

**From Cold War to Hot Peace?**  
*The Politics of Conflict Resolution*  
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*As people existing in a continuous struggle for truth, we have to examine and question old concepts, values and systems.*

*Steve Biko*

The scene was a Conflict Resolution workshop for refugees from the Great Lakes region of Africa. In the center of the room lay a plant that the facilitators had just uprooted from the garden outside. Like good facilitators who believed in the power of visual aids we had uprooted a plant with yellowing leaves as a discussion starter in reflecting about the nature of conflict in Africa. We asked the participants: Why are some leaves turning yellow? Theories of photosynthesis were expounded upon. And we, the facilitators, were pleased with ourselves. Then we moved on even the most critical part: what need we do to stop the yellowing of leaves? Again, another torrent of plant biology...but there was this young man who seemed very uncomfortable with the whole conversation. Amid the discussion, he slowly and steadily raised his hand and calmly said: "Paint the leaves." There was hesitation, then the participants burst into laughter. He did not laugh. "This is what everyone is doing," he added, "why waste time with water, light and manure – go buy green paint and paint the leaves!"

This discussion has partly led to the reflections in this paper. Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding, Win-Win Outcomes and Sustainable Peace, to name but a few, have become terms that now dominate the lexicon of social transformation processes in the so-called third world. This discussion is animated by the concern that what appears as an evolution of a culture of peace, inspired by a "universalized" conflict resolution theory is shy about visiting the root causes of most conflicts in the so called third and fourth worlds. Conflict Resolution may well be a process of uprooting of people and painting of leaves. Or, at best, a process of only stopping the yellowing of leaves. Not only is current conflict resolution theory and practice generally ahistorical but it also tends to take for granted indigenous cultures, knowledge systems and realities. We are also prepared to believe that it is not a historical coincidence that the ideology of conflict resolution is being promoted at a time when the socio-political conditions worldwide are unstable.

To start with, we share Ngugi wa Thiong'o's view that "peace is not possible in an imperialist dominated world...[if] peace [is] the social basis and climate for a truly human community." Therefore:

[w]riting for peace should at the very least mean raising human consciousness to an uncompromising hatred of all *exploitative parasitic relations* between nations and between peoples within each nation [...] for we must all struggle for a world in which one's cleanliness is not dependent another's dirt, one's health on another's ill-health, and one's welfare on another's misery.

In this paper, we discuss the theory and practice of Western nurtured conflict resolution and its attendant processes now widely being "adopted" in third and fourth worlds. While we recognize the potential of some of the activities and the solidarity being created between people and organizations, we insist that for current conflict resolution theory and practice to be worthwhile, significant and relevant to the reality of the majority of people in the world, it must be placed within the history of the relationship between the so-called North and so-called South. And when we do that, we shall begin realizing that conflict resolution theory and practice, perhaps unknowingly, abets the process of globalism. We are witnessing people's basic challenges of survival either being turned into problems of ethnicism [or tribalism] or communication. People who are hungry are being told re-state their interest – not position! -- and seek win-win outcomes. People who are oppressed are being regimented to manage their anger and compromise. People who have lived together for centuries are being taught how to listen well for that is important for prejudice reduction.

In this paper we shall argue that we do not resolve or transform conflicts by skirting around the root causes of conflict. We venture that while upwards of 80% of global conflicts call for solid advocacy and activist alternatives, conflict resolution practitioners are quick to mediate and negotiate where power imbalances are apparent and even when mediation and compromise potentially become acts of violence. Incidentally a more "third world" interpretation of Adam Curle's Progression of Conflict matrix suggests the need for more activist approaches that lead us to confrontation with injustice. As long as conflict resolution is shy about visiting the real causes of conflict, we shall continue betraying the struggle of the poor and oppressed people's struggle to attain basic needs, rights to

life and freedoms. In this regard we shall question whether conflict resolution *a la* Western culture is not an attempt to deny and suppress the power of indigenous cultures by making them predictable hence oppresseeable.

We must begin by asserting that all peoples, in the attempt to come to terms with fellow humans, nature and the supernatural encounter conflicts. In responding to these conflicts and challenges, values are evolved and culture is created. Ideally, any people become makers of history in an ever-continuing process. Therefore "conflict resolution" as produced by the West is but one way of responding to conflict and creating culture. In this respect, therefore, all cultures can be said to be "a conflict resolution/transformation" praxis.

Some "optimists" would argue that with the end of cold war, surely conflict resolution, *a la* Western culture, is relevant and necessary in a unipolar world. Well, Africans say that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. And, Ali Mazrui has rendered aptly that when two elephants make love it is still the grass that suffers! Perhaps we can also add that the grass does not suffer any less when the elephants are making love!

