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HEALING HISTORICAL TRAUMAS
Empathic dialogue in creation of better futures
Nermin Soyalp

Futurists have argued that imagination of inclusive futures can promise avenues for peace and reconciliation (Ogilvy, 2002; Sardar, 2013). One exploratory way of overcoming political impasses and creating more inclusive futures is to understand psycho-social obstacles to reconciliation and peace, in other words, an exploration of what makes people invested in conflict and how to address them.

Humans live in the present and are connected in a diverse web of pasts, futures, as well as being connected to each other. The quality of present connections has deep roots in historical experiences, and whether they are reparative or destructive determines the quality of futures co-created. Destructive belief systems (such as us-versus-them mentalities, ethnicism, nationalism) influence collective stories, spoken or unspoken messages, norms, values, taboos, imagined futures, behaviors, and actions (Montuori & Donnelly, 2014; Sztompka, 2000; Volkan, 2000; Volkas, 2009). If shared destructive belief systems are not challenged, overarching cultural institutions and societies become part of the trauma narrative and behaviors maintenance and perpetuation (Tuana & Sullivan, 2007). These narratives and behaviors are passed down to the next generations, ensuring their persistence (Danieli, 1998; Leary, 2005; Volkan, 2006; Volkas, 2014).

I have researched collective trauma for nearly a decade, focusing on Turks, Kurds, and Armenians. This chapter sketches the significance of this work within a broader global context, highlighting how, when dysfunctional societal dynamics with deep roots in history are not addressed, continue to perpetuate violence. Providing one way of overcoming such dynamics is at the grassroots level to communicate across cultures, dialogue with those perceived as the “other,” actively humanizing one another as a form of resistance, and ultimately generating critical hope.

Exploring transgenerational, collective, and historical traumas
Transgenerational, collective, and historical traumas are interlinked processes that influence individual and group’ identities and sense of well-being (Volkas, 2014). I view collective trauma as the complex, lasting, and devastating physical, social, and psychological impact on
many people simultaneously and in similar ways. Collectively traumatic experiences such as mass deportations, earthquakes, floods, and famine can affect society at multiple levels: micro (individual), meso (local community), and macro (culture and society-at-large). These multi-level traumas can be passed on to subsequent generations and thus become transgenerational and historical (Sztompka, 2000).

At an individual level, in cases of threats to life, bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence or death (torture, rape, displacement), a natural disaster (earthquake, fire, hurricane), or the cumulative effects of repeated atrocities (captor, child abuse, torture) may overwhelm the individual’s sense of control, connection, and meaning. Substantial portions of individuals affected by psychologically traumatic experiences develop what is clinically referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other stress-related symptoms. PTSD is when the human self-preservation system goes on permanent alert after a traumatic experience as if the danger might return at any moment (Herman, 2015).

One way of defining transgenerational trauma is the transmission of trauma from one body to another, generation by generation, through violence or other forms of abuse, resulting in psychological, somatic, and other stress-related symptoms (Menakem, 2007). Traumatization does not only happen within a family line. Violence can be brought in from outside a family or community. Furthermore, when the experience is collective, the transmission of trauma becomes a systemic issue. During collectively traumatic experiences, bodies and the environment are impacted simultaneously and in similar ways. For example, war conditions are psychologically overwhelming and psychically destructive, and social structures, institutions, and economies could collapse. Suppose these different aspects of society, from micro-level individuals to macro-level relationships, are not healed. In that case, the effects are normalized and manifest in the culture, personal, or group identities, myths, values, taboos, and norms in forms of strong nationalism, the sense of a collective enemy, of pride or humiliation concerning a broader group identity, and a strong sense of us-versus-them may emerge.

Political psychiatrist Vamık Volkan (2006) calls these belief systems “chosen” traumas, the unconscious selection process of a collective narrative. Psychotherapist and drama-therapist Armand Volkas (2014) describes them as collective adaptations that become historical traumas at some point in time. Theoretical sociologist Piotr Sztompka (2000) calls these collective maladaptations cultural traumas. Psychotherapist Yael Danieli (1998) describes this fixity (p. 7) as a possible regression that continues to travel in time, a state of being “stuck” in a free flow. The degree of fixity depends on the severity of the event and how individuals and society cope, make meaning and adapt over time.

