

MEMORY AND REMEMBRANCE

A Qualitative Project Considering Memory and the Act of Remembrance

Pursuant to the Requirement for LEAD756: Qualitative Research Methods

by

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Introduction

As a Christian, I am working with the global Jewish community of Polish descent. I interact with Jews, who live in Poland, Israel, Australia and the United States and I have been operating successfully within this construct for nearly eleven years. I am the president and founder of The Matzevah Foundation (TMF), a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a public charity. The genesis of TMF began as an extension of the partnership that I established with the Polish Jewish community of Warsaw in 2005 and continues today albeit in a different form through TMF. My work with the Jewish community arose from living and working in Poland for twelve years with the Baptist Union of Poland as a pastor tasked to lead and strengthen Baptist churches.

In leading TMF, I have been working diligently toward developing and deepening my understanding of cross-cultural diversity issues concerning the Jewish worldview and issues related to Jewish and Christian interaction, so that I might become a more competent, cross-cultural leader. In this paper I will develop a basis of conducting a qualitative inquiry regarding my work with TMF. I will rely upon several source documents that I have written and photographs that I have made over the past twenty-six years. I will deal with primarily in this paper the concept of memory and the act of remembrance or remembering. My purpose is to understand memory, which is literally the storage space of the human mind – the place, where things are remembered; however, more so, I would like to examine remembrance which is the action of remembering something. To what does acting upon memory lead? Where does remembering take me? How does recalling and acting upon events or events associated with the Shoah change me and others?

Since I lead TMF, I believe that is inherent for me to understand the basis of the vision that I have crafted: remembering, restoring and reconciling. These three concepts grew out of my experience as a photojournalist, firstly, and secondly, as a pastor, who lived and worked in Poland with the Baptist and Jewish communities. These concepts have greatly crafted the two-fold mission of TMF: to educate the public about the Shoah (Holocaust) and to care for and restore Jewish cemeteries in Poland. Through remembering and caring for and restoring desolate and forgotten Jewish cemeteries in Poland, I lead TMF and others to honor the memory and celebrate the lives of normal, everyday Polish Jews, who lost their lives in the Shoah (Holocaust). It is my desire ultimately to reconcile the broken relationship that exists between Jew and Christian.

Regarding conventions and terminology used in this paper, I will follow the Jewish practice suggested by Manosevitz (2010) of not pronouncing the “name of the Divine” and I will therefore “use the spelling G-d” (Manosevitz, 2010, p. 55). The term “matzevah” (מצבה) is Hebrew and means a memorial stone or monument; a matzevah is erected in memory of a significant event or placed at the head of a grave. In Jewish cemeteries, the stone or matzevah signifies remembering and honoring the deceased and ensures that the grave will not be desecrated. Cemeteries in Hebrew are referred to as *Beit Chaim* – “the house of the living” and are considered to be holy places by the Jewish community. I will use the Hebrew term, Shoah (catastrophe or destruction) to define the events of what many refer to as the Holocaust; I make this distinction for two reasons. Firstly, as Manosevitz (2010 emphasizes) instead of using the term Holocaust, Shoah is “used by modern scholars in reference to that event” and secondly the word, Holocaust, is a Greek word that means “burnt offering,” which according to Manosevitz

extends some type of “religious significance” to the event, adding that “there was nothing religious about Hitler's ‘Final Solution’” (p. 55).

Autoethnography: An Unfolding Story of a Researcher

In light of the fact that in qualitative inquiries, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data, I think that I should share a few things about myself, which have impacted me personally and have given direction to my research. One major component of my life that is relevant to my role as a researcher is that of being a photojournalist. I was not formally trained as a photojournalist; however, I did take a few photography courses and several masters' level courses in journalism and photojournalism. For the most part, I was a photographer, who desired to document life in a journalistic fashion.

When I was first began working as a photojournalist in 1984 at a small, daily newspaper in East Texas, I began to grow and develop as photojournalist. I taught myself the basics of photojournalism by reading newspapers and magazines and studying the work of other photojournalists. I would ponder their compositions, analyzing the lens selection, point of view and technical acumen of noteworthy photographs. I did this not to emulate their work but to understand their frame of reference and approach to photojournalism. In his book, Creswell (2013) echoes this practice in qualitative research as a means to "learn how to write a qualitative study" by reading published articles and studies and then "looking closely at the way they [are] composed" (p. 111).

As a photojournalist I had to learn to be an observer, who assessed and tried to bring meaning to events that I covered. I had to make declarative statements about what I saw through my lens, which at times allowed me to interject my own personal bias or how I saw and interpreted unfolding events. At times I had to interact with a subject when shooting a portrait or an illustration for a story explaining or telling a subject what I needed them to do (directive work, providing direction for subject). As I consider my role as a researcher, I see that due to the

nature of qualitative inquiry, I am more directly involved with the process of observation and see that my role is more in line with that of being both participant and participant observer.

Most of the time as a photojournalist, however, I was objective in that I had to capture events as they unfolded, but other times I was able to be interpretive in how I photographed the events that I covered. Generally photojournalists do not interact with nor try to influence their subjects so that they might capture or photograph their subjects *in situ* as is and not stage photographs. This of course is the practice of a purist, who desires to be ethical and capture life as it is; however, the discipline is and has been at times compromised much like research by bias and unethical attempts to skew data toward more favorable results.

It is difficult for photojournalists to step from behind the lens normally and become involved in what they see. Doing so hampers the thinking and seeing process; nonetheless, it is possible and by so doing a photojournalist may become an activist advocating and participating in a particular cause, much like an ethnographer might do. For me personally, one thing that I had to do was to move from one documenting real life to someone, who was engaging compassionately in life. I could no longer be an observer but I had to become a participant, who had to learn how to mobilize, lead and equip people for engaging life and dealing with its concerns. I became an activist – a partisan so to speak as my Polish-Jewish friend Alek Schwarz views it, when I began to work with the Jewish community of Poland to restore neglected and abandoned Jewish cemeteries.

It might be helpful for you to know something about my career as a photojournalist. Gratefully, in my professional career I have had my photographs published in the USA and, by *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines, and nationally and internationally by the Associated Press, Reuters and other press agencies. I have won numerous awards for my photographic work in

sports, feature and news photography, while I worked as a photojournalist for more than ten years. As a direct result of my photojournalism career, I am interested in items of news, disaster, or human suffering stories. So when I lived and worked in Poland for twelve years, I naturally became curious about World War II and its impact on Poland, so I investigated the history of Europe in more detail.