Since the term culture is at the heart of our discussion, we begin by making introductory remarks on the term under the sub-heading "A Word on Culture." The second section of this paper titled "Towards Hot Peace?" is devoted to a critical review of conflict resolution theory and practice with particular reference to the widely adopted pyramidal model developed by our professor John Paul Lederach. Our concluding notes are titled "Our Hope, Our Strength." In the paper we shall use the terms Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding interchangeably. While we appreciate the theoretical distinctions, our experience shows that in practice the effects are not dissimilar. We shall also use the terms indigenous peoples and third and fourth world peoples interchangeably. These people have common experiences in their history and their current encounters with conflict. And in most cases they are both. Let us now begin by grappling with the simple yet often very confusing term: Culture.

### **A Word on Culture**

*Of all our studies, history is well qualified to reward our research – Malcolm X*

It seems that dependent upon one's intention, the definition one gives to the word culture can either propel a people's capacity to become makers of history or, as is all too common, send them to a museum as spectators of history. Many definitions of culture favor the reductionist perspective, selectively slicing away events and activities and, above all, commodifying them. Consequently, there are many people in the so-called third and fourth worlds who view their culture primarily through capitalistic products, examples of which would include "tribal" dances, masks and yoghurt. With such narrow definitions of culture, it is not surprising that whenever young people from third world assert the power of their culture they are greeted by the cynical refrain: "You mean you want to go back to wearing skins, sticking spears through each other and sleeping on trees?"

The written history of third and fourth world peoples -- written as it was with questionable intentions -- is full of violent conflicts. Little is said about the oral history that has narratives of peacemaking and nation building in abundance. Little written history talks of the values that our ancestors evolved in response to conflict. We need not repeat that the myth that our ancestors were nothing but a bunch of violent, blood thirsty "natives" is still being reinforced at every opportunity. And if there is any good at all then it is "tribal" and not effective in the "modern" era. Unfortunately, this strange logic guides conflict resolution practice today. It seems that there is little in our written history that would offer solid answers to contemporary conflicts. It is on this basis that conflict resolution justifies wanton invasion of other people's ways of responding to conflict. Yet as Paulo Freire affirmed: "cultural invasion always involves a parochial view of reality and the imposition of one's worldview upon another." Fortunately, written history is not the only history available

Steve Biko defines culture as "the society's composite answer to the varied problems of life." And more importantly, "we are experiencing new problems everyday and whatever we do adds to the richness of our cultural heritage, as long as it has [humans] as its center." Indeed, the etymology of the term denotes dynamism and permanent transformation. Bennars and Njoroge inform us that "culture" comes from the Latin verb "cultus" which means to cultivate, or more precisely, act upon the land, transforming it for production. "Cultus" involves *human action* to transform the world, to make the world human. Broadly speaking, therefore, culture entails human response to three important elements: nature, fellow humans and the world beyond or the supernatural. Through reflection and action, a people -- any people -- would constantly be in the process of evolving culture given emerging challenges from the three elements. It is this capacity to be makers of culture that differentiates humans from animals. "To make culture," Augusto Boal notes, "is to invent the world so that it responds to our needs, our desires, our dream."

In the so-called modern era we have witnessed humanity evolve a culture that does not enhance life. In almost every part of the world, greed and insecurity has led to astronomic consumerism and domination. What we have now is a culture of lies and death primarily guided by fear and profit. Humanity has turned anti-life. We are now evolving a culture that does not have humans and life at its center. And, as Ali Mazrui would say, the ancestors are angry.

For people who have endured colonialism and imperialism, questions regarding culture remain in mire. Not only do we tend to doubt our humanity but also our very capacity to "cultus." Responding to westernization [and globalism] indigenous peoples and those who have survived colonialism are struggling with questions of modernity. Can our traditions and cultures modernize? Should we surrender to globalism [that poses as modern culture]? Or, better still, is it possible to modernize without westernizing? Writing in 1972, the Guyanese historian Walter Rodney captured the impact of this historical struggle when he wrote:

[t]he decisiveness of the short period of colonialism and its negative consequences on [the third world] spring mainly from the fact that [the third world] lost power. *Power is the ultimate determinant in human society*, being basic to the relations within any groups and between groups [...] *when one society finds itself forced to relinquish power entirely to another society, that in itself is a form of underdevelopment.*

Did the colonized peoples of third and fourth worlds lose the power to encounter conflict within their own societies and with other societies? Have third and fourth world peoples become spectators of history? Are the violent conflicts we experience a symptom of our search to regain power? Will the breaking from the yoke of cultural captivity be the most significant step in regaining power? But this may only be one side of the story.

Indigenous traditions and culture are resilient. The resilience may not be found in books or films. Like their religions, it is lived. In times of crisis one may capture the manifestations of its precepts. It is a culture that enhances the capacity to confront the realities not by merely embracing it but by critically determining and modernizing traditions and practices on our own conditions and understanding. And things will get better when more third and fourth world and indigenous people overcome the definitions of culture that suffocate their capacity to transform their world according to their needs as their ancestors did.