One highlight I would like to make here is that in comparison to disasters and accidents—though both potentially traumatic to everyone involved—human created atrocities are psychologically harder to bear as they involve dehumanization and undignified practices and challenge the structure of morality and the values that define humanity (Danieli, 1985; Herman, 2015; Volkan, 2006). After natural disasters, victims ultimately tend to accept the event as fate or as God’s will (Lifton & Olson, 1976); in contrast, when trauma results from war or other ethnic, national, or religious conflicts, there is an identifiable enemy group who has deliberately inflicted pain, suffering, and helplessness on its victims (Volkan, 2006).

Another distinction between atrocities and natural disasters is that the effects of natural disasters are enhanced due to conscious human-made decisions. Natural disasters may expose existing structural inequalities, corruption, and us-versus-them mentalities. For instance, the massive Marmara earthquake in Turkey in August 1999 that killed an estimated 18,373 people (centered in Izmit near Istanbul, with a magnitude of 7.4) is identified as a natural disaster and...
exposed preexisting corruption in the administration, which further perpetuated traumatization in the collective. Over the decades, disorganized urban planning, coupled with increased urban migrations, had caused unsafe structural developments. Many of the structures that collapsed during the earthquake had not been built according to appropriate safety standards. Furthermore, it became known after the earthquake that builders had bribed certain local authorities in order to construct cheaper, unsafe buildings (Volkan, 2000). When the public realized the neglect of national and local planning authorities and the witnessing of the poor civil defense system that came after, they lost trust in government and felt unsafe (Özerdem & Barakat, 2000; Pınar & Sabuncu, 2004).

Another example comes from a 2000 study (Goenjian et al., 2000) that compared the severity and longitude of PTSD, anxiety, and depressive reactions of Armenians who were directly affected by the 1988 Armenian earthquake (with a magnitude of 6.8) and Armenians exposed to violence between Armenian-Azerbaijan ethnicities in the same year. Their research concluded that there were no significant differences in PTSD severity between people exposed to severe earthquake trauma versus those exposed to severe violence (Goenjian et al., 2000). However, Volkan (2000) points out that societal processes may also result from catastrophes and their long-term transgenerational effects. Many injured Armenians refusing to accept blood donated by Azerbaijanis after the earthquake indicate that the tragedy had enhanced ethnic sentiments, including resistance to “mixing blood” with the enemy.

According to Volkan (2006), if the affected groups from a collectively traumatic experience cannot mourn their losses or reverse their feelings of helplessness and humiliation, the experience obligates subsequent generations to complete these unfinished psychological processes. These transgenerationally-transmitted psychological tasks can shape future political/military ideological development or decision-making processes. Centuries later, even if the nation might have lived under relative peace, historical traumas can be re-triggered under collective stress. This can lead people to find themselves in whirlpools of rage, hatred, grief, worry, paranoia, and political conflict—depending on the original wound and the type of collective trauma, with associated reactions emerging.

Not every collective conflict turns into a collective atrocity. However, under certain conditions, an ideology of entitlement to revenge or justification of violence can be actualized at a collective level. Historian Ronald Grigor Suny (2004) reviewed how the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) government exploited war conditions and “Muslimness” identity in orchestrating the Armenian Genocide in 1915–1917. Volkan (2004) studied blind trust and how German youth complacently followed the Nazi Third Reich during World War II leading up to the Jewish Holocaust. Feminist philosophers Tuana and Sullivan (2007) explored the concept epistemologies of ignorance—the promotion and maintenance of lack of knowledge, misinformation, and unlearning of something previously known for purposes of control and domination. Drawing from their reviews, the list below interlinks conditions and where the line between conflict and collective violence is often crossed. These include:

1. Preexisting us-versus-them mentalities promoted and maintained by culture, media, leadership, education, administration, and institutions.
2. Real or imagined sense of threats (e.g., a threat to one’s family or friends, to one’s life, to the way things normally are, social status, and personal and group interests) that are amplified by media and leadership.
3. Strong emotions (e.g., fear, rage, anger, hatred, and resentment) fueled by preexisting dysfunctional belief systems (e.g., us-versus-them) and real or imagined sense of threats.
4. Institutionalized power structures in place that can carry out collective action (e.g., organized groups with resources and extreme views).
5. People in leadership whose positions depend on ethnic antagonism and deliberately stoke violent political tactics to secure their power. Furthermore, they are prone to exploiting preexisting tension and emotions that potentially mobilize people into collective action (e.g., an organized group with resources run by charismatic leaders who are prone to exploit members' belief systems).

