

# **DIGNITY AND HUMILIATION STUDIES**

## **HUMILIATION FLOWERING FROM HISTORICAL ROOTS**

### **AN AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE**

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#### **THE INGATHERING OF HUMANKIND**

As the ingathering of humankind (Lindner 2005) gathers momentum on planet Earth, the yearning for recognition and respect becomes magnified. The denial of recognition and respect, experienced as humiliation could force human beings apart, just as they are coming together. This paper examines Australia's denial of recognition and respect to asylum seekers and office workers. The disrespectful behaviour is traced to its roots, the sadistic behaviour of the colonial masters over convicts. Human Rights ideals do not condone the mere replacement of old tyrants with new ones; they envisage the dismantling of entire hierarchical systems. The task is to build institutions, both globally and locally, to ensure that people are not being oppressed, discriminated against or humiliated.

### Cycles of Humiliation

In building anew, the historical roots of cycles of humiliation have to be addressed. C. Wright Mills “hammered home again and again the notion that people lived lives that were not only bounded by social circumstance, but deeply shaped by social forces not of their own making, and that this irreducible fact had two consequences: it lent most human life a tragic aspect with a social root, and also created the potential – if only people saw a way forward – of improving life in a big way by concerted action.” (Mills 1959:230) It is this potential of improving life by **concerted action** that gives energy to cycles of affirmation. “The deepest layer of affirmation requires a relationship of trust and closeness in which the physical, psychological, intellectual, and social aspects of each are identified, encouraged to grow and affirmed by feelings which invest and maintain the total goodness of the person.” (Dominion 1975 in Kane 1976:44)

Concerted action is building new institutions that are both virtual and local – we will have to affirm one another in a discarnate way, as well as an incarnate way in the ingathering. Friendship, however, is the key to both local and virtual action.

The threads of dignity and humiliation are put together with the help of the Web and Part Whole Approach to scientific examination by Phillips and Scheff. (Phillips et al 2002) The move away from a stratified worldview gives breadth, height and depth to analysis. The scientific approach is broadened if it includes metaphysics and the venture into space, time and self identity. “What kind of thing am I? Do I move through time or with time? Without the series of past, present and future, how are we to make sense of the way in which each event is either before, simultaneous with, or after, any other event? How is human or personal identity maintained through time?” (University of Western Australia) Indeed, how are cycles of violence maintained through time? Scheff implies that forces pushing toward violence have increased in modern society, based on his

analysis of shame. He associates unacknowledged shame with continuing cycles of shame and rage, which he saw in the long term relationship between France and Germany that was associated with World Wars I and II. (Scheff 1994)

### **Definition of the Problem**

Defining the problem of dignity and humiliation in the world and its effects, violence or passiveness, shows the infinite complexity and dynamism of these human interactions. With Phillips and Scheff we can assume that all available knowledge is relevant to the problem and we can see the scientific method as a never-ending process. Moving up the ladder of abstraction, the macro, looking at the “whole”, there are physical, biological, social and personality structures and the situational/historical context linked to the problem. As we move down the ladder of abstraction to the micro, the parts, we can focus in close up on the defined problem. We can then test the understanding that violent and humiliating behaviour towards asylum seekers in Australia has its historical roots in the suppression of the convicts.

Developing new institutions to promote human dignity requires foundation and organization. Schumacher suggests that “development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their **education, organisation, and discipline**...it cannot be ordered, bought, comprehensively planned...it requires a process of evolution. All three must evolve step by step, and the foremost task of development policy must be to speed this evolution. All three must become the property not merely of a tiny minority, but of the whole society.” (Schumacher 1974:140/41) To go with this idea, Lindner has three more ideas when thinking of new developments. They are: making the ingathering safe by the policing of local neighbourhoods, a new approach to traditional “male” and female” role descriptions, and a change to think autonomously. So we are building on the idea that the humiliated must stop reacting to the master’s sanctions and definitions and begin to act. This has to start at the local level, with education, organisation and discipline.

