

**Adaptations of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions
in the North American Context:
Local Examples of a Global Restorative Justice Intervention**

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Abstract: *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) are restorative justice mechanisms for addressing human rights violations and injustice at the macro level. Mainly applied in the Global South, they have only recently been adapted within North America. The Greensboro, NC TRC was launched by grassroots and community-based organizations in 2004 to examine the causes and consequences of a 1979 incident of racial violence. The Canadian TRC was established in 2008 to address the legacy of colonial policies of assimilation and the forced schooling of indigenous populations. Through a comparison of these two cases, this paper will investigate how the North American context shapes the nature of the problems that these TRCs address, how they are organized, their relationship to the legal system, the role of civil society, and their relationship to poverty and reparations. Implications for social work, restorative justice and the potential for additional TRCs in North America are discussed.*

Keywords: *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, restorative justice, human rights*

TRCS, SOCIAL WORK AND THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) are a popular human rights intervention based upon restorative justice principles that entail investigations into past human rights violations (Hayner, 2001). TRCs have been implemented around the world in diverse settings such as South and Central America, Africa, and Asia. While each one is unique, a TRC may be defined as a national or community-based intervention to repair social fabric damaged by violence and oppression through investigation (truth seeking) (Androff, 2012a) and dialogue (reconciliation) (Androff, *in press*). The first TRCs in the 1970s and 80s emerged in Africa and South America as tools to assist societies transitioning from dictatorships and regimes of political oppression. The most famous TRC occurred in South Africa, and was part of the political compromise in the transition from Apartheid to democracy (Minow, 1998). The high profile and perceived success of the South African TRC in contributing to the peaceful transition and forestalling a civil war inspired many subsequent TRCs around the world, including Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Peru, Morocco, and the Solomon Islands.

TRCs focus on providing the victims of human rights violations with information about the nature and details of crime; this serves to clarify the nature of the violence and to create opportunities for closure and healing for victims (Androff, 2012b). TRCs can include multiple forms of justice, but are centered on the restorative justice principles of responding to victims' needs, engaging multiple stakeholders, and attempting to rebuild the relationship and social fabric that are damaged by violence (Androff, 2010a). Through bringing together victims, perpetrators and community members to share their

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experiences before a public and supportive commission, TRCs contribute to reconciling formerly divided and antagonistic people. TRCs often incorporate elements of local or traditional culture, such as indigenous conflict resolution or community justice to facilitate reconciliation (Androff, 2008). TRCs conclude their work by publishing a final report with detailed findings from their investigation and participants' testimonials; these reports also make recommendations for moving forward, promoting further reconciliation, and institutional reform.

TRCs and Social Work

TRCs are multi-disciplinary interventions, drawing upon theory and practice from diverse fields such as law, theology, psychology, political science, anthropology, sociology, and social work. Androff (2010b) has explored the connection between TRCs and social work. TRCs are relevant to social work in the problems that they respond to and seek to ameliorate, such as assisting disempowered and vulnerable populations, confronting racism, and improving the social welfare of victims of violence and oppression; their methods, such as community practice, civic engagement, narrative recovery from trauma; and their goals, such as reconciliation and peace-building, building strong sustainable communities, and promoting social justice and human rights.

Social workers in South Africa provided therapeutic support and social services to victims as part of the TRC (Hamber, 1998; Sacco & Hoffman, 2004). In addition, social workers in South Africa contributed to the TRC through professional advocacy; social work educators and professional organizations submitted statements to the TRC detailing their complicity in Apartheid policies, such as not admitting Black students to social work schools and maintaining different standards of practice between white and Black South Africans (Loffell, 2000; Lombard, 2000). Social workers from Australia and New Zealand were involved in the Timor-Leste TRC in assessing the mental health needs of the largely traumatized population and designing a mental health services delivery system and policies. The TRC in Canada is holding public events at schools of social work, and coordinating outreach efforts to ensure the participation of indigenous populations (www.trc.ca).