Destructive leadership approaches, as opposed to reparative ones (Volkan, 2006), can influence propaganda, media, and the promotion of ideologies over time that dehumanize the victim group and spread the belief that forced displacement, massacres, torture, and raids are just things to do. An example of how these dynamics played out in the geographic location of Turkey includes how institutionalized manipulation and propaganda of the masses led to collective brutalities during the fall of the Ottoman Empire, causing over a million Armenians to vanish from their ancestral lands (Suny et al., 2011). Later, during September 6–7 pogroms (violent riots) in 1955, an outraged Turkish Muslim mob demolished non-Muslim homes and businesses in Istanbul (Güven, 2011). A more recent example is the Sivas Massacre on July 2, 1993, at the Hotel Madımak in Sivas, where Sunni Islam religious extremists attempted to lynch participants in an Alevi cultural conference, mainly targeting writer and intellectual Aziz Nesin, who supposedly insulted their religion. The events resulted in the arson of the hotel and the killing of 35 people. Historically, we have seen that psychological, social, and environmental factors can cause a particular group to dehumanize another group. Dehumanization, prejudice, and blaming create psychological distance, which allows atrocities to happen. When supported or enabled by institutions or leadership, violent reactions can occur.

The legacy of historical trauma in turkey and potential healing avenues

In the next section of the chapter, ways of healing the wounds of history through the arts and drama are explored. As all of my work in this field has occurred with Turks, Kurds, and Armenians, a bit more historical context of the region is valuable to provide here. Collective atrocities do not happen in isolation. As each collective event is explored—what happened during the event, before and after; how people coped, made meaning; and the resulting transgenerational (mal)adaptations—the interconnections become more visible of how one followed the other (Sztompka, 2000).

In my research, I looked at the historical traumas rooted during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire such as the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1917 and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Nationalist state and military policies conducted in Turkey since its founding marginalized Kurds and non-Muslim communities. At the beginning of the 20th century, emerging through the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, the new Turkish national bourgeoisie and leadership promoted speaking one language and sharing the same national sentiment to unite people under the umbrella of a new homogeneous nation-state. Additionally, the new state adapted being “secular” as one of its core principles (Kirişçi, 2000). First non-Muslims, then Kurds, and then previously empowered religious communities were excluded from the powers that built the new nation (Göçek, 2015; Yeğen, 1996). Consequently, new and recurring conflicts emerged with the promotion of Turkishness due to Turkey’s still multi-ethnic and multi-religious social map. For example, there were about 30 local Kurdish rebellions and resistance following the formation of the Republic, which were all brutally suppressed.
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(Aras, 2014), such as the suppression of Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925 (van Bruinessen, 1992) and later the Dersim Massacres in 1937–1939 (Aslan, 2010).

Even 100 years after the Armenian Genocide, the Republic of Turkey still does not fully acknowledge the atrocities that happened as genocide (Göçek, 2015); to an extent, speaking of historical atrocities has become taboo. The mention of the word “genocide” is a source of great discomfort for many Turks. The small number of remaining Armenians in Turkey still live in fear. Highly populated Kurdish areas in Eastern Anatolia have become war zones since the 1980s. The level of instability based on government policies and procedures has crippled many Kurdish communities from excelling economically and politically. Kurds who resist assimilation to Turkishness face discrimination and oppression in every aspect of life (Aras, 2014).

Unfortunately, psycho-social, political, and socio-economic implications of generations-long trauma informed new political disputes and introduced new traumas to society.

From purging and ethnic cleansing to political tension, most collective atrocities anchor some form of us-versus-them mentality. Though complex, collective repair is possible with people’s participation from all strata of society (Danieli, 1998; Volkan, 2006). From denial of a traumatic event to commemoration as outlined by Dixon (2018), the stages of healing from collective traumas can happen in eight non-linear stages: (a) denial or silence about the collective atrocities; (b) myth-making or relativizing, which can involve justifications and recreation of a narrative to claim “it is not what it looks like;” (c) with the acknowledgment of what happened, people realize the catastrophic loss that it has caused; (d) people acknowledge the harm and express genuine regret (e); perpetrators as individuals or institutionally admit responsibility. After admitting responsibility, there is a sense of transparency about the events and the consequences, and more reparative efforts can begin: (f) apology; (g) offer of compensation for losses; and (h) commemoration (Dixon, 2018, p. 16). In a review of literature and related historical documents, Turkey can be characterized as somewhere between myth-making and acknowledging its history (Dixon, 2018; Göçek, 2015; Soyalp, 2022).