If a people's capacity to respond to these elements is disrespected, regimented or entirely replaced, as conflict resolution seems to do, then such a people lose enormous treasure and power – their identity and very capacity to be human, to be makers of culture. In our experience it limits indigenous people's capacity and space to function within their own paradigm(s) and to pursue and implement their own models of human association, interaction and endeavor. They lose their power for human action for change. They cease to know who they are. As Max Weber would say, they even cease to know who they are not. This leads to uprootedness [especially from land] that cripples people's capacity for self-reliance. Dependence on State and other external agencies for their very existence; cultural and structural violence and domination are the most obvious consequences. In other words, humans become predictable, dysfunctional and eternally dependent.

We hasten echo the words of Luigi Guissani that traditions are not handed over to us so that we become fossilized within them. Like our ancestors, we should be able to develop tradition, "even to the point of profoundly changing it." However, in order to develop the capacity to transform tradition we must "act with" what our ancestors gave us. This means using tradition critically, filtering it through our own experience. However, "using tradition critically does not mean doubting its value – even if this is what is suggested by the current mentality."

Ironically, the more we run away from our traditions and seek to modernize within the precepts of other people's cultures, the more we become "fossilized." We must identify and reject the history that sought to portray us as non-humans. At the same time we must trust our true history, experience and capacity to transform. In the preface to Fr. Laurenti Magesa's prophetic work, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Fr. John Walligo's is insistent that we are obliged to examine our history, culture and morality to excavate the values upon we can anchor our identity and inspire our liberation. "To do otherwise," he concludes, "is nothing less than communal suicide."

### **Towards Hot Peace?**

*There is no turning back...we will win. We are winning because ours is a revolution of mind and heart – Caesar Chavez*

Two critical issues that conflict resolution *a la* Western culture theorists and practitioners hardly acknowledge is the history of the field and the idea of what is termed civil society. First, it is rarely stated that human history is primarily about encounter with conflict: conflict with fellow humans and the institutions they create; nature; and the world beyond. And, more importantly, all cultures are a process and product of this encounter with conflict. Like liberal democracy, conflict resolution is presented as a new, universal, social science initiative, which any "civilized" person should accept.

As an academic discipline, conflict resolution western culture is an outgrowth of democratic liberalism. Emerging from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century discontent with monarchies, democratic liberalism searched for an alternative ideology that would fulfill the aspirations of the emerging nation-states following the treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

Though the State would be able to exercise authority even by use of force, the citizens would control the State. This was regarded as a pragmatic response to the dictatorial tendencies of the monarchy. Conflict Resolution draws from democratic liberalism, if with a little creativity, for as Allan Tidwell notes:

what [m]odern conflict resolution has done is to replace many of the explanations of behavior such as the desire for life and liberty, with other motivations. For example, instead of arguing that people are motivated by the pursuit for life and liberty, Burton has argued that individuals are motivated by our of needs satisfaction [...] *Regardless of the motivation held, many of the objectives of conflict resolution remain as those in democratic liberalism.*

The focus of liberal democracy is the individual not the collective. Individual needs and convenience overrides the collective aspirations, self-determination and values. This very same logic functions in the "universalized" conflict resolution. Because Conflict Resolution assumes that the State is a neutral institution, or at least derived for the common good, there is a tendency to take the forces of State for granted. In so doing, the field does not address issues of structural violence and structural illegitimacy -- the very source of violence and conflicts in most of third and fourth worlds. It promotes the idea that prosperity and the development of the individual is the strongest foundation of peace.

To a large degree Peacebuilding has followed the patterns of State-building. And here lies a fundamental irony: Max Weber's assertion that the State possesses the monopoly of the legitimate use of force is borne by experience. Violence is central to the nature of the State. Ali A. Mazrui stretches the argument: "[t]he global system on nation-states has in turn been a structure of repressed international violence." Now, if conflict resolution is founded on the same ideal as those of State building and, if the State is fundamentally an instrument of structural violence, does it not follow that Peacebuilding is predicated on ideals of violence?

Someone once defined the state as a group of people bound by a common misconception of their origin and a unified hatred for their neighbor. Having lived with the State and global hegemony for almost 300 years, not only have we been accustomed to believe that both are the *only* way of social organization, but we have also forgotten where we have come from. We tend to forget the philosophical underpinnings of social organization of our nations [the so called tribes]. Rarely do we see the State -- as a social organization -- as a problem by itself. And, in recent times we have gone further: according to Hoffman, democracy is presented as nothing than the State itself. We are afraid to face the reality that the "modern" Westphalian State hardly respects the aspirations of nations and people that preceded it. We are afraid to believe that the fragility of the global structure of nation-state makes it easier for a few people to exercise the culture of power through the control of instruments of violence and the production and consumption behavior patterns of the whole world.