On a personal level, I became aware of the troubled history of the two largest communities of Poland: the Roman Catholic community and the Jewish community. And I realized that I was not part of either of these two communities – I was not part of either the Roman Catholic community or the Jewish community. In fact the Polish government put me in a third category, a third community: the Baptist Christian community. If you yourself are not familiar with the difference between the Roman Catholic Christian and the Baptist Christian, I will repeat for you what I told a Jewish woman one Tuesday evening in Warsaw. She asked me, “I know that you are a Christian, but tell me who you are as a Baptist.” I told her that we gather to worship the One True G-d, we study Scripture, we pray and someone teaches. In other words, Baptist Christians are not like Roman Catholics, who pray to the saints and have images, priests and ceremonies. Our practice is based on what we learned from the Jewish community. We follow the simple pattern of synagogue worship. One Jewish man from the *Chevra Kaddisha* – the Holy Society said it this way. “You are Baptist? I like Baptists because they focus on what we share in common.”

When I lived in Poland, it was not difficult to find evidence of World War II; it is evident in the lives of nearly every single, living person and through the pot-marks of bullets or shell fragments, it is engraved on the exterior walls of numerous buildings throughout the country but more so in Warsaw, the Polish capitol. I lived in Warsaw for about eight years. Our youngest son

was born in Warsaw on 15 October 1997 and we returned home to live in work on his birthday in 2008. While I lived in Warsaw, I made photographs of the city of places associated with the War or with the Shoah. I also read a great many books on these two subjects. In my efforts to research and understand the War and the Shoah, several themes emerged and caught my attention:

- The anti-Semitism of Polish and Jewish relations prior to, during and following the War
- The social change in village Poland as people moved to the cities
- Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland
- *Aktion Reinhard* (Operation Reinhard) – Hitler's plan for death camps to exterminate Jews upon arrival. *Aktion's* three extermination camps were all in Poland: Treblinka, Sobibor and Belzec.
- Auschwitz and its culminating role in what we now know as the Shoah

As the magnitude of the Shoah began to weigh on me, I tried to grasp the scope and the scale of the tragedy; nevertheless, I could not even begin to wrap my mind around what had happened and why.

The Shoah

In January 1933 Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany and began the radical transformation of Germany. His plan was simple: nullify the undesirables (concentration camps for political prisoners and mentally ill), multiply the desirables (Lebensborn and eugenics for biologically and racially pure Aryan traits) and liquidate the barriers (thus, discriminatory actions against Jews, considered the primary hindrances to pure Aryan racial development) in order to establish German supremacy in Europe. World War II in Europe was a political and economic trauma for the Jews. But more so than that, it was a spiritual devastation – destruction, to which Jews refer today as the Shoah. Of the 11 million European civilians, who died during the Second World War, six million people died simply because they were Jewish; the number of deaths is staggering when considering the fact that eighty percent of the European Jewish population perished or was exterminated at the hands of the Nazis within the six year period of the war (Krysińska & Lester, 2006, p. 141).

It is difficult to understand the scale and depth of the collective trauma suffered by the Jews during the Shoah. Krysińska and Lester (2006) examined “empirical research and clinical observations concerning the long-term consequences” arising from the trauma of the Shoah suffered by European Jews (p. 142). They noted the gross injustice committed by Nazi Germany against an innocent group of people – the Jews. Furthermore, they specified in their study that European Jews had suffered persecution at the hand of their neighbor for centuries; however, during the era of the Second World War and the Shoah, the Jewish people endured at the hands of the Nazis “the most severe and unprecedented oppression and terror” in their history (Krysińska & Lester, 2006, p. 142).

The context of Poland is important as is the relationship that Jews and Poles have shared over their long history, which at times has been strained and embittered. The events of the Shoah – the Nazi Final Solution only worked to exacerbate the difficulty in their relations even further. Common belief is that the Nazi regime chose Poland for the setting of the Final Solution because of Polish anti-Semitism; however, this is not the case. The Nazis chose Poland strategically “as their gigantic laboratory for mass murder” simply for the reason that Poland was the home to the largest Jewish population in Europe (Zimmerman, 2003, p. 3). Although the Shoah was not conceived by Poles, it “had tainted Polish soil forever” (Zimmerman, 2003, p. 6). Dealing with the aftermath of such a tragic event would require cleansing Poland and its people from this “terrible burden of history” by allowing the Polish people to see themselves and their country “in the light of truth” (Zimmerman, 2003, p. 6).

The Shoah as such “is the tragedy of the Poles” because during dark days of the Nazi extermination of the Jews, Poles “were exposed to an unprecedented moral trial” through which it would be difficult to say if anyone else “would have come through it better” (Zimmerman, 2003, p. 7). Moreover, Poles were eyewitnesses and saw firsthand the events of the Shoah and the plight of their Jewish neighbors. At times Poles were noble and assisted their neighbors under the threat of execution and on other occasions, they were slightly more than bystanders doing little or nothing to protect their Jewish neighbors from the Nazi brutality. Nonetheless on at least one occasion, Poles became participants of barbarism, rounding up and brutally murdering their Jewish neighbors in a pogrom – an organized massacres of particularly Jews (“Definition of pogrom,” 2012). Jewish perception of the role of Poles in the Shoah often conflicts with the historical record. Both Poles and Jews suffered, albeit disproportionately, at the hands of their Nazi oppressors.

Anti-Semitism and Diversity in Contemporary Poland

Antoni Sulek (2012) addresses the issue of anti-Semitism among Poles by examining sociological research conducted over a forty year period (from 1967 to 2010) in which researchers from numerous government and academic investigators examined the Polish population's view of their relationship with Jews following World War II and the Shoah. Sulek did not focus on the long-standing history of Polish Roman Catholics and their Polish Jewish neighbors; rather, he focused on the perception of Polish Jewish relations in the mind of Poles. His analysis points to the fact that Poles have "a general non-acceptance of strangers" but more so have a "specific type of anti-Semitism" throughout their society (Sulek, 2012, p. 425).

