

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK

17-23 NOVEMBER

2024 Edition

*The Promise of
Restorative Justice
in a Polarising World*



EUROPEAN
FORUM FOR
RESTORATIVE
JUSTICE



EUROPEAN **FORUM** FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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Editors' Note

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Why do we organise Restorative Justice Week every year? Because we know that restorative justice enables the viewing of conflicts through a different lens. A lens through which the opportunities related to harm and grievances also become visible. Restorative practitioners who facilitate dialogues between victims, offenders and their communities experience the potential inherent in this every day. Recognising this comes with the responsibility of sharing. We must make this experience widely available. This is the significance of Restorative Justice Week.

This year our organisation invited other restorative justice organisations from all around the world to come together to discuss the theme of this year's campaign. The polarisation of our societies, and the opportunity to look at this worrying trend through a restorative lens emerged from this meeting. Throughout this magazine, you'll notice visual elements inspired by the concept of polarisation, all designed to reflect the complexities of division and the potential for clarity and connection. The cover image, a photograph of a polarised camera lens, symbolises the theme by capturing the idea of different perspectives coming into focus through restorative justice.

Inside, you'll find a collection of insightful articles contributed by our Secretariat, partner organisations, as well as from members of the EFRJ's Working Group on Hate, Polarisation and Violent Extremism. These pieces highlight diverse Restorative Justice Week initiatives, providing real-world examples of how restorative principles are being applied in various communities. Our hope is that these initiatives and the stories contained within this magazine will resonate with readers, offering a greater understanding of the promise and potential of restorative justice as a tool for building more inclusive, compassionate societies, and will inspire readers to take part in this growing global campaign. Thank you for joining us on this journey as we explore and celebrate the vital work being done in restorative justice across the globe.

At the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ), we are dedicated to advancing high-quality restorative justice practices across Europe and beyond. As an international network of practitioners, academics, and policymakers, we strive to create a world where restorative justice is accessible to all, fostering healing and constructive dialogue in various areas of life, from criminal justice to family and community settings. We do not advocate for a single model of restorative justice; instead, we recognise the approach's evolving nature and the importance of core restorative values such as respect, inclusion, and empathy, which underpin all our work.

Restorative Justice Week is a significant annual event for us, offering an opportunity to raise awareness, share knowledge, and highlight the impact of restorative practices in communities worldwide. This year's theme, "The Promise of Restorative Justice in a Polarising World," is especially timely, as it speaks to restorative justice's unique capacity to address complex social issues. Through our publications, events, and campaigns, we aim to foster dialogue between practitioners, researchers, and policymakers and support restorative justice's growth throughout Europe and beyond.

We are grateful to each partner and contributor who helped bring this magazine to life, particularly to the interns at our Secretariat in Leuven, Belgium, and we invite you as a reader to engage with the work we are all doing to make restorative justice a cornerstone of more inclusive, understanding societies.

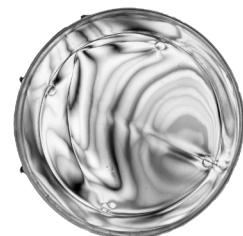
Director's Note

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Executive Director



CONTENTS



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK

How Restorative Justice Week became a global movement and what is it today

5

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND POLARISATION

How polarisation affects us, and the opportunities to tackle it by looking through a restorative justice lens

9

LIVED EXPERIENCES

Stories of individuals who have experienced restorative justice in situations of extreme harm

17

WHAT'S ON DURING #RJWEEK'24

A teaser of events around the globe marking this Restorative Justice Week.

29

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

How you can get involved in the global #RJWeek movement

33

EXPLORE MORE

Are you interested in learning more? We can help!

39

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK

Three horizontal red bars of decreasing length are positioned to the right of the text. The top bar is aligned with the word 'RESTORATIVE', the middle bar with 'JUSTICE', and the bottom bar with 'WEEK'.



What is Restorative Justice Week?



Restorative justice is an approach that offers offenders, victims and the community an alternative pathway to justice. It promotes the safe participation of victims in resolving the situation and offers people who accept responsibility for the harm caused by their actions an opportunity to make themselves accountable to those they have harmed. It is based on the recognition that criminal behaviour not only violates the law, but also harms victims and the community.¹

Restorative Justice Week began in 1975 in England as 'Prisoner's Sunday,' a day to remember incarcerated people. Over time, it grew and spread to other countries and was transformed 20 years later into 'Prisoner's Week'.

In 1996, the Correctional Service Canada adopted 'Prisoner's Week' and transformed it into 'Restorative Justice Week: Community, Victims, and Prisoners', later shortened to 'Restorative Justice Week'. Since then, Restorative Justice Week has been celebrated internationally, during the third week of November, as a week to honour and raise awareness about restorative justice and showcase the work of individuals and organisations in the field. In some parts of the world, like Belgium, Prisoner's Week and Restorative Justice Week are still celebrated together today.

COVID-19 represented a shift for

Restorative Justice Week from primarily local gatherings to global, online events that could be accessed by people all around the world. Online restorative justice events have allowed the work of diverse local organisations across the globe to be showcased. This shift not only expanded participation in Restorative Justice Week but also highlighted how restorative justice can be used in a diverse range of contexts and societies and proved that restorative justice is a continuously expanding global movement. As a result of this transformation, there has since been a growing desire for greater international collaboration for Restorative Justice Week and within the greater restorative justice movement.

The European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) has been part of this movement since 2000. Every year, we work with members and other restorative justice organisations to

host events and share information, creating spaces for dialogue and healing.

Restorative Justice Week today is an opportunity to reflect on the developments and achievements of restorative justice, reflect on the situations where restorative justice can be used, raise awareness, showcase organisations and key individuals in this field, and contribute to building more peaceful, understanding communities.

¹United Nations Office of Drug and Crime Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes (2nd Edition)

This year's #RJWeek theme

The 2024 Restorative Justice Week occurs between the 17th – 23rd of November and the theme for this year is:

'The promise of restorative justice in a polarising world'

Each year, Restorative Justice Week is organised around a theme highlighting topical and emerging application areas of restorative justice. This year's theme reflects the growing challenges of division and conflict in today's society. As our world becomes more polarised, with increasing tension across political, social, and cultural lines, restorative justice offers a hopeful and constructive way forward. It provides a space for dialogue, understanding, and healing in the face of these divisions, reminding us that, even in times of conflict, there are pathways to connection and mutual respect. This theme emphasises the potential of restorative justice to bring people together, repair harm, and rebuild trust in an increasingly divided world.

The theme was decided in collaboration with restorative justice

organisations from all around the globe. To encourage international collaboration and coordination possibilities for Restorative Justice Week, the EFRJ organised meetings with other organisations, who were invited to suggest potential themes for the 2024 Restorative Justice Week.

Past themes have included:

- 'Repair and reform: restoring dialogue, solidarity & justice in today's societies' (2023)
- 'Releasing the potential of restorative justice: available, accessible & adaptable' (2022)
- 'Protect and empower the person harmed' (2021)

See some previous #RJWeek events on page 42.





A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK

A little snippet of #RJWeek'24 Events

As in previous years, the EFRJ is helping to promote all Restorative Justice Week events from around the globe. Below is a map of some of the currently organised #RJWeek'24 events. The full interactive and up-to-date version of this map can be found by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this page, or on our website.

page 31
Restorative Justice in Local Communities Around the World
IIRP/EFRJ

page 32
Restorative Carillon Concert
EFRJ and Leuven Restorative Cities

page 31
RONSJ
Restorative Justice Week 2024

page 30
First South Asian Restorative Justice Essay
Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice & Kathmandu University

page 30
NATIONAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM
NATIONAL SUR LA JUSTICE RÉPARATRICE
SHIPPING COLLABORATION | TONKING SOCIAL CHANGE
UNE COLLABORATION INSPIRANTE | DÉCENNER LE CHANGEMENT SOCIAL
NOVEMBER 18-19
LES 18-19 NOVEMBRE
OTTAWA CONFERENCE & EVENT CENTRE
2024
NRJ25-SHJR-CA

II JORNADA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO DA JUSTIÇA RESTAURATIVA NA AMÉRICA LATINA
A JUSTIÇA RESTAURATIVA EM CONTEXTOS DE DESIGUALDADES SOCIAIS E DESASTRES AMBIENTAIS
11. 12 e 13 novembro 2024
Florianópolis/SC - Brasil
PROGRAMAÇÃO
FÓRUM LATINOAMERICANO DE Justiça Restaurativa
@forolatinj

CONTEMPORARY RESTORATIVE PRACTICE
FROM AWARENESS TO PRACTICE TO TRANSFORMATION
International Conference | Canberra, Australia | 21-23 November 2024

Are you planning an event for #RJWeek24? Submit details of the event using the QR code or our website so we can add it to our interactive map!

