, sets the evocative tone of the book for the need to listen to "people who have suffered torture trauma and where *blood and bones cry out*" (xiii)[1] in order to "raise our individual voices to make a collective song of healing" (xiv).

The book utilises a phenomenological approach and is grounded in practical experiences of peace building, some shared by a unique father and daughter relationship that led to this co-authored book, some experiences John Paul Lederach has had, and some others that were experienced by Angela Jill Lederach. These experiences vary from a mass women's movement in Liberia that influenced a peace agreement, to Somalian elders who walk between warring clans to promote meaningful dialogue, former child soldiers running drum workshops and victims of rape in Sierra Leone who give poetic voice to the pain of their violation. In some sections of the book, it is clear who the primary writer is, in other sections the voices blend beautifully.

It is the importance of voice that the book makes central to challenging orthodox perspectives on ethical peace building. The book begins by contextualising the central focus, explaining the significance of the "unspeakable"; the difficulty of expressing deep pain and being healed after experiencing the trauma of violations that are so abominable they seem beyond words.

From so many parts of the world, blood has been spilt and bones cry out for healing. The book relies heavily on the reader responding to metaphors, visual imagery and a stress on the significance of aural contributions. There is a strong critique of notions of reconciliation based on paradigms of linearity and sequential ideals of progress; instead, what is advocated is the exploration of trauma healing, peace building and reconciliation based on spatial and movement metaphors. The authors emphasise lived experience within local communities; healing as a dynamic aspect of everyday life; and they engage with "metaphor-phenomena like sound, music, poetry and mothering" (p. 12).While fascinating, the emphases are unorthodox in academic works and at

[1] All quotes in italic are in italic in the book.

times, I wished for more scholarly support for the validity of these metaphors.

The book begins with personal narrative stories of how people affected by the war in places like Liberia, Somalia and Venezuela find spaces for voices to be heard so that social transformation and healing can begin. These spaces emerge through lived experience where the human capacity for "*survival, resiliency* and *flourishing"* (p. 53) can be found. The first main theoretical challenge made to conventional peace theory is to question the idea of conflict as linear and thus peace as necessarily sequential. Instead, Lederach and Lederach argue that as metaphors, the concepts of place, safety and voice reveal more complex insights into the realities not only of violence suffered, but also of the nature of resiliency. Moving away from linear images towards ideas of depth and rootedness, the analysis draws on cyclical processes tied to specific locations and belonging. 2

In protracted conflicts, the powerlessness of those with no voice in the peace process is common. The authors emphasise the centrality of voice to feeling surrounded by safe spaces in which to tell stories that grant recognition of selfhood and thus they suggest that healing is aural. The section on the sonics of healing may strike some readers as highly unconventional.

It gives examples of the power of music, culturally different valuations of sound, poetry and lyrics to evoke spatial metaphors of circling, deepening, expansion, surrounding and repetition; sounds that call to mind emotive connectedness between individuals that contribute to social healing.

Having spent much of my adult life with an Irish husband who grew up near Van Morrison's home in Belfast and knowing his music intimately, the chapter on Morrison's music as the "inarticulate speech of the heart" (p. 111), was of personal interest to me. Lederach draws on Morrison's emphases on listening to one's inner voice, often through the power of responding to wonder, silence and the transcendent and told through concrete stories of living in the moment. Yet in feeling the silence, I kept wondering about those who are forcibly silenced or who, like raped women, choose silence for fear of shame or ostracisation if they voice their anger or the pain of their loss of dignity. Yet, I agree that "in many regards healing ultimately is about restoration of voice, both for individuals and communities" (p. 110) and music, poetry, literature, art and conversation touch us emotionally, often in surprising ways; inducing sensations linked to memory and experience and contributing to meaningful restoration of dignity after traumatic loss. However, I remain cautious about agreeing with the author's suggestion that healing is aural. In my view, this is part of the story of

healing.

There is at times what seems initially like over-romanticism, but I encourage the reader to mull over what is being suggested. Take for example the idea of the surrounding power of love and trust between ex-combatants and women that is initiated through the voice of the mother. Reflect deeper on what is being said, and it is clear that this is not the endorsement of essentialised notions of femininity as passive peace loving, but rather, recognition of "women who have, by *intentional design*, imagined a way to work the healing of their communities" (p. 168). This is an important message.

The final chapters muse on the aural theories outlined throughout the book. The authors conclude on the need for three metaphor shifts in furthering healing and reconciliation. First, a shift from a line to a circle, a container space with depth, where people feel a sense of belonging. Second, a shift from views of peace building as sequential movements to continuous flows of multi-layered experiences with sound and music, memory and hope as examples of spatial and temporal understandings. Third, through sonic expression and poetry, they note the metaphoric "shift from progression as forward moving to maturity and spirit engagement as involving and expressing themselves multi-directionally" (p. 202).

Sometimes, it takes a while to adjust to this metaphoric language.

The authors end with three crucial definitions that are worthy of quoting in full. "*Healing represents the journeys to touch, reclaim, name and project voice*", hence "finding one's voice and meaningfully projecting voice are keys to change" (p. 204). This I agree with, however, I struggle to grasp their definition of reconciliation within a sonic metaphor where "reconciliation *emerges as the mix of voices finds its natural frequency*" (p. 205). I tried to ponder what this means. The following explanation is more helpful to me, that "reconciliation as sound suggests the need for constant nurturing, circling and engagement, mixing and remixing of voices and the repeated deepening of meaningful conversation" (p. 206). Their definition of social healing is useful. "*Social healing represents the capacity of communities and their respective individuals to survive, locate voice and resiliently innovate spaces of interaction that nurture meaningful conversation and purposeful action in the midst and aftermath of escalated and structural violence*" (p. 208).

The policy implications of this book are profound. They imply that orthodox views of strict models of conflict as linear and peace as sequential assume bureaucratic, top-down approaches toward traumatised "cases" that miss the points made in this book. The policies needed for social healing require community-

based participation with local collectives that shape programs that are meaningful to specific communities. In Australia, the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act 2007 (otherwise known as the NT Intervention) was a package of welfare provisions and law enforcement that did not listen to or pay heed to the real needs of Indigenous Australians. Imagine the difference to individuals, communities and the Australian nation when people are given space for voice and for participatory processes that mould programs best suited to each particular community! Given the emphasis in the book on place, safety and voice, the central concepts provide profound grounding for rethinking a host of trauma healing programs.

I enjoyed the book immensely, even if I was not always fully convinced by the arguments. The writing is clear, very accessible, is poetic at times and draws deeply on intuitive, spiritual and expressive modes. However, not all will relish the style of writing. Those who seek rationalistic, proceduralistic, formalistic models of trauma healing and reconciliation will be disappointed. Those looking for ten policy steps to peace building will not find these. Not all readers will respond easily to a book that is heavily reliant on metaphors, visual imagery and a stress on the significance of aural contributions. However, it is a book that is inspirational in challenging traditional notions of healing and reconciliation and deserves to be widely read, re-read and its ideas debated with students, scholars, community workers, trauma counsellors, policy-makers and peace builders.

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