

# **‘How Restorative Justice can be used to prevent Juveniles from re-offending’**



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## My Background

I have been a police officer for six years, where I have served different capacities. During the first five years, I served as a response officer dealing with 999 calls. As a public order officer I was on the front line of the Tottenham Riots, which took place in August 2011. I witnessed the fury of youths rioting and hurling furniture, bricks, concrete slabs at the police. This was one of the most challenging situations I have been involved in. I stood with a shield in my hand facing the irate rioters, who beat violently against the police line. I had never been in such a conflicting situation before. As I stood there with a shield facing the rioters, I could not see any justification as to why a person would turn to violence and want to hurt another so badly.

During 2012 I had the privilege escorting the Olympic torch relay securing the Olympic flame and ensuring public safety. I met the most amazing people throughout my journey, people who had very little but did a lot to help others. I absolutely loved meeting such people and it was so refreshing from my everyday job to meet such humbling amazing souls.

That summer, I ran through Tottenham High Street where the riots had started the summer before. We ran through a community which generally disliked the police and even though we were not in police uniform, it was slightly unnerving. I ran and looked at everyone who had come out to cheer us on. I felt completely humbled by the public that cheered us on and supported us. I could see the young people amongst the crowd and they reminded me of the rioters the year before, but this time they were smiling, celebrating and rejoicing with the rest of their community. I would describe the atmosphere as that of a carnival. What a contrast it was. It was uncanny how quickly things changed in the same place and with the same people.



Myself in uniform.



Aftermath the Tottenham riots 2011.



Running at the Olympic relay 2012

The police have a key role in society to solve crime and keep the public safe. I joined the police to make a difference: to help people: to catch the bad guys and make it a safer place for the victims. Most officers join for the same reason.

As part of my daily role I arrest, interview, gather evidence, take victim statements and stay in contact with both victim and offender throughout the investigation. The truth is the police are unable to mend the damage: it has already happened. Even if police deal with the offender, it may not stop the victim from jumping every time someone cycles past them because they think they are going to get robbed. The victim may never understand why the offender did what he/she did. I have often heard the victims cry, complain and ask 'why me?' The effects of an offence can be devastating and different and unique to the victim.

Before joining the robbery team, the image I had in my head of a robber was that of a thug, horrible, big tough guy, violent, aggressive man. I did arrest and deal with quite a few robbers. However, they were not big, thugs or even that tough. I am approximately 5.1 ft in height: not the tallest police officer, so quite often these so called robbers tried to intimidate me with their stature. However, separated from their peers and spoken to alone they were just ordinary youths. They robbed because they can, peer pressure, it made them look tough, for respect, status, to fit in their gangs/groups and for many other reasons. I have arrested the same juvenile over and over again and they continue to commit crime even if they have been arrested previously due to these reasons. Arresting juvenile offenders sometimes felt time wasting, because I knew they would be out offending again.

I later joined the neighbourhood policing team, where I worked in the Finsbury Park area. It is common to be hit with a smell of cannabis whilst walking on the main road, over shadowed by raised blocks and estates, where groups of youths loiter in crowded areas. Groups become attached and protective of their area and tend to refuse entry to other groups from other areas causing post code wars and even gang-related incidents.

Some Juveniles do not think about the consequences of their actions, however small, they can change their lives, their families and their communities and often for the worse. For instance if a juvenile robs a passer by just for a bet, the effect on the victim can be devastating depending on the victim's age, gender, social upbringing, past experience and so forth. It has an effect on the offender's family, where the parents (or guardian) have to come in to custody if the offender is caught. The community will also be affected as people will hear about the robbery and may be fearful to walk down the same street. The victim may never comprehend why the offender did the crime.

## **What is Restorative Justice?**

Howard Zehr stated "Central to Restorative Justice is the idea of making things right or, to use a more active phrase often used in British English, "putting right." As already noted, this implies a responsibility on the part of the offender to, as much as possible, acknowledge the wrongdoing and take active steps to repair the harm to the victim (and perhaps the impacted community). In cases such as murder, the harm obviously cannot be repaired; however, symbolic steps, including acknowledgment of responsibility or restitution, can be helpful to victims and are a responsibility of offenders." (Howard Zehr and Ali Gohar Little Book of Restorative Justice)

Restorative Justice processes provide the opportunity for both victims and offenders to communicate within a safe environment to discuss the impact of the crime; it therefore presents the victim with a voice and empowers them. It holds offenders accountable for what they have done, enables them to take responsibility and make amends. For offenders, the experience can be incredibly challenging as they are confronted with the personal impact of their crime. It gives victims a chance to tell the offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers and even an apology, and this can be a huge step in moving forward and recovering from the crime. Restorative justice provides a high victim satisfaction rate and a significant reduction in the frequency of reoffending. Government research demonstrates that restorative justice provides an 85% victim satisfaction rate and a 14% reduction in the frequency of re-offending (Collins. J 2015, Restorative Justice in the Magistrates Court information pack).

There are many different forms of Restorative Justice, which work. The processes can be changed, adapted to suit the people, setting and what is being addressed. Victims and offenders do not have to meet or talk to recognise the impact of their criminal behaviour. In prisons or juvenile centres they are challenged and educated on the effects and the harm that their actions have caused. But all Restorative Justice processes set out to change the person causing the harm and to make them realise that what they are doing or have done is wrong. Above all else, Restorative Justice helps to humanise a person.

### **The UK and Metropolitan Police Service.**

In England and Wales the age of criminal responsibility is set at ten. Young offenders, aged ten to seventeen (i.e. up to their eighteenth birthday), are classed as a juvenile offenders.

The Metropolitan Police have a Restorative Justice Team has been utilised since the riots of 2011. The process allows officers to deal with low level offences at a low or community level without the need to arrest and formally sanction. Depending on how the victims wants the crime to be dealt with, officers can offer the victim the opportunity for the crime to be dealt with through a process of mediation and conferencing. This will also be based on the gravity of the offence and whether the offender admits the offence and is also willing to participate.

When a face to face meeting is not appropriate, it can be arranged for the victim and offender to communicate via letters, recorded interviews or video.

According to Scotland Yard the number of recorded knife-crime injuries in London went up from 941 to 1,070 in the three months between February and April this year. <sup>1</sup>

I work on the borough of Islington and it is clear to me that youth violence is on the increase. In January 2015, seven people required ambulances due to stabbings. This is the second highest monthly number that the borough has seen since records began in 2012. Additionally, 56 teenagers needed hospital treatment after they were assaulted and three local youths have been murdered in the last six months.<sup>2</sup>

The government publications 2010-2015 however recorded that fewer young people are committing crimes, but there are still too many young people coming into contact with the criminal justice system. In particular, too many young people are re-offending. 73% of young people released from custody re-offend within a year. This may imply it is the same juveniles committing the crime however of a higher level.<sup>3</sup>

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1. [www.theguardian.com/uk/london/youth/offending](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/london/youth/offending)

2. <http://islingtonnow.co.uk/2015/03/25/islington-has-second-highest-crime-rate-of-all-london-boroughs/> By Poppy Danby on March 25, 2015.

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-young-offenders>

## **Meeting victims who had been through Restorative Justice UK**

Before setting off I wanted to know the impact of Restorative Justice and through some contacts I met two victims who had been through the process. The crimes that they were victims of are of high nature.

Female 1 was a victim of rape and she met her offender in a conference. She had only thought of him as a monster. He had ruined her life, she had stopped eating, drinking, her marriage fell apart, she had no hope and the question that kept going through her head was 'Why Me?' She stated it was terrifying to meet her offender however he has to spend the rest of his prison life inside walls whereas she can start rebuilding hers.

It was the first and last meeting with her offender and that was all that she needed to move forward.