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND POLARISATION





What is polarisation?

Polarisation is both a state of being and a process over time where differences in opinions, beliefs, and identities intensify, leading people to adopt increasingly extreme and opposing viewpoints.

Instead of encouraging healthy disagreements, polarisation often creates strong divisions, where people see issues in 'black and white' terms, often reinforcing an us-versus-them mentality. This leads to the 'othering' of groups that hold opposing views and can result in misunderstandings, fear, and conflict.

The divisions in society created by polarisation can, but do not always, provide an environment to allow the



rise of extremist ideologies and movements. It can also highlight existing inequalities in society, like unequal access to power or the marginalisation of certain groups. As these divisions deepen, people may hold increasingly negative views of those who are different from them, leading to stereotypes, prejudice, and even harmful behaviour like hate speech.

While polarisation is often seen as negative, and it indeed has many risks and dangers, it also presents an opportunity. By bringing these divisions into the open, polarisation can help communities recognise where injustices and social disconnections lie and can reveal

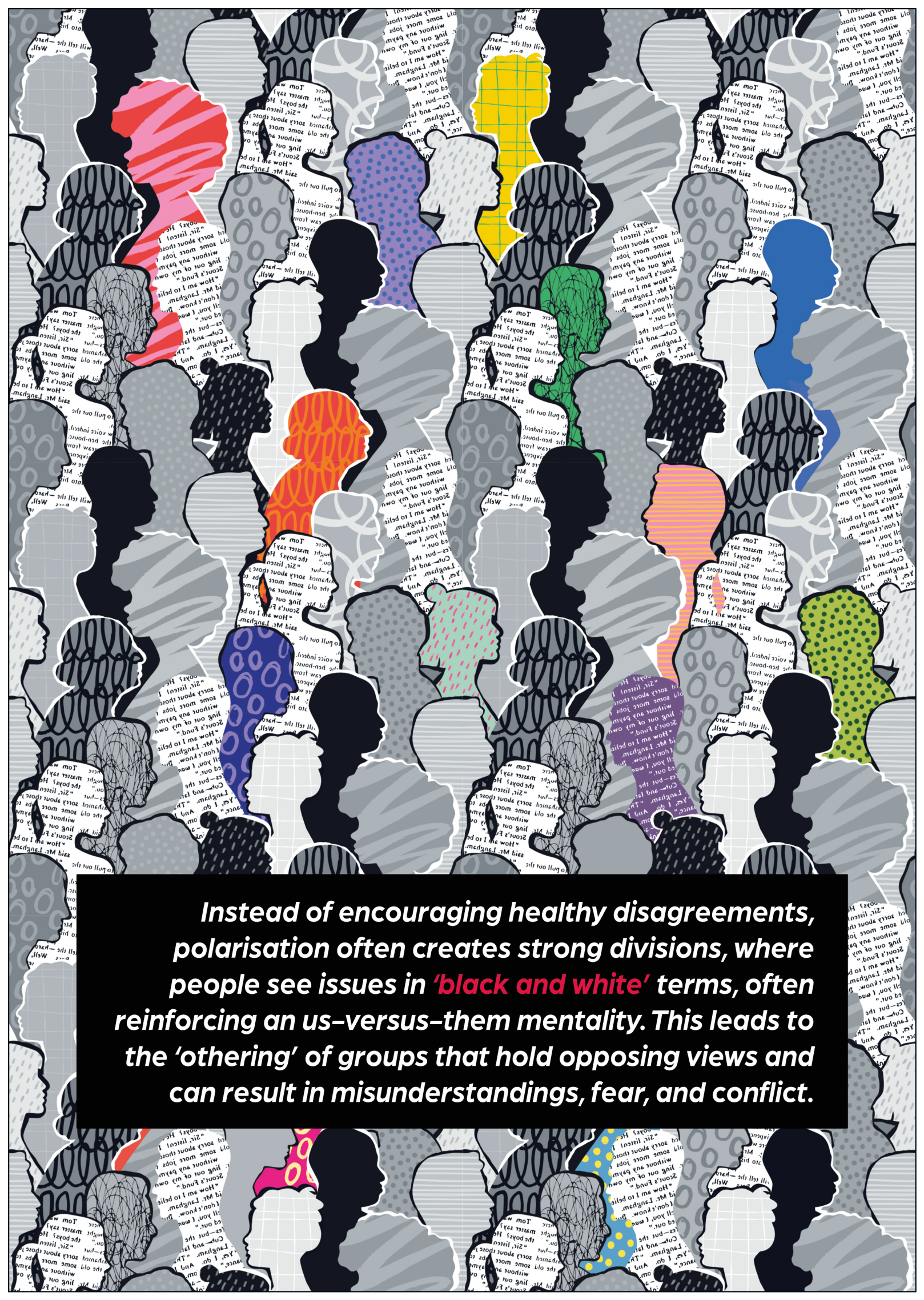


opportunities for addressing these conflicts through dialogue and understanding.

"By bringing these divisions into the open, polarisation can help communities recognise where injustices and social disconnections lie and can reveal opportunities for addressing these conflicts through dialogue and understanding."

Restorative justice offers a way to address these divides by fostering dialogue and understanding. It creates space for conversations that allow people to share their experiences and work together to bridge the gaps that divide them. This helps reduce conflict and promotes inclusion, helping to build more connected, peaceful communities.



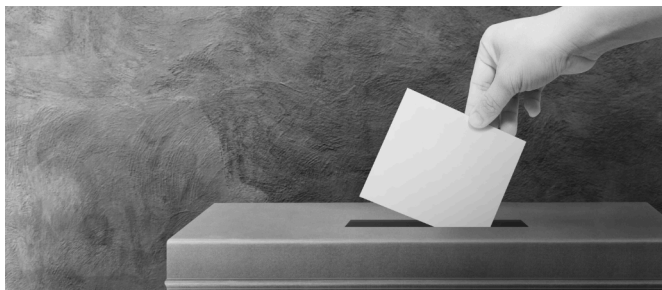


*Instead of encouraging healthy disagreements, polarisation often creates strong divisions, where people see issues in **'black and white'** terms, often reinforcing an us-versus-them mentality. This leads to the 'othering' of groups that hold opposing views and can result in misunderstandings, fear, and conflict.*



Media

The media serves as a critical part of the information environment, framing political and social issues and informing the public about key events. As the media people consume has now moved to the online space, it opens up issues such as the rise of dis- and misinformation, and the creation of echo chambers, where people only encounter information or opinions that reflect their own, reinforcing their beliefs and leading to polarisation of these beliefs.



Political

Political polarisation refers to the growing divide between political parties, leaders, and their supporters, often resulting in extreme differences in opinions on key social and policy issues. In politically polarized environments, it becomes difficult for individuals or groups with differing views to find common ground, and political debates tend to become hostile and less cooperative, making compromise rare.

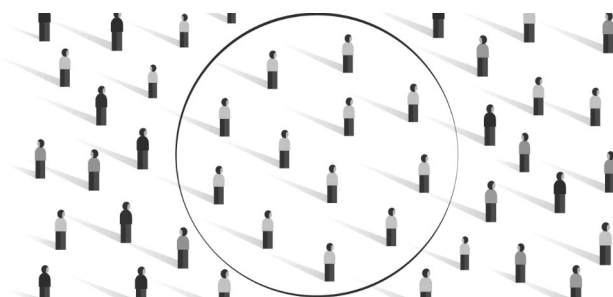


Social

Social polarisation happens when groups within a society become increasingly separated or isolated from each other due to differences in cultural, religious, or ideological beliefs. This can lead to communities having little understanding or empathy for one another, which weakens social cohesion and increases tensions between people with opposing perspectives.

Types of polarisation

Polarisation can take many forms, including media, group, social and political polarisation. Polarisation is not the same as conflict; it refers to the increasing distance between viewpoints, while conflict involves direct clashes or confrontations. However, polarisation can act as a catalyst for conflict, pushing people towards more extreme positions and making disagreements harder to resolve. Similarly, conflict can also increase polarisation.



Group

Group polarisation occurs when people in a group discussion move toward more extreme positions than they initially held, often because of reinforcement from others who share their views. This phenomenon can cause groups to become more radical or extreme in their thinking, whether in a political, social, or decision-making context, amplifying division between opposing groups.

- Lucy Jaffé

Former director of Why me? UK and EFRJ Board Member

“International Restorative Justice Week is a wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves of the **power and potential of restorative justice**. It changes lives by supporting those most affected by crime and conflict to listen to each other and agree how to move forward.”



How can we use restorative justice?