In summary, in the case of Turkey’s historical traumas, the state and institutional functions do not appropriately acknowledge historical and current atrocities. The state uses various forms, such as forced migration, torture, and the annihilation of villages as a tool for societal control and domination. Thus, talking about societal healing options before the Turkish state is willing to prevent it from continuing becomes an act of wishful thinking. Moreover, the denial of both the Kurds’ ethnopolitical place in Turkey and the Armenian Genocide is not based on a mere gap in knowledge or simple ignorance; they result from complex institutional epistemological ignorance advocated and maintained by the Turkish state and society. As a by-product of the evolution of Turkish identity (“Turkishness”), some of the widely used and uncompromising state-enforced mandates and policies have created effects of willful ignorance throughout society, thereby amplifying ethnic tension and perpetuating conflict.

Looking at the last 100 years in Turkey and drawing on its complexities, psychology, and identity, my research (Soyalp, 2022) concluded that the deep wounds that exist from a string of long-standing conflicts between Turks, Kurds, and Armenians have not yet been sufficiently addressed, let alone healed. Furthermore, epistemologies of ignorance have kept the lid on transgenerational experiences and have prevented appropriate healing modalities from being applied. Collectively and historically shared traumas have become inherently more complicated and layered generation by generation, especially when exacerbated by oppressive state policies. As a result, Turks, Kurds, and Armenians have been unable to move through their complex emotional and historical stances, creating a political impasse that inhibits mutual recognition and respect, preventing reconciliation.
Healing the wounds of history through drama and the arts

During my research, I produced and, at times, co-facilitated numerous peacebuilding and conflict transformation workshops called Healing the Wounds of History (HWH) with Kurds, Armenians, and Turks. Participants from groups in historical conflicts, who are willing to be emotional pioneers for their cultures, come together for a workshop. By participating in these workshops, participants break the taboo against “enemies” speaking to each other. The goals of the workshops are: to humanize one another through sharing personal stories using theatre and creative methods, to take steps toward healing personal and collective wounds, and to transform historical trauma into constructive action and service (Volkas, 2009, 2014).

Using drama therapy, psychodrama, and playback improvisational theatre techniques (Volkas, 2009), HWH workshops forefront supportive psychological approaches to conflict, providing a map to help individuals, groups, and communities traverse the emotional terrain toward reconciliation. Psychodrama is a profound action method that was developed by Jacob Moreno (1889–1974), while Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was developing talk therapy. Psychodrama is often used as a psychotherapy technique, in which the client (protagonist) uses spontaneous dramatization and role-playing to gain insight and to express their narrative. Drama therapy in groups often develops in five sequential stages: dramatic play warm-ups, scene work, role play, culminating enactments, and finally, the dramatic ritual for processing and integration (Emunah, 2019).

In these workshops, I hear many stories, ranging from how one’s ethnic and religious identities make participants feel to how a family story or a personal experience of trauma continues to influence their lives. These workshops have been influential in strengthening my ability to empathize with Kurdish and Armenian experiences and, in turn, more deeply explore my own Turkish identity. With workshop participants’ permission and without revealing their real names, I am sharing a few stories that exemplify some aspects of intergenerational traumas and the significance of dialogue for personal and communal resilience.

From 2015 to 2016, Armand Volkas and I co-facilitated ongoing monthly HWH workshops in San Francisco with a group of Kurds and Turks. During one workshop, a young Kurdish woman, Cevher, shared a story about when she was only five years old and at home with her parents in a Kurdish mountain village in Eastern Turkey. At the time, in 1990s, the war was peaking between the Kurdish armed group Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) and the Turkish military. It was a snowy winter, and Turkish soldiers forced her family out of their home. The soldiers said that they were going to occupy it until guerrilla fighters returned. Because of the village’s location deep in the mountains, the guerrilla fighters often demanded support, food, and shelter from the villagers. Knowing this, Turkish soldiers came to the village to try to trap the guerrilla fighters. Cevher said her family felt that they had no choice when the PKK asked for food and shelter—the villagers had to comply because they had no protection. When Turkish soldiers found out about anyone helping the guerrilla fighters, it was a grave crime, and villagers were punished by torture or sent to prison for supporting PKK. This created even more suffering as it put the villagers in a double bind.

