

Remembering Nanjing 2011-Program Flow

Aya Kasai, MA, MFTI Expressive Arts Therapist
California Institute of Integral Studies
East West Psychology PhD Program Student

Remembering Nanjing 2011 was held at Nanjing Normal University in Nanjing, China from October 5th to October 8th and was facilitated by Armand Volkas using Healing the Wounds of History (HWH) approach. This writer acted as an interpreter with Eddy Yu and many others, and at times participated in the exercises. The effects each of the exercises had on the participants and their impressions will have to be brought to light by interviewing the participants in the future. Here, I will briefly describe the flow of the workshop and the exercises using my own impressions.

Healing the Wounds of History (HWH)

Healing the wounds of History is a reconciliation method created by Armand Volkas for the descendents of the Holocaust and the Third Reich to overcome their historical legacy. It utilizes drama and expressive arts therapy and is applied to various groups in conflicts. HWH is based on concepts such as collective trauma, generational transmission of trauma, the effects of the cultural and national identity on individual's self-esteem (Volkas, 2010) This method include 6 steps of reconciliation (1. Breaking the taboo, 2. Recognizing each other's humanity, 3. Realizing the potential perpetrator within each of us, 4. Sharing grief, 5. Acts of cooperation through ritual, creation and performance, 6. Transformation of trauma into acts of service or creativity.) These steps may not necessarily occur in order. First, a dialogue workshop is conducted in a small group and then ritual or performance is organized to share the effects of the workshop with the wider community. Volkas often utilizes

playback theatre performance to achieve this effect. In the current effort, playback theatre performance was conducted with the help of Chinese and Japanese theatre companies. Playback theatre is an interactive theatre in which the tellers' story and audiences voices are played back improvisationally by the actors. It is a modality for empathy and understanding.

Participants

People who participated throughout the four days were mainly; 10 students and graduates of universities in Nanjing, specializing in history, psychology, and Japanese; 1 teacher; 6 people from Guangzhou, 2 people from Hong-Kong. Non-student participants' occupations varied from education, human-service, finance, and arts. From Japan, there were two Chinese students, one resident Korean from Japan, 18 Japanese including university students, graduate students, professionals, teachers, and researchers. Some areas of their specialization included, psychology, human-service, economics, education, anthropology, and the arts. There were also Nanjing Normal University faculty and staff who found time in their busy schedule to attend parts of the workshop. Altogether there were about 40 participants with the majority being students. In HWH, it is ideal to have an equal number of participants from the groups in conflict. So this was achieved with the cooperation of the participating universities. Over twenty participants came from outside Nanjing and stayed in the accommodation facility inside the University where the workshop was conducted.

| October 5, Program Day 1

In the early morning, many of the participants from Japan visited the memorial Hall of the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre. In order to save more time for the workshop, participants were asked to visit the museum on their own. As a result most Japanese participants had then witnessed the museum before the beginning of the workshop.

Morning: Introduction

After the welcome, Dr. Zhang Lianhong presented on the history of the memory of the Nanjing Massacre. During the lecture, playback actors played back elements of the lecture as well as some of the participants feedback. The Chinese participants shared their anticipation, questions and statements and this was expressed through playback. It seemed that the dialogue was already beginning.

Afternoon: HWH Workshop

Warm-up exercise

Name and movement: Expressing how you feel in the moment using name and movement. When one person expresses, the whole group mirrors back.

Imaginary object: Passing an imaginary object around the circle such as a lighted matchstick, a goldfish taken out of its fish bowl. Participants begin to get used to acting. Sometimes the matchstick goes out. The fish will die out of water and the participants naturally had to work together to pass it around fast. Laughter occurs when someone lights a cigarette, and when the fish is dropped on the floor.

Sound ball: One person throws an imaginary ball with a sound, another person receives the ball and repeats the sound, and then throws it to someone else with the new sound attached. The ball then increases in number to 2 and 3. This exercise encourages participants to use their voices as well as to be active in their communication.

Here to there: Acting and moving, participants go from one end of the room the other one by one. Through this exercise, participants become more accustomed to having their expression being witnessed in the group.

Here to there in pairs: In pairs, participants start an improvisational act without consulting each other and walk from one end of the room to the other. This exercise encourages participants to work spontaneously with another person.