Jews have a perceived presence among Poles, who for the most part, are ignorant of the actual numbers of Jews residing in the country. Poles generally have negative emotions towards Jews even though they are barely visible in contemporary Poland. Jews number approximately 20,000 people; however, it is worth noting that prior to the war the Polish Jewish population approached 3.5 million people. Consequently, Poles view Jews symbolically as a "collective entity and a construct of the collective imagination" (Sulek, 2012, p. 425) because Jews are for the most part a lingering mist of a painful albeit distant past. Sulek concludes that the attitudes of Poles towards Jews are shifting in a positive direction which is indicated by an increase in the manifestations of "feelings of closeness" and a decrease in "disapproving cognitive schemes" (p. 425). Changes in the future will rest upon how well Poland rebuilds its national identity and the public discourse concerning "Polish-Jewish relations past and present" (p. 425).

Expressions of Multiculturalism in Poland

Changes in attitudes regarding anti-Semitism and racial diversity are emerging in Poland. Noa Biran and Roy Talmon of the Talmon Biran Architecture Studio in Tel Aviv, envisioned a

project to place Hanukkah candles in surviving buildings located in the former Warsaw Ghetto. These Jewish men took this action as a means to “contribute to the much wider discussion of multiculturalism in Poland” as they believe “that contemporary Polish culture still has strong ties to the Jewish culture that once flourished on Polish soil” (Aderet, 2013, para. 7). Biran and Talmon view their actions symbolically and state, “While the lighting of Hanukkah candles is clearly a Jewish custom and sometimes had to be performed in secret by a persecuted minority, here in Warsaw the candles are being lit openly in the windows of these houses” (Aderet, 2013, para. 8). They add, “Hanukkah’s historical significance is its commemoration of the Maccabees’ revolt against the Greeks, and it is positioned here in a new context that commemorates the Nazi occupation of Poland and the extermination of Polish Jewry” (Aderet, 2013 , para. 9).

Multiculturalism is becoming a more common theme in a country that has faced racial and ethnic difficulties in the past. This conclusion is amplified strongly by recent legislative developments within the country. Poland’s government took a bold step toward embracing diversity in Poland by passing what is termed the “National Action Plan for Equal Treatment for the Years 2013-2015,” which provides “detailed recommendations regarding Poland’s anti-discrimination and equal treatment policy” (“Poland: The government has adopted the National Action Plan for Equal Treatment for the Years 2013-2015,” 2013). Considering Poland’s history, this development is an astounding development in light of the fact that this is the first time for the country’s government to address “the issue of equal treatment of many groups exposed to discrimination” (“Poland: The government has adopted the National Action Plan for Equal Treatment for the Years 2013-2015,” 2013).

A Christian's Response to Shoah

Personal Reflection

Auschwitz is a museum today, visited by millions of people annually; however, the event it represents – the Shoah, still cries out, demanding justice for innocent victims murdered in its gas chambers. An article that I read in *The Guardian* captures the enduring legacy of hatred and the impact the Shoah has on the world today; it states, “As at Auschwitz, the gates of hell are built and torn down by human hearts, a wrenching debate about anti-Semitism in Poland's past leads us, in the end, to ask questions about ourselves” (Ash, 2009). I have visited Auschwitz on numerous occasions. Every time I visit, I stand in silence surveying what remains and ask myself, “Why?” Remembering is important. Memory work is not cost-free, especially when we talk about mutually experienced trauma and collectively enacted wrongdoing, as in the Shoah. Judith Lewis Herman (as cited in Krondorfer, 2012, p. 308) writes that “remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.” I see a connection between her words and the Shoah; remembering and telling the truth about the Shoah leads to two outcomes: restoration and healing. In light of the consequences of remembrance, what should be the Christian response to the Shoah? How should I respond personally to the Shoah?

My Path to Dealing with the Shoah

I did not easily come to understand what my response to the Shoah should be. What could one man do in the face of such a monumental tragedy, such an injustice? How could I even lead others to join me in it? I did not have any answers to these questions because I had not really yet asked them of myself. However, while I was living in Europe, this began to change during the Kosovo Conflict between March and June 1999. The Kosovo Conflict was characterized by

genocide in which Serbian Christians were killing their Albanian Muslim neighbors. I have written of my experience previously, so in the following sentences, I will quote a few statements. This action of neighbor killing neighbor led to what has been termed “one of the greatest humanitarian crises of the Twenty First century,” due to the fact that “hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees” fled the country into neighboring countries (Reece, 2012, p. 5). I was a first-hand witness of this crisis “when in May 1999, I volunteered to assist a non-governmental organization in its distribution of humanitarian aid to the displaced people of Kosovo. This was the first time in my life that I had heard first-hand the testimony of people whose loved ones had been killed at the hand of their neighbor. It was overwhelming and tragic” (Reece, 2012, p. 5).

In 2001, I began to consider my experiences in Kosovo in the light of history and Scripture. The Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) reports the first murder in recorded history when Cain killed his brother Able (Bereishit/Genesis 4:8-9). What is important in this account is G-d’s statement to Abel regarding his brother’s murder: “What have you done? Hark! Your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the earth.” One day while in Warsaw, Poland “I accidentally stumbled upon the only surviving Jewish synagogue remaining in the city. I began to contemplate my experience in Kosovo” (Reece, 2012, p. 5). And, then it hit me. Innocent bloodshed cries out for justice. So then, I began to deal with the question of the Shoah. I sought a way to speak eloquently, but simply, to that very specific focused issue as a follower of Jesus.

Between 2001 and 2004, I began to read Polish history extensively, especially history related to the Second World War, the Shoah and Jewish and Polish relations. Eventually I had an encounter with a Polish woman of Jewish descent who told me that I should visit a Jewish cemetery where I was working outside of Warsaw. At that point in the summer of 2004, I visited the Jewish cemetery and encountered first-hand its desolation, destruction and desecration. I

began to consider the importance of a cemetery to a Jew and why these Jewish cemeteries were uncared for and overgrown. I realized the reality of the Shoah and its impact on the lives of people because the shedding of innocent blood was crying out for justice. I researched Jewish cemetery restoration and began to understand its importance. I approached the Jewish community about bringing friends of mine, friends who followed Jesus as volunteers, to assist me and the Baptist congregation that I was leading clean and restore this Jewish cemetery outside of Warsaw. In March 2005, when I met with Alek Schwarz, a member of the Rabbinical Council for Matters of [Jewish] Cemeteries, he asked me, “Why do you wish to do such a thing?” In Polish, I responded, “*Pojednanie*.” In English this word means “reconciliation.”