C. Wright Mills insisted that history and biography were important when we are trying to find out what is happening in our society. My own forbears came to in Tasmania, (formerly known as Van Dieman's Land) as free settlers in 1837. With my own history deep inside me, I am going to concentrate on 'demonic' inhumane treatment of the convicts in the Australian past, and the present manifestation of treating people like "objects" or "dogs" to try to break their spirit in the present history of Australia today.

### **What kind of thing are we?**

We are becoming discarnate. Marshal McLuhan understood that the human consciousness can now be "outered" and "innered". We watch the spaceship *Discovery* on TV and we are 'there' and 'here' in our body at one and the same time. A resonating interval has been set up. "The true action in the event (is) not on the earth or on the spaceship, but rather in the airless void between."

(McLuhan, Powers 1989:4)

As seen from space, Earth has now only insiders, the people of the earth. We all belong to the ingroup of humanity. Lindner argues that what gains visibility, is interaction with insiders. If this is so, if the interface on earth is now with insiders and insiders, that is, the recognition that we are all members of the human race on planet earth, what is the resonant interval that McLuhan talks about. It is of course the behaviour of one "insider" to another "insider" The interaction with "insiders," continues Lindner, "is fraught with quests for recognition, appreciation and respect, quests that may lead to feelings of humiliation and their violent handling, if unsatisfied." (Lindner 2005) The resonant interval is between dignity and humiliation. "Every person has the need to be touched and to be recognized by other people...infants will not grow normally without the touch of others...As a child grows older, the early primary hunger for actual physical touch is modified and becomes recognition hunger...recognition, whether positive or negative, stimulates the brain of the

one receiving them and serve to verify for him the fact that he is there and alive.” (James & Jongeward 1973:44/46) All of us need affirmation. “No one is ‘outside society’; the question is where each stands within it.” (Mills 1959-2000:184) He thinks there are limits to freedom. The truth limits freedom. We will see later that the determination not to lie brought someone back from humiliation to dignity. Our first Australian saint to be, Blessed Mary McKillop, made truth her foundation. She continually fought for equality within the order of nuns that she instituted, and also fought for her constitution being sanctioned in Rome, rather than being tied to the whims of local Bishops. She once refused to do what a Bishop asked. “I told him that I could not, that that was not the truth, and that whilst I would do anything to stop the letters which were appearing in the paper, I could not do so at the expense of the truth.” (Thorp 1957:159)

### **Moving up the ladder of abstraction**

In a globalising world, feelings and acts of humiliation increasingly represent the most significant phenomena to be reckoned with?

Using Scheff’s part/whole theory we ask what is the whole? What are the parts? The planet earth is the whole that we are looking at right now, and our individual actions are the least parts that make up the whole. And the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

In order to promote dignity for all, public policy planning is central, both locally and globally. As to public policy planning, Daniel L. Shapiro of the Harvard Negotiation Project describes the current situation as follows (2004):

“There exists sophisticated social machinery that uses emotions to influence public policy. It is common practice for some politicians to scare, fear, or humiliate constituents to vote a certain way, act a certain way, or think a certain way. They stir negative emotions and use them as a tool of persuasion. Sometimes the behaviour of the politicians serves positive social ends;

sometimes it doesn't...there exist few psychological sophisticated, effective methods to deal with the large-scale experience of humiliation, resentment, and the desire for revenge. What is needed, then, is the development of a set of process options to deal with such situations.” (Shapiro 2005)

Something has happened in Australia that has started off that process. Human Rights was at the centre of it. The Australian government, after September 11, 2001, began switching their priorities to focus on the terrorist threat at home and abroad. A Norwegian vessel had picked up asylum seekers and Australia was refusing to take them. “Ever since the Tampa appeared, Howard and his ministers had been arguing that Australia was involved in a kind of ward to protect its borders, with the right to take tough action that wars allow. (and a strategy) of isolating the asylum seekers from DIMA officials, from police, from civilian doctors, from anyone at all who could accept an asylum please – and especially from the pro bono lawyers looking for clients.” (Marr, Wilkinson 2003:145) These were the people that were the enemy. This was the resonating interval between humiliation and dignity. Australian lawyers started to work for the asylum seekers pro bono. “By the morning of 13 September – the day of the appeal in the Federal Court – the navy had nearly a thousand asylum seekers on its hands.(Marr, Wilkinson 2003:149)