Female 2's father had murdered her mother. Through restorative justice practice she was able to forgive and form a relationship with him. She stated that by communicating with her father and getting the whole truth was the only way to keep her mother alive.

It was clear to me how important restorative justice practice was to the victim to rebuild their lives and move on. Both these females were victims of high level crime, if it can work on such a level then why not lower level petty crime to prevent any further offending?



## **Aim and Target Audience**

As a serving Police Officer my research is aimed towards agencies working within the Criminal Justice System and in particular the Police Service whom I believe can benefit from Restorative Justice practices in dealing with juvenile offenders for a wide variety of crimes. I intend to share my learning experiences from South Africa and the USA and to consider how they can be implemented in the UK.

My aim therefore was to study Restorative Justice and how it is implemented in South Africa and the USA:

- How effective is Restorative justice in reducing juvenile crime.
- How Restorative Justice procedures/practice can be improved in the UK police service working in conjunction with other agencies.

## **Planning stage**

During my planning phase, I contacted people in the UK, USA and South Africa, with experience or currently using Restorative Justice Practices working with Juveniles. Most were very helpful where they guided me and even helped me plan my journey. However I encountered a few people who, refused to work with me simply because I am a police officer. I have been to meetings, gatherings and social networking events, and as soon I mentioned what I do for a living I have had people stopped talking to me. I do understand people have had negative experience of the police and that I represent the Police Service where ever I go, but sometimes people forget that not everyone is the same. The same can be said for offenders, not all offenders are the same and we cannot generalise.

### **My travel choices:**

I connected with the organisation 'Initiative of Change UK', a registered charity, which is committed to building trust across the world's divides. Through them, I met Ginn Fourie an Afrikaner and Letlappa Mphahlele, former director of Operations of the Azanian People's Liberation Front.

Towards the South African apartheid Ginn's daughter was a victim in the Heidelberg Tavern bombing in Cape Town, by the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), under orders from Letlappa Mphahlele. According to Letlappa, the bombing was in response to the killing of several young black people by the South African police. Their story is one of forgiveness, where Ginn meets Letlappa for the first time many

years later and actually forgives him for his cruel devastating action. Something changes inside Letlappa "It was only when people extended gifts of forgiveness that the roots of my heart were shaken, and something was restored inside me". Vulnerable feelings when expressed to each other have the potential to establish lasting bonds. Today Gin and Letlappa travel together and share their story of Restorative Justice and how they used it to heal, connect and forgive. I had imagined Letlappa to be quite an aggressive man however when I met him he could not have been further from that, he was very lively bubbly and full of humour. This is Restorative Justice on a bigger scale.

Internationally, processes like the Truth and Reconciliation Process in South Africa are based on the restorative principles of truth telling, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In this large-scale context, restorative principles can be effective at repairing damage done by long-term historic conflicts affecting entire nations. Having met Ginn and Letlappa and having had the privilege of working with the Khulisa and the Tutu foundation further interested me to go to South Africa and see how they were using Restorative Justice.

I have chosen USA because Restorative Justice appears to be successful in many states with such high crime levels. There are a lot of different work addressing early intervention and alternative community based programmes to divert young people away from the juvenile system and prison. The USA and the Met Police especially the NYPD have a good relationship, so I wanted to see how and if they implement Restorative Justice practice in their service.

## **Travel Itinerary**

### **South Africa**

- 27th -30th Sept:** **Bloemfontein** - International Conference
- 1st - 13th Oct:** **Cape town-** Khulisa, Community court, NICRO, Voorberg prison
- 14th - 17th Oct:** **Johannesburg** - Kliptown township, Public Order department

### **USA**

- 20th -24th Oct:** **Chicago** - Community Justice for youth RJ training.
- 25th – 29th Oct:** **Pennsylvania/ Bethlehem** -International Restorative Conference
- 30th Oct – 2nd Nov:** **Florida/Miami:** Miami Dade police service and Country Juvenile Service Department
- 3rd Nov – 6th Nov:** **Texas/ Houston:** Bridges to life- RJ used on prisoners.
- 7th Nov – 9th Nov:** **New York:** School visits.

Restorative Justice has been widely used in prisons more so with adults so my journey took me to a few prisons. Upon speaking to the prisoners it was clear that their criminal behaviour could be related back to when they were juveniles.

## South Africa

**Bloemfontein:** 'Freedom our Responsibility' International Conference.

People from all over the world, mainly Africa attended to partake in conversations about freedom and peace. People who were in conflicting situations in their country, who were freedom fighters, however have now learnt that we can resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner and deter away from violence by using Restorative Justice Practice.



At the conference I met Letlapa Mphahlele and Ginn Fourie

There I met an Aboriginal man who spoke about the racial divide where he lived between his community and the police service in Australia. He himself had been involved in many clashes with the police. However over the last few years he has started to work with the police and the local youths to create better relationships with the future generations, which is much needed in society. The local youths co-operate with the police and together they take part in sports as a weekly event. With -time and effort they have built bridges and started seeing each other as Human beings.



## **Cape Town - Working with KHULISA**

In Cape Town I joined an organisation called Khulisa based in South Africa and the UK. The founder, Lesley Ann focused on Restorative Justice programmes, which are implemented at every level of the crime cycle, from community to pre-trial, during incarceration and at offender reintegration. Khulisa offers a holistic approach by combining these programmes with its rehabilitation and self help programmes.

### **Community Court:**

I visited a Community court, where many juveniles that come through have taken part in a first time crime or petty offences. The Police arrest offenders, book them in the police station then send them straight to court, where they sit in a cell with others waiting for their hearing. The police do not interview the offender as it is a petty crime so they leave the court to deal with it. Prior to standing in front of the judge, a social worker from Khulisa analyses the juvenile and assesses the case to see if the offender takes responsibility and accounts for their criminal actions. The judge then makes a decision on the offender's punishment based on the social worker's assessment. Juvenile offenders tend to go through the 'Diversion programmes', which may involve educational programmes or community work to prevent them from re-offending. However if they do not complete the programme they have to go back to court. This process allows police to go back to their duties rather than holding on to crime investigation. This is unlike the Met Police where we have to deal with the whole case by investigating even when the case may not go to court.

**Social Workers Assessment:** The Preliminary Assessment, occurs in the court prior to the offender's hearing. Those attending the meeting whether it is the police, the prosecutor or the attorney, all dress down and out of uniform. That way the juvenile can feel a little relaxed instead of feeling judged or even punished. I sat in a preliminary assessment with the social worker and an offender. A young black female had been arrested for shop lifting. She was working in an organised group where young vulnerable people were targeted by small stall holders to go and steal from big stores. She had been given a list of things to steal from the store then in the end re-grouped to get paid. The young female was given a bag lined with aluminium foil so the alarm would not go off. She was later caught with items totalling 2954 Rands (£163.94). This crime is regarded as Cubac (Child used for adult crime).

The offender's aunt had attended the preliminary meeting and sat around the table. The social worker started the preliminary assessment with medical questions. Questions around the family situation, home life, school, any alcohol or drug use were assessed. In the UK I would ask such questions at the interview stage however here it was informal and the young female appeared comfortable in the presence of a social worker who was really there to help her rather than punish her.

The young female stated that she knew she was doing wrong and if caught she would be in trouble, however she wanted the money. She stated that the group she was operating with did not explain the procedure, just gave her the 'magic bag', a bag that was lined with aluminium. She explained it was her first time and that she was not forced to do it. This juvenile throughout the assessment said 'sorry' and appeared embarrassed. The widespread of poverty and the lack of opportunities attract these young people to such offers. I have experienced the young people of London often complaining about boredom and hopelessness and therefore commit crime for money or for a thrill. The young female was presented to the judge having accepted responsibility for her crime. The judge stated that if she completes her programme she must re-attend the court with both her parents. The judge refused to have her aunt representing as her guardian on her return. This was because in the past when juveniles were presented in court sometimes their guardians were actually criminals themselves and made sure that the juveniles gave the desired answers. If the offender does not comply with the diversion programme, the social worker reports it and the juvenile would be dealt with by the court and likely to have a criminal record which will affect their future, job etc.