And, with that single word, I began a ten year journey that has led me to where I am today – working with the Jewish community of Poland through caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries. I do not have an answer for the evil and hatred that occurred during the Shoah in Poland, nor do I have a reason for the destruction of the Jewish heritage and culture of Poland. All I know is that I am compelled to speak to the injustice of the Shoah and be a voice for those, who no longer have a voice today.

Approach to the Study

For this qualitative research project, I processed my experiences in the context of my work and experiences with the Polish Jewish community through photographic data that I have amassed over the years. I surveyed hundreds of negatives, slides and digital images that I produced over a twenty-six year period related to my journey. I asked myself questions such as these: Why did I photograph that particular subject? Or, what was going on in the scene that captured my interest? My aim was to recollect and see how my photographs have shaped my experience. I concentrated on photographs that I made specifically related to the Shoah, genocide, terrorism, Polish Jewish cemeteries, and memorial ceremonies. I grouped the photographs based on subject and then searched for themes present among the photographs. Primarily, I saw three themes emerging from the photographs: remembering, restoring and reconciliation (or dialogue leading toward reconciliation). Once I had a good sense of what I was looking at in the photographs, I selected a group of thirty-six photographs for this study reflecting these themes. The majority of the photographs expressed the theme of remembering. For further explanation about the specifics of the photographs, please see **Appendix A** (Numbering and Description of Photographs) and **Appendix B** (Photographs Selected for the Project).

For the independent analysis of the photographs found in this research project, I prepared two sets of questions drawing upon the inductive and deductive methods of reasoning as a means to identify “a set of comprehensive themes” from the photographic data (p. 45). For the questions found in Option 1, I employed an inductive approach (reasoning from information provided leading to a probable conclusion supported by evidence discovered/supplied). Using the inductive approach allowed for respondents to come to their own conclusions about the

photographs. On the other hand for Option 2, I used a deductive approach giving the respondents three predetermined categories plus one “user designated” category into which they were directed to assign the photographs. For several of the respondents (TMF Board and Advisory Board Members, I also used one of the photographs (008) to glean further insight by asking several open-ended questions. For further information about the discussion question, please refer to **Appendix C** (Options for Exercises and Discussion Question).

Concerning the respondents or those who assisted me make sense of what I see in the photographs, there were ten people who responded to my request to review and evaluate the photographs. Of this number two respondents are Jewish with one being a rabbi living in Atlanta, Georgia and the other a college student living in Israel. One colleague from the Andrews PhD program responded. Additionally, six people, who are Baptist Christians and who have been associated with TMF for several years also gave me input regarding the photographs. The final respondent is a Jewish Christian, whom I met recently and who has become a part of TMF.

Emerging Symbols and Themes

As I stated above, I began with the broad idea that I was primarily dealing with the theme of remembering in the photographs along with restoration and to a lesser extent reconciliation. The theme of remembering is echoed in the responses albeit in different manners. For example one response noted how hatred, destruction and sadness were evident in the photographs but added, “I see great sadness, because of those [lives] that were lost in that hatred, and are now memorialized as the victims of terrible acts toward individual groups, but also humanity as a whole.” Additionally, the same respondent stated that the injustice perpetrated functions as a “great unifier, in the large groups that come together to remember their lost loved ones, to repair the damage done by their oppressors, their destructors.” In this response, I see that remembering leads to action through dealing with the damage brought on by oppressors. This concept in its simplest form is restoration; nonetheless, as this respondent put it “the scars . . . still remain.”

I asked one person to tell me what they thought about Photo 008 and they responded by stating:

If I remember correctly this is a death camp in east Poland. On the horizon, you can see the watchtower and the fences - which is symbolically connected to the German camps across Europe. To me, the photo reflects the act of remembering - we need to go to these places and to hear about the atrocities that took place there.

Clearly remembering here leads to action by going to places associated with the Shoah and hearing about the “atrocities that took place there.” But is that enough? I think that by remembering we are changed and that change leads to action and a deeper understanding of ourselves, others and G-d. To illustrate this understanding one respondent wrote a personal reflection concerning Photo 027 showing a woman placing a stone on a large matzevah (gravestone):

Although some sad things have happened on that plot of land in a remote corner of Poland, there are people remembering what happened. Not only is someone remembering at the time of the photo, as demonstrated by a person leaving a stone, but there have been many there before her, also leaving a remembrance stone. It serves as a reminder to me that it's good to have spiritual markers in my life . . . for both the good and the hard events. When I look back at these markers I quickly remember the situation, how I found myself there, the people who journeyed with me, and the lessons that G-d showed me in those seasons. I am always reminded of the faithfulness of G-d in my life and how steadfast he is. Those events are in the past but the lessons I learned are with me now and will serve me well as I continue.

Interestingly several respondents identified monuments, "lines of separation," barriers, walls, "memories of the living," and "remembering the fallen." Other respondents saw teamwork, concern (care) and commitment; people "communing together to ensure those who died are not forgotten and their deaths mean something." This particular respondent went on to add, "We must remember the terrible things man is capable of. We must reflect on our own mistakes or where we rationalized wrong to be right, learn from it, and not repeat ourselves." One respondent identified in the photographs "the gulf between men" and how they saw them as an attempt "to understand how to bridge the gulf and why it exists."

In commenting on Photo 029, a respondent stated,

This photograph was taken from inside the fences (based on the building in the background); I assume this to be Auschwitz II/ Birkenau. If so, then this camp was not designed to be entered into and then left. The fences were meant to be the last border its' prisoners knew. This camp was meant to be the last place its' attendants lived. There is a person in this photo, who appears to be very emotional. To me this person is weeping over the massive loss of life, the horrible experiments, and the other terrible deeds that happened here. But he can leave the fences. He can go back home, read a book, watch TV and go to bed. That's not criticism, but it's the truth, as at least 1 million died here. This man has been very affected by the truth, maybe by how unfair and horrible the truth is.