When the Turkish soldiers came to stay in their home, Cevher’s grandfather resisted leaving. Cevher described how the Turkish soldiers started beating her grandfather in front of the family. This is where her enactment of the incident began in the workshop: In defiance, five-year-old Cevher defended her grandfather when the Turkish soldier beat him. She cried, “Stop!” One of the significant Kurdish traumas is represented in this scene—suffering the abuse and the expression of a child standing up, symbolizing the Kurds’ vulnerability under oppressive governments and the Kurdish strength and resilience despite oppression. In
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essence, Cevher’s drama is representative of most Kurdish dramas. In the end, Cevher’s family was forced out of their home, and when they came back, they found it littered with empty cans, leftovers, and garbage.

Another workshop participant, Berna, who came from a small Turkish town by the Mediterranean coast, responded to Cevher’s share. Berna carried a strong Turkish cultural identity as a Yörük Turk. Berna said, “I had similar experiences when I was a child. Kurds are not the only ones who have been mistreated. Turkish soldiers would come to our homes and our village looking for guerrilla fighters too.” She added that “Kurds were business owners in Marmaris” (a tourist town on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea). She continued: “I have been mistreated and assaulted by Kurdish men when I worked in these facilities. The Kurdish men I worked with were patriarchal, and they took their anger out on Turkish women workers.” Berna acknowledged Cevher’s story. However, she felt that there was more to the story of Kurds and Turks in Turkey. Berna’s previous experiences with Kurdish men and her memory of victimization of her own community, even though they were Turkish, brought up a sense of defensiveness in her. The rest of the Turkish participants in the workshop (coincidentally, they were all men and 1980s leftists who were tortured by the Turkish military during the military coup in 1980–1983), because of their deep empathy for the Kurds at that point, did not respond to Berna. Berna felt alone in her experience. This exchange was a striking example of the complexity and interrelations between Turkey’s Kurdish and Turkish experiences. The distinction in the responses and stories exemplified the vast differences in experiences based on gender, political views, personal experiences, and cultural backgrounds.

At times, keeping the flame of hope alive became a crucial need for both sides of the conflict. During these workshops, in 2015, the fragile recent ceasefire between the Turkish military and the PKK, “Kurdish opening,” and peace talks failed. The tension between Kurdish identity and the Turkish state got heated. Many people in the group reported experiencing contradictory feelings: the hope of sharing with a community and the despair and anger of things they could not control. Some people dropped out because it felt too much to deal with the stress of the day and work and then came to these workshops where heavy topics were explored. Participants wondered, “what is the point?” “There are more important things to do.” The desire for “practical” solutions came up many times. At such times, the purpose of these workshops was merely to keep hope alive amid great despair and not feel alone with grief.

A few years later, from December 2020 to March 2021, we held ongoing workshops with Armenian educators, activists, and therapists to process collective trauma concerning the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Artsakh/Navona-Karabakh region. Given the heat of war, we organized workshops with one culture, either Armenians or Azerbaijanis, at a time. We also invited students from diverse backgrounds and various parts of the world; their participation and empathic engagement became part of the healing process for Armenian participants.

In their different ways, all Armenian participants mentioned feeling how their narratives were not heard by international audiences; and how they finally appreciated being listened to and heard in an empathic way. One participant said, “the weight of war I have been holding, trying to explain the Armenian experience, has finally lifted. I don’t have to explain myself anymore. I feel listened to, heard, and understood.”

Arman and I did not get a chance to work with Azerbaijanis at that time. To my surprise, however, through conversations with a number of Azeris in the Bay Area, I have heard similar complaints that the rest of the world was against them. Their reactions were coming from two conflicting narratives. The domestic media coverage and social media that they were exposed
to portrayed Azeris and Turks as the victims. The Armenian and international media they saw portrayed Azeris and Turks as vicious perpetrators. One Azeri I met said, “Nobody likes Turks; we are alone.” Anecdotally, these conflicting narratives can further perpetuate fear and hate between Armenians and Azeris. Trying to respond to epistemologies of ignorance—misinformation, exaggeration, or exploitation of public views—poses great challenges for peacemakers from either community as they can also find themselves feeling overwhelmed.

