

Conference on Reconciliation and Change

Panel w/ Schreiter, Doherty and Rasool—
“Lessons Learned from Successful Reconciliation Efforts”

✧ September 14th, 2012, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. ✧
Miami Dade College, Wolfson Campus

Panel Discussion with Schreiter, Doherty, and Rasool:

Father Robert Schreiter: At this stage in the program it's an opportunity for the three of us to interact about points that have been raised that we think are important that we carry forward in some kind of way. To give [Ambassador Rasool] a chance to kind of breath for a moment, I am willing to begin and then we can move on.

I appreciated both of your presentations so much and I want to lift up some things that struck me particularly that in turn I think will be important for our discussion over lunch and this afternoon.

The first is about leadership. One of the things that I have observed in many places is the leadership that is able to bring things to sort of the tipping point is not the leadership you need after the tipping point. Leading up the moment of change is often an act of resistance and resistance is about organizing negative emotion. So we can all be against something for very, very different reasons. My image of this was the downfall of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, where in the march down EDSA [Epifanio delos Santos] Avenue in 1986, you had communists and nuns, arm in arm. And the nuns handing the communists their rosaries and the communists brandishing their rosaries; they were all together in moving down the street.

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And what often happens is the leaders who successfully bring people together like this are really not capable of moving into the next stage because it is a different set of skills. And I think both of your remarks about the negotiation point to the fact that there is a very different set of skills needed from the skills that bring you from the point of negotiation.

I think as an example where it did not work, I think Lech Walesa in Poland, as best as I understand his story, with the Solidarity movement he moved people forward, but when it came then to having to build coalitions, that is a whole different kind of skill. What you, Ambassador talked about so well, an adherence of principle but a flexibility of tactics, and how do you bring people into the coalition and keep people in the coalition, that is very important. And Pat Doherty, you said much the same kind of thing.

The second point I lift up is something Pat Doherty said as he talked about once you get negotiations going they have their own dynamic. And he underlined the point of process, which was something I was trying to make this morning that if you think you know that the goal is entirely ahead of time, that may indeed block you in the kind of flexibility you

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need in the process of getting there. And as I heard you say, things start to emerge that you had not thought of, that become important for the outcome, so that is another thing that particularly struck me.

A number of other things: one, Ambassador, when you talked about how amnesty was brought into the truth and reconciliation process, one of the issues that has haunted...

Schreiter (continued): many of the transitions in Latin American in the 1970's and 1980's is the issue of impunity. Where a kind of blanket amnesty is given no further questions asked. And when the question become about justice in Cuba—this is going to come up in some way I think again, too. What you suggested seems to be very important. You are going to have to have some level of amnesty; you cannot punish everyone who did something. This became very clear in Rwanda. Someone calculated, when they had close to 100,000 people incarcerated, to give everyone a fair trial like what they were doing in Eritrea would take 425 years. Well, you can see what's wrong with that formula. Also, it can so deplete all the resources you need for nation building that you can't go forward. So there is going to be some measure of amnesty. But doing amnesty with conditions and thinking through those conditions. So that though conditions are restorative, that there is an accurate restorative justice is particularly important, I believe.

Connected with what you talked about contextual forgiveness. And this is one of the big issues I run into when you talk about social forgiveness. That it can become very abstract. And what you were suggesting at least as I heard, and I hadn't heard it said quite that way before, the case where members of the defense forces or the police would take parents to the place where their son had been buried after he had been tortured. That this becomes a mediating factor, especially that when you tie in, as you said, to the healing of the nation, but that has to be done very explicitly, as I assume you were saying, when we've talked about healing Cuba. Define those very concrete forms of mediation, rather than just very simply the big abstract things. You know we believe in human rights, we do. But what does that look like concretely and how can that capture the moral imagination of people?

One final thing, because this is meant to get going into a conversation, the point you made that I was trying to work with this morning and Pat Doherty in terms of giving us the panorama of the situation in the struggle in Northern Ireland, is the breaking down of the generalizing about the other. Monoliths, you spoke about. Monolith, thinking about the enemy. This is old, as I understand it, out of evolutionary of biology, an old defensive stand of how we protected small groups. We generalize when we saw an enemy that everybody is against us. And how then at key moments do you have to be able to start to recognize that there is as much diversity there, elsewhere. I work a lot in intercultural communication and this is one of the first things you have to do is help people break through that. And what you said there, I think, or both of you really pointed to that in a particular kind of way.