Despite these connections, there are many missed opportunities for social workers to supplement and improve the work of TRCs (Androff, 2010b). There is a natural relationship between the values and goals of TRCs with the profession of social work's code of ethics. Social workers could contribute their professional knowledge and practice skills of assessing and working with vulnerable people by facilitating interviews and eliciting testimonials before TRCs, and providing therapeutic and social support to victims. TRCs represent an opportunity for social workers to deliver culturally competent psychosocial services, and to engage in advocacy on behalf of oppressed and vulnerable populations.

North American Context

North America differs in many regards from the settings where past TRCs have been implemented. Five characteristics of previous TRCs guide this comparative analysis of

TRCs: the background context of violence that they address; the nature of how TRCs are initiated, usually through a political transition; the level of cooperation with the legal system; the role of civil society; and the economic context of poverty, inequality, and development. Each characteristic is discussed in the contrast between the Global South and North.

Are the problems that TRCs respond to in North America qualitatively different than those faced in the Global South, or are they variations of the same problems? The Global South is a term that loosely applies to less developed countries, emerging nations, and what used to be commonly referred to as the Third World. TRCs in the Global South have addressed the problems of military dictatorships, political oppression, civil wars, "dirty" wars, ethnic cleansing, foreign invasion and occupation (Hayner, 2001). Nations in the Global North, typically industrialized, democratic, and situated in Western Europe and North America, are less often associated with the violence, strife, and corruption of the Global South. Yet there remain structural problems of violence, oppression, poverty, and injustice that TRCs can address.

Most TRCs have occurred in the context of a political transition (Hayner, 2001). TRCs are one mechanism that societies use to facilitate transitions from oppressive political states to democracy, and are often part of a new government's attempt to reckon with the past and set the stage for a new social contract with the people. TRCs are a part of the field of transitional justice; much of the discussion and debate about TRCs involves reforming social institutions; promoting national healing, reconciliation, and unity; and achieving accountability for perpetrators and effective justice for victims (Minow, 1998). However, governments in the Global North may be less likely to experience a political transition. If there is no overt or otherwise shift in power relations – can TRCs in the Global North still be called transitional justice? After a political transition, the new government often confers legitimacy upon the TRC; in post-conflict settings, TRCs can suffer from being perceived as overly sympathetic with particular interest groups. When there is no political transition, TRCs are sometime initiated and operated by the same government that was in power during the contested period, and may even bear responsibility for some of the abuses. How is the legitimacy of TRCs affected when the same government responsible for perpetrating abuses and injustice is implementing a TRC or similar intervention for its own past abuses?

Transitional justice mechanisms often compensate for the lack of or weak judiciaries. TRCs are frequently called "hybrid" interventions where they operate in tandem with legal systems. In Timor-Leste, the TRC referred "serious crimes" to the formal legal system, and perpetrators of "less serious crimes" could avoid prosecution by participating in community reconciliation ceremonies (Androff, 2008). In South Africa, perpetrators who made a full confession for their politically motivated crimes under Apartheid could receive legal amnesty (Minow, 1998). However, Western nations pride themselves on the rule of law and are characterized by strong independent legal systems that address a wide range of civil and criminal offenses. Do the functioning legal systems of the in the West diminish the role that a TRC can play, and how does such a system change the way that a TRC could operate? Restorative justice scholars and practitioners advocate for the reform

of criminal justice systems in the West, perhaps TRCs could add to such efforts (Beck, Kropf, & Leonard, 2011).

Priscilla Hayner (2001) has called civil society the “essential ingredient” of TRCs. Civil society groups have influenced the work of many TRCs to ensure their responsiveness and sensitivity to victims groups, women’s groups, and children. In the West, there is a historical tradition of civil society groups organizing, advocating and influencing social and political institutions. Should civil society play a greater role with TRCs in North America, or is there less of a need due to the pre-existence of community based and grassroots organizations?

Most TRCs have occurred in the Global South, in many settings that have been characterized by mass poverty and deprivation, inequality, and economic and social underdevelopment. These conditions often exacerbate conflict or are causal factors in the precipitating violence. There is a growing recognition that economic and social development is a crucial component to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Research from the Balkans (Stover & Weinstein, 2004) indicates that economic recovery can contribute to pro-social relations between antagonistic parties. TRCs have been increasingly concerned about the conditions of inequality and deprivation that must be remedied in order to achieve sustainable peace, and have given greater attention to the “positive” human rights, such as the right to development and material welfare. Early TRCs in Latin America made efforts to include reparations and restitution for victims of human rights violations and their families, yet also suffered criticism that they were “buying off” victims as a substitution for justice. How should TRCs in industrialized, developed nations focus on issues of reparations? In the context of a “richer” nation with higher standards of living and social welfare policies, is there less of a need for TRCs to include these issues? Of course, poverty exists in developed economies, and victims of violence and other human rights abuses also suffer material consequences of lost income and decreased standards of living regardless of the overall economic context.