Role play: In pairs, participants enact assigned roles for 30 seconds. Some of the roles include:

A passport control officer/A suspicious tourist

A school principal/A child who has done something
A person on a diet/Attractive dessert
Blank computer screen/A person with a writer's block
A dragon/A knight
Shy 4-year-olds in the park

This exercise seems to allow the participants to use imagination and creativity to enact the themes related to conflict, power, awkwardness, with imagination and humor. Participants all act at the same time so there is less risk of embarrassment and it draws out their childlike qualities. Even with the language barrier, many participants seemed able to communicate using their facial expression, gesture and tone of their voice.

Line repetition: In pairs, repeat the given lines over and over different ways and see what feelings and sensations come up.

"I want it" vs. "You can't have it"

"Please forgive me" vs. "I don't forgive you"

"I'm sorry" vs. "You hurt me"

These lines bring the participants closer to the theme of gathering. The lines are spoken without story or context but many sensations and feelings arise. This exercise seems to allow the facilitator to see if the participants have been properly warmed up, and how ready the group is to accept these sensations and emotions.

In this pair work, participants change partners one after the other. Whenever the new pair is formed, they exchange their names and handshake. After the exercise, the participants were asked to walk around the room to shake hands and exchange names with people they had not worked with yet.

Socio circle: The group forms a circle and a person discloses a fact that is true to the

self. Participants who identify with the statement step inside the circle to form an inner circle. They then looked into each other's eyes recognizing that they share the theme. Anyone who recognizes the fact to be true but does not want to expose themselves does not need to move.

My parent was a soldier

My grandparents were soldiers

I have heard war stories directly from family members

My partner is someone from the "historical enemy" population

I am a friend with someone from the "historical enemy" population

I have an experience of discrimination

After this work, in small groups, participants were asked to share their thoughts and feelings. Usually, HWH is conducted with a group of up to 25 participants. But because this time the group had 40 participants, small group sharing became very important. There were 7 or 8 bilingual Chinese and Japanese speakers in the group so they helped with the communication.

Memory object: Participants were asked in advance to find and bring an object that symbolized or represented their relationship to the theme of the workshop. Thinking of what to bring acts as a warm up. In small groups, people shared their story about the object. In a large group, the participants were asked to share in one sentence and then to place an object on an altar created with colorful scarves. This altar was displayed until the end of the gathering. Some of the objects participants brought included, pictures of the grandparents from the war generation, a war memorial stamp, school history books, a comic book, and newspaper articles. Through this exercise, they start to recognize that each participant has a story and a legacy that our generation inherited.

| October 6, Program Day 2

The first hour was spent reflecting on the day before and participants were asked to share either a dream they saw the night before, or sensations, feelings, images that stood out. Members of the playback theatre played in an attempt to empathize with the story. Here are some things that were shared.

Japanese Female: I had a dream about a grandfather who was a military truck driver in the Philippines. I'm sitting next to him in the truck and we are driving in my town. But it seems that he doesn't know the direction and is not driving very well. So I'm trying to grab the steering wheel by reaching my body across from my seat and I'm trying to take over the driving.

This is a dream that this writer shared. Right after the dream, the meaning of the dream was mysterious to me but after seeing my dream played back, I was able to feel the meaning more directly. It felt like the dream was about inheriting the legacy of the war but I am trying to drive in my own way and get to a different future than the one that our grandparents imagined.

Chinese Female: After coming to Nanjing, I visited the Memorial Hall of the Victims and that night I had a dream. I'm at some kind of a ruin. It was a white round shaped dome and there were trees all around. But the place felt rather lonely and desolate so I left the place.

Chinese Female: Feeling calm and collected. My body is stuffed with many things and it has ripened round like a pomegranate. It has ripened and is about to explode. This woman was participating in this dialogue for the third time. After her image was played back, she seemed to realize, "I said explosion but it's rather more a quiet feeling."

Volkas explained about the purpose of the exercise is to look not only at his-

torical facts but how we absorb them and store them in our body as sensations, emotions and images. Playback theatre seemed to encourage empathy and to help a teller grab hold of their sensation, emotions and meanings more clearly, as well as to communicate it to others. I am curious how other participants experienced this exercise and look forward to asking them about it.