Maybe just one final comment: that open windows do close. I remember the first time I ran into this I was on a commission in Europe and one of the people on our panel had just come from Moldova—this would have been about 1998—and he said the window is open to really bring Moldova into the whole picture and maybe even into the European Union, but it was not going to stay open for very long, and it didn't. That it becomes important, as we see these windows open, and we

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really take advantage and have ourselves ready to take those kinds of important kind of steps. That's enough for me to kind of begin. Pat?

Pat Doherty: I think I will pick up on your last point about open windows closing. In 1994, when the IRA called a ceasefire, you had two different responses from the two governments: the Irish government wanted to move into negotiations fairly quickly and the British government was then under the leader John Major, of the Conservative Party, he started a whole debate about whether or not the cease fire was permanent that went on and on forever. It went round and round in circles and wasn't taking the opportunity of the fight that was there and was real on the ground.

The Irish government tried to fill that particular gap by opening up a forum in Dublin Castle called the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. It's amazing the way these forums keep coming up all the time. But there was no great dynamic to that because the British government was refusing, and the ceasefire broke down in 1996. And it wasn't until Tony Blair came into power, where he came to Belfast and made a very pro-Unionist speech, but privately he opened up negotiations again. So if the Tories had stayed in power in Britain, that window would have remained closed; it would have been a huge tragedy and we wouldn't have been where we are now.

Amb. Ebrahim Rasool: Just a bit of things on the open window. The window in South Africa was opening with the prospect of the Berlin Wall falling. But the National Party had one of the most cautious, archconservative, repressive, presidents in place, P.W. Botha. And we knew that we needed to help the window stay open by dissecting the apartheid monolith, as I explained already, and creating the conditions for something to happen within the National Party. And that is where, F.W. de Klerk staged a coup—not a military coup, but an inter-party coup that got rid of P.W. Botha, and got the momentum going for change. So it is not simply a passive thing of observing the window and seeing it open and seeing it close. It is about how one ensures that the window remains open and that you can go through it. And I think we need to be able to understand how windows open at moments of transition within an opportunity that may exist.

The other thing that I think is probably starkest in South Africa was that we had global theology saying that apartheid was a sin; we had the United Nations declaring apartheid a sin; we had ordinary people across the world mobilizing against the apartheid because they saw it as a sin. So it was no doubt that we were dealing with not only with an enemy of the South African people but an enemy of the sensibility of all people across the world. How do we apply some of the things in South Africa where there is, for example, when you are up against an empire like the British who have managed, say for example, to paint the IRA as essentially violent and created it in its own image. But more importantly, how does it apply when you have competing narratives? Can you have the same kind of issues of amnesty applying when there is a moral blur? That sometimes when you have two narratives, I think that is really where I think we need to take the lessons and apply it in ways which are not as clear cut as would be as for example the South African situation.

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And one other thing that I think is useful to understand is that you can't always have everything of everything, that sometime two very noble ideas can be mutually exclusive, if you want it all. So take peace and take justice. That you've got to forfeit some justice in order to get peace and you may need to forfeit some peace in order to continue a struggle for

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justice and that the intersection between the two is often that compromise. The intersection between peace and justice because if you have too much peace you often do it at the expense of justice, and if you prosecute a struggle for complete justice you've got to be in against peace, almost in a sense. It's nearly a discussion on proportionality that I think we need to be able to understand. How much justice can we have and how much can we forfeit that is comfortable and good? And how much peace do we need forfeit in order to prosecute a struggle for enough justice? I think it's those imponderable grey areas that I think we need to think about a lot more.

Father Robert Schreiter: If I can just continue on that particular point, I have worked a great deal with the World Council of Churches that has a very strong commitment to justice. But they have been accused of being so committed to total justice—that of course, we were not going to get total justice—that all the other things that can be done are simply ignored.