Restorative justice offers a constructive way to address the challenges of polarisation by bringing people together to engage in open and respectful dialogue. Instead of focusing on the divisions themselves, restorative processes look at the harm caused by these divisions and encourage all affected parties to participate in finding solutions. This approach shifts the focus from blame to understanding, helping communities bridge divides and work towards healing.

In polarised situations restorative justice enables conversations that might otherwise seem impossible. By creating a safe space for all sides to share their experiences and perspectives, the process can reduce tensions and allow for the rebuilding of trust. Restorative dialogue can break down the 'us versus them' mentality that often defines polarisation, helping people to see one another as individuals rather than representatives of opposing groups. Restorative justice encourages people to acknowledge their differences and reflect on their commonalities.

Restorative justice doesn't view the people involved as the problem, but instead sees the opportunity for growth through their engagement. It acknowledges that conflict is a normal part of society, and when approached with the right tools, it can be a catalyst for positive change. In this way, restorative justice helps communities not only address the immediate harms caused by polarisation but also build more inclusive, cohesive environments for the future.

EFRJ Working Group on Hate, Polarisation and Violent Extremism

Since 2019, the EFRJ working group on Hate, Polarisation and Violent Extremism has been exploring how restorative justice can better respond to these situations. For more information about this working group and to read their publications, scan this QR code:



Restorative justice has been used in a variety of situations. Some of these include:

- *Restorative Cities and Neighbourhoods*
- *Restorative Schools*
- *Situations of radicalisation*
- *Responses to terrorism and violent extremism*
- *Hate and violence prevention*



The potential of relational and restorative schools for challenging polarisation

by **Chris Straker**

15th October 2024



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Relational and restorative schools play a key role in addressing polarisation by directly challenging the issue of 'othering'. To 'other' someone is to make them 'less than' – to lower their identity and status. This is combined with language that distances 'them' from 'us', and when people are devalued and distanced in this way, it can easily lead to harmful behaviours. The 'us' and 'them' mindset can manifest in many ways, including discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, territorial identities, religion, and disability.

Relational and restorative schools are both shaped by, and contribute to, the wider field of restorative justice. They

share a deep understanding that we are all profoundly interconnected—that when something affects one person in a community, the entire community must come together to find a way to make things right.

Relational and restorative schools are guided by core values that are explicit in all the language and behaviours used by the whole school community and underpin every aspect of school life. These values have a societal output, and their development within the school community prepares students to embody these values and challenge philosophies that contradict them in the wider community and society.

Some key values for relational and restorative schools include:

- Connection, community and communication
- Diversity, fairness and equity
- Accountability and responsibility
- Empathy and understanding
- Inclusion and belonging
- Education and learning
- Social justice and dignity

The 'othering' in schools can result from a weak articulation of the relational and restorative school values as well as from the formation of strong cliques or peer groups. These groups, and a lack of understanding between them, can foster this 'us' and 'them' mentality and students who don't find a group to



belong to can be at risk of being 'othered'. Relational and restorative schools, through their values, principles and practice, address this issue head-on.

The use of relational and restorative approaches has often been associated with reducing exclusion in education. However, I would argue that one of its major benefits is to articulate the diverse voices of students and develop empathy. Relational and restorative approaches are one of the few interventions which address incidents of polarisation through understanding all perspectives when addressing the situation. It provides students who have been harmed with an opportunity to express themselves and their feelings. For teachers, restorative approaches allow opportunities to provide safe spaces for students to learn about the impact of the harm caused through polarising behaviour, to (re)connect with each and remove the stigma of the 'other'.

School relational and restorative practice also emphasises the importance of balancing power relationships in any dialogue. It develops skills in individuals and groups that allow them to engage in purposeful and deliberate dialogue about the issues that concern them. The skills and understanding developed in restorative schools can then transfer into the community in which the students live. Relational and restorative practice in schools sees a community composed of multiple groups not as an exclusionary space, but as a place that encourages the kind of dialogue that leads to understanding. It opens up a space where conflict can be dealt with in a positive way.

An important way a relational and restorative school can create spaces for dialogue and engagement that develop students as agents of understanding is through restorative circles.

Circles are an excellent way to see relational and restorative school values in action. But circles need to be



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"The circle is designed to help participants bring forward their 'best selves'. In other words it helps us conduct ourselves from the values that represent who we are at our best. The circle... [allows us] to act from our values precisely when it might feel most risky to do so." (Ball J, Caldwell W, Pranis K., 2010, Doing Democracy with Circles, p.33).

developed systematically across the whole school, and in all aspects of the school's life. Using the circles as part of the wider workings of a relational and restorative school can create and support the conditions for schools to be more reflexive and proactive in engaging, not only in cultural- and community-building but also in proactive responses to specific, potentially, polarising incidents when they happen in the wider society.

Some examples of circle practices that could be used in schools are:

- **Dialogue circles** – to explore a specific issue or topic from many perspectives
- **Learning circles** – for teaching or sharing
- **Circles of Understanding** – to create dialogue to clarify a specific issue, but not focused on creating consensus
- **Support circles** – where people come together to support an individual/family
- **Healing circles** – to share experiences, particularly harms
- **Celebration circles** – where people come together to recognise a person's or wider group's achievement


- **Conflict-resolution circles** – to bring disputed parties together to resolve differences
- **Reintegration circles** – to bring someone back into the community

The example of circles is important. The skills of listening and speaking that are developed mean that the whole school community feels seen, heard and understood. A confidence in self, and an understanding of others, means that students are in a better position to challenge polarisation in the wider society and sets them up to become active citizens in their own lives outside of school.

This article is a contribution from Chris Straker. Chris is the Director, trainer and consultant for Restorative Thinking UK. He is also a Registered Training Provider with the Restorative Justice Council. Chris is an active EFRJ member and part of two EFRJ Working Groups: Schools and Cities.

LIVED EXPERIENCES





“[Restorative
Justice] is about
the idea that
because crime
hurts, **justice
should heal.**”

- John Braithwaite,
Emeritus Professor and Founder of the School of Regulation
and Global Governance at the Australian National University



The Power of Our Pain: Lessons from the Parents Circle

by Shiri Ourian



In the face of deep-seated conflict, particularly one as longstanding and bitter as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many would assume that reconciliation is a distant hope, if not entirely impossible. But there exists a beacon of hope in the form of the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), an organisation made up of over 750 bereaved families, both Israeli and Palestinian, who have lost loved ones to the conflict. These families have made the extraordinary choice to pursue reconciliation instead of revenge. Their work offers a powerful example of how principles of restorative justice and reconciliation can be employed in conflict settings.

Established in 1995, the Parents Circle was born out of the shared pain of bereavement—a collective experience that transcends ethnic, religious, or national identities. In fact, the first Palestinian members of the Parents Circle were originally from Gaza.

At the heart of their work is the belief that dialogue and understanding can serve as antidotes to hatred and polarisation. They bring together bereaved Israelis and Palestinians to share their personal stories of loss with the general public, not to compete over whose suffering is greater, but to foster a sense of shared humanity. In these meetings, participants listen to the other's pain, gradually building a foundation of empathy and mutual understanding. This act of storytelling – telling the truth of one's experience and hearing the truth of another – lies at the core of restorative justice.

Our Tears are the Same Colour

For many, especially those who have suffered personal loss, engaging in dialogue with "the enemy" seems counterintuitive. This process of sharing and listening allows people to break down the psychological walls that have been erected by years of fear, hatred, and propaganda. It helps

them see "the other" as a human being rather than an abstract enemy.

The recent events of October 7th and its aftermath have intensified these challenges. The scale of violence, the heightened fear, and the renewed sense of vulnerability have made it even harder for individuals to open themselves to humanising the other side. Many are experiencing a raw and immediate grief that makes the idea of reconciliation feel distant, if not impossible. Yet, it is precisely during such times of heightened trauma that the Parents Circle's work becomes both more difficult and more necessary.

This process can be deeply transformative. Many participants have described how, before attending a dialogue session with the Parents Circle, they had no interest in speaking with people from the other side. But after hearing their stories, they began to realise that, despite their



differences, they shared a common goal: a desire for peace and an end to the cycle of violence. Empathy is awakened and actively nurtured through these dialogues.

Building Relationships in the Midst of Conflict

Building relationships in conflict settings is never easy. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with its deep historical roots, asymmetrical nature, and ongoing violence, presents a particularly challenging environment for fostering relationships across divided lines. Palestinians, living under occupation, face distinct and severe hardships that further complicate dialogue. Yet, the Parents Circle's work demonstrates that even in the midst of such inequality and conflict, it is possible to create and sustain relationships built on trust, empathy, and a shared commitment to peace.

"[This process of sharing and listening] helps them see 'the other' as a human being rather than an abstract enemy."