Having raised several questions about how the differences between the historical, political, legal, civil, and economic contexts of past settings of TRCs contrast with that of many nations in the Global North, two case studies will provide examples to further investigate how TRCs may be adapted to various settings. The two case studies are drawn from the only TRCs to have been implemented in North America: in the United States and in Canada.

NORTH AMERICAN TRCS

Greensboro, NC

The GTRC was a community’s response to the 1979 ‘Greensboro Massacre’. On November 3, 1979 a caravan of KKK and American Nazi Party members fired into a labor demonstration that was being held in a low-income neighborhood of Greensboro, North Carolina (GTRC, 2006; Magarrell & Wesley, 2008). Five people were killed and 10 were injured. The demonstrators were a racially mixed group with ties to the Communist Worker’s Party. They had been organizing for labor rights and social justice

in North Carolina, and had gained union leadership roles in local textile mills. They had previously confronted the Klan, and there was an escalation of provocative rhetoric leading up to the attack.

The city of Greensboro did not react well to the shooting. They arrested and harassed the victims, and distorted the media coverage of the violence to portray the incident as an equal shootout between two radical fringe groups - rather than a one-sided attack. The victims were portrayed as dangerous communist agitators, outsiders without community ties. Many suspected Greensboro police complicity in the attack; later it was learned that the Greensboro Police Department and the FBI had an informant inside the KKK – and knowledge that they were arming themselves in advance of the demonstration, however there was no police presence on the day of the attack. Distrust of the city government deepened, particularly among low-income and African American residents.

There were three subsequent legal trials. Two criminal trials resulted in acquittals for the perpetrators by all white juries, even though the attack was videotaped in broad daylight. However, the District Attorney wasn't supportive of the victims, equating the killing of communists in the USA to the Vietnam War. The victims felt that the criminal justice system did not produce any meaningful justice for those killed. These events negatively affected economic, social and political dimensions of life in Greensboro, and the lingering racial tensions contributed to a climate of animosity. In 1985, the victims won a federal civil suit against the perpetrators and the Greensboro Police Department for the wrongful death of one of the victims, and used the settlement to fund their organizing efforts and to expose their story, discover the truth behind the violence, and pursue justice for the victims.

Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC)

25 years later, community-based organizations, grassroots groups, churches, and civil rights organizations partnered to create a TRC as a means of re-investigating the Greensboro Massacre and to promote reconciliation in the community (GTRC, 2006; Magarrell & Wesley, 2008). The International Center for Transitional Justice provided consultation, and the GTRC received funding through philanthropic organizations and individual donations. Although initiated in part by the victims of the Greensboro Massacre and their supporters, a selection process was implemented to ensure that the Commissioners who led the GTRC would be objective and independent.

The GTRC was launched in 2004; its seven Commissioners were mandated to examine the context, causes and consequences of the events of November 3, 1979, and to promote dialogue and reconciliation in the community. Although their focus was only one day, they used this one event as a lens through which to investigate patterns of racism, anti-union activity, and white supremacy over decades. In their investigation, the GTRC reviewed the evidence from all three legal trials, local and federal law enforcement records, newspaper articles and academic literature. In addition, they took approximately 200 statements given in personal interviews and public hearings. The GTRC held three public hearings; the first was focused on the events leading up to 3 November 1979, the second on the events of that day, and the third on the consequences

of the violence. In 2006, the GTRC finished its work by releasing a comprehensive Final Report, with recommendations for the community (GTRC, 2006).