Refugee groups spontaneously started to form to help the asylum seekers. The one I joined was Rural Refugees for Australia. They continually told the truth, that the Australian Government was a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention. “The issue of illegal entrants was ...as much about leadership as the issue itself...Admiration for (Prime Minister) Howard’s leadership had not stopped rising since the Norwegian ship was halted” (Marr, Wilkinson 2003:283) The Liberals won the election in 2001 by instituting a fear campaign, connecting refugees with terrorists, and John Howard was returned as Prime Minister.

**Concerted Action**

Rural Australians for Refugees enabled us to write to the refugees in Baxter Detention Centre, South Australia. We went to Baxter to talk to them and helped in every way we could, especially by writing letters to the Government. Three of our families were released – one family, the mother with a baby on the breast, was dumped in the main street of the nearest town. Luckily one of the Circles of Friends (another refugee group) saw them, and helped them find accommodation and transport.

The *Tampa* was the electric alarm that gave the energy not only to lawyers, but also to many other people. who began to use all their faculties to make good the human rights violations that they were witnessing. The asylum seekers of the *Tampa* were transferred to the vessel *Manoora* and taken to Nauru, part of Howard's 'Pacific Solution' of isolating asylum seekers on Pacific Islands.

“Whenever two cultures or two events, or two ideas are set in proximity to one another, an interplay takes place, a sort of magical change. The more unlike the interface, the greater the tension of the interchange. (McLuhan 1980:4) The interface here is the interface between the persons who are humiliated, and those who humiliate. What energy will we find here?

Julian Burnside QC was energised by the plight of the asylum seekers. He spoke out:

The United Nations Human Rights Commission has described conditions in Australia's detention centers as "offensive to human dignity". The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has described Australia's detention centers as "worse than prisons" and observed "alarming levels of self-harm". Furthermore, they have found that the detention of asylum seekers in Australia contravenes Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which bans arbitrary detention..... Only the Australian government and the Australian public

are untroubled by our treatment of innocent, traumatized people who seek our help. (Burnside 2003)

Speaking out the truth with dignity gets rid of the slush funds of anger. Working for a solution with other like minded people in a humble, rational way changes the situation. We will be healthier. “There is no question that slush poisons us physically I’m sure that it contributes to attacks on the digestive system, circulatory system, respiratory system, indeed on all systems” (Rubin1969:73) That means less energy for making good decisions. “The human organism is a complicated energy system, deriving its energy from the food it eats and expending it for such purposes of circulation, respiration, digestion, nervous conduction, muscular activity, perceiving, remembering and thinking. (Hall1954: 36) Slush funds of anger take away from the energy needed for imaginative, creative decisions.

### **Knowledge Society**

Lindner echoes Teilhard de Chardin when she says that “at present homo sapiens is about to create a global knowledge society.” (Lindner 2005) Chardin called this a noosphere. For Lindner human rights is asking the arrogant to bend to humility, and the humiliated to rise to humility, so that the master slave gradient may collapse to the line of equal dignity and humility. Reflection enables change. Other manifestations of life fail to cross the threshold into reflection. “Only in man does ‘consciousness snap the chain’ and in man the highest aspiration of the phenomenon of life finds its fullest expression...the arrival of man marks a completely new level, equal in importance to that constituted by the appearance of life, and which we may define as the establishment on our planet of a thinking sphere superimposed upon the biosphere: the noosphere (Chardin:1971:9)

### **Cycles of humiliation**

Let us use this noosphere, this new knowledge centre that we have. Humiliating behaviour is learnt. It can be unlearned. Conflict resolution can be taught in its place. My family came to Hobart, Tasmania from Island in 1837. The history of violence is everywhere in Tasmania. The Old Hobart Jail has cells under the Chapel that are seven feet long and less than three feet high. Convicts humiliated there were unable to stand or sit, while the Preachers droned on above about the New Covenant of Love. Official religion was a means of control in convict days. The mandatory Sunday muster of convicts had to finish with a service and a clerical harangue.