After this hearing a young boy stood up in court. It was his second time in court within a week. His mother was sat on the bench. When the judge asked why he had 'dhaka' (marijuana) on him he stated that he was keeping it for a friend. His friend had dropped it and he had picked it up and he was going to return it back to him. The prosecutor presented the mother with some questions. The mother broke down and explained how her son had been kicked out of school for his unruly behaviour and had joined a group comprised of ex-prisoners. These ex-prisoners had taught him to be a better criminal and now he thinks he is invincible. With his mother crying it had an effect on him and he too became emotional with tears in his eyes. For me this was what Restorative Justice was about. He could see how his behaviour was actually affecting his mother who was at breaking point. The judge explained that he would be put on a house arrest with curfew times and that it was the mother's responsibility to keep an eye on him at all times.

The preliminary assessment determines the juveniles' future to a certain extent and is in place to prevent the juveniles from going through the criminal justice process. Khulisa and in the UK the youth offending team facilitate them or have programmes in place to prevent these young people from going through the criminal process therefore preventing them from getting a criminal record. If they fail to comply with the programme they are tried in court as if they had not accepted responsibility. However at any stage of the criminal process, if the juvenile has a change of heart and admits their involvement in the crime, he or she can be diverted to a programme to prevent them from going through the criminal process. Youth/Child centres are an alternative to prison, where the child can remain there for at least four years for an offence whether it is a repeat offence or serious offence.

Sometimes placing them back in their homes can cause more issues and may even be dangerous for the juvenile. The social worker explained that there was a huge pressure on them and their job can be made a little easier if the parents assisted.

### **Paarl : First Time Sexual Offence**

I went to Paarl to observe a fourteen week long diversion programme with juvenile male offenders. They were all between the ages of thirteen to eighteen years old and had been arrested for a variety of first time sexual offences. The offences were ranged from indecent exposure, sexual touching to even rape. These boys were from townships where there are high level crimes, gang culture and drug problems and other societal issues. The level of violence in townships, even for first time offenders is often far higher than that of the city.

Within the group there was a group of five boys who were involved in the rape of a young girl. I was startled to hear that it was their first time offence. The group was made up of ten boys who were still going through puberty . Due to their lack of sex education they appeared to be unaware of what was right and wrong.

This programme taught the boys the basics of sex education and encouraged them to think about their own actions. They were asked questions that perhaps they would never be asked at home or just generally outside or at school (that is if they went to school). The programme is a long process to teach these boys right from wrong, about sex and the opposite gender. They were given the chance to ask any questions around sex anonymously and put it in a box so the social worker could look at it later and address it in the next session.

One of the social workers made the statement 'Boys don't cry - myth or belief?' This saw the attitudes of the boys. Six of the boys said that boys do not cry. The social worker then had a discussion with the boys and explained that it is a belief and that crying is a natural emotion. She explained how people express sadness by crying and gave scenarios where it was better to cry than to express that sad emotion through anger. I wondered whether these boys knew what they did was wrong. Were they unaware because they see such behaviour within their families? These boys were from impoverished backgrounds where they would have shared a bedroom with many other family members if not all of them.

Both the social workers were very professional and they treated the sexual nature of the offences as just ordinary offences and treated the boys as young boys: As they should be. All the young boys had gone to court, where they had been assessed prior to the hearing, where it was decided that they go through this diversion course. One

of the social workers herself went to every household and spoke to their parents prior to them starting the programme.

During the programme they also used two main strategies, the first being Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and the second being a person centred approach, where they replaced the sexual urges of these young boys with other behaviour such as sports. These programmes help them to learn and change their thinking process and as a result their behaviour. Here not only do they learn about their wrong behaviour, it allows them to mix, socialise, work and learn about other tribes. At the beginning the boys stuck to their own tribe however as they got used to their environment they were moved around so they could work in mixed groups.

It was apparent that lack of education, ignorance, over crowdedness, poverty and societal factors affect the type of crime committed in a particular society. History, family, upbringing, determined their values and what they believed was right or wrong. This programme restores these young men. It makes them change and see themselves and the opposite gender in a different and more positive way. Here Restorative Justice programmes are about educating juveniles, getting them to connect with their emotional side and also putting themselves in the victim's shoes and empathise with them.



## **NICRO: Restorative Justice Process**

I met a Restorative Justice Manager for an organisation called NICRO which works with young offenders and victims in the aftermath of a crime. This organisation looks at underlying family/peer issues and figures out which diversion programme is a benefit to them. Once decided which diversion programme is suited to the juvenile they send a report to the court asking for one to six months time to work with the juvenile. NICRO also works with victims and has a crucial role in long term therapy and preparing them for meeting the offender. Role playing technique is used to make the victim more confident in approaching the offender.

Both the offender and victim may go through many emotions and NICRO's staff enable such emotions to be expressed in the safest way possible. A life size doll is provided for the victims to express their anger on, where they can scream, shout and say what ever they want. It is a way of preparing the victim to meet their offender, to express themselves and get what ever they want out of their system so that on the day of meeting their offender they feel calmer and do not feel the urge to lash out as they have done so already whilst preparing for the final day. Both the offender and the victim are worked with closely and are prepared for the day of the meeting. NICRO provides counselling, education and training to deal with emotions and underlying behaviour, to victims, offenders and their family.

On the day of the meeting the parents of the victim and offender may be present. The facilitator introduces the meeting and goes through the ground rules. The family are given the opportunity to ask questions, express their feelings and emotions. The victim has the chance to say how they feel and what they would like to happen to fix the issue. If needs be the victim can leave the meeting and have a think about what they would like to happen. This can then be discussed with the offender so they both come to an agreement, which they can then sign a contract on. If it is a low level offence e.g. theft of phone the offender can agree to work hard and buy the victim a new phone. There are many results that the victim may opt for such as: the victim may want the offender to get drug rehabilitation, community service or they may just want an explanation and an apology.

NICRO had finished dealing with a case where a female in her 30s was assaulted by a young man who was affiliated to a gang. Everyone was scared of this man. There was a party in a community hall and the female had asked the male to close the door however he refused and assaulted her by punching her in the face. The very next day the female went to the police to report him. However other members of his gang found out and tried to intimidate her and her family. The police had to eventually move her from her house for safety. Whilst her house was left empty the gang members burgled her house, stole the water pipes, brass and water taps and sold them. Her house was flooded and ruined.

During the Restorative Justice meeting, the victim asked 'why?' he had assaulted her, (A question which I am all too familiar with) and explained how his behaviour had affected her entire life and her children. The male explained that he was intoxicated and just felt irritated. During the preparation phase the offender took it upon himself to fix her house. He fixed the taps, replaced the materials that had been stolen and got rid of the squatters. The offender realised the effects of his actions so put himself forward for counselling sessions and found the courage to move away from the area, away from his gang and to start over again to create a better life. The victim eventually felt safe enough to move back home. Throughout their meetings, the offender and victim spoke to each other and were able to form a relationship and still keep in contact.

The facilitators have a duty to carry out follow ups every three months to ensure that the participants stay on the right track and if needed further help then is provided.

NICRO's social worker explained that it was difficult to measure whether what the offender says is actually how they feel. It could be an act which they put on just to avoid prison. They can say "sorry" because they know that is what the victim, family or the facilitators want to hear. There is an expectation of forgiveness where the offender may feel entitled to be forgiven. However even after the process this may not be the case. Sometimes the offender may start the process with an attitude that he or she does not care but over time whilst working together they learn to express their emotions and do end up being sorry for their actions towards the victim. Sometimes one of the parties may never want to meet the other so letters may be the best way to communicate.