Another respondent focused on what they saw in the photographs and remarked,

What do I see? The cry of the human heart . . . Am I seen? Am I significant? Am I loved? Who will walk my life with me? Share my sorrow? Enter my pain? Am I alone in my pain? Where is my G-d? What is happening? There is an emptiness in grief. It is a vacuumed of the soul. Where one was once joined to you in spirit and in love, there is an absence. It is an absence of presence, an absence of emotion. Grief fills the space where

joy once lived. Companionship is gone. To be remembered, to have one's emotions recognized is validating. To have them shared is healing.

We see in these comments that remembering is evident in the photographs and when we remember, we “are recalling the totality of the loss” so that “the world remembers.”

Consequently, remembering carries with it a “burden” as one respondent stated; a burden can be an obligation or a responsibility – both are actions. When we remember, we also hear “the cry of the human heart” laden with grief having no room for joy. Remembering therefore is recognizing the emotions – the pain or the burden of those who suffered and remembering allows us to enter into that pain as a means to heal the broken-hearted. This is compassion and mercy and through which healing emerges.

What does remembering lead to? Restoration or healing clearly emerges. Restoration although not prevalently cited by the respondents did appear as a theme in the photographs. Restoration requires action, which is reflected when one person asked, “If not us, who?” Furthermore, G-d commands in the Torah: “*Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life*” or “*Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor*” (Leviticus 19:16b) (NIV, 1984). We see an important moral principle in these two verses, an ethical value for us to follow and to practice. When we see someone – our neighbor in trouble, what are we to do? Scripture teaches us that we “do not stand idly by,” which means that we are not to ignore the people around us. When we see someone injured or in trouble the moral thing to do is to act – not stand by idly and “watch as something happens to someone else. It is your obligation to do something to help” (Delcau, 2012, p. 15). In Photo 013, one person reflects and asks, “We pass by devastation and mind our own business. When will we be the Good Samaritan? And bind the wounds?”

Additionally, dialogue and reconciliation emerged as a joint theme in the comments made by another responder, who added the category: “Dialogue with self (sorting it out for yourself,

what are you going to do about it?” Oftentimes, we do not think of reconciliation in light of coming to terms with our own person and our response to some great injustice or tragedy. The Prophet Micah admonishes us to “act justly” (Micah 6:8), which is an indication that we are to respond to injustice by doing what is right or just – we cannot ignore injustice; we must deal with it.

One person focused only on one photograph – the very first one (Photo 001). This person commented that the first thing that they saw “was the divide that still existed . . . regardless of the work that had been done to bring the fragments together . . . we could never make it re-line-up perfectly. I saw how the fragments were unproportioned (one side in most painful situations always ends up with more [pain]). I had the thought that mercy is messy sometimes . . . sometimes giving and showing mercy in hard situations can feel like signing your own death warrant . . . and no matter how much you manage to give, the divide will never fully come together . . . the pain and mistrust will [still] be there.” These comments relate to the unfinished task of reconciliation – as it is a work in progress, which may never be realized. Instead the responder continues, when considering the relationship “between Christians and Jews/Poles and Jews . . . [we are] to do whatever we can to walk the narrow path, to get between those fences, to get down into the cracks, and to build bridges that keep working to narrow the gap of that divide.” Only G-d can close the wound and bring ultimate healing. Adding comments about this same photograph another person responded, “With time – broken objects can be put back together.”

I went back to one of the respondents and asked them if they could tell me how these photographs connect: 008, 014, 015 and 023 (the fence at Majdanek, the image of the man on a matzevah at Treblinka, restoring a Jewish cemetery and two women leaning on a matzevah). In

reflection, briefly this person indicated, “The photos are very powerful as they represent the juxtaposition of Jewish and Polish [life] in real life [today].” When I met with this person, they requested the back story on the selected photographs and remarked on Photo 014 and Photo 023, “The cemetery restoration picture is powerful in that it is not Jews doing the work . . . [it is] such a beautiful image to know that others care” and “now that I know the story of the two women leaning on the stone, even more powerful – it shows the common humanity.”

No Man’s Land: The Space Separating Jewish-Christian Conflict

Unexpectedly, I discovered another theme while reviewing my photographs. I realized that when I have visited Treblinka, Auschwitz or Majdanek, I have always made photographs of the fences. As noted in many responses that I received, these are barriers and symbols of confinement and suffering, which serve as a warning. Treblinka does not have any of the original fences standing today as the Nazis destroyed them as a means to cover their crimes. Instead, surrounding Treblinka today are huge pillars (matzevahs) which delineate the perimeter of the former death camp. Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek both have double layered fences around their boundaries and along some inner areas. **Photo 008** from Majdanek (following below) captures many aspects about the Shoah and symbolically has become a highly nuanced expression of my interaction with it.

In the photograph on the left, are the barracks, where prisoners were kept and of whom most were Jews. As evident in the photograph on the right are two rows of fences along the perimeter: an outer row with projections facing outward and an inner row with projections facing inward. These projections are laced with barbed wire. I see three major spaces in this photograph: an inner space, a neutral space or a “no-man’s land” and an outer space. The inner space (on the left) represents captivity, bondage, suffering and unspeakable horrors of the Shoah;

the no-man's land is a middle ground that is a neutral space separating the inner and the outer space – it is a buffer of sorts and is neither. The outer space on the right is freedom and the life that was and that is today – it represents hope.



Photo 008, "No Man's Land" lies between the fences at the Majdanek Concentration/Death Camp.

Halina Birenbaum, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Shoah, wrote that when she was interned at Majdanek, she volunteered along with other women to weed the grass between the electrified fences. She said in her account that no guard, overseer or *Capo* "dared come between these wires, so no one urged us on, or struck or rushed us. We could sit and rest, picking at the weeds and grass. I preferred this work to any other. Here I had the peace that I longed for" (Birenbaum, 1996, pp. 88-89). Like Halina, I find myself in the middle space; however, I am not between the electrified fences. I am between the Jew and the Gentile-Christian. I have come to understand that neither group understands me. I think that the photograph is significant as it

captures and symbolizes my involvement as a Christian dealing with reconciliation in the context of the Shoah. I wrote last summer:

I live between two cultures, a third culture, but I am neither. I see myself as a hybrid. I have elements of both within me. Sometimes, I am misunderstood, so I work to understand and reconcile the two.