Second, it is hardly stated that the idea of civil society, which champions Conflict Resolution work, has its roots in the European intellectual tradition and western political culture. This concept is yoked together with the idea of the Westphalian nation-state. As James Mittelman has noted, civil society "is regarded as that realm of associational life above the individual - or, some would say, the family - and below the state." More importantly,

[t]he idea of civil society has been imported into the politics of globalization partly because of neoliberalism's lack of philosophical dimension and also partly because of multiple signs of disintegration of social order."

If we accept these arguments, therefore, when John Paul Lederach talks of a "middle out" approach he is basically affirming the ideology of the civil society. In other words, he would like to see changes happen but within the realm of the existing nation-state. In this regard, statist diplomacy and alternative dispute resolution methods are heading towards the same destination: a situation of social order and not necessarily of just peace. We shall return to this discussion presently.

Further, many conflict resolution organizations are structured along the pattern of the nation-states. Though they preach democracy, openness and accountability, the reality is that many have centralized authoritarian leadership structures. Like third world governments, their ancestors reside in Western capitals. Hardly are they accountable to the people they purport to serve. Like the State, peacebuilding organizations operate like oligarchies unable to enhance the much-needed dialogue. One gets the feeling that if NGOs were to possess instruments of physical force they would be transformed into a replica of the State.

Yet, in most of third world, conflict resolution work is engineered by Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs]. Many models favor and advocate intervention by the middle. In the last decade, donors seem to have chosen to

channel more of their resources through NGOs as State apparatuses have become more corrupt and unreliable. Consequently, this group of society has become a reliable conduit not just for donor aid but also for Western consumerism and cultural domination. However, if we seek to attain anything sustainable, anyone who has worked with NGOs in third and fourth worlds would advise you to rather remain faithful to the State. The reality, as columnist John Githongo writes, is that,

[m]any of today's NGOs can *never* be sustainable and independent because of their dependence on donor funds that are dished out by agents serving the interests of mainly Western governments. *These governments have specific agendas and when agendas change NGOs have to change or find themselves starved of funds.* Today it's gender, then environment, then governance, then human rights, corruption, then decentralization and *conflict resolution.*

The cultural mode of peacebuilding agendas is determined in Western capitals. In fact, the NGOs are more accountable to their donors than their own people or governments. On the other hand, when International NGOs enter areas of conflict in third and fourth world nations, little effort is made to "inculturate" their structures and operations. They maintain their perceived set of assumptions and prejudices and are, therefore, unable to constructively address the core issues of the political, social and economic conflicts. One of the "theoretical" assumptions they make, as Graham Hancock in the *Lords of Poverty* would say, is that third world people are a helpless lot, capable of nothing. Not only do they need compassion -- that apparently is in abundance in the West -- but also intellectual and moral leadership.

It is in this spirit that we wish to examine in more detail a model now widely being adopted in the third and fourth worlds. Developed by our professor John Paul Lederach, the model conceptualizes "leadership in a population affected by conflict" in the form of a pyramid and categorizes key actors in conflict into three, namely, top [the smallest], middle and bottom [the largest]. He further posits that because the middle level is not desperately involved in survival activities, and since they have connections and respect between the top and bottom, they are best suited to initiate and co-ordinate Peacebuilding programs. He proposes that Peacebuilding take a well coordinated multi-level "middle out" approach both vertically and horizontally. Indeed, he proposes a set of activities and programs that could be undertaken at each level to build an infrastructure for long term Peacebuilding.

In our experience we have noted the two major interpretations given to the model. Peacebuilders from the West perceive the model as a point of reference to strengthen their capacity for a more "systematic" and "strategic" response to violent conflict. For them, the model clearly identifies peace actors and their functions as well as possible Peacebuilding activities.

From a third world perspective the pyramid itself is a furtherance of a dominant system filtered through the Westphalian nation-state system. It affirms the centralizing nature of the Westphalian nation-state and promotes individualism [not individuality!], breaking down the collective identity of a people. It lends credence to a system that suppresses people's aspirations through a monopolizing centralized authority backed by a rigid bureaucracy controlled by a few.

We wish to interrogate the cardinal points of analysis in this paradigm. First, Lederach's model seems to define the *thesis* as a "deeply divided" nation-state. It therefore prescribes an *anti-thesis* of a "middle-out" multi-level approach in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding. The synthesis, it seems, is peaceful nation-states.

Second, the model is not clear on the criteria of categorizing "leadership in population," though it echoes a Marxist analysis of society. In most indigenous societies like Nagalim [lim=land], a pyramidal categorization would not accurately represent the structure, power relations or leadership or the ontological worldview of the nation. There are many societies where power and leadership are devolved.