The relationships formed through the Parents Circle are not based on agreement about political solutions or historical narratives. Instead, they are based on a shared humanity—the recognition that both Israelis and Palestinians experience profound grief, and that this shared grief can be a starting point for dialogue and reconciliation. Through repeated interactions, participants develop a sense of trust and solidarity that can withstand the pressures of the surrounding conflict.



Listening from the Heart

The Listening from the Heart peace education programme, developed by American Friends of the Parents Circle – Families Forum, serves as a powerful extension of the organisation's commitment to reconciliation and restorative justice. This peace education initiative brings bereaved Israelis and Palestinians into communities that are divided or polarised around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, fostering empathy and dialogue in spaces where these values are often absent. By creating a platform where personal stories of loss are shared directly with participants, Listening from the Heart provides a structured opportunity for communities to engage with restorative justice practices.



The program emphasises the human impact of conflict, encouraging participants to listen deeply, confront their own biases, and recognise the shared pain experienced on both sides of the divide. Central to this work is the idea that true healing comes not from isolation or retaliation, but from engaging directly with those whom one might perceive as an enemy. This initiative provides a replicable model for communities facing an importation of the conflict.

If they can choose peace, surely anyone can too...

The Parents Circle's work is not only about healing individuals; it is about cultivating a culture of peace. Restorative justice is not just a process that happens between individuals — it

is a way of thinking and being that can transform entire societies. By promoting dialogue, empathy, and reconciliation, the Parents Circle is helping to lay the groundwork for a future in which Israelis and Palestinians can live together in peace. Their efforts are a reminder that peace is not simply the absence of violence — it is the presence of justice, empathy, and mutual respect.

Shiri Ourian is the Executive Director of American Friends of the Parents Circle: Bereaved Israelis and Palestinians for Peace. Shiri raises crucial support for the organisation's peace education program, which aim to build reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians based on shared values of compassion and mutual respect. Moreover, she led the development of a new peace education program which fosters empathy, humanisation, and understanding around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

shiri@parentsclerfriends.org

To find more information about the Parents Circle scan here:





Personal Stories from the Parents Circle

*The strength of the Parents Circle lies in the powerful personal stories of its members, many of whom have faced unimaginable loss and found ways to reconnect through dialogue. Four remarkable examples are **Robi Damelin, Bassam Aramin, Layla Alshekh and Yonatan Zeigen** – whose stories are a testament to the power of restorative justice.*

Robi Damelin lost her son, David, an Israeli soldier, to a Palestinian sniper in 2002. David was passionate about peace and had opposed his deployment to the occupied territories. In the wake of his death, **Robi could have chosen to live in anger and bitterness. Instead, she chose to channel her pain into building understanding between Israelis and Palestinians.** She became a leading voice in the Parents Circle, advocating for a reconciliation process to be a precursor and an integral part of any political agreement between both sides. **Robi has reached out to her son's killer, seeking not revenge, but a path to reconciliation.** She says that she understands that the sniper saw his uncle violently killed when he was young and so he went on a path of revenge. She has also supported the release of the sniper from prison in exchange for a hostage release.

Bassam Aramin, a bereaved Palestinian father, lost his 10-year-old daughter, Abir, who was killed by an Israeli border police officer in 2007. Bassam, however, is no stranger to the complexities of the conflict. As a young man, he was imprisoned for planning an attack against Israeli soldiers. **While in prison, Bassam began to study the history of the Holocaust, which radically altered his perspective on violence and revenge.** After his release, he became a peace activist, and following his daughter's death, he turned his grief into a commitment to working for peace alongside bereaved Israeli families. He says that if the soldier who killed his daughter should come to ask him for forgiveness, he would grant him forgiveness, for himself, not for the soldier. His ability to work with those on the opposite side of the conflict is a profound testament to the capacity for empathy and understanding, even in the most difficult circumstances.



Pictured above: Layla Alshekh (left) and Robi Damelin (right)

Layla Alshekh's story is a heartbreaking testament to the cost of this conflict. Layla, a Palestinian mother from Batir, lost her 6-month-old son, Qusay, during an Israeli military operation in 2001 during which he inhaled tear gas and was prevented from getting medical attention in a timely manner. The tragic loss of her infant son was a devastating turning point in her life, one that left her shattered and consumed by grief. After 16 years, despite her pain, Layla chose to join the Parents Circle, seeking to transform her sorrow into a call for peace and dialogue. She believes that no mother should ever have to endure such loss, and **her commitment to reconciliation reflects a deep desire for a different future – one where all children can grow up in safety.** Layla's journey is a powerful example of the courage it takes to choose peace in the face of unimaginable tragedy.

Yonatan Zeigen adds another layer to the tragedy and commitment to reconciliation. Yonatan is newly bereaved, having lost his mother, Vivian Silver, a prominent peace activist, on October 7, 2023. Vivian Silver was dedicated to fostering connections between Israelis and Palestinians and was a vocal advocate for feminism and peacebuilding throughout her life. In the wake of her death, Yonatan has joined the Parents Circle, continuing the legacy of his mother. In a recent interview, Yonatan referred to the remains of his mother's burned home saying, "Another person could come here and say this is the reason to kill Palestinians...I stand here and say this is the reason to fight for peace. So this won't happen again...If the very militants who destroyed this kibbutz came to him now saying they were ready to negotiate for peace...**he would listen openly. 'Come', he said. 'Even if you killed my mother before.'**"

- Tim Chapman,

'Mitigating Polarisation: Lessons from the restorative justice approach', 2021



“Polarisation is a
product of our **global**
interconnectedness”



Retissons Du Lien*: Thinking Together to Act Together

*Reweaving Connections

by Isabelle Seret



This article was originally written to the Belgium Federal Parliament in March 2021. It has been adapted for our magazine by Isabelle Seret from Retissons du Lien. This article was translated to English with the help of the EFRJ's interns: Chloé Landemaine, Marie Van Roste and Breanna Fernandes. You can find the original article in French in the digital version of this magazine.

Since its formation in 2018, the Retissons du Lien group has brought together victims of the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris, parents of the jihadist offenders, and frontline workers (e.g., social work, legal aid services, education, etc.). The group's members come together and open dialogue with the aim of understanding the harm suffered and to prevent the phenomena of violent polarisation from occurring in the future. The group was created with the help of Vincent de Gaulejac (clinical sociologist, professor emeritus at the University of Paris) and Isabelle Seret (lecturer in clinical sociology, trained in applied victimology). To read more about the group, scan the QR codes at the end of this article.

Less than a month after the Brussels attacks, on April 17, 2016, a march against terror was organised in Brussels by a collective of citizen organisations to pay tribute to the victims of the attacks.

At this march was Saliha, whose son died in Syria, and Lisa, a victim of the Zaventem attack on March 22, 2016. A photo shows them each holding one end of a banner. On a white sheet, a black inscription reads, "Retissons du Lien" ("Reweaving Connections") and

in red, a simple heart. Two mothers supporting each other in the face of pain and absence of meaning. Two mothers who support each other to carry a message of hope, building the possibility of a common future that fosters connection instead of division. Without their collective strength, the banner would stretch and fold, preventing the heart that unites them from being seen.

Vincent de Gaulejac and I were somewhat surprised that no public

institution took this citizen movement as a basis for reflecting on the causes and consequences of such extreme violence. From this highly symbolic march, which brought together people from diverse backgrounds, ages, genders, social classes, and various openly affirmed religious beliefs, the idea of creating a space for existential exchange was born—a space where people could speak about themselves, share their experiences, feel listened to, and engage in citizen action by investing themselves in prevention



activities and testimonials. These initiatives were shared in schools, universities, closed educational centers, and in prisons, spreading the message of what unites us.

"This suffering was the result of the tearing apart of the social fabric. Something happened to us."

In the absence of public initiatives, in March 2018 we launched this improbable group: Retissons du Lien (Reweaving Connections). Thinking Together to Act in Unison composed of individuals whom history might have opposed. The group includes victims of the Paris and Brussels attacks, families who were victims of a loved one's involvement in jihadist ideology, and frontline workers confronted with radicalisation. It is up to the latter group to find the resources to respond to the pressure from institutions urging them to conduct detection and "deradicalisation" actions. However, these narratives denouncing insecurity do not allow us to approach the complex, contradictory, and chaotic reality—let alone the vulnerability, doubt, and intimate suffering.

The group Retissons du Lien was formed from one simple realisation: "This isn't right", or in other words, "Never again." Its members faced deep, lasting, intense physical and psychological suffering that was difficult to share, but feeling that it also had to be shared, to be socialised, because the pain of each person was a symptom of wounds that affected society as a whole. This suffering was the result of the tearing apart of the social fabric. Something happened to us. Thus, there is a close connection between the work of each person to heal their own bodies, minds, and interpersonal relationships, and the collective work of fighting against racism, exclusion, and hate speech. The need for individual therapy cannot be separated from the broader work of reweaving social bonds.