## **Restorative Justice processes in Voorberg Prison Service**

I visited Voorberg prison as part of a Christian Restorative Justice service, which is run by six volunteers and a priest. I was a little nervous entering the prison however I was reassured by the priest. As I entered I could see and feel all eyes on me and I felt a little uneasy. The prisoners' uniforms were orange overalls just as I had imagined. There were a few with white uniforms, these were prisoners who worked in the kitchen. I felt uncomfortable to be in a room full of criminals, who had robbed, assaulted, murdered and raped.

The session started off with a prisoner singing whilst playing his guitar. The priest then asked one of the prisoners to read the 'Temptation' section from the Bible. The priest explained how Restorative Justice can be used in different ways to deal with crime. It can be used on an individual basis to restore the 'self', to build or restore the relationship with the family or the victim by understanding the effects and actually repaying them back if possible and the community.

The priest continued with the session stating that 'The self needs to be able to forgive the self as we are disappointed with ourselves. Guilt prevents us from living a life holding us back as prisoners beyond the gates of prisons. Temptations, allurements can sometimes be powerful that we are unable to resist'. It was so refreshing to see how receptive the prisoners were. The biblical story of Adam and Eve was related to everyday life. The priest explained how there is evil from the outside however when there is evil from the inside that is when it is dangerous. If an offender has been continuously offending from a very young age, taking part in theft, robbery, burglary then even worse and no one has told them they are doing wrong, their offending behaviour may appear to be normal to them. The lack of consciousness makes them dangerous and they may be capable of doing anything without feeling any remorse for their action. Offenders often refuse 'help' or do not seek for help when they need it so they try to resolve the issue by what ever means. If they are able to reveal problems to someone then they can receive the help and perhaps accept their wrong doings.

The prisoners were split into groups. They were asked what their temptations were and how they dealt with them? Most of the prisoners said the biggest temptations in prison was 'gangsterism' (gang culture) especially if the prisoner was new, where he would be persuaded to join a gang for protection against the other gangs. Other temptations included prisoners being provoked to fight by other prisoners, to disobey orders and to take drugs to forget the pain.

The prisoners were tasked to look at their own crime and think about the following questions and discuss them in their groups:

- 1) Did you hide your crime?
- 2) How did the denial of your crime lead to more crime?
- 3) How did your actions hurt others, your family, your victims and your community?
- 4) Before today did you fully realise the consequence of your crime?
- 5) How has your crime affected you?

One of the young men explained that his action had affected his family and that his younger brother was also robbing people and following in his footsteps. He felt disappointed with himself because he had let his brother down and had not been a good enough role model. If someone had sat him down and shown him how his behaviour was influencing his younger brothers, perhaps he would have stopped instead of wasting his life in prison and only learning now that what he did was wrong.

Another man explained how he still had nightmares about what he had done especially to an old man. He was an armed robber, robbing banks, stores with guns. He explained that he was violent but had no intention to hurt anyone. However his actions did hurt, cause pain and the victims are still scarred. In his last robbery he and six others stormed in to a store, tied up the owner who was an old frail man, put a gun to his head and robbed the store. The old man was so scared he was shaking and crying. Eventually the seven of them were caught and put to trial. When the case went to court and the seven got up, the old man was brought forward to give evidence. The old man was so frightened he broke down and said 'I can't do this' he could not even look at the seven robbers. This image of the old man stayed and continually haunted the offender. He really wanted to meet the old man and say 'sorry'.

A younger man stated that it troubled him that he was viewed as a role model by the youngsters in his community but for all the wrong reasons. He had been committing crime since the age of fourteen and it had finally caught up with him in his twenties. He was seen as a big dangerous thug and the young men in the community wanted to be him. Now that he was in prison he knew what damage he had caused. He had made the youngsters more dangerous gangsters who were causing havoc in his community. He had realised his wrong ways but he could not fix it as he was in prison.

It really showed me how this programme made these offenders human again with real emotions and feelings. They started to think about the effects that they had on their victims, their families and their communities.

The priest showed how Restorative Justice Processes help restore harmony through God, family/community and the person themselves. To amend their wrong doings, the programme helped the prisoners to look inside themselves and rediscover who they really were. The changes in the prisoners lead to the desire for reconciliation. For some of the men the hardest thing is to forgive themselves so this programme slowly breaks it down and teaches them to forgive and feel at peace with themselves first and foremost before they can rectify anything else. Even though the sessions were based on Christianity the priest did refer to Islam and Hinduism as there were prisoners of those faiths partaking in the programme.

At the start of the day I was nervous entering the prison, which held people who had done wrong, made mistakes, committed horrific crimes and had caused everlasting pain. By partaking in the programme with the prisoners I felt surprisingly at ease and I actually felt safe amongst them. Being in that room and working with these men they were no longer prisoners to me they were simply human beings who were doing their best to restore themselves. I could see they had come a long way and maybe being locked up away from temptations had given them a second chance to rediscover their real selves and given them a purpose in life. A lot of them had found religion and it was their saviour and what gave them strength to get through each day. Religion gave them guidance, a purpose and anytime they needed help they could call to their lord who was always there. This programme educated the men and helped them to get in touch with their natural emotions, something that they had distanced themselves from, they regained their consciousness and learnt to be aware of their actions and behaviours. Most had started offending when they were young, they said if they had been shown a way they would have stopped instead of wasting time in prison and learning now.

## A day with Gueteng's Public Order Police



Myself and the warrant officer.

Even though Restorative Justice is being used in South Africa, it has not reached many parts of the country. Townships or illegal settlements have a large gang problem. The people in the townships were pushed to move there during the apartheid and had remained in the filthy and over crowded environment. More often they did not have running water, electricity so they would steal the electricity from the train tracks or from each other. The lack of basic necessities, over crowdedness caused disputes and often there were protests on the street.

I joined the Public Order Branch for the day. Whilst I was sat talking to the warrant officer there was a protest outside, something which this police service is only used to and has to deal with on a regular basis. The warrant officer took me out aftermath the protest. The protest was due to cattle livestock running through the township ruining the peoples' plants, crops and structure. It had come to a point where the people in the township would protest about anything that caused them any inconvenience. I was driven to the road which had been blocked by a tree. It looked like aftermath a cyclone, only it was people, angry people who had done this. There were massive rocks which the police had tried to clear of the roads. It was sad that these people had to resort to this violence because they felt injustice. The warrant officer explained how the people of the townships were deprived, hard done by and neglected so take matters into their own hands burning cars, buildings, transportation whatever they could get their hands on. In the past it has been so bad to the point that the people started to burn schools, cars and if upset with the police they would burn down the police station and steal the firearms. This would disadvantage the community even more. I as a public order officer probably deal

with disorder very rarely like the Tottenham riots but these officers deal with it so regularly and they have to be ready at all times.



Geuteng's Townships

It was clear the people in charge were not listening to the people and their needs and out of frustration the people react by committing crime and in turn disadvantage themselves even more. The government really needs to hear the cries of the people and provide the basic necessities. The people in the township need to work with the police, build a relationship and move forward.



## **Kliptown -A town that is non existent on South Africa's map.**



Graffiti of Kliptown Township

Thulani and Martin showed me around their community and spoke to me about how they were big tough gangsters. They had been to prison several times however they have now changed and come back out to teach others and restore their community.