The other thing that you were talking about that I wanted to mention, one of the exercises we use a lot in training people in peace building actually comes from John Paul Lederach, a Mennonite, who does a great deal of work in conflict transformation, and referring to Psalm 85, Verse 10 -depending on whose translation you use- but it comes out basically, "Mercy and truth will meet, justice and peace will kiss." He says it's those four principles, mercy, not mercy in the judicial sense of reducing someone's sentence but in the biblical sense of God's deep unconditional love and kindness. You need mercy, you need truth, you need justice, and you need peace. If justice becomes so absolute it can become harsh and destructive that's where the mercy part comes in. You need the truth, and you already attested to the power of truth, talking about the Truth and Reconciliation commission. But all of these have to work together if you're really going to have peace. And one of the exercises we use is to have a smaller group and have four people each take one of those and argue the importance of them to see how they come together. So that's kind of a practical way of getting at some of these kinds of things.

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Pat Doherty: If I could pick up on your first point about leadership and moving into a phase where there may not be the leadership to take you on to the next phase. We call this, within our party "transitional", and it is very, very difficult. Because the leadership that emerges through the conflict and into the negotiation, there's a huge thrush from the base of that leadership because they feel like they have been tried and tested through a long period of time. But there also has to be that recognition that we won't all live forever and that transition needs to happen.

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In the short bio at the start, it said I was party vice president from 1988 to 2008. And the reason I stood down in 2008 was just on that point of transition. I convinced Gerry—and this was easy for me because I always said I'm five years older than the average person in my party of leadership—that we needed to put into place a transition phase, and we were blessed I suppose, and I think the ANC were blessed, that they clearly had a leader, Nelson Mandela, and in our case, Gerry Adams. But we had a huge collegiate or collective leadership right on their shoulders, right behind them; it wasn't just down to one

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person. And we started that phase, but the base did not like it; the base felt, “Who are these new people coming in? Where have they been?” They haven’t been anywhere because they are too young to have been anywhere. It is something that you have to deal with.

I know now, 10 years ago when you are doing party meetings in whatever part of Ireland, you’ve been talking about ceasefires, big constitutional issues, the issue of prisoners, the release of prisoners, now you are talking about social and economic issues. I’m not saying you are entirely out of the woods, but you can see the transition within the meeting. But it is a difficult issue; leaders shouldn’t stay on forever. I think they should do it in a phased, gradual, but a quite steady way as they move forward.

Amb. Ebrahim Rasool: I think that Pat has just reminded me about what I excised in the middle of my speech. I started with a joke and ended with a scripture. Somewhere in the middle that I have excised, was a quote from Antonio Gramsci, who is a good Marxist, sociologist or philosopher.

This idea of transition, he helped me through leadership roles I played as governor of the Western Cape and managing a transition in South Africa. Gramsci said that transitions are the most uncomfortable, dangerous periods in the life of nation or a people, because what is old has not yet died and the new has not yet been born. And if anyone of us is waiting for a transition to be neat, they are

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in a fool’s paradise. If anyone thinks there are discrete moments in a transition where you can separate all the parts, they are wrong. If anyone thinks transitions are easy and not dangerous, that is the moment when a society is most vulnerable and a community is most vulnerable. That is the time when anyone has the ability to pierce that society’s vulnerability.

So in various transitions, whether it is Ireland, whether it is in South Africa, whether it is in the Cuban situation, I think we must expect messiness. We must even think we must expect danger. But the question we must always understand—that we are answering—is how we become the midwives of the best of the new and undertakers of the worst of the old. We cannot wish away all of the old, because there may be some important things that society needs for continuity; and we cannot bring to birth immediately all of the new. But it is the management of the coexistence of the old and the new that I think we have to become adept at. Nothing becomes neat; it’s all a matter of management, and it’s keeping an eye on a destination and then managing the path towards it. And it’s not always the straightest path, it’s not always the neatest, not the most beautifully tarred one and the traffic lights in place and the traffic lanes open without a jam. I think it’s really understanding and managing a dangerous spirit in the life of a nation that is what transitions are about and our role within it.

Father Robert Schreiter: If I could add just one point on that, that I thought of as well. This is directed more towards the future with Cuba. Of the resentments I saw in spending time with people in East Germany, the things they had managed to construct in their own society in the time of the German Democratic Republic, which they thought was worthwhile, and so on, got swept away when the West Germans came in with all their money to help with the reconstruction. Part of it was again not realizing how both sides had changed in those 40 years of separation. But a sense that we had some good things, these were simply set aside.