I am learning about myself and who I am. I am also learning about the work of reconciliation through remembering the Shoah and its victims by caring and leading others to restore Jewish cemeteries in Poland. I do not have an answer regarding how this is all to work out because what I am doing is emerging and unfixed. However, I find peace in what I am doing. And even in the most difficult of circumstances that I find myself in leading a Christian non-profit working with the Polish Jewish community, I persevere because, I have learned to remember that G-d is with me as I walk humbly with him.

Discussion

I began this project with three primary themes that have emerged from my life through photographs that I have made over the past twenty-six years: remembering, restoration and dialogue (leading toward reconciliation). I also encountered a new theme, which is the space between conflict and people – the so-called no-man’s land. I believe that based on the responses that I received from the diverse group of people who responded to my photographs – Jews, Jewish-Christian, Christians or who are either associated with or not associated with the work of TMF, I may conclude that my findings are valid and state that these themes are present in these photographs.

I may connect remembering, caring, and dialogue (leading in time to reconciliation) to the academic literature.

As I noted earlier, remembering is important. Memory work is not cost-free, especially when we talk about mutually experienced trauma and collectively enacted wrongdoing, as in the Shoah. Judith Lewis Herman (as cited in Krondorfer, 2012, p. 308) writes that “remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.”

Remembering should lead to a compassionate response which is seen academically as humane orientation and “is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others” (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009). Kabaskal and Bodur (2004) explain further that “this dimension is manifested in the way people treat one another and in the social programs institutionalized within each society” (p. 569). Simply stated humane orientation is concerned with the welfare of humanity.

Moreover, Judaism, Islam and Christianity, see G-d as the “ultimate” source of “goodness” and requires “humane-orientated behaviors and doing good to others” (Kabaskal & Bodur, 2004, p. 565). I may link the concept of humane orientation with the Jewish concern for humanity as Soloveitchik (as cited in Wyschogrod, 1986, para. 10) postulates that Jews have always been part of humanity and are for this reason “committed to the general welfare and progress of mankind,” desiring to combat disease and “in alleviating human suffering, in protecting man's rights, in helping the needy, etcetera.” I would also like to connect humane orientation with the Jewish concept of mercy or *chesed* or *chesed shel-emet* (חסד של אמת) meaning literally “kindness of truth” or true loving-kindness (Sienna, 2006).

This type of kindness shows concern or care for others; furthermore, we understand this sort of kindness as compassion. The Jewish Talmud considers compassion to be “the hallmark of an ethical person” and it “is *the* defining characteristic of being a Jew” (Telushkin, 2006, p. 20). By being merciful or compassionate, we demonstrate that we care for what was important to someone else, which could be an injustice, a misdeed, or an emotional pain. The best way to show compassion is through a loving deed – an act of kindness in an attempt to make right what was wrong. In so doing, we are able to display the character and heart of G-d.

Healing emerges when we remember and enter into the pain of those who suffered an injustice. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote (as cited in “The reasons for my involvement in the Peace Movement,” 2001, para. 5-6):

“There is immense silent agony in the world, and *the task of man is to be a voice for the plundered poor*, to prevent the desecration of the soul and the violation of our dream of honesty. The more deeply immersed I became in the thinking of the prophets, the more powerfully it became clear to me what *the lives of the Prophets sought to convey: that morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings*, that *indifference to evil is worse than evil itself*, that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible.”

We are responsible to deal with evil and its aftermath. One difficult issue that I have encountered in my work of caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland is indifference. It is not an “indifference to evil” that Heschel has in mind; nevertheless, it is apathy or a lack of concern. I find indifference among Jews of Polish origins and Christians. To the Jew caring for the dead, which includes caring for a cemetery, is not optional. To do so is to obey the Torah and by so doing fulfill what is known as a mitzvah. According to Rabbi Heschel (as cited in Eckstein, 1984, p. 66), “the central issue in Judaism is the mitzvah, the sacred act.” So, Heschel is saying that “the task of man is to be a voice” for those who have no voice. The Jews who were exterminated during the Shoah have no voice, so where is the concern?

The Jewish Prophets, such as Micah and Hosea spoke about to the issue of mercy – literally the concern for others. The person of Jesus Christ, a Jewish rabbi, also unquestionably spoke to the importance of mercy. Jesus taught that keeping the Torah is important; however, he emphasized that observing it should be done without “neglecting the more important matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23). Jesus also pointed to what the Prophet Hosea (Hoshea) wrote of G-d, “For I desire mercy (loving-kindness), not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of G-d rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).” What I see here is a connection between memory and concern; in my mind these two concepts are insuperably linked to each other. I cannot be a bystander when I see or recall an injustice; I must act compassionately.

From Singleton and Hays (2008) and Singleton and Curtis (2006) I have come to understand something about dialogue. They postulate that there are four agreements of what they term courageous conversations about racial conflict; these are: (a) staying engaged in the dialogue about race, (b) a willingness to be uncomfortable or experience discomfort, (c) speaking your truth and being honest about feelings and opinions, and lastly (d) expecting and accepting

that closure may not be realized as resolutions are rare. These four principles are vital in assisting me navigate the racial (and religious) issues that I face with the Jewish community and for my work in Poland (Singleton & Hays, 2008, p. 22).

Anti-Semitism in Poland is a present reality. Although I do not deal with the same racial issues as seen in the construct of courageous conversations, I think that the principles are applicable to my work. Engaging anti-Semitism through “individual and collective actions that challenges” (Almanzán, 2008, p. 5) the existing misconceptions of Christian and Jewish relations is what I am doing through the work of TMF in caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland.

I think that the Jewish concept of *Dabru Emet* (speaking truth) relates very well to the courageous conversation construct of “speaking your truth” and allows me to introduce this academic practice into my work. I have learned that through *Dabru Emet* some Jews acknowledge that “Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon” (“Dabru Emet: A Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity,” 2000, para. 5). I also encountered a remarkable statement:

Christians know and serve G-d through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve G-d through Torah and the Jewish tradition. That difference will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other; nor by exercising political power over the other. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community (“Dabru Emet: A Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity,” 2000, par. 6).