Sandrine, a victim, says: "We were not targeted as individuals. Through us, they were trying to reach the Belgian

Faire société malgré les attentats



state. Through our deaths and injuries, we embodied the attack against Belgian society and its values".

Victims carry within them a double wound. One is personal, intimate, etched into their bodies and psyche. The other is symbolic, in that the attack aims to destroy society, its values, its institutions – the foundation of the social bond.

When parents ask to be recognised as victims too, they are asserting their desire, for both themselves and their children, to be included in this shared world and to break free from the stigma placed upon them. Azdyne says, "People tell you, 'If I were in your shoes, I'd keep a low profile as the father of...' It's difficult because, well, I didn't choose this, and then... there's this silence... because I want to talk about it. I'm not asking for material help, but at least for people to understand that we weren't the ones who sent them to jihad".

"Victims carry within them a double wound. One is personal, intimate, etched into their bodies and psyche. The other is symbolic..."

In this group, it was necessary to face pain, shame, anger, guilt, and stigma—and transform them. "How can we live together in society if we are afraid of one another?" Sandrine asks. Indeed,

society is becoming radicalised in the sense that distrust and suspicion have become the main ways people relate to each other. The encounter with 'the other' has become an eminently political act as much as it means encountering difference. The question is not whether we will live together, but, as the author Amin Maalouf says, but how! How are we going to live together?

This group, through its symbolic significance, bears witness to the possibility of an inclusive society. It works to prevent all forms of radicalisation or polarisation.

Cinema ZED in Leuven will have a special screening of "Au dela des larmes", a documentary film about Retissons du Lien's story, on Thursday the 12th of December. This screening will be in French with English and Dutch subtitles, and will be followed by a discussion including members from the group. For more information:



More information about the group (in French):



Video recordings of the Retissons du Lien encounters:





Decoding political violence, preventing involvement with violence

by **Sandrine Couturier**

Transcription of a speech made by Sandrine Couturier, a victim of the 2016 terrorist attack in Brussels, on the 29th November 2019.

Why did I agree to join the group Retissons du Lien at the request of Isabelle Seret in March 2018?

Isabelle contacted me on February 15, 2018, to invite me to participate in a project. The subject of the message was "Thinking together to act in unison".

At that time, I was working with my therapist on writing an open letter about my feelings of societal abandonment.

I felt abandoned by the state, which, contrary to its public statements, had dragged its feet on developing a status for victims and created numerous administrative hurdles for us victims to access it. For two years, I had been fighting to overcome denial, to recognise the seriousness of what had happened to me, and to accept that I was indeed a "victim," all while striving not to lock myself into this new identity. The State, meanwhile, was doing everything possible not to acknowledge that through the deaths and our injuries, it was the State itself that had been targeted and that it had a responsibility, at the very least, to recognise this unconditionally: publicly, financially and administratively!

On the other hand, I felt abandoned by "society," where life had resumed its normal course without much question about what had "happened to us", resigning itself to the idea that "we now just had to live with it..."

This "thinking together to act together" brought a breath of

This speech has been shared by Retissons du Lien. It has been translated to English with the help of the EFRJ's interns: Chloé Landemaine, Marie Van Roste and Breanna Fernandes. You can find the original speech in French in the digital version of this magazine.

fresh air to the despair and disillusionment that overwhelmed me. Finally, someone was telling me they refused resignation and wanted to act! That was my first reason for saying yes.

The second reason was perhaps more personal. By inviting me to "think" and "act," Isabelle engaged my intellectual abilities. I was no longer just a poor traumatised victim; I became a rational being once again... Isabelle fully recognised this new identity I had taken on—that of a victim—since I was invited to the group in that capacity, but she did not limit me to just that. She appealed to my multiple identities, just as the mothers of children who left for Syria are not only "mothers of jihadists".

In this respect, the group allowed us victims to realize that we shared, in diametrically opposed contexts, this same feeling of being reduced to labels.

At the same time, her request also shocked me. I clearly



"By inviting me to "think" and "act," Isabelle engaged my intellectual abilities. I was no longer just a poor traumatised victim; I became a rational being once again..."

remember the phone conversation we had. She asked me to join a group that would bring together victims of the attacks and mothers whose children had left for Syria. She had already worked extensively with these mothers and spoke to me about their suffering, their feelings of exclusion and guilt... I found it bold but brave of her to tell me all this, to me, a victim of the attacks! And it piqued my curiosity. I wanted to meet this woman who dared to break such untouchable taboos and to consider the work she was proposing.

At the same time, this call triggered a real emotional storm within me: So, jihadists had mothers, and moreover, they were suffering. I had never paid any attention to the man who blew himself up in the metro. I didn't even see him enter my carriage, so he wasn't real to me, and that was just fine. I had no desire to give him any substance, in fact I never even remembered his name. At the same time, these mothers had nothing to do with the jihadists of the Brussels attacks, but I also didn't want to be used as a moral counterweight. The fact that I expressed that I had no hatred didn't mean I was ready for anything! What could I possibly say to these women?

That's what violently occupied my mind for several days. My brain was in overdrive, and my senses were on high alert. I think that was the third reason that made me say "yes": I felt alive.

To escape the hell of the attacks, I had completely cut myself off from my emotions: "act, don't think", "don't see", "don't feel anything". I later learned that this is called the reptilian brain. It saved my life, but the journey to reconnect my brain to my bodily and emotional sensations was long and painful.

By proposing that I confront this reality, Isabelle was forcing me back—brutally but kindly—into emotional life: one filled with convictions, fears, joys, pain, discovery, and compassion...

To conclude: first a little anecdote. Since I joined the group, I have insisted on the fact that it is not a therapeutic group, but while preparing this speech, I had to admit that, in fact, it has been, given the reasons that made me join. At the same time, "thinking together to act together" was, and still is, going against the simplistic and populist discourses prevalent today. The security measures taken by political leaders, their divisive rhetoric stirring up fears, and advocating for a culturally and philosophically homogeneous society make no sense to me and make me feel unsafe.

Participating in this group was a political commitment to

building a different society based on inclusion and knowledge of 'the other', rather than exclusion and fear. For me, these are the primary conditions for my safety, and that's what I found in the group.



Photo [taken by Silvia Bottone] of commemorative mural of the terrorist attack at Maelbeek metro station. The work, by artist Benoît Van Innis, represents an olive tree, a symbol of peace and hope. A poem by Federico García Lorca translated into eight languages appears at the base of the tree:

Blue sky
yellow field.

Blue mountain
yellow field.

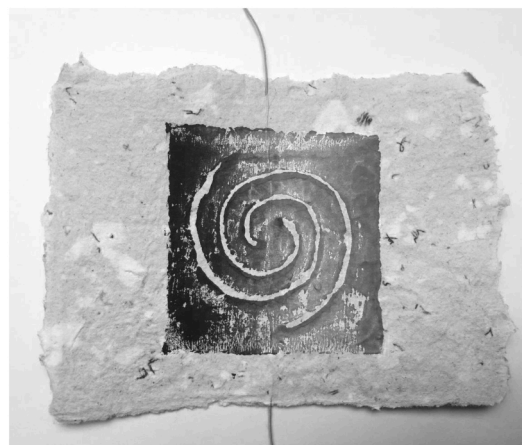
Across the empty plain
an olive tree goes walking.

A single
olive tree.



From closed-doors to restorative dialogues:

The Encounter of the Encounters



The symbol of the Encounter of the Encounters: artwork created by UK-based artist Clair Aldington from shredded dialogue notes embedding symbols of spirals and sunrays to represent journeys of transformation.

Over the last several years, a unique restorative journey has brought together people directly impacted by political violence and violent extremism from across Europe and beyond. Known as The Encounter of the Encounters, this initiative started as a simple idea but has transformed into a powerful example of the human ability to seek healing and reconciliation in the face of unimaginable loss.

"Punitive justice has never offered me to speak with them. At least, they asked me how I am doing!"
– Basque Country participant

The group's story began in 2018, when three experienced facilitators—Claudia Mazzucato, Guido Bertagna, and Gemma Varona—came together to deliver a course on the potential of restorative justice practices in cases of political violence and acts of violent extremism. Each of them had independently spent years working on encounters between victims and former combatants in Italy and the Basque Country, but they shared a vision. Inspired by their past experiences, they imagined a cross-border gathering that would allow individuals with lived experiences of extreme violence and acts of terrorism to engage in conversation with each other. From this moment on, the three stayed in touch and engaged more facilitators to grow their shared vision.