Thulani is a young man of thirty years of age: He had been living a criminal life since the age of thirteen. Thulani came from a family where committing crime was normal. His mother used to shoplift to feed them and his brothers were robbers and he really looked up to them. He did not have any good role models and offending was the norm. He used to disarm those with guns, beat them up and steal their weapons. He would burgle houses and even police stations because that is where the most weapons were stored. He offended to prove to the rest of the gang that he was brave and because of his bravery he was very popular with the girls. He was finally caught for the armed robberies and sentenced to twelve years. Due to his good behaviour he served half of his sentence. Thulani had spent so much time and energy in the gang proving that he was worthy and a respectable member however when he was locked up, no one came to visit except his mother. That is when he realised there was no point in wasting his time and energy with his gang. Three years have gone by since and he has not drunk alcohol and has not committed any crime. His focus now is to get youths off the street and get them involved in learning new skills to prepare them for a prosperous future.

Martin was fifty years old and described himself as a habitual criminal, an armed robber and drug dealer. He served half of eighteen years and came out after nine years. Martin had been in and out of prison nearly all his life, even through the apartheid and in total had served at least twenty five years behind bars. Going to prison and death did not scare him. He had seen his friend take his own life and if death approached him Martin stated that he was ready. Martin remembers his



mother saying 'What you do now will come back to haunt you' and she was right. Martin still feels guilty for hurting her so much.

Both Martin and Thulani explained even though they were involved in gangs on the outside, there were worse gangs in prison. The longer sentenced prisoners ruled and if you were in for a serious more brutal crime then you were more likely to be respected. Friends, family and even the prison wardens would get drugs, phones and other substances in for prisoners. The prisoners would hide the drugs in their orifice until they were locked up in their cells at the end of the day.

Martina and Thulani met in San City prison which they described as 'corrupt'. Prisoners were able to smuggle in pretty much what they wanted. Prisoners were locked up at 2pm, there were sixty to a hundred prisoners to a cell. The over crowdedness caused chaos, where there were often fights, and even death. There were not enough beds so some slept on the floor or even on the toilet. The conditions were despicable. The older prisoners got away with what ever they wanted from the younger newer prisoners and if anyone spoke out then they were met with the consequences which would likely to lead to serious injury or death. Both Thulani and Martin had been in prison for a few years and were to be transferred to another prison Leeukop prison, which was known for more notorious criminals.

They both met in the van en route to the prison and instantly became friends. They came up with a plan that they were going to help each other, stay out of trouble, behave well, to 'change the place' to stay occupied in their activities and away from the big thugs. As soon as they got to the prison they made themselves busy enquiring about recreation and rehabilitation programmes. None of what they wanted were available at the time so they decided to create a rehabilitation group themselves. They organised a drama group to demonstrate the activities that occur in prison and how it affects others to educate the prisoners. Some of the wardens were not happy with their plan and resented them. Some days they would open the spare cells for them to practice and other days they would shut the doors preventing them from progressing. Through their shows, more and more prisoners joined their group. They did a show on HIV and gang culture in prison and how it affected the prisoners. The wardens did as much as they could to stop the shows. With every obstacle Martin and Thulani with their sheer determination did everything they could to be successful. Their group allowed the prisoners to express themselves, to be emotional, to occupy their time so not to fall into the hands to gangsters, drugs and other criminal activity that was a daily occurrence in the prison. Martin and Thulani had inspired other prisoners and made them feel more human again.

I asked Martin a few questions because I wanted to know why he started to commit crime and if there had any preventative measures before hand would he have stopped (See Appendix 1 Martin's story).

Martin explained that by sending offenders to prison will not make them better, however it often makes them worse criminals or they may fall to victimisation by the bigger tougher prisoners. Martin and Thulani started committing crimes at a young age firstly because of poverty which later led to other crimes. They were both somehow victims of their own upbringing and surrounding. Committing crime was not unusual everyone was doing it, they just got better and better at it. This is something that can be related to the juvenile offenders in London that I deal with regularly. They both said they wish there was something in place educating them about the effects of crime before they ended up in prison. They did not once think of the effects their criminal behaviour had on the victim, their family or the community. Had someone pointed that out when they were young maybe that would have had an impact on them. Educating juveniles is vital in preventing crime.



Martin on the left myself, a guest and Thulani walking around Kliptown

## USA

### Chicago - Circle training

I took part in a Restorative Justice Circle group in South Chicago, which has one of the highest gang/gun crimes rates. On my first day I got off the bus and walked down 51st street. The street was wide, empty and there was a dire feeling about this area. It did not look welcoming however as I walked through it, I soon noticed the groups of youths hanging outside the store. To me it was an image from an American gangster movie, with youths loitering around street corners, tattoos across their faces representing the gang they were from, or tear drops representing they had murdered/killed. Low cropped jeans baggy hooded tops all of them with their hands in their pockets. I was scared and I wanted to cross the road and hold on to my bag even tighter but that would be too obvious. I was in an unknown territory and these kids looked mean. The group then started to walk towards me not directly me but on the same pavement. I was not sure whether I should make eye contact because sometimes that was enough to cause aggression but I thought eye contact was a good idea should anything happen at least I had a good look at them. As they got closer I noticed how all of them wore an angry, screwed up face like the world had done something so cruel to them and they were on a mission to cause damage. So many thoughts went through my head. I looked at every one of them and I smiled, not a single one smiled back.... until I got to the young boy at the end. He had his hood on his head with another woollen hat underneath with a mobile phone tucked inside the hat against his ears. I carried on smiling and this boy who also wore a mean face suddenly smiled back! His aggressive screwed up face disappeared even if it was for a few seconds he smiled at me. He looked like any other ordinary gentle boy who would not hurt a fly.

I was glad I had not crossed the street or clutched on to my bag as if I was going to get robbed. These youth were probably used to people labelling them and actually never having the courage to speak to them or even say “hello”. I made a decision that week to walk down that street every day as I got into my place of training.

The training was held at ‘Precious blood’ a church group which helps juveniles. I took part in a Restorative Justice circle led by Ora Schub, where I was one of the participants. There were people from all backgrounds, those who had held circles before, those who worked with juveniles, schools youth groups, ex-gang members, who had admitted to hurting others all in the name of their gang, those who had been to prison etc. I was a little nervous going into an area where most people would have ill feelings towards the police. One of the guys during the break approached me and said “it is nice to have a police officer in the group, it will give me a chance to humanise you”. During my trip I had humanised the criminals and there I was, where someone had said they wanted to ‘humanise’ me.

A talking piece (an object) was passed along and it allowed the person holding it to speak. The talking piece was a splendid way of telling stories and the journey people have taken to get to where they were, the struggles that they have gone through and are still going through. It allowed the one person holding to talk, to express their emotions in an unhurried pace whilst others listened without distracting. It gives the participant an equal opportunity to speak and carries an implicit assumption that every participant has something important to offer to the group. The talking piece facilitates the contributions of quiet people who are unlikely to assert themselves in a typical open dialogue. As it passes physically from hand to hand, the talking piece waves a connecting thread among the members of the circle (Circles Processes Kay Pranis, p36).

Many sensitive stories were shared during the circles. The ex-gang members told us how they had witnessed drive by shootings, murders, had been involved in ruthless fights, had been injured or had been near death themselves. There were stories how their own gang members had betrayed, deceived and even tried to kill them. These ex gang members had survived to tell us their stories and were now working to help get people out of gangs. Circles provide a safe space for individuals to express conflict, pain and anger, which most people can relate to and understand.

Juveniles may not feel safe to speak their deepest truth if they do not feel a sense of common ground and quite often will not reveal things to the police. Circles are beneficial for juveniles because the physical format of the circle symbolises equality, connectedness and inclusion. It promotes focus, accountability and participation by all. Because there is no hierarchy it enables people to feel comfortable and confident to speak up. Juveniles want to be treated as adults and want to be respected and so such a setting will enable them to feel like that.