After this, survivor 夏淑琴 Xia Shuqin came to the venue and talked to the group about her experience in the Massacre. (Her testimony is described in different section of this booklet) After hearing the survivor's testimony, some participants were able to sit in the chair in front of her to respond to her story. Japanese participants responses included the feelings of apology, determination to remember her story and to tell others, while Chinese participants responses included deep respect. Each participant responded in their unique way and the survivor kindly listened, often nodding and smiling. In a part of the dialogue, the survivor said to the Japanese "You are not bad. It is the fault of the Japanese militarism at the time." And she expressed her wish for the Japanese and Chinese to have more interaction. Participants may have felt moved and deeply appreciated her sharing and this may have motivated them towards a dialogue.

Afternoon: HWH Workshop

Identity Work: *My name is (name) I am (nationality)*: Volkas explained that the history of the country one belongs to affects how one feels about him or herself. In this exercise, a person says out loud his or her name and nationality and notices what sensations, feelings and images come up. Lines can be repeated or can be said in a different language. One can realize that there are several different feelings. During this exercise, a woman from Guangzhou, a woman from Japan and a man from Hong Kong tried this exercise and seemed to feel ambivalent about naming their nationality. By trying, different feelings and episodes arose. Then, the participants divided into small groups and shared how it would be to do this exercise themselves.

Chair Work: A Japanese chair and a Chinese chair was set up facing each other and participants were encouraged to sit and represent the collective voice of that culture. Volkas facilitated by explaining, “This work may feel a little scary but we have created bonds between the group up to now. Unless we express what is truly in our hearts, true reconciliation will not happen.” In this work, anyone can sit in either chair. Some Chinese people were speaking as Japanese and some Japanese people were speaking as Japanese. It began by conflicts being expressed and issues such as textbooks was brought up. Towards the end, as Japanese people continued to apologize and the Chinese people demanded apologies from the government, there was a question about how long the Japanese people were supposed to have feelings of apology and guilt, also anger and powerlessness that comes along with this question. At the same time, the Chinese side voiced their wish that the image of the Japanese as “demons” would disappear from history, and a wish to accept individual apology and to forgive. The Japanese side also expressed their wish to listen to Chinese voices as well as to co-create a textbook.

After this exercise, people took off their role as the collective voice of the nation and formed a large circle. Then the work of the day ended with each person sharing one word. In 2009, the time was not ripe to exchange these kinds of honest voices. As Volkas suggested, in 2009 we may have been afraid of breaking the bond that we have created. Perhaps this time enough ground work had been created to take the risk.

| October 7th, Program Day 3

Morning: The workshop began by participants’ check-ins. The work of the previous day left strong impressions on everyone. So the day began by hearing some of the unexpressed voices. A Chinese man shared, “Unless the Japanese government apologize, I feel disrespected.” and a Japanese man responded, “I have been involved in this subject for the last thirty years but there are right wings who resist. How much apology does it take to end this? I feel complex feelings as well as sadness.”

Another Japanese man started sharing an episode that he experienced in the US. So Volkas invited the playback theatre to create a place to share, where individual stories are witnessed. Three people shared their stories in the playback. (This is further described in Kayo Munakata's report)

Afternoon: Much of the morning was spent sharing and sitting to watch the playback. So the afternoon session began by physical warm-ups such as name and movement. Then, participants formed pairs to do the following exercise.

Interactive Sculpture: In pairs, person A freezes in movement while B participates and responds to person A. This is repeated.

Imaginary gift exchange: Person A imagines a gift of a certain size and weight and gives it to person B. Person B improvises and decides what that gift is and appreciates it by saying, "Thank you for (name of object). Here is a gift for you!" and hands another object with a different size and weight. Person A receives it and says "What a wonderful (name of object)" and then gives another gift. This continues for a while.

Enacting a scene in pairs:

Climbing a mountain: Two people climbing a mountain together

Survival: An airplane crashed into the Amazon and you are surviving in the jungle together. They are getting on each other's nerves.

Once upon a time: In pairs, they improvise a story. Person A starts, "Once upon a time ..." and when the facilitator says "Switch!" person B picks up the story from where person A left off. They continue in this manner for a while.

Enacting and improvising a story: This time body movement is added to the story they are creating.