"The Encounter of the Encounters is not the sum of the [regional] encounters, all with their own story. It is a superlative, it is the incontrissimo, the super-meeting. We are here because we are convinced that this encounter has changed us." – Guido Bertagna, 2022

In September 2019, the first Encounter of the Encounters took place in San Sebastian. It brought together people who had experienced violence in very different ways: survivors, victims, bereaved families, former combatants and political prisoners (sometimes also their partners and/or children joined the meetings) as well as young people and students, civilians and professionals working in relevant fields. The group was composed of individuals from Italy, Basque Country, Northern Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, who had engaged in a restorative encounter within their own contexts. What was unique about the group was that, for many, this was the first time they had shared their stories with others outside their own communities. Despite stark differences in languages, cultures and backgrounds, as they sat together they worked through deep emotions and painful memories, forging connections that transcended their divisions and demonstrating the borderless benefits of restorative dialogues.

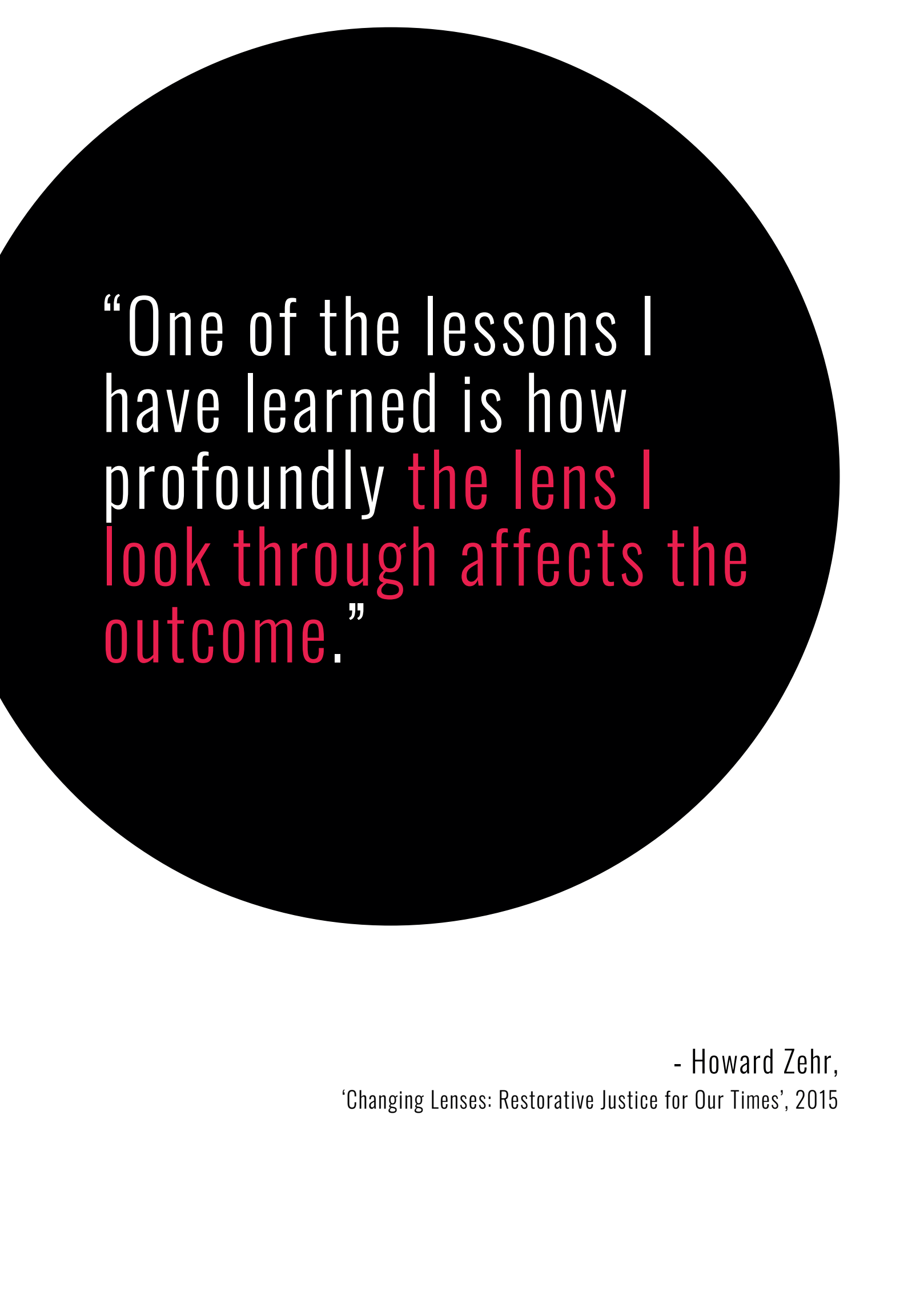
This year, the European Forum for Restorative Justice recognised The

Encounter of the Encounters with the European Restorative Justice Award, a testament to the group's unique impact and the courage of all those involved. EFRJ Chair Brunilda Pali, who presented the award, highlighted the group's extraordinary resilience and spirit of transformation: ***"Moving past the worst thing that ever happened to them but also moving towards other human beings, 'difficult others,' who are more than the worst thing they have done."*** Through its encounters, the group has transformed pain into an invitation for dialogue, reminding us of the power of shared humanity. Through dialogue, art, and the courage to face painful truths, this initiative has become a beacon of hope, inspiring others to believe in the possibility of healing and peace, even in the most extreme cases of harm.

"some truths are difficult to hear and they may even hurt, giving life to new tensions and polarisation, and still these truths seem to be at the basis of coexistence..."
– Emanuela Biffi, 2023

As Brunilda put it: "[The group] demonstrates that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, we have the capacity to come together and listen to one another. May their journey inspire us all to strive for a world where justice and peace triumph over hatred and division."

For more information about the Encounter of the Encounters, visit the EFRJ website or see the Resource Kit at the end of this magazine.



“One of the lessons I
have learned is how
profoundly the lens I
look through affects the
outcome.”

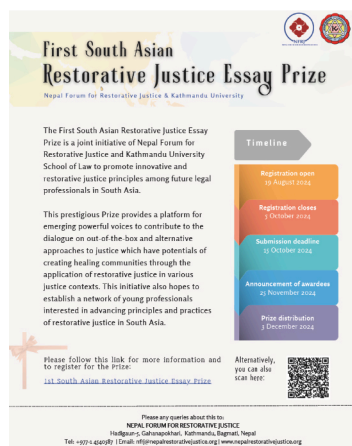
- Howard Zehr,
'Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times', 2015

**WHAT'S ON DURING
#RJWEEK'24**

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In the spirit of global collaboration for Restorative Justice Week 2024, we are pleased to showcase the work of some of our partner organisations from across the globe. For more events and their details, see pg. 8 or the EFRJ website.



The Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice is organising the "South Asia Restorative Justice Essay Prize" to mark this year's International Restorative Justice Week.

The Awardee will be declared on the 25th of November 2024 and will be honored with a cash prize and a certificate during the 6th Nepal Conference on Restorative Justice on the 3rd December 2024. The Prize will be in a mixed format of in-person and online. The Prize will be awarded in-person in Kathmandu, Nepal.

This initiative is mainly meant to young lawyers and changemakers from the South Asian region. The conference where the Award is open for all those interested in restorative justice and its applications.

Through this initiative, our dream is to inspire young students and lawyers to think beyond the traditional silos of the criminal justice system, and have them become changemakers. The first edition will be South Asian in scope, and thus covering eight countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India) but this will be expanded beyond the region in the future.

Contribution by Ram Tiwari, Executive Director of the Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice

Fostering Restorative Justice Leadership: Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice Launches South Asia Essay Prize

Restorative Justice Week (RJ Week) has been celebrated annually across Canada since 1996 in the month of November from Sunday to Sunday beginning on the 3rd Sunday of the month. RJ Week events aim to acknowledge the impacts of restorative justice in the legal system, education, health, national defense, conservation, fisheries, and communities. RJ Week is also a time to raise awareness of restorative justice and celebrate advocates, supporters, practitioners, educators, participants, and researchers. RJ Week was initiated by Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), the Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy within CSC's Chaplaincy Division, and the RJ and Dispute Resolution Division.

Beginning in 2005 a national symposium was added to Restorative Justice Week activities. The first National Restorative Justice Symposium (NRJS) was held in Ottawa and, since then, different organisations working in the field have hosted the annual event in different parts of Canada. The Symposium is organised by a volunteer planning committee.

Contribution by Pat Lewis, Co-Chair of the NRJS

Back to RJ Week's Roots: National Restorative Justice Symposium (NRJS)





A month of celebrating restorative justice with the **IIRP** and **EFRJ** podcast series: Restorative Justice in Local Communities Around the World

The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) and the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) have joined forces to spotlight the power of restorative justice in communities worldwide through a special four-episode podcast series, "Restorative Justice in Local Communities Around the World," featured on the Restorative Works! podcast.