The GTRC was a grassroots or community-based TRC. Some have called it an “unofficial truth project” (Bickford, 2007). Throughout the process, the Mayor and City Council of Greensboro officially opposed the GTRC, however all the African American City Council members voted to support it. While being a grassroots commission had some benefits, there were some clear limitations associated with the lack of state sponsorship. Chief among them was that the GTRC lacked subpoena power, and thus could not compel the participation of individuals, nor obtain official records. Another obstacle to the investigation was the strict control of information by federal agencies. Several documents released to the GTRC under the Freedom of Information Act were substantially blacked out. There was no question of amnesty – however the widows and survivors of the attack signed an agreement that they would not pursue prosecution if any new evidence was uncovered in the re-investigation.

While the majority of GTRC participants were victims and concerned community members, groups critical of the victims and the GTRC also participated. Greensboro police personnel, lawyers from the criminal trials, and some KKK members and a former Nazi came forward, giving statements and attending the public hearings. Although one perpetrator came forward, expressed remorse and apologized to the family of the demonstrator that he had murdered, many felt that the failure of more perpetrators to participate or disclose details about law enforcement complicity in the attack hindered a broader reconciliation in the community (Androff, 2010a). Despite these criticisms and its limitations, the GTRC became a powerful example of participatory democracy and for what citizens could achieve to face their community’s past in spite of government resistance. Many participants felt that the GTRC’s ability to bring people together in a peaceful setting who used to be violently antagonistic demonstrates the potential for reconciliation built on mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The GTRC, as a community based restorative justice intervention, made important contributions and the grassroots coalitions forged in its creation and implementation have continued to work for political and social change in Greensboro.

Canada

The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission addresses the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools which operated over 100 years as part of a national policy of forced assimilation (ICTJ, 2008). The residential schools, begun in 1874, were run first by churches and charity organizations and then by the state, primarily the child welfare system (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010). The policy of forced schooling separated First Nations, Inuit, and other Aboriginal children from their families and placed them into institutional boarding schools. Children were not allowed to speak their native languages or practice their cultural and spiritual beliefs. These policies were aimed at changing the cultural identity of the child, or to “kill the Indian in the child”. The schools were overcrowded and underfunded; children faced high rates of disease, malnutrition, physical and sexual abuse, and death. Over 150,000 indigenous children attended the Indian Residential Schools, the last of which closed in 1996.

This experience was deeply traumatic to the indigenous populations of Canada, which continue to struggle with numerous social problems such as high rates of poverty, disease, family violence, substance abuse and over-representation in the child welfare and criminal justice systems (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). Historical trauma refers to traumatic events that are not limited to individuals, but affect social groups, to communities (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010). Based on research with Holocaust survivors and their children, the concept of historical trauma also attends to how trauma is passed down inter-generationally. In addition to collective distress, it is also about harm that was intentionally perpetrated by outsiders. Historical injustices and traumatic events have been connected to contemporary social problems. Indigenous populations in Canada suffer many disparities and disproportionalities across many domains of wellbeing; they experience lower life expectancy, high rates of disease, high incidence and concentrations of poverty, high rates of substance abuse and family violence (Trocmé, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004). In Canada, 30 to 40% of all children in the child welfare system are indigenous (Farris-Manning & Zandstra, 2003), and the rate of suicide among indigenous youth is 5 to 7 times greater (Health Canada, 2006).

Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CTRC)

The 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) was the result of years of advocacy, legal suits, and negotiation with indigenous communities and survivors of the Indian Residential Schools (ICTJ, 2008). In 2008, Prime Minister Harper made a formal apology on behalf of the state to all indigenous communities for the policies of forced schooling and assimilation, acknowledging that government policy was to separate and isolate indigenous children from their families and communities; churches and professional social work organizations have also apologized for their role in the Indian Residential Schools. The judicial agreement included \$2 billion in reparations to be paid by the Canadian government and the 4 churches that also administered the schools. The Common Experience fund pays a lump sum of \$10,000 to any survivor who spent any part of a year in one of the schools, and \$3,000 for each additional year. The Independent Assessment Process allows for victims of physical and sexual abuse additional reparations of up to \$275,000, but the burden falls upon the victim to document the abuse. The IRSSA also set up funds for healing and commemorative programs to address cultural and collective harms through the promotion of spiritual renewal, public education, memorials, and museums.

