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Waves of Healing by Theo Gavrielides raises a topic of great interest to those concerned with the potential contribution of restorative justice to the improvement of civil society, especially during this economically and politically turbulent period in history. As noted by Dr. Gavrielides (2012), the vast majority of restorative justice scholarship has focused on applications in interpersonal crime between a limited number of direct stakeholders. Research suggests that it is the direct and personal nature of the restorative justice encounter that allows for the emotional healing experience when crime is seen as harm done to people and relationships and not only as offenses against the state or public order (Abramson & Moore, 2002; Masters, 1997a; Masters, 1997b; McCold, 1999; McCold & Wachtel, 2003; Pennell & Burford, 1994; Zehr, 2002). However, large scale group violence presents an obvious challenge to restorative justice proponents, namely, what sort of direct and personal process could possibly encompass the sweeping scope of interpersonal harm that occurs during events such as the UK riots of August 2011, or the politically charged street actions in Greece over recent years?

I would assert, perhaps surprising to some, that there is no restorative process that can encompass and process the harm caused during such enormous and complex events. Dr. Gavrielides (2012) intimates this tension when he asks, "How is restorative justice possible with these cases, if its

ethos and success rely on individual responsibility taking (p. 1)?" What restorative justice can offer, especially when viewed through the expanded framework of "restorative practices," is a wide range of formal and informal processes that can be applied at multiple levels of civil society by both professionals and citizens (Wachtel, 2004). Some, such as Wachtel (2012), have termed these areas "restorative zones." Hull, England, is one recent example. In Hull, in cooperation with the Hull Center for Restorative Practice, thousands of educators, police and youth and family services workers have been trained with IIRP approaches in a range of restorative skills (Mirsky, 2009). These skills encompassed formal restorative practices such as restorative justice conferencing and family group conferencing, as well as more informal skills such as the flexible use restorative circles, fair process in decision-making (Kim & Mauborgne, 1997) and the use of affective language and questions. Data from Hull shows that these efforts have reduced youth entrance into the criminal justice system by twice the national average, reduced custodial sentencing by 23% and reduced reoffending to 13% as compared to the national average of 27% (MacDonald, 2012). These improvements, in addition to reductions in school exclusions and violence, have cost the city of Hull an estimated £259,000, while resulting in savings of approximately £3.5 million (MacDonald, 2012). Similar projects are also underway in the area of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA, and in the planning stages in Philadelphia and Detroit. The restorative zone concept is rooted in the belief that restorative measures stand to benefit civil society most when they are employed, not only reactively after tragic or traumatic events, but also proactively in order to develop social capital, community and relationships that tend to prevent harm and violence from occurring in the first place (Wachtel, 2012).

The preventative potential of restorative practices is of particular importance because some of the events described by Dr. Gavrielides (2012), though inexcusable at the level of personal accountability, have their roots in complex political and social tensions that will boil over in any society that does not provide practical, direct and readily available civil methods for the release of tensions and the redress of grievances. The proactive interpersonal skills that undergird all restorative practices have much to offer the process of civil engagement and even diplomacy (Braithwaite, 2002).

However, even in a well-developed restorative zone, we should assume that street group violence could or will eventually happen. In such a case however, we could then imagine many layers of civil society using a wide variety of restorative practices as part of the activity of coping with the aftermath. Courts might offer restorative conferencing for offenders who have been identified with specific personal crimes and victims. Police might hold circles with community stakeholders in the wake riot control efforts to rebuild bonds and relationships and discuss common accusations of excessive force and repression. Political entities might use the circle format, which creates a safe forum for the expression of emotion while encouraging civility, to discuss the underlying social tensions that helped to feed the violence. So the question for restorative advocates shifts from, "What restorative process might we use in the wake of group street violence?" to "How can we create a restorative community that both prevents and responds to group street violence in a multi-layered approach?" This multi-layered approach would be capable of matching the complexity of group street violence events. The direct interpersonal nature of restorative practices also tends to empower communities by giving them a meaningful opportunity to be heard and impact decisions that affect their lives. This could have the effect of alleviating some of the feelings of disempowerment and helplessness that especially contribute to politically oriented group street violence (Gavrielides, 2012).

It is important for restorative practices advocates to not promise or imply that restorative methods will solve all of society's ills or prevent all tragedies. No social innovation should be held to a standard of perfection. We certainly have not been holding current criminal justice practice to such a standard. However, restorative practices does have the potential to offer an overarching framework, comprised of research-based interventions and interpersonal skills, which can transform how a complexly layered civil society responds to group street violence. While not reaching perfection, restorative practices can make what we do before, during and after group street violence much more effective, healing and humane. Dr. Gavrielides has done restorative practices advocates a great service by bringing this important application to the fore.

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