The four days were intense! The training taught me a lot including how to facilitate a circle. Listening to other peoples' stories, problems and heart ache can be draining and even though we were from different parts of the world, most of whom had had bad experiences with police, we all cried, laughed, played games, shared stories and we were one! We were all connected and there was a lot of love! As Kay Pranis said "When people share their pain, mistakes and drop layers of protection, revealing themselves as struggling, vulnerable human beings we feel more connected to them and we too are able to break down our barriers. Sharing stories also allows us to change our views and judgements about the person who is sharing their story. Story telling is a process of self reflection" (Circle Processes - Kay Pranis p40).

## **Bethlehem/Pennsylvania The Restorative Justice Conference**

I attended 'The 17th World Conference of the International Institute for Restorative Justice'. I met many experts in the field of Restorative Justice and I had the privilege of talking to them and gaining more knowledge. I met Terry O'Connell is a police officer from Australia and also a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Australia Fellow from twenty years ago and who had been carrying out Restorative Justice work. It was reassuring that he was already conducting such work and it was working.

I watched two videos of Terry O'Connell's work on Restorative Justice Conferences, which he had conducted after a crime had been committed:

***Facing your Demons 1999:*** A group of young men had gone in to a pizza place to carry out an armed robbery. One of the men had a loaded weapon and upon entering the pizza place shot a young man who was working there. The robbers were caught and imprisoned. The family of the deceased were affected tremendously, along with his friends, his neighbours and his colleagues who had found his body. Terry worked through the case and organised a conference for all the parties to get together. The victim's family and friends were angry and they wanted answers. They had already pictured the offenders as monsters. However this image disappeared during the duration of the conference and their anger slowly diminished. The victim's father who was very angry, slowly expressed softness. When the offenders spoke everyone listened and at the end having seen the tears and vulnerability of the offenders, the victim's father even approached the offender and wanted to work with the offender to portray his message to youngsters. Before meeting the victims, the offenders were nervous and had been preparing for this meeting over some time replaying in their heads what they were going to say, where one said "Confronting victims whose pain I am responsible for".

***-Burning Bridges 2005:*** Four friends burnt a sacred historical bridge in their small community. The boys burnt it as a joke, however the fire got out of control and burnt the whole bridge. This action affected the community, school, their family and everyone who used the bridge. A conference was held with the victims and offenders. Upon hearing the boys, those sat in the conference realised the boys were only young and had done a foolish act which went out of control. However they still had to pay a price. The video documents how the community moves on from grief and anger to healing.

Both the incidents are of young people who have made huge mistakes without thinking of the consequences. Victims and their families need answers and sincere apologies. Restorative Justice conferences were used to get people talking, recognise each other as human beings who have made a mistake and see if there were any ways to make amends. Conferencing is a victim sensitive approach where it allows

those who have been affected by the crime to come together to share their feelings, develop a plan to repair the harm and prevent recurrence. Meeting the victims face to face and hearing about the impact of their actions brings a real sense of remorse and desire to change.

### **Electronic tag monitoring group**

**Sellersville CSF Community Service Foundation-** RRC Restorative Reporting Centre.-  
For Juvenile Offenders.

I sat in a juvenile centre, where juvenile offenders who had violated their bail were monitored with an electronic monitoring device. Before the programme had started these juveniles would stay at home, waste their time and likely to get up to mischief leading them into more trouble. This programme was set up so they had somewhere to attend from Monday to Friday evenings and at the weekend partake in community work. The facilitators explained how in the beginning the boys would resist in taking part in any activities however they slowly started to enjoy the programme.

There had been an issue over the weekend when they had gone to complete their community service. After dinner they got in a circle where they had a 'check in'. Each person was given the chance to discuss the issue that had occurred over the weekend and how their behaviour affected them and others around them. The facilitator would ask questions and then the juvenile would answer without anyone disturbing him. The session was informal and they did not have a talking piece but it worked. Afterwards the rest of the group would give that person feedback. One of the boys had issues with another boy from a separate group over the weekend where they did their community work and he stole their cake. He said he was sorry and should not have done it but at the time it was funny. The rest of the boys commended him on his honesty and gave their feedback.

There was another incident where a boy threw water at another however the victim of the incident mistakenly attacked another boy. The facilitator asked the following questions to the boys which were devised by Terry O'Connell:

-What happened?

-How did you feel at the time?

-How do you feel since?

-Who has it affected?

-What would you do to change?

The issues may appear petty. However if they are not addressed as soon as possible these juveniles may think they have got away with it and next time may even try something even worse. The juveniles looked up the benefits and cost in the short term and long term. Young people often want respect and so they do silly things to look cool and be accepted. Here the restorative Justice programme teaches these young offenders to account for their actions and think through what they have done and could do in the future to mend the problem. Any problems that occur are addressed as soon as possible so the problem does not grow into something bigger.

## **Texan Prison Visits - Bridges to Life**

I joined Bridges to life in Houston/Texas, where founder John Sage stated that 'people who have suffered as victims of crime are best positioned to help offenders, and that by helping offenders, they could also help themselves deal with their continuing pain and hurt'. This led to the formation of Bridges to Life.

The journey towards peace requires radical change. It involves a transformation of heart, mind and habits. Bridges to Life have witnessed this transformation in many of their offender participants during the process. The recidivism statistics of the graduates relative to the general population inmates indicate a very significant impact (Blackard K (2014) Restoring Peace, Using Lessons from Prison to mend Broken Relationships p2).

It is recognised that with offenders, whether they are from adult prisons or juvenile facilities, more than 50% of those who are discharged are arrested within three years of their release. They may fall back into their old habits, may not cope with the outside world and may not be accepted. They break their parole, hurt get arrested and find themselves back in prison. Bridges to life emphasises a lot on Faith which definitely has a tremendous effect on these prisoners. Even if they do not have anyone else they have God! I was privileged enough to visit numerous prisons where Restorative Justice was being used successfully and I was able to partake in the process.



### **Santa Marias Bonita House**

I visited Bambi-Prison system for pregnant females and new mothers, which enabled mothers to bond with their babies whilst in prison. That way these mothers have a chance without the social service taking away their baby. The females were given six months Restorative Justice training which helped them recognise the crimes that they had committed and how they can repair the damage. On completion of the programme they have a graduation ceremony. I sat in the programme as the females shared their stories and letters that they had written to their victims and family members. Two pregnant females shared their stories where they had been through ordeals that no person should go through. They had seen things that had traumatised them and the only way they felt they could deal with such ordeals was through alcohol, drugs, sex, gangs and committing crime.

Female1 shared her story of how she was caught up in a love triangle at the age of fifteen, where she witnessed a murder and a suicide of those close to her. At such a tender age to have to witness such cruelty and turmoil she did not know how to cope and so took up drinking and drugs to block out the pain. She went through traumatic stress disorder but did not receive any help. Her behaviour spiralled from an ordinary average teenager to an unruly female. She started hanging out with the wrong crowd going from one abusive boyfriend to the next and at age of sixteen fell pregnant. She eventually injured a girl in revenge who had been seeing her then boyfriend, which led her to prison. She was currently pregnant with her present boyfriend. This young soft looking lady did not just become a criminal out of the blue because she just felt like it. She behaved in ways to deal with her trauma which eventually led to criminal behaviour. Had her emotions been identified and had she been helped at the young age maybe she would not have looked for other things to deal with her pain.