Conclusion

What do these themes mean to me? Over the past few years I have developed an ethical framework for my life and work based on Micah 6:8. God requires us to act justly (do justice), to love mercy (practice charity or have concern for others) and to walk humbly with God (be humble and faithful to God). From this verse, are derived the principle values that I have used to guide TMF:

1. Remembering – means to bring back to memory the past. It is important to remember the past and to remember the history, heritage and culture of the Jewish people and their contributions to Polish and Jewish history. TMF desires to speak to the injustice of the Holocaust by acting justly through remembering and honoring the victims of the Holocaust by facilitating and conducting Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Poland. Through our just actions, we are able to preserve justice and build hope for the future.
2. Restoring – means returning to a former state of being. As a group of Christians, TMF is able to deal with the painful past of the Holocaust today by seeking to bring Jew and Christian together in a common mitzvah to care for and restore Polish Jewish cemeteries. By loving mercy, as seen in this simple act, we express God's loving-kindness and demonstrate God's character. As Christians, who are involved with TMF, we are able to demonstrate that we care for what is important to Jewish people and more so through expressing mercy (caring acts), we display God's love, which allows forgiveness to emerge.
3. Reconciling – means bringing together or unifying differing elements. As Christians acting through TMF, we cannot reconcile without first being humble and serving with integrity, as we seek to continue and broaden the dialogue with the Polish Jewish community.

Consequently by acting justly, we remember and honor the victims of the Holocaust. By loving mercy, we care for and restore Jewish cemeteries in Poland. Through humility, we approach the Jewish community attempting to begin the process of restoring the relationship between Jews and Christians.

Appendix A: Numbering and Description of Photographs;

The following is a numerical listing along with a brief description of each photograph selected for this study. In parenthesis, please find an acronym designating a category that I selected for each of the photographs: REM – remembering; RES – restoring and REC – reconciling. None of this information was shared with respondents.

1. 001 – Broken Star of David Matzevah, Otwock Jewish Cemetery, August 2006 (REM)
2. 002 – Erecting a fallen matzevah in Zambrów, July 2013 (RES)
3. 003 – Jewish and Polish students clean Jewish cemetery in Otwock, October 2006 (REC)
4. 004 – Viewing ashes of Shoah victims, Majdanek, December 1988 (REM)
5. 005 – Memorial to Muslim victims in village of Qyshk, Kosovo May 2000 (REM)
6. 006 – Restoration of Jewish cemetery in Zambrów, July 2013 (RES)
7. 007 – Plaque at Empty Sky Memorial, Liberty State Park, New Jersey, April 2013 (REM)
8. 008 – Fences, Majdanek Death Camp, Lublin, Poland, December 1988 (REM)
9. 009 – Warning sign Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland, September 2006 (REM)
10. 010 – Support of NATO in Kosovo, May 1999 (REM)
11. 011 – Warsaw Jewish cemetery clean-up, June 2007 (RES)
12. 012 – Memorial to Otwock Ghetto liquidation, July 2007 (REM)
13. 013 – Post-war Peje (Pec), Kosovo, September 1999 (REM)
14. 014 – Moving displaced matzevah, Otwock, Poland, July 2006 (REM)
15. 015 – Human figure on matzevah, Treblinka Death Camp, August 2008 (REM)
16. 016 – Matzevahs at Empty Sky Memorial, Liberty State Park, April 2013 (REM)
17. 017 – The Seventy-Seventh Anniversary of Jedwabne Pogrom, July 2013 (REM)
18. 018 – Names of Victims at Empty Sky Memorial, Liberty State Park, April 2013 (REM)
19. 019 – Beams from WTC at Empty Sky Memorial, Liberty State Park, April 2013 (REM)
20. 020 – Book of Life, Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland, August 2013 (REM)
21. 021 – Matzevah at the Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland, July 2006 (REM)
22. 022 – Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, Jedwabne, Poland, July 2013 (REM)
23. 023 – Comfort at Jedwabne Memorial, Jedwabne, Poland, August, 2012 (REM)
24. 024 – Unveiling matzevah to victims in village of Qyshk, Kosovo May 2000 (REM)
25. 025 – Matzevahs, Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland, September 2006 (REM)
26. 026 – Widows of Qyshk, Kosovo May 2000 (REM)
27. 027 – Placing stone at matzevah in Jedwabne Jewish cemetery, August 2012 (REM)
28. 028 – Jedwabne Pogrom Memorial, Jedwabne, Poland, August 2012 (REM)
29. 029 – Reflection at Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland, June 2002 (REM)
30. 030 – Cleaning matzevah at Otwock Jewish cemetery, June 2006 (RES)
31. 031 – Tykocin Jewish Synagogue, Tykocin, Poland, August, 2012 (REM)
32. 032 – Matzevah at Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland, July 2007 (REM)
33. 033 – Jews remembering relative at Pruszków Jewish cemetery, July 2008 (REM)
34. 034 – Cleaning Jewish cemetery at Oświęcim, Poland, August 2013 (RES)
35. 035 – Buddhists pray at Auschwitz Death Camp, August 2007 (RES)
36. 036 – Israeli Jews, Auschwitz Death Camp, Oświęcim, Poland September 2006 (REM)