Third, and equally important, is that Lederach's model omits two critical components -- the global forces and poverty. Any model that only glances at the question of globalism and the squalor in the third and fourth worlds must, *ipso facto*, remain questionable. The poverty and violent conflicts we endure germinate from the alliance of greed involving a few powerful people in Western capitals who connive with political leaders in third and fourth worlds.

Fourth, while Lederach acknowledges that "at issue in many of today's conflicts is the very nature of existing states, as contested by disputing internal groups," the model he develops gives scant attention to the critique of the structures of the State. In other words, he seems to make a critique of the functions of state from a statist perspective. On this account, the model makes the same mistake like statist diplomacy, of which Lederach is critical of, and for which he seeks to provide an alternative.

It would seem that Lederach's analysis and prescriptions assume that peace can effectively be built within the nation-state system if all levels of society are involved in an inclusive process. However, if the foundation of the house is weak, does it matter how inclusive we are, and at what level, we are involved in the building? Shouldn't the building of the house of peace fundamentally involve the deep digging of the foundation to take into account the elements of globalism, power and poverty that keep sneaking through the foundation?

To be fair to our professor, the model is developed from his experiences working within fragile nation-states. He may have failed to notice that the model would only buttress, or used to justify the need for, a centralized authoritarian system which hardly answers to the aspirations of the many competing for space within it.

Lederach proposes a "middle out" approach in intervention. Experience tells us that this kind of approach does not lead to any meaningful transformation of oppressive and violent structures. At best, if Peacebuilding is midwived along the model, then all we shall have is a smaller pyramid inside the larger pyramid. The Philippines experience is a good example. Successive revolts by the civil society have only succeeded in replacing the people at the top of the pyramid without making any radical changes to the existing oppressive pyramid. This clearly indicates that transformation of individuals is less than adequate in the quest for justice. Peacebuilding without transformation of structures can only lead us to "hot peace."

Many times, the question that then emerges is: are the middle actors -- or most of whom work with NGOs -- usually part of the solution or part of the problem? This becomes even more apparent considering that most NGOs do not witness or live with the consequences of their actions and decisions. Many intermediaries do not run the same risks as the people they work with.

More importantly, because of a "lack of tenure" NGO Peacebuilders are more involved in survival needs in the same measure with the grassroots that they seek to help. Sociologists forewarned that this sector of society is never really interested in radical social change. Foremost, they are interested in ascending the rungs of the societal ladder. The NGO workers tend to be more liberal and moderate than the suffering masses. Being able to satisfy their basic needs in the short-term, their concept of justice is in perpetual metamorphosis. As they flirt with the structures they initially intended to oppose, they begin seeing justice issues primarily in terms of human relationships and not justice as including how humans relate with structures and systems. We therefore have a group of people working within unstable systems, with weak and unstable links with the donor community but who are expected to be the critical elements in the building of sustainable peace.

Having "objectivized" their oppressors, the middle class aspires not to change their fragile systems but make the most out of it, survive within it. Or better still; hope that things will change and that they will ascend to the higher rung of the ruling elite. On the other hand, the ruling elite holds this class in fear and suspicion and is, therefore, always on the look out for a few "radicals" in the middle -- who may stir up the masses -- to co-opt them in the higher class or eliminate them altogether. It is doubtful that these are the people we can rely on to devise and coordinate value-driven conflict resolution programs. These are the people who will very likely tell you that globalism is inevitable and modern.

For most struggling peoples the *thesis* would be a unipolar hegemonic system nourished by fragile nation-states and intent on dominating the "third world" materially, culturally and ideologically through a profit-driven culture of power. Inspired by Steve Biko's article "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity," we would say that the *anti-thesis* must, therefore, be a humanity-driven, historically minded and culturally sensitive critical solidarity amongst all struggling peoples at the core of whose vision are self-determination, respect for all people and economic empowerment. The *synthesis* would be just and egalitarian nations with a human face, where cultural domination and power politics have no place.

We want to linger on this point and consider, if briefly, two examples with regard to nonviolence. We want to demonstrate that like current conflict resolution practice, many times noble peace and nonviolent processes do not seem to ask the right questions. Emerging from the encounter of Hindu culture with British oppression, *Satyagraha* [or Truth Force] as evolved by Mahatma Gandhi proved a potent rallying point for Indian people. Accustomed to dealing with violent subjects, the British occupiers were unable to respond to a peaceful resistance and eventually acceded. India became a nation-state, a fully-fledged member of global hegemony. And, therein lies their irony:

In Mazruian terms, "[t]he prophet of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi, helped to facilitate India's entry into the global structure of power and war." *Satyagraha* had failed to evolve a sustainable and peaceful post-revolution agenda. It would seem that Gandhi took it for granted that peace and justice for all would prevail within a State system [predicated on violence?]. Mazruian questions, correctly in our view, whether this was not a betrayal of nonviolence. Indeed many other successful revolutions [peaceful and unpeaceful] conducted within the parameters of the nation-state have only led people to further misery and subjugation. When the Post-independent State of India was challenged, it used the very same instruments of force -- the very same the British used in suppressing liberation movements in British India -- to suppress genuine democratic peoples movements.