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I think it would be important as we think about the future of Cuba as obviously within Cuban society. They have managed to do some good things that they see and it may not be at the high governmental level it may be much more at the social level that those may remain in place. Not only to honor the dignity of the people who have endured throughout all of this but also so they can be active participants and continue to be active subjects in their own rebirth, if you will.

Pat Doherty: On the question of dynamics - dynamics do kick in at various stages, I suppose. There are three big ones that I've seen in the Irish process. In the early years, there was a personal dynamic between president Bill Clinton and Gerry Adams that he came to believe that Gerry could be trusted. Then later on I saw a personal dynamic between Tony Blair's chief advisor and negotiator, Jonathan Phillips, with Mark McGuinness, where they both came to realize that they could make things happen and they wouldn't be misleading each other. I supposed the biggest dynamic and the most public was when Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, was able to become first minister, with Mark McGuinness becoming his Deputy first minister. These are the two polar opposites of the conflict. They became to be known in the media in a few months as the "chuckle brothers" because they seem to have been laughing when they were talking to each other—and they were. That concept, the "chuckle brothers", was well accepted within our community, but was hugely resented in the Unionist community. It was almost as if though he and Paisley had lost the run of themselves. But there was that dynamic.

Amb. Ebrahim Rasool: I grew up in a province, the Western Cape, which had completely different demographics from the rest of the country. Where the overwhelming majority of people were so-called "colored." And it was the one province, other than Kwazulu Natal, that had Chief Buthelezi and the Zulus. In 1995, the liberation election voted against the ANC, and voted against Nelson Mandela, and in the Western Cape voted in the National Party. I became the leader of the ANC in that province and led it eventually, after 10 years, to a victory in the Western Cape through a combination of coalition building and winning trust. But for all the election up to that, the ANC ran on the moral authority that it was right, that it brought liberation. But the more righteous it was, the less trust it brought, because it did not understand the psyche of the people who were not obviously white and the previous beneficiaries of apartheid, and not obviously black, and hopefully now the new beneficiaries of a post-apartheid South Africa. They found themselves in between. And I am thinking of the name—it should be on my mind—of the film that Morgan Freeman—not *Invictus*—the one where he is in jail, it is about redemption—Shawshank Redemption!—it was when watching that that I think I understood what the issue was with that community and I think that American Cubans should understand about their brothers and sisters and the citizens of island Cuba, that there is a point where you have become institutionalized; when your reality has been constructed in a way—like the East Germans—and the act of liberation could be an act of denigration.

And I then understood in the Western Cape the more we were going on about Nelson Mandela and the ANC, the more we were building guilt and not acceptance; the more we were losing trust rather than gaining trust. And therefore it was getting into the psyche of that institutionalized community that one can reconstruct their psyche on the basis of their trust.

I am saying that we could go into Cuba, as weak as it is now, we could be the people that bring all the benefits, all of the things we have learned in the United States of America. "We will show you the new way, the way the world has changed"—and we may miss everything. That the liberated may see us differently.

Nelson Mandela became very aware of what needed to be done with each community. In very speech he made to every community he made a point to say how we chose someone from that community to be an ambassador, like Franklin Son in 1994; how we chose someone in that community to be his Minister of Justice; how we chose this one to be that, how we chose that one, etc. A complete drive for affirmation, because you are not affirming what they stand for, you are affirming them as human beings in order for them as human beings to have enough comfort to make the changes that may be

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required. I just thought that, picking up on the genial story that that was something from our own experience that would be worth sharing.

Father Robert Schreiter: Thank you very much. I think that concludes this portion, so we can turn it over for any announcements.

Carlos Saladrigas: Alright, we now proceed with the program. The next speaker is Roberto Goizueta, who I introduced earlier today. He is going to be followed by a question and answer session where every one of the participants is going to be free to ask questions of the panelists. Again, I would like to remind

everyone that we are following Chatham House rules which state that when a meeting is held, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliate of the speaker, nor that of any other participant may be revealed. Again, those are the rules of the conference, and I really appreciate your being here. I would like to thank Ricardo Herrero and Thomas Bilbao from the Cuba Study Group for their fantastic work of putting this together, everything has been great. Without further ado, Dr. Goizueta.

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