The next female was a little hesitant to tell her story with me, a police officer, present. Female 2 again had a disruptive life. Her mother was an alcoholic and had left her family when she was very young. Her parents' splitting up led to her disruptive behaviour at school. Her father later passed away from cancer. Female 2 later had a boyfriend who physically and sexually abused her. She described the horrific crimes that her ex boyfriend had inflicted on her. Once she overcame the ordeal she met her current boyfriend by whom she was currently pregnant with. She and her boyfriend had managed to get involved in an incident where a man they knew was shot and killed. However, Female2 and her boyfriend found themselves somehow involved in the investigation. The female described how badly the police had treated her and her boyfriend and therefore took a dislike to me. However, judging by my shocked reaction, she opened up. She even asked me personal questions and said that she was coming to realise that there are good cops too.

This Restorative Justice process for these women allowed them to tell their stories and also be listened too. They could relate to other women's stories and knew they were not alone. It educated them and allowed them to find their inner voice. The course helped them mature and develop in a positive way and realise there was a way out of their disruptive lifestyle. Listening and being listened to is a powerful tool of healing.

### **Alcohol and Drug rehabilitation prison for young men**

Most of the young men in this prison had a lot in common. They were from dysfunctional families which involved alcohol or drugs. The young man who shared his story followed a similar pattern where one of his parents was an alcoholic and smoking drugs was common in his house. One of his parents was strict with his education whereas the other did not care so he grew up confused not knowing how far he could go causing havoc. He would go to school as and when he pleased and he would not be punished for it. He started smoking drugs heavily, he bought himself a car and started going to all the parties. At the age of 17 he met his girlfriend and at the age of 19 he had his first child. His father later died and left some money for him and his siblings. Instead of investing his share, he bought an even bigger and expensive car, which he later regretted as it only got him into trouble. He got more and more addicted to drugs and needed higher amounts to meet his needs then would go speed driving. One day he went to a party and he wanted more drugs so he broke into someone's house. The neighbour phoned the police and he was chased by the police but managed to get away. The guy who owned the house sent his gang looking for the burglar and they tracked where he lived and did a drive by shooting. Even though his family were inside luckily no one got hurt.

The young man loved the adrenaline rush and lived a thug's life. He continued putting his girlfriend and baby at risk, until one day his girlfriend decided enough was enough and left. This came as a shock and that is when he promised to change. Eventually the police caught up with his games. His girlfriend was pregnant again however he was now in prison and could not be there for her to support her through the pregnancy.

This story really excited the young men in the circle. However his behaviour was discussed and he really listened to the group. In his youth he did not have anyone important to tell him to stop behaving in such a way. His parents were bad examples to him and he had no aspiring role models to look up to.

This young man did say that something really bothered him. As a teenager he used to burgle his neighbour's house all the time. His neighbour was an old man who used

to leave his savings money in a certain place and the young man knew exactly where it was and he used to always steal it. The old man passed away. The money the old man was saving could have been for anything, his health, his children, grandchildren. He would never know. The young man expressed his guilt. I suggested that perhaps he could track the old man's family and even write them a letter to say sorry or when he got out perhaps do something to make up for it. This young man did not look like a typical offender at all. He was a short, quiet, timid looking young man but his story blew me away.

People need guidance and sometimes can lose their way. They need to hear what is right or wrong. However it is never too late to make amends even if it is through other people. Parental and responsible guardians have a huge part to play in juveniles' upbringing and the choices they make in their life. Young people look up to role models and by having positive adults to look up to can be direct them in the right way.

### **Adult male prison:**

I joined a group of volunteers who give up their time to work in a male prison restoring the prisoners. All the men were of different races and ages and had committed serious crimes. By this time I had been to a few prisons and I no longer saw them as just prisoners but as human beings who needed guidance. I sat in a circle, where some shared their stories and others shared their letters. A couple of the men read their letters which they had written to their victims, the victim's family, their children, or partners. There were many 'sorrys's, tears, shaking with fear, guilt and empty stares. These men had gone through so much pain in their early years and consequently reacted in ways that eventually led them to prison. They knew they had wasted their time doing the wrong things when they should have spent it with the people they loved most, their partners, wives, children, parents etc.

I felt their pain and thought "who am I to judge them?" No one is perfect. Why did they not receive the help they needed when they were going through hell. No one fixed their pain and now they are trying to fix the pain that they had caused.

Even though these men had committed horrible crimes they were wonderful to be around. They were full of humour and it was obvious that they had a bond and looked after one another. It was reassuring to see that they were genuinely happy for those who were being released. One man spoke about love and care and he appeared so warm and content. He regularly had his family visit him in prison to provide him with support. It was clear that the love of family and close friends kept these men going and of course their faith in God.

At the end of the session, we said a little prayer. We all held hands. We had connected by sharing stories and by touch. They may have committed horrific crimes that I could not even begin to imagine but I still felt warmth and love amongst them. Every man in that circle said a little prayer and even I had a chance to say a little prayer at the end. They really included me and I saw no difference between myself and them.

The Bridges to Life RJ programmes were vital in keeping the prisoners sane and able to express emotions which perhaps would be difficult for them to express outside of the sessions. The programmes aim to hold the offenders accountable and show them a need for change: to get beyond the 'me' and start thinking about others and the larger society. They do this by teaching the following...

**Responsibility:** is about cause and effect, and it involves behaviour and its consequences. Cause is the reason something happens. Effect is the result. If the person causes hurt, pain conflict or a problem he/she is responsible for it. The offender regardless of his upbringing, schooling or lack of schooling, parents, upbringing, social setting, if he/she causes an effect on another then he or she is responsible unless they have been forced to commit such an action.

Juveniles may not see that they are responsible and may blame their circumstances, their parents, their families, make excuses to make themselves feel better but it does not take away what they have done. Understanding past actions and consequences - understanding and accepting responsibility is necessary for offenders to deal with what happened and move to the future.

**Action:** One person's action affects another which in turn affects another and so forth. It is like throwing a stone into a still silent pond, the stone hits the water in one place but its effects move out in a circle and the affects the surface of the water in many places. Thus one persons actions usually has several effects, some perhaps obvious and intended and others less significant or unintended.

**Accountability:** A person is accountable if they are fully or partially responsible for a conflict, problem or crime. Accountability works both ways where you are accountable to others as they are accountable to you. Juveniles often think their crime is petty and have caused no harm or if so very little harm that the other may be able to overcome it easily. Juveniles may fail to recognise or face up to the needs of others or are unwilling to answer for what they have done.

**Confession:** means admitting you have done wrong and acknowledging or disclosing our misdeeds, faults, or sins, taking and accepting responsibility. When an offender honestly confesses to themselves, admits their crime, faults and short comings - they are accepting responsibility and being accountable. A dishonest, insincere confession

will do more harm than good: it will put you deeper in the hole of your own faults and shame. Rather than free you, it will entrap you. Rather than confirm your honesty, morality, and strength it will lead to a cycle of lying, immorality and weakness.

Bridges to Life give opportunities to the offenders to confess by telling their stories and by writing letters, to victims and to family members. The offender draws upon everything he or she has learnt about themselves. It allows them to let go of the burden of the guilt that they have been holding on to, it is a release and makes them feel free. I have seen the men in the prison weep but afterward regain more control and feel powerful as they have let go.

## JUVENILE CENTRES

I visited a couple of Juvenile centres during my trip. Miami Dade/Florida and Houston/Texas Juvenile centres operate in similar ways away from the police service. Once juveniles get arrested they get escorted to the juvenile centre where they are handed to civilian workers and get dealt with accordingly. Here the juveniles are helped instead of being punished. They are interviewed and are taken through the appropriate steps to provide them with the right tools to keep them out of trouble. If the cases are long, the juveniles are held in the centre where the males and females are separated. They are provided with programmes and have schooling inside the centre.

This is very unlike the Met where juveniles are booked into custody with adult prisoners. Sometimes the adults can get violent and need to be restrained, all in view of the juvenile. It is troubling as the juvenile is a witness to this behaviour and also it is very unsafe for them, therefore being dealt with separately is ideal.