Each episode features practitioners who share real-world stories and insights into different communities, illustrating how restorative practices address diverse social, environmental, and cultural challenges, promoting peace and collaboration from a grassroots level.

Listeners can expect invaluable insights into how communities across the world are harnessing the promise of restorative justice to build understanding and resilience. Each 20-minute episode airs every Thursday in November 2024, showcasing a lineup of global speakers committed to advancing restorative justice:

Nov. 7: Leah Koumentaki and Federico Reggio
Nov. 14: Nirson Medeiros da Silva Neto and Brunilda Pali
Nov. 21: Paolo Baffero and Laura Hein
Nov. 28: Kethlin Lörcincz and Maia Chochua

The current public discourse often paints a rather dark and polarised picture, where the behaviour of children and young people is addressed with stigmatisation. However, the VERSO-program team meets education professionals weekly, and the feedback they receive provides a much different perspective. Similarly, the VERSO-program's latest annual report highlights various successes, offering 'glimpses of light' during these sometimes challenging times.

The webinar, held on Thursday the 21st of November, offers an uplifting look at restorative successes with the theme, "Valon pilkahduksia – restoratiivisen yhteisön onnistumisia osallisuuden ja hyvinvoinnin vahvistamisessa" ("Glimpses of Light – the successes of the restorative community in strengthening inclusion and well-being"). Field experts will share their experiences and perspectives on the importance of a restorative culture within their communities with a panel including contributions from Principal Jarno Paalasmaa, Restorative Mediator Alina Kausamo, and Daycare Director Taina Kuivalainen, each sharing practical experiences that underscore the power of empathy and dialogue.

Glimpses of light: the annual RÖNSY webinar from the **VERSO**-program





Restorative Carillon Concert

Organised in collaboration with the carillonneur of Leuven, Leuven Restorative City and the European Forum for Restorative Justice.

Why a Carillon (bell) concert for Restorative Justice Week?

- The carillon is the largest instrument in the world and its sound transcends the public space. Its sounds invite people to stop, wonder, and see things in a different light.
- Historically, bells were used to mark important moments for a community: celebrations, commemorations, and to give warning of danger. Bells are made of bronze. In the past, they used the same material to cast cannons. What musical instrument could better represent conflicts and resolution?
- Leuven has a long tradition of carillon concerts, and its carillon housed in the University Library is one of Europe's largest and finest carillons: with 63 bells with a total weight of 35 metric tons. Leuven's carillon is also a symbol of restoration. The library and its bell tower seen today have been reconstructed after destruction during World War I. Today, Leuven is one of the main sites for carillon culture in the world, with several weekly carillon concerts.
- Leuven is an essential hub for restorative justice as a 'Restorative City'; several organisations in Leuven are committed to working with restorative justice or work restoratively. It is the headquarters of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, and it is also a key place to study restorative justice both for scholars and practitioners.

The concert will be held in Leuven and will be live-streamed on the EFRJ socials on the 20th of November



Luc Rombouts

Luc Rombouts is a Belgian carillonneur. He is the official carillonneur of the Leuven University Library, of the Great Beguinage (Leuven), of the Park Abbey (Leuven), and of the city of Tienen. He is appointed as the Curator of Carillon Culture of Leuven. He gives carillon concerts world-wide, teaches carillon playing at the Royal Carillon School in Mechelen and has published extensively about historical and social aspects of the carillon culture.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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Want to join the global **#RJWeek** movement? Here's 4 easy ways to get involved!

Every individual has the potential to make a difference by advancing the global restorative justice movement, but sometimes it can be hard to know where to start. The EFRJ has put together four practical actions that anyone can take to help make restorative justice accessible to all. Join us in bringing restorative justice to communities everywhere!

1

Attend an event this #RJWeek'24

There are many different events organised around the globe this Restorative Justice Week. No matter what your interests are, there is something for everyone! Events include film screenings, art exhibitions, discussions, community gatherings, presentations, conferences, and more. By attending an event organised for #RJWeek, you can not only get to know more about restorative justice and support the hard work of fantastic organisations, but also get to have fun while doing so! Some of these events may even be local to you, but if not, there are many online events you can join. Consult the map of RJWeek events on our website to help plan your week (see pg. 8 for more details).

2

Spread the word about restorative justice and its potential

Share what you know about restorative justice with your community! Talk to neighbours, friends, or family members—you may be surprised by how many people could benefit from knowing about restorative justice. Social media is also a great tool! During #RJWeek, many restorative justice organisations worldwide post messages online; check them out and amplify them by sharing posts that resonate with you. Every share helps to spread awareness!

3

Reflect on your own conflicts

Take a moment to think about any conflict in your life. Is there a way to address it constructively? Consider small steps to open a dialogue or find common ground. Conflict can be an opportunity for growth and connection—a powerful way to honour Restorative Justice Week.

4

Learn more and stay connected

Restorative justice has lasting benefits beyond #RJWeek. Explore resources and get in touch with your local restorative justice organisations to stay connected. You can also keep up with the EFRJ's channels ([@euforumrj](#)), subscribe to our Newsflashes, consult our network, and browse the collection of resources on our website to stay updated. There are lots of great resources to learn from!



How to create a successful Restorative Justice Week campaign

12 Practical Steps

by Lucy Jaffé

Lucy Jaffé has created successful communications campaigns promoting restorative justice as the former Director of Why me? for 13 years. Based in London, she now works as a consultant and contributes to the work of the EFRJ as a Board member. She enjoys the challenge of getting the restorative message across to new audiences. We hope that her article will encourage you to get started.

The Restorative Justice Week provides an opportunity to get the message across to people for whom it matters. But how do this effectively? What are key things to consider when designing a campaign?

1. Define Your Purpose

Begin by clarifying your objectives. What do you want to achieve? Do you want more people to know about your work? Do you hope for more funding for restorative justice services? Maybe you want your local politician to consider putting restorative justice on the agenda. Take time to identify your goals.

Action idea: Gather a small group for a brief meeting to brainstorm and draft a clear purpose statement that aligns with your organisation's strategy. Ensure it resonates with your whole team and get it approved by senior management.

2. Identify Your Audiences

Understanding who you are trying to reach is crucial when it comes to advocacy. Potential audiences include the general public, crime those involved in a crime victims, justice professionals, or policy makers. Different groups require different



messages, so by focusing on a specific group, you can tailor your messages more effectively for a better outcome.

Get inspired: By focusing on specific groups, such as policymakers or justice professionals, you can tailor your messages effectively, making it easier to track engagement. The successful health campaign, Movember, which asks men to grow moustaches in November to raise awareness of men's health issues, specifically targets their campaign material toward men.

3. Craft Key Messages

Communicate what restorative justice means clearly and concisely. Use relatable language and avoid jargon that may confuse the audience. Emphasise positive aspects such as justice, choice, purpose and efficacy of restorative justice.

Helpful resource: WhyMe?'s "How to Communicate Restorative Justice Effectively" guide can provide additional insights for (re)framing your messaging.

4. Create a Call to Action

What specific actions do you want your audience to take? Make your calls to action straightforward—whether it's signing a petition, attending an event, donations or sharing a social media post. Providing templates or examples can make it easier for people to engage.

Action idea: Ask supporters to send an email to their local government representative advocating for restorative justice initiatives. You can even create a template for them to use easily!

Action idea: Ask supporters to take a selfie with the hashtag #RJWeek24 on



paper and post it on social media tagging your organisation.

Get inspired by: Why me?'s pledge campaign for the 2024 Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

5. Leverage Existing Resources

Identify resources already at your disposal—social media channels, case studies, promotional materials, etc. Collaborate with staff, volunteers and even other organisations to maximise resources and support.

6. Share Personal Success Stories

Stories are powerful tools for illustrating the impact of restorative justice. Collect and share narratives from practitioners and participants, ensuring you have permission to share their experiences. Aim for concise anecdotes that demonstrate the transformative nature of restorative justice.

capturing attention, while quotes from influential figures can add credibility to your campaign. Radio and local newspapers are often keen to pick up on local stories, so tune in and pick up the name of a presenter or reporter you like and ask them if you can come on their show.

7. Organise Events

Plan events—either in-person or virtual—that can generate buzz and content for promotion. Invite knowledgeable speakers and engage the community with discussions or Q&A sessions. Events create opportunities for interaction and can be publicised through various channels, enhancing your campaign's visibility.

Action ideas: Invite guest speakers to talk about Restorative Justice; Share your own expertise in a Q&A session with local citizens; Write a press release. Run a restorative café.