In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon provides us with an equally insightful example. He questions the "use" of nonviolence in circumstances that are all-too-familiar to indigenous people – the colonial situation. Our colonial and neo-colonial history is replete with examples of approaches that seek to encourage people to suffer peacefully. Is it a coincidence that conflict resolution in thirdworld has been vigorously popularized after the end of the "cold war?" Is conflict resolution functioning in the same way as the nonviolence that Fanon talks about? Are conflict resolution practitioners acting as the modern day colonial bourgeoisie which

[a]t the decisive moment [...] which up until then has remained inactive, comes into the field. It introduces that new idea which is in proper parlance a creation of the [neo]colonial situation: nonviolence. In its simplest form this nonviolence signifies to the intellectual and economic elite of the colonized country that the bourgeoisie has the same interests as they and that it is therefore urgent and indispensable to come to terms for the public good. Nonviolence is an attempt to settle the [neo]colonial problem around a green baize table, made, before any blood has been shed, before any regrettable act has been formed or irreparable gesture.

Mazrui notes that "nonviolence amongst the natives was used as a device to control the natives." Is conflict resolution an attempt to control third world peoples? Are conflict resolution practitioners the modern day missionaries who must prepare ground for the global forces of greed and domination? Two worrying trends: One, because of a rush to mediate and negotiate win-win outcomes, those involved in peoples movements perceive conflict resolution as a threat in the search for justice. For instance, in the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, one group views security as peace while the other views justice as peace. The one with the most power -- read military might -- prevails and the win-win outcome is that security is equated to peace. And since justpeace is not located within the larger democratic perspective, it becomes easier for the more dominant party to create conditions that would enable them to impose peace accords and treaties on the other. World over, we have similar experiences where the oppressors have created conditions for "domination through negotiation." Is it, therefore, surprising is that governments in third and fourth worlds are getting more interested in training their own administrators in conflict resolution and [passive] nonviolence?

The potential that unjust systems would use methods of conflict resolution for subjugation is real. The alliance between the political elites and conflict resolution workers has pushed history further away from the map of justpeace. When the models of conflict resolution ignore history and hardly tackle the root causes of violent conflicts we face, can we expect them to lead us to the land of milk and honey? Let us listen to Tidwell again:

While history has been recognized as playing a central role in the conduct of conflict and conflict resolution, it has yet to be placed within the context of conflict resolution theory. *Most conflict resolution theory is ahistorical...[y]et the connection between communication, history and human needs is clear*

When the lessons of history are ignored how can we respond to the present and the future? For too long we have been chasing butterflies in the name of addressing poverty issues. Never did we heed the warning aptly given by Abdulrahman Babu in 1972:

[...] Throughout the last decade we have been posing the wrong questions regarding economic backwardness. We "did not look into the past to know the present." We were told, and accepted, that *our poverty was caused by our poverty* in the now famous theory of the "vicious circle of poverty" and we went round in circles seeking a means of breaking that circle."

Nelson Mandela may have completed the picture when he recently told Australians that reconciliation would remain an empty shell if Australian blacks did not have food in their stomachs. We were told that we were poor because we are poor and now we are being told that we experience violent conflict because of our "tribes." Conflict resolution for third and fourth world peoples has bought into play a most fallacious theory: that we are unable to govern ourselves because of our ethnicity [not even ethnicism!]. Having failed to appreciate that tribalism and ethnicism are creations of the ruling elite in fragile nation-states who, in turn, worship the global forces of greed and domination, conflict resolution theory and practice is not particularly concerned that people should build peace from our individuality, culture and experience.

Conflict resolution seems to be taking cue from the global *realpolitik* particularly with regard to the coinage and promotion of the terms ethnic conflict. Peoples movements and struggles in the cold war era that were referred to, and promoted as, nationalistic movements and freedom struggles have been reduced to "ethnic conflict." This reductionist and self-serving definition of peoples struggles undermines aspirations of peoples for social and political change towards more responsive structures and systems. As well, it reflects the shallow understanding of the dominant knowledge system and worldview that is unable to visit and recognize the historical legitimacy of indigenous peoples and their struggle towards their rightful place in the world. When conflict resolutionists work with this mentality all we expect is a spiral of conflict.