In Houston they have rescue dogs and the juveniles are taught how to look after the animals. This is a good way of teaching the juveniles about care and trust. Even though I think it is important to establish a relationship with police and juvenile offenders, these centres have no police involvement after arrest, which in my opinion separates them even more and the juveniles will only associate police with the bad.



## **NEW YORK**

I visited schools in New York which operated Restorative Justice Programmes as part of their curriculum. Students were taught how to facilitate circles and deal with certain incidents. It was refreshing to see young adults in the class taking charge and control of any mishaps which may have occurred and resolving their own situations instead of relying on the teachers. These students already grasped that one person's action affects others and so forth.

Too often unruly students get expelled from school and sent to referral schools. Bad behaviour mixed with bad behaviour creates the worst in a person. Restorative Justice system within the school seems ideal, where students are taught to take responsibility for their own action, change their ways and improve. That way students are less likely to be expelled, therefore unlikely to get involved in criminal activity or have any contact with the police.

## **Recommendations**

-Police are the first to come into contact with juveniles when they have committed a crime and are more likely to know the offenders, their offending habits and who they loiter with. The Police service and YOS (Youth Offending Service) already work together, but the juveniles go through the police service first then the YOS who are seen to help them. It would be ideal for the police and YOS to be trained together to get the juveniles through early intervention and diversion away from the criminal justice system. By police working directly with the young people will break down barriers. It is important for our young people to have a positive relationship with the Police service, where they feel safe and be able to trust the police to resolve conflicts.

- The police service and YOS to work with external agencies such as Khulisa, Leap, and Tutu Foundation UK. To work as a joint partnership instead of external agencies. There are a lot of Restorative justice work happening in the UK for the same cause, it would be ideal if they can learn from one another and work together to get the best out of the youths.

-Most inner city schools have police officers attached to deal with any criminal activities that occur inside and outside school. To have officers trained in Restorative Justice so they can deal with youths out of the criminal justice system. Also have Restorative Justice taught in Pru (Pupil referral units) where excluded students are sent to from school and whom police deal with often. That way the youths can understand the effects of their behaviour on others. By providing learning opportunities and strategies early on will help young people to cope with challenges in life and will help them to stay off the streets. In the long run it will allow the young people to make positive and valuable choices in their life.

-Police officers to be made aware and trained in Restorative Justice Process. Restorative Justice Process is ideal to change these young people for the better, to prevent crime, restore our communities and reduce the prison population. Parents/guardians need to take more responsibility for their children and work with the police.

- In the long term future it would be ideal to have separate custody for adults and youths. That will minimise any risks that come with custody and adult prisoners.

-The Tutu foundation and I are working on an idea to improve youth and police relations by having round table discussions where both youths and police can hear each others views on a regular basis. The purpose for this is to create a dialogue between young people and the police, to create a greater understanding of each other's positions and misperceptions.



## **Conclusion**

I felt there was a lot of dislike towards the police throughout my trip. However during the Restorative Justice programmes, the prisoners, ex gang members and many more managed to humanise me. Restorative Justice Processes plays a vital role in humanising people through communication. Not only does it work between victims and offenders, it can also work with police and the people they deal with. Meeting these prisoners has made me more aware and in tune with my feelings, decisions and how I deal with people and incidents. It is important to build a relationship between police and juveniles in order to progress and solve any conflicts or crime.

Although not all offenders start off young, from my journey and experiences as a police officer, I have found that most of the offenders often started young, came from a dysfunctional family, both or one parent not physically present, endured emotional abuse, witnessed domestic violence and had some relationship with drugs or alcohol. The juveniles may have been through foster care, social care homes, skipped schools, taken drugs and/or alcohol, joined gangs to have a 'family' to fit in, shoplifted, sold drugs, committed burglary to get what they wanted.

Alternatively a person may have had the best upbringing and still turn out to be a notorious criminal. Juveniles, no matter how tough they think they are, are more likely to be pressurised by people, their surroundings, lack of guidance and discipline.

Even though Restorative Justice Processes are used for victims and offenders, my focus was on offenders. By focusing on them and rehabilitating them to change and become restored ensures less victims. The use of restorative practice in early intervention aims to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. This improves their life chances, reduces demands on the police and ensures fewer victims. It looks at long term solutions instead of temporary measures.

My Winston Churchill Fellowship journey has moved me, made me feel uncomfortable, scared, vulnerable, intimidated, joyful, given me satisfaction at the improved change but most of all made me feel connected as a human being.

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## APPENDIX

Page 22: South Africa Kipton.

This is Martins Mahlamvu's story in his own words:

*I started crime at an early age. I did it innocently at first because I was hungry. I used to steal lunch boxes at school, as I always went to school on an empty stomach with no lunch box or anything to eat.*

*At the age of 12, I started committing serious crimes, first by killing dogs for fun it was because of peer pressure and influence from violent movies. I then went on to drugs at the age of thirteen, selling them for someone. I became brave and started stealing from him and started selling for myself. This eventually led to guns. I started committing crime due to the poverty stricken way I grew up, and it was out of necessity which later turned to greed. I lived in poverty and committed crime however I wasn't the only person who felt the same, most of the men in my gang were the same I joined many gangs and mainly because of peer pressure. I was in a gang called ,bsb, then mother fuckers(this was a messy gang and guns ruled our lives here) I then moved to a gang called CATs, where we committed gun crimes but not cruel like the first. At first I did not even see it as a bad thing as every one was doing it in my community. Killing something was scary then that became normal. I grew to be heartless. Going to prison was a statement and it gave me power and honour. Being arrested was scary at first but coming back out I felt like I had reached manhood.*

*South African police need to be well informed about how to approach a fugitive and also think about the safety of the good citizens. The police of other countries need to share with other third world countries the importance of serving the world loyally not with their pockets. I have been in and out of prison all my life that I have actually lost count.*

*In my early years of being sent to prison, I hated it and always thought about my home bed whenever prison lice started turning to my skin for breakfast and supper. There is nothing good about prison but in my last stint in prison where I served the longest sentence, I found my spiritual side. I started to discover my talents through the organisation we formed with Lesley and vine (Khulisa social solutions back in 1997). The organisation did not change me completely because peer pressure still influenced my moves. I knew prison could not change me ,even with all the pain of being locked up, being surround by other prisoners in crowded space, bad food and more. I attended the classes of restorative justice briefly and it was at this time that I started thinking deeply about my life. I remembered back from the lessons of Khulisa in 2009 the importance of change.*

*I met my friend Thulani and we decided, to start a group that can bring about change and break the circle of crime and violence in our communities, but we told ourselves we needed to start in prison then move to our communities, then possibly the world. It had to all start from within.*

*Prison wardens treat inmates as prisoners or even slaves instead of instilling corrections or showing the importance of change. There are inmates who discover their potentials early, but these kinds of wardens really block their positive growth. When I took the initiative of changing myself and others these wardens did their best to block me. With all the obstacles mainly the wardens we stayed positive in our team. We faced pressure from the inmates (gangsters) and wardens alike.*

*Restorative Justice sessions taught me a lot and it made me realise the truth about crime. How my actions has affected me, my future, my victims, my family, my community and lots more. Since I have been out I have become a community builder. I am doing a lot of positive things that I never dreamt I would be doing in my life time. Even my own community is surprised at my change but I love every moment and my community is grateful for what I do. It's not about money any more, even though we all need it to survive, its now about transforming peoples lives for the better and in return it really builds me up every day. Police definitely need to have Restorative Justice in the way they deal with offenders and incidents as it can guide an offender from the early stages so that there is no need to just send people away to prison. The prison system can only do so much to restore and rehabilitate prisoners. More often it creates beasts and if they get released they can ruin a community. Prison cannot build a person, human beings can.*