The IRSSA established a national level Truth and Reconciliation Commission with a 5-year mandate, allocating \$60 million in funding. Supplementing the other aspects of the IRSSA, the TRC was created to allow the survivors to tell their story and to educate the public about the nature of the abuses suffered in the Indian Residential Schools. The purpose includes unearthing the previously silenced stories and providing validation and emotional relief for the survivors, as well as to combat the widespread ignorance about the history. The Canadian TRC is unique; it is the first to be established at a national level in a Western nation, the first to be initiated through the judicial system, and the first to focus colonial harms against indigenous people.

The CTRC began in 2008, and is currently ongoing, but has faced several significant challenges. There have been changes in personnel, funding cuts, delays, and tensions between the twin goals of accountability for perpetrators and reconciliation and healing. The CTRC does not have subpoena power to compel the participation of perpetrators, and its mandate does not allow for the naming of individual perpetrators. Furthermore, the CTRC faces the challenge of ensuring that victims perceive the process as legitimate. It is conducting outreach among indigenous communities across Canada to educate survivors about the process and to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate. As this TRC has been implemented relatively late in the history of the Indian Residential Schools, many survivors are passing on. The Timor-Leste TRC also faced challenges in conducting outreach to rural participants; many communities were wary of participating at first and regrettably many only felt confident about coming forward after the official process concluded (Androff, 2008). Despite these challenges, the CTRC is an opportunity to raise awareness about the impact of colonialism and atrocities committed against indigenous peoples, and has the potential to result in political and social change that benefits the indigenous population of Canada.

THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT REVISITED

Having explored the two case examples of North American adaptations of TRCs, a return to the characteristics of this unique context provides insights into the viability and future for how this global restorative justice intervention could be implemented locally.

How do the underlying problems and background contexts addressed by the GTRC and CTRC compare with previous TRCs? The GTRC was focused on one episode of racial violence between two groups, yet also was concerned with the nature of the state's involvement in the violence. The GTRC was particularly interested in the degree of complicity of the Greensboro Police Department, the FBI, and the ATF: how much foreknowledge did they possess about what the KKK and Nazis were planning? What could they have done to prevent the attack, either through neglect if not tacit approval? Some in Greensboro questioned if these law enforcement agencies had a more active role in planning the attack, and that perhaps the economic interests that were threatened by the demonstrators' success in labor organizing, such as the owners of local textile mills, also bear some responsibility. The CTRC also addressed an issue of state abuse, albeit much larger, that of essentially the colonization and forced assimilation of the indigenous population. The harms recognized in the IRSSA and the subsequent government apologies were the direct consequence of state policy; a concerted and organized effort to destroy a people, their culture, their communities, and their future through their children. From these examples, it may be that TRCs in the North American context can be effective at addressing the abuses and excesses of the modern state such as institutional racism and the effects of colonialism.

This may be a relevant direction for future TRCs in North America or other Western, developed nations in the Global North. Given that many nations in the Global North are characterized by strong government states, TRCs may serve as a vehicle for addressing the unequal distribution of power in society, overlooked problems that the state has failed to address, and historical abuses that remain contemporarily significant. Furthermore, as

many nations in the West have significant minority populations (for example, the US is rapidly becoming a minority-majority country), TRCs could be important tools for dealing with conflict between groups within a pluralistic state. In addition, as the pressures of immigration into developed countries increase, potential conflicts around race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture may present opportunities for applying TRCs to promote a positive vision of diversity and co-existence. One relevant example may be police abuse; community discord often follows episodes of police brutality and violence. TRCs could be effective tools for grappling with the issues of minority relations with state power.

TRCs in the North American context are not likely to be generated through a process of political transition. These governments are more stable, and less likely to engage in transitions from oppression to democracy. Most are democracies, and therefore open to social and political change from within the system. How does the lack of a political transition affect TRCs? The GTRC was limited in many ways by the lack of official state sanction, and in fact by the contemporary city administration's resistance. Many participants in the GTRC felt that its work was hampered and a fuller reconciliation was impeded by a lack of political change in Greensboro, because the same political, economic, and social interests that influenced the local government in 1979 essentially remained in power in 2004. Without the resources or stamp of legitimacy of state support, the GTRC's investigation and its outreach to all city residents was limited. The CTRC is also limited in some ways by the lack of political transition, and indeed many indigenous communities in Canada have questioned the authenticity and genuineness of the CTRC as it comes from the same source that perpetrated the original injustice. Some First Nations tribes have protested the CTRC for this reason.