Appendix B: Photographs Selected for the Project



Photo 001



Photo 002



Photo 003



Photo 004



Photo 005



Photo 006



Photo 007



Photo 008



Photo 009



Photo 010



Photo 011



Photo 012



Photo 013



Photo 014



Photo 015

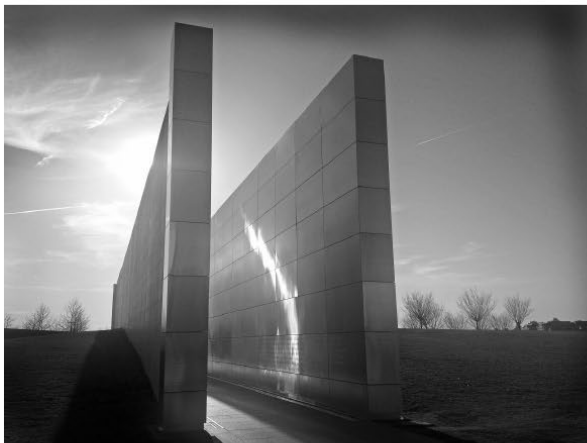


Photo 016



Photo 017



Photo 018

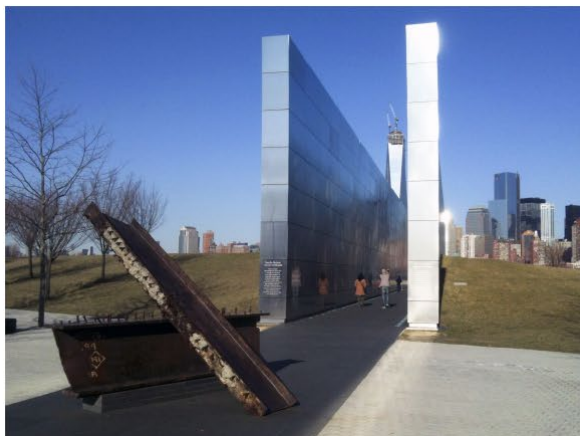


Photo 019

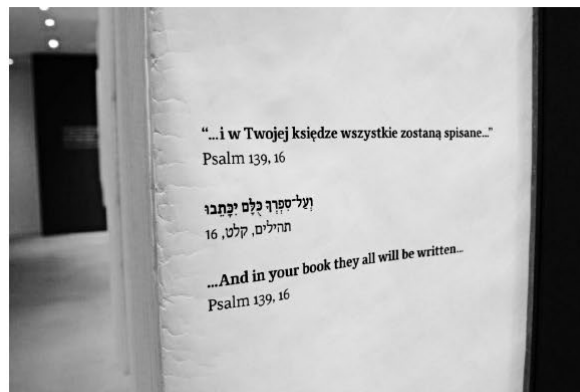


Photo 020

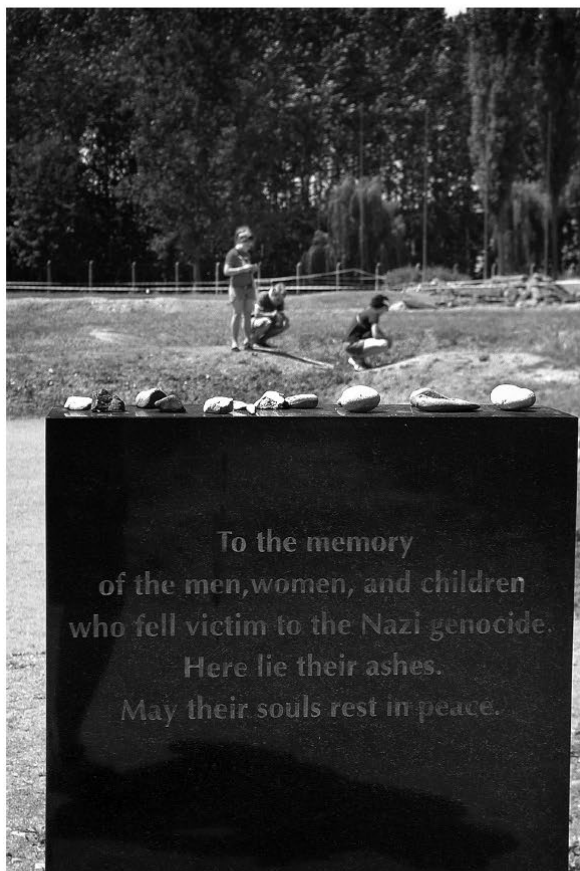


Photo 021



Photo 022



Photo 023



Photo 024



Photo 025



Photo 026



Photo 027



Photo 028



Photo 029



Photo 030



Photo 031



Photo 032



Photo 033



Photo 034



Photo 035



Photo 036

Appendix C: Options for Exercises and Discussion Question

Option 1

I am working on a qualitative research project related to my emerging dissertation topic. I greatly appreciate your input as it will assist me validate certain aspects of my research related to the data that I have previously collected in the form of photographs. I would like to use your comments as data, which could possibly appear in this project, my dissertation or some other published form.

My purpose ultimately is to learn from you and what you see occurring in these photographs as you review each one.

Your group has received a package of 36 photographs (random and no particular order); I have distilled these photographs from hundreds of digital images, slides and photographs that I made since 1988. The photographs are numbered from 1 to 36 and do not have any descriptions provided.

For reference to the photographs, simply note the number of the photograph (001, 002, 032, etc.) under the question that you are answering.

Please review these photographs and answer the following questions:

1. What do you see? What do you feel or think about the photographs?
2. What is going on or happening in these photographs?
3. How would you title this group of photographs? Is there a theme or themes? If so, what would it (they) be?

4. Are these photographs related or connected in any way? Do you see any relationships between the photographs? What is their relationship to each other? What groupings or categories do you see?
5. Did any photograph disturb or puzzle you? Which one?
6. Did any photograph grab you or tug at your heart?
7. Choose one photo that grabs your heart. Write your own story about it. What is its connection to your life?

Option 2

I am working on a qualitative research project related to my emerging dissertation topic. I greatly appreciate your input as it will assist me validate certain aspects of my research related to the data that I have previously collected in the form of photographs. I would like to use your comments as data, which could possibly appear in this project, my dissertation or some other published form.

My purpose ultimately is to learn from you and what you see occurring in these photographs as you review each one. I would like to also learn how you might see the groupings of these photographs and their relationship to each other.

Your group has received a package of 36 photographs (random and no particular order); I have distilled these photographs from hundreds of digital images, slides and photographs that I made since 1988. The photographs are numbered from 1 to 36 and do not have any descriptions provided.

Please review these photographs and group them in categories provided; you may create your own category, if you feel that some photographs would fit better in a category you determine.

I would recommend that you review each photograph individually and carefully prior to placing it in a group. Simply note the number of the photograph (001, 002, 032, etc.) under the category you have selected.

I have defined at least three categories, you may see more, if so please add them.

1. Remembering (acting on memory, doing something about injustice)
2. Restoration or Healing (demonstrating mercy or expressing loving-kindness in face of injustice)
3. Dialogue toward Reconciliation (seeking to understand injustice through dialogue with person treated unjustly)
4. Blank – User Determined

TMF Board Large-Group Discussion Question:

In photograph 008, what do you see? Based on your education and life-experience, how would you express what is displayed in the photograph? Do you see anything symbolically important? How would you characterize the meaning of the photograph? What does it say to you personally?

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