Allegory: In pairs, they create a story that includes the following elements. A Japanese person and Chinese person started out on a journey to heal the wounds of history. Along the way, they meet a survivor, angry Chinese mob, wise old person

and Yangzi river. The pair takes turns as in previous exercises to create and enact the story.

It seems that this exercise was introduced to face the themes of history and conflict again with flexible body, playfulness and creativity.

Identity work

Map of messages (Deconstructing and constructing identity)

This exercise is based on the idea that the identity and images we hold about each other is constructed by spoken and unspoken messages from our family members, education, friends, community, media, internet, government and books that we constantly receive. By mapping these messages, one can become more aware of how these messages influences the self. By bringing it into consciousness, a person can chose to be unbound, to dialogue, and to create distance from unwanted messages. Also by bringing a person's map into life and playing the roles, empathy is created. In this exercise the group enacted the map of a Chinese woman whose mother was born in Japan. During the war, her mother was discriminated and was forced to return to China but then she was also discriminated in China from her own people. Because of the mother's circumstances, this woman was also discriminated against by Chinese people. But because she wished to be a bridge between Japan and China, she became a language teacher. Volkas facilitated parts of the map psycho-dramatically and she was able to dialogue with some of the messages. The participants entered into her story by taking on some of the roles. I imagine this helped them empathize. After this work, we shared our thoughts and feelings in a large group and ended day 3.

In the evening, Friends Playback Theatre from China and PlaybackAZ from Japan conducted a collaborative performance. (This is further described in Munakata's report)

| October 8th, Program Day 4

Morning: Memorial Service

As we did in 2009, the group conducted a ritual at the memorial site along the Yangzi river. The group agreed that the Japanese and Chinese participants form pairs for the first part of the ritual in which each pair will went up to the memorial monument, offered a flower, prayed, and witnessed each other. After this, a Chinese group, and a Japanese group as well as a small group that did not belong to either took turns going up to the memorial as a group to commemorate. Everyone seemed to take this ritual very seriously and expressed heartfelt respect, apology, and prayer each in their own way. After that, people took a walk around the park. For a long time, people were up on the rocks where they could view the river and were having fun taking photographs with each other. This is a memorable scene for me.

Afternoon:

Apology work: The work begun by a warm up line repetition of “I have to go” vs. “Please stay” followed by “You hurt me”vs. “I’m sorry” and then creating a scene improvisationally. Many different scenes were played a sense of humor. Participants were then asked to discuss in pairs insights they received from this exercise. After this, Volkas explained steps of apology and the pairs created human sculptures of each of the steps.

Chair work: Lastly, Volkas had us do another round of the Japanese chair vs. Chinese chair work. First the superficial collective voice is expressed from the chairs, and then the person goes behind the chair and expresses the voice of the wounded child. Chinese voices expressed the frustration of not having their pain understood, or feeling that they had not received a proper apology. Japanese voices expressed not wanting to be used by others, not wanting to show weakness, fear, not knowing what to do. Through understanding that there are these wounded voices underneath the voices of conflict, the groups were encouraged to express what they needed from each other. (The detail of this work is written in Volkas’ report.)

Tree of Hope: Lastly, we formed a large circle, and Eddy Yu facilitated the ending ritual. Participants wrote their hopes or prayers on a piece of paper and each person read it and hung them on tree branches that were set on the stage.

This is a very brief report of the flow of the 4 days. The purpose is that when reading the other reports, the readers can understand the context in which the participants had their experiences. In a few months, I would like to interview the participants to gain more understanding of the impact these workshops had on the participants. I would like to thank Dr. Zhang, Mr. Volkas, Ms. Muramoto and all others who were involved in this project. I apologize for not being able to mention all of your names here because of the page limitations. I am grateful that I was able to participate in this gathering.

References

- Volkas, A. (2010). Healing the wounds of history: Japanese and Chinese cultures facing the legacy of the Nanjing Massacre. In K. Muramoto (Ed.), *Generational transmission of war trauma and efforts for reconciliation: International seminar – Remembering Nanjing 2009* (pp. 131-156). Kyoto, Japan: Ritsumeikan University Human Service Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.ritsumeihuman.com/hsrc/resource/19/open_research19.html