Based on these examples, it is clear that TRCs in the Global North will face challenges of legitimacy connected to the lack of a transition context. TRCs in North America that are organized by or in concert with the government will be challenged to overcome perceptions and cynicism about being an exercise in political expediency. These TRCs are also at risk of being co-opted for ulterior political motives. TRCs that are not connected to the political system may suffer from enjoying less political support or be more likely to be resisted by the political structure. At the same time, political transitions can be messy and confusing, and there can be a benefit to efforts to address past violations within a stable economic and political framework. TRCs may be a tool to shift power within an existing democratic system.

How can TRCs in the North American context cooperate with existing legal and social service systems? Unlike previous TRCs, TRCs in North America are not likely to be implemented in a legal vacuum. However, the existing legal system, and in particular the criminal justice system is far from perfect and could benefit from significant reform. The GTRC was in part a response to the failure of the legal system to provide justice for the victims and hold the perpetrators accountable. The so-called functioning legal system resulted in acquittals for the killers, although there was a civil settlement in federal court. The CTRC was also the result of a civil settlement; in both cases there was no criminal sanction for the parties responsible for the abuses. Despite the shortcomings of current legal systems, the Canadian judicial system did render the IRSSA, which may point to

future possibilities. Neither the GTRC nor the CTRC has an official relationship with the legal system. The potential for hybrid TRCs, working in tandem with the courts, has not been explored. However there is a precedent for hybrid courts, possible examples include drug courts, mental health courts, and perhaps most appropriately tribal courts. These models may indicate how TRCs can partner with courts to provide a more meaningful justice for victims by promoting accountability while still attending to the restorative justice principle of restoring the social fabric.

There is a great opportunity for civil society organizations to make use of the TRC model in North America. The presence of a vibrant civil society can strengthen the work of TRCs, regardless if they are operated with or without state sanction. Either way, civil society groups have the potential to influence and support TRCs in North America. Civil society must be more active to ensure that TRCs are responsive to victims' rights, and can work to prevent their co-option by political institutions. TRCs in North America can be a vital tool for participatory democracy; a means for citizens to engage in civic action to address the problems of their community and society.

Can TRCs be a tool for addressing poverty and inequality in Western democracies? Obviously, poverty still exists in Western nations. Yet the relative high standards of living may mean that TRCs will focus less upon victims' economic welfare and place more emphasis upon reconciliation or healing. However, TRCs can serve an important function in addressing inequality by calling attention to the often overlooked, marginalized populations that exist, if somewhat hidden, in rich countries. Through participant testimonials, public hearings, and dissemination of Final Reports, TRCs can publicize the plight of poor and vulnerable people, drawing public support for supportive policies

What is the future for TRCs in North America or other Western democracies? There are several possibilities. Communities across the U.S. South have begun to explore organizing TRCs to address their own histories of racial violence and oppression, including in eastern North Carolina, Mississippi, and one in New Orleans to address the causes and consequences of the disaster following Hurricane Katrina (Magarrell & Gutierrez, 2006). A group of descendants from a preeminent New England family that profited from the trans-Atlantic slave trade have suggested that the TRC model may be useful for grappling with their legacy in the history of enslavement in the U.S. (DeWolf, 2008). Scholars such as Walters (2008) have called for a TRC to examine the contentious issue of reparations for slavery in the U.S. TRCs may be useful for addressing other issues of indigenous rights; the U.S. shares a history of forced schooling and destructive assimilation policies of indigenous people with Canada. Senator Leahy from Vermont, the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, made national news when he called for a commission to investigate torture, questionable interrogation techniques, and wrongdoings committed in the "war on terror" (CNN, 2009). It is a sad reality that there is no shortage of human rights violations, even in the Global North for which TRCs may be a useful intervention. Anywhere that there is community trauma, or an abuse of state power, TRCs can contribute to the recognition of harm to victims and the reconciliation of divided societies.

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