9. Build Partnerships

Collaborate with organisations that share your vision and can help broaden your outreach. Imagine a retweet by Taylor Swift! Can you get a larger NGO with a bigger social media following to repost your messages? Reposting content from partners or engaging in joint campaigns can enhance visibility and reinforce your message. EFRJ is the obvious partner, but also think outside the box about connections you have with local businesses or educational establishments.

10. Express Gratitude

Keep your supporters informed about the campaign's progress and acknowledge their contributions. A simple ...thank you" can go a long way in building loyalty. Regular updates can encourage continued engagement and participation.

12. Reflect and Review

After the campaign, take time to reflect on what worked and what didn't. This can involve quick weekly check-ins with your team or a comprehensive review at the campaign's conclusion. Understanding your successes and challenges will improve future initiatives, foster a culture of learning and retain old and new supporters for future campaigns.

By following these twelve steps, you can effectively promote Restorative Justice Week, raising awareness and fostering community dialogue. With clear goals, targeted messaging, and strategic partnerships, your campaign can make a meaningful impact on the understanding and application of restorative justice principles.



Here's an example: Andrew burgled Susan's house. They met in prison in a restorative justice conference. He realised the damage he had done and signed up to a drug awareness course. She got her questions answered and felt free from fear. This is the power of restorative justice.

6. Utilise Media Channels

Select the most effective channels for communication based on where your audiences are active. Prepare key messages in advance and consider using social media, local newspapers, and radio for outreach. Short videos and images are particularly effective in

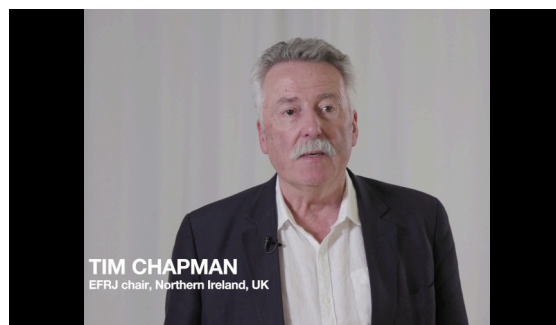
8. Seek Amplification from Influencers

Partner with well-known individuals or organisations to amplify your message. Their endorsement can significantly increase reach. For example, securing a statement from a local politician or celebrity can attract media attention and boost credibility. And never under-estimate their interest in being centre stage.

Get inspired by: a speech from the Minister of Justice whom Annegrete Johanson organised for the EFRJ 2024 Conference in Tallinn.



Some previous #RJWeek events



VIDEO CAMPAIGN - 2019

In 2019, the EFRJ presented, "Why Restorative Justice Matters", a video series released each day throughout the week presenting the relevance of restorative justice in different contexts: for today's

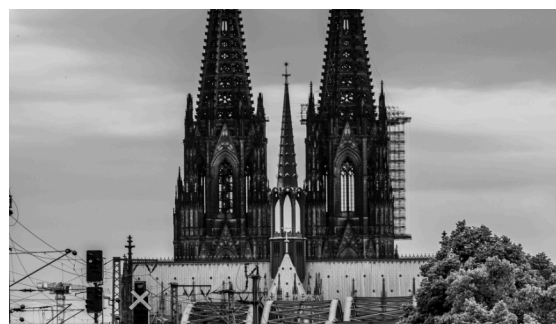
societies, for Europe, for children's rights, for desistance from crime, and for communities. The videos have been used in a variety of materials since and now they are subtitled in multiple languages.



COLLABORATIVE THEATRE - 2023

The theatre performance "123 vragen" brought together citizens and inmates across Flanders and Brussels (Belgium) to discuss how society can deal with difficult issues such as conflicts,

punishment, and restoration. It was presented as a part of the Restorative conference (Herstelconferentie) organised by Moderator and Avansa in Leuven.



IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE AS AWARENESS-RAISING - 2019

The German restorative justice organisation, TOA Servicebüro organised an improvisational theatre with actors and mediators to inform audiences about

victim-offender mediation in Germany in an interesting way.



LINKING TO OTHER EVENTS - 2018

Conflict 180, an organisation implementing restorative systems in schools and organisations, took part in RJWeek on the National Day of Listening (23 November). The organisation promoted

the idea of people connecting and sharing stories by interviewing someone about, for example, their dreams or lessons they would like to share.




MOVIE SCREENING AND REFLECTIONS - 2023

A screening of, "Je verrai vous toujours vos visages", was organised for RJWeek in more than 15 different places in France, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. The

screenings addressed a variety of communities from the wide public to criminal justice professionals to prisoners. It will be screened in several locations in 2024.

- Jennifer Llewellyn and Robert Howse,
'Restorative Justice: A Conceptual Framework', 1999



“Restoration requires
attention to each part
that suffers, for
restoration is impossible
if a part of the whole is
harmed.”



EXPLORE MORE

Want to learn more about restorative justice and/or polarisation? Check out these resources:

European Forum for Restorative Justice resources:

- Project "ALTERNATIVE – Developing alternative understandings of security and justice through restorative justice approaches in intercultural settings within democratic societies", <https://www.euforumrj.org/alternative-2012-2016>
- Project on LGBTQI+ hate crime, <https://www.euforumrj.org/letsbygobytalking-2020-2022>
- Webinar recordings on LGBTQI+ hate crime, <https://www.euforumrj.org/events/LGBTQhatecrime>
- Brief on restorative justice and violent extremism and other publications from the EFRJ Working Group <https://www.euforumrj.org/restorative-justice-and-violent-extremism>
- Webinar recording on violence hate and othering, <https://www.euforumrj.org/node11/recording-our-violence-hate-and-othering-webinar>
- Article by Tehmina Kazi, "Restorative justice, hate crime and migrant integration", <https://www.euforumrj.org/restorative-justice-hate-crime-and-migrant-integration>
- Radicalisation Awareness Network and EFRJ, "The role of restorative justice in preventing and responding to violent extremism," https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-01/ran_rvt-exit_role_of_restorative_justice_dublin_3-4_122019_en.pdf
- Keynote presentation of Gema Varona for the RJWorld 2020 eConference, "Restorative justice and violent extremism, with a focus on victims of terrorism and community (art) relational projects", <https://vimeo.com/444917420>
- Workshop reports from CJPE "Summer School on Radicalisation and Violent Extremist Offenders," <https://www.euforumrj.org/criminal-justice-platform-europe-cjpe-events-archive>
- Blog article by Emanuela Biffi, "The Encounter of the Encounters", (2021) <https://www.euforumrj.org/encounter-encounters>

- Laudation Speech for The Encounter of the Encounters by Brunilda Pali, 2024, <https://www.euforumrj.org/brunilda-palis-laudation-speech-encounter-encounters-0>

Regional/national testimonials of restorative justice in artworks or books:

- Film, Maixabel
- Theatre play, "La Mirada del Otro"
- Book, "Los ojos del otro" (Esther Pascual)
- Book, "Il libro dell'incontro"
- Documentary, "One day after peace"
- Documentary, "The worst thing: from Germany with love"
- Documentary, "Au dela des larmes"

Journal articles and reports:

- Van Alstein, Maarten. "Polarisation and conflict." (2022).
- Chapman, Tim. "Mitigating Polarisation: Lessons from the restorative justice approach." (2021). See also the BRIDGE project.
- European Commission. "The Media and Polarisation in Europe: Strategies for Local Practitioners to Address Problematic Reporting." (2023).
- Radicalisation Awareness Network. "The potential of restorative justice in cases of violent extremism and terrorism." (2021).

EFRJ Events coming up:

- Webinar, "Restorative Justice and Domestic Violence: Experiences and Common Challenges." Nov. 18.
- Launch event, "Testimonies on Restorative Justice and Sexual Violence." Nov. 25.
- 3rd Winter Academy, Feb. 3-7 2025.

For more details, see <https://www.euforumrj.org/events>

“We cannot fall into the trap of making policies guided by terror, treating the symptoms of the illness without addressing the root causes. [...] **We need restorative justice now more than ever.**”

- Ilhan Omar, Member of the Congress of the USA

“We know [restorative justice] can bring significant benefits not only for victims of crime but also perpetrators, as well as their **wider families and communities.**”

- Northern Irish Justice Minister Naomi Long

“International Restorative Justice Week is a wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves of the **power and potential of restorative justice.** It changes lives by supporting those most affected by crime and conflict to listen to each other and agree how to move forward.”

- Lucy Jaffé

“Polarisation is a product of our **global interconnectedness**”

- Tim Chapman

“Restorative justice seems **more apt to address the justice needs of all those involved** in stories of injustice, be they victims, responsible persons, bystanders, the community and the State.”

- Marta Cartabia, former Italian Minister for Justice

“One of the lessons I have learned is how profoundly **the lens I look through affects the outcome.**”

- Howard Zehr