Again, the politics of conflict resolution operates on the assumption that peace will lead to self-determination - which itself is a misleading contradiction in terms. This short-term, superficial understanding of peace is now responsible for destroying many peoples struggle for justpeace in the so called third and fourth world. One needs to begin realizing that the struggle for peace is embedded within the larger struggle for self-determination and justice. Peace cannot exist in isolation; it can only exist with the realization of self-determination.

It is therefore hardly surprising that conflict resolution has elevated the psychologizing of conflicts almost to the status of a fine art. The tendency to rely and depend heavily on a psychological understanding for analysis in this field could be very misleading. Though psychoanalysis is becoming universal in character, its applicability, relevance as well as its remedy needs to be culturally, socially and politically deconstructed for a more holistic process of healing.

In short, conflict resolution is posing the wrong questions and not looking further enough into our past. It is time third world people asked themselves rather seriously whether people who live in squalor, are oppressed by national and global forces, and who are struggling for a little freedom are in urgent need of prejudice reduction workshops, communication skills and peace manuals. There is a chart commonly used in conflict resolution training. Two burros have a pile of hay on each side but they have a rope tied to their necks, connecting them. Each keeps pulling seeking to reach its pile of hay. But then the burros realize that a little dialogue would lead them to enjoy one heap, together. And when they are done with one pile they move to the next heap and also enjoy it, together. Conflict resolved. But our friend Jean Ndayezigiye once posed: What happens when the two burros have finished both haystacks and are hungry again?

Broadly speaking, Conflict Resolution practice fails to appreciate that structures and systems condition human relationship. For instance, if someone is oppressing you a conflict resolution practitioner will not tell you to change the "system" of how you relate or at least, question and transform the structures that make it possible for the person to oppress you - that is too radical, leftist, revolutionary. Rather, you should continue suffering peacefully as you search for the personal transformation of your oppressor. This is also the message we get from the films of Hollywood. Their stories are calculated to "purge" not just our bad tendencies but more importantly, our desire to change society. We relinquish our power to act to the beautiful, sensual, white middle class character. The same message is apparent in conflict resolution: do not change the oppressor, seek to transform the [personal] relationship between you and the oppressor. And, if the oppressor does not change here on earth, do not worry much, an everlasting [re]solution awaits them in hell.

Yet there is a fact that many people do not appreciate, namely that the imperial powers borrowed and continue to borrow ideas on social organization from indigenous peoples. We suggest that the primary tenets of governance in the USA are borrowed from the indigenous peoples of America. US democracy would have been a good example of a dialogue of civilizations were it not for the fact that American "democracy" is controlled by a clique intent on domination. American democracy has betrayed the tenets of devolution of power borrowed from indigenous traditions. And, there are signs that conflict resolution theory is already borrowing from indigenous ideas. However, the values and structures of capitalist societies potentially prevent the growth of indigenous Peacebuilding values and principals. Problem is when such models are appropriated and processed through the assembly line of the capitalistic experience, then exported back for adaptation in third and fourth world countries.

We now want to make some comments regarding training and education with regard to conflict resolution. As we pointed out in the introduction, countless training programs in conflict resolution are now in progress. In other words, the impact of conflict resolution theory and practice is being felt, or has the potential of being felt, right to the grassroots. In our experience, peace "education" is by and large a monologue. When it is claimed that it is dialogical then it is a dialogue of two monologues or the dialogue of the powerful speaking twice. The experiences and reflective capacity of people are taken for granted. In Freirian terms, we now have bank clerk conflict resolution trainers who run around assuming that their elders and those they work for, or represent, are not educated. The enthusiasm with which they dump definitions on unsuspecting people would provide good comedy were it not for the fact that such knowledge affects they way a people define themselves and how they should encounter the world.

What happened in Information training is being replicated in conflict resolution. And Anthony Smith's warning is relevant as well:

As long as training stresses little more than technique and avoids the whole problem of self-consciousness and consciousness of the objective interests of one's society, training can only serve as an instrument of perpetuating the present international and economic order [...] it can only serve to widen the economic, cultural and intellectual gap that exists between the West and ourselves.

It is not surprising that current conflict resolution training seems to produce very alienated individuals. Because the training lacks "consciousness of the objective interests of one's society" the training produces people whom seem removed from the realities they operate from. At best, they begin to define their reality using Western lenses. With time, with such education they become less activist, their analysis is blunted. They perfect the art of transferring the meaning of our suffering through other communication styles.

Let us conclude this section by underlining a cardinal difference between conflict resolution as practiced in the North and South. Now, whereas in the North, conflict resolution is premised on the building of human relationships and tolerance, in the South genuine "conflict resolution" begins with a call to challenge oppressive systems and structures, a demand for natural justice and human rights and respect and freedoms. A charitable view would be that since structures and institutions condition human behavior and social relationships and since these theories emerge from highly capitalistic economies, whose consequence has been accelerated increase in social distance, it is only natural that a decrease in social distance would be cardinal concern.