One workshop participant, an Armenian-American social activist and peacemaker, said that in his role as a peacemaker, he at times felt in the dark and frozen because he was engaging with “the tragedy of atrocities unaccounted for, unreported,” referring to war crimes and filmed atrocities against Armenians that were being used to further terrorize Armenian communities by posting them in social media. He added, “[the dark] leaves us without the language to heal—groping, instead, to find the language to be seen … In short, I can’t write in the dark! Even a tiny candle helps. Though a solitary candle can light a room, not even a room full of darkness can snuff out a single dancing flame. It’s important that we try to stay lit.” Our workshops with the Armenian communities helped light that candle for him as he continued doing his work. Even though it was only a small light, sometimes it is all that is needed to remain mobile under great despair—to move one step at a time. He concluded that our workshops “helped identify the contrast between wartime advocacy and peace work, and that’s helped [him] to find [himself] in a momentary lapse.”

Through my research and the HWH workshops, I’ve learned that when the traces of oppression and injustice are present, despite the feelings of despair and profound grief, keeping the flame of hope alive becomes essential. However, how can we keep this spark alive despite the despair and catastrophes we witness all around us? What do we do when we make close contact with collective pain, injustice, and there is so little we can do as individuals? Moreover, how do we turn these feelings into constructive action?

Critical scholar and educator Freire (1998) notes that, after all, without hope, there is the sense that there is very little we can do if nothing at all. Hope is an ontological need. The attempt to improve the world without hope and trying to reduce struggles with only calculated acts or a purely scientific approach is a frivolous illusion. Additionally, in the face of injustice and oppression, it is vital to take action. Even in the face of overwhelming odds, it is vital to hold on to hope. Being in an empathic dialogue with the “other” and people across cultures pose potential for personal and collective psychological well-being and resilience. In the process, the generational personal and systemic wounding can be transformed into shared grief, recognition, reclaimed history, which ultimately generates hope and open pathways for reparative futures.

Conclusion

In the HWH workshops, personal healing often occurs when participants begin to see the complex layers of their cultural and national identities. As workshop participants claim their ancestral roots, face the good and the bad in their lineage, grieve what needs to be grieved, and process what needs to be processed while being witnessed by their own and opposing cultures, healing from historical trauma occurs. Volkas (2009) breaks down the Healing the Wounds of History process into five phases: firstly, participants break the taboo of not speaking to each other by coming to the workshop. Secondly, they humanize one another through sharing stories. Volkas (2009) writes, “When members of cultures in conflict listen deeply to each other’s stories and hear each other’s pain, they begin to care about one another. Their feelings of empathy and friendship become more powerful than the historical imperative to hate one
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another” (p.147). Following this, the group may also explore potential perpetrators in all of us, grieve their ancestral loss, and finally create artistic expressions or make commitments to service. Following their participation in the workshops, participants produce public theatre performances, and art installations; some become more involved in social movements. The constructive action does not have to be groundbreaking. As we engage in dialogue workshops and gain a deeper understanding of historical wounding and its current impacts, we become more compassionate doctors, therapists, teachers, partners, and so on.

Other types of conflict transformation or therapeutic dialogue workshops could facilitate similar healing outcomes as well. Intentional practices, such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution, restorative justice, create spaces for individuals and groups to address their collective wounding. As participants go through the phases of healing from their historical traumas, there is an organic development of making commitments to acts of creation or acts of service, which is a way individuals bridge their personal and collective experiences. Hence, we can contribute to repairing the dysfunctional ties between the past, present, and future.

Notes

1 See Soyalp (2020) for more details on the underlying paradigm and how I applied transdisciplinarity as a research framework.

2 Workshops were facilitated by Armand Volkas, MFT, RDT/BCT. Volkas created the Healing the Wounds of History (HWH) process in the early 1980s in Los Angeles, CA. He is a child of Jewish Holocaust survivors and resistance fighters. He formed his approach of healing historical trauma by first facilitating dialogue between children of Holocaust survivors and the Third Reich.

3 Armed conflict began in the mid-1980s. Kurdish and Turkish civilians, Turkish military personnel, and Kurdish rebels alike have been injured or have lost their lives in the conflict. In response, feelings of rage, grief, and fear have grown on both sides. Whether directly impacted by this conflict or not, media coverage of suicide bombings, images of battered and tortured rebels, and photos of dead civilians from both sides have created generalized feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and dread for citizens of Turkey living inside and outside of the country. Subsequently, a deep mistrust between many Kurds and Turks has emerged.

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Nermin Soyalp

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