For indigenous peoples, relationship building is not an issue. We do not even speak about it; we are born in relationships not just with humans but also with other living and non-living beings. It is one thing we least need to be reminded by any theory, unless it is a red herring or a deliberate effort to regiment us for integration into a greedy global system. Our Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding must, *ipso facto*, begin with natural justice and human rights. Otherwise, we might experience peace, but it will be hot, very hot peace.

#### **Our Hope, Our Strength**

*Do not be afraid to dream. Great things happen when people have the courage to dream*  
– Max Ediger

We wish to make the familiar call that we must believe in ourselves. In our view, conflict resolution as packaged and exported by the West to replace the politics of "cold war" with an ideology of "hot peace" where the diversities of rich indigenous peace cultures and indigenous knowledge systems are negated. Globalism provides little or no space for indigenous cultures to make reflective adjustments matching the needs and challenges that emerge from new encounters. "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor," Steve Biko wrote, "is the mind of the oppressed." The power of culture is that it humanizes while the culture of global hegemony dehumanizes through the creation of a manageable, predictable and "oppressible" culture. Our future begins to disappear when the culture of power makes us believe we are not makers of culture.

Perhaps a good point to start would be to overcome the superstition that technological advancement is equal to modernity. There is need to stop being fatalistic about the seemingly enormous advancement in science and technology. We must accept that modernity is not just about historical time but the quality and character of the lives we lead. And if other indices, besides the economic were to be used to judge whether we are modern or not, then we, the people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would rank poorly, perhaps worse than our ancestor who lived in caves. Listen to Boal again:

Many people who in the past used to defend the poor, today affirm that globalization is inevitable and modern. They forget that all hegemonic powers have always been globalizing and that to globalize is in their nature. From Pax Romana on, or the Incas and the Aztecs, or the British and American empires, or Hitler's Thousand-year Reich, imperialisms have always sought to monopolize the world. There is nothing modern about the modern world; there are still troglodytes!

"Conflict Resolution" is at the core of any culture as it involves negotiating our encounter with the world beyond our individuality. Culture demonstrates a people's collective wisdom, history, traditions, science, and technology, to mention a few. We insist that any attempt to interact with, or change, a people's core culture ought to be eternally respectful to say the least, for therein lies their power to shape their present and future. And in order to be relevant in

the current scheme of things, there is need to make a step back. We need to overcome the fallacies in our written history. We must realize that we can modernize without our valuable experiences and cultures being filtered in Western capitals.

The implication of Conflict Resolution is that it has been responsible in systematically destroying indigenous concepts and understanding of Peacebuilding, which are more holistic in nature that is mindful towards issues of culture, justice, nature, history and human development. This erosion of indigenous understanding and concepts of Peacebuilding is primarily due to the inability of the dominant knowledge system and the western notion of education to recognize and respect the indigenous knowledge system. This has stifled genuine dialogue between cultures and between peoples. A starting point might be to search for new paradigms of governance and systems that are more responsive in nature with the inherent capacity to meet the aspirations of peoples.

In this regard, we must do an honest and thorough study of Somalia. What alternatives to social organization does the Somali crisis suggest? We have to examine why and how the Somali currency increased value during the period of no central government and near collapse of the State. How has Somali survived for over a decade without centralized authority? We have a great task to evolve political, economic, social and legal systems that answer to our needs and aspirations, which may even traverse current world economic and political systems and institutions.

The economic and political systems we evolve must be able to respect our differences and talents. From the USA to Rwanda, the nation-state seems to criminalize human differences. What systems and structures would unleash the potential of our creative talents as well as the use of the resources that we have been blessed with in the third and fourth world? We should then create critical linkages and solidarity with people from other third world cultures. Such linkages should help resist the evil forces of capitalistic greed. In so doing we must debunk the myth that the few western States are all-powerful. Already there are signs that the oppressed in the West are realizing that they will suffer, if they are not doing so already, the effects of globalism. The need to solidarize against the forces of evil. We should debunk the myth that these forces are so powerful, almost insurmountable. History is replete with examples of great forces collapsing.

There is a dire need to consciously promote the need for critical partnership between the first world and the third world [indigenous and non-indigenous or western and non-western which ever suits]. Genuine dialogue with humility must begin to enhance understanding between the western and indigenous knowledge system. This is inevitable for the collective survival of all humanity. There is an imperative need to realize that our freedom and justice are tied with one another in this interdependent, interconnected and interrelated circle of life.

Then we must be ready to ask the right questions. If we ask the right questions, we shall see the need to address issues of economic poverty apartheid in general and poverty in particular. In any case, the problems of the third and fourth world have already been so incisively analyzed. We need to consciously and critically act in creating a new culture – a culture of justpeace.