An echo of this behaviour occurred at the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast, Parliament House, Canberra. As the Prime Minister got up to read the Lesson the question was asked “How can you stand up there reading from the Bible when you have 300 innocent children in detention?” ...the hard of hearing Prime Minister thought the interjector was referring to the 300 plus asylum seekers who drowned a year ago on the ill fated SIEV X vessel.” (Crabb:2002) The interjector was my husband, he was quickly isolated, and only two people gave him visible support out of the 600 Christians in the Great Hall.

“The essence of any sadistic relationship between a bad prison boss and his prisoners is that the latter should be (in the word so often used of Australian convicts) “objects”. The System’s distinction between “objects” (prisoners) and “subjects” (the free) was no mere grammatical quirk. It implied the convict’s expulsion from the domain of rights. “Felons on Norfolk Island have forfeited all claim to protection of the law” wrote Governor Brisbane in 1825, meaning every word. (Hughes 2003:461) Without human rights, human society crumbles.

The reputation of Van Diemen’s Land as the convicts’ hell was gradually acquired. William Sorell (1775 – 1848) saw the state of the island as “the most depraved and unprincipled people in the Universe (Hughes 2003:370) He laid

the foundations of the “system of perpetual reference and control over convicts that would become the bureaucratic masterpiece of his successor, George Arthur...By 1822 convicts made up 58 percent of the white populace of Van Diemen’s Land. New means of terror had to be devised to keep them docile. In 1821 he founded a small penal settlement at Macquarie Harbour, as a “Place of Ultra Banishment and Punishment” for convicts who had committed second crimes in the colony. (Hughes 2003:371) The prisoners were quartered on an island in the middle of the harbour known as *Sarah Island*. It was recorded that Cuthbertson, who was in charge was the most inhuman tyrant the world every produced “Humanity was a virtue he did not acknowledge...in the five years between 1822 and 1826 there were 245 prisoners at Macquarie Harbor...In that period the scourgers inflicted a total of 33,723 lashes, 6,744 per year, meaning a little over 40 per man, each stroke meticulously noted in the commandants ledger”. (Hughes 2003:377) Life was unbearable. Prisoners would simply murder an overseer or a prisoner so that they could be hanged. Macquarie Harbour would remain a colonial benchmark for some time – the nadir of punishment, until it was shut down and then exceeded by Norfolk Island. Norfolk Island held 1,000 convicts, but its real use was the intimidation of tens of thousands more. If it was not “demonic” it would have been as useless a deterrent as gallows with no rope. Mercy on the mainland needed the background of terror elsewhere. (Hughes 2003:484)

While sheer force as a strategy was common and efficient in former times...nowadays, relationships are expected to be maintained in different ways. With Lindner, we are to think autonomously, stop reacting to the master’s sanctions and definitions, and begin to act.

## **Moving down the ladder of abstraction**

### **Breaking the spirit**

“Abstract concepts are essential to progress in sociology...concepts are abstract when they allow us to explain diverse phenomena in diverse circumstances” (Phillips 2002:26) In both the convict days, and today also, there is evidence that the “spirit” of the person must be broken to be totally humiliated. That is why so many of our asylum seekers in detention end up in psychiatric hospitals.

“The route from theory to observation involves diverse kinds and levels of interconnections...sociologists have often tried to move down the ladder of abstraction with procedures that oversimplify the complexity of human behaviour.” (Phillips 2002:33/34) At the lowest ebb on our ladder of abstraction is the description of a convict flogging by John Frost:- “the flogger using every means in his power to break the spirit of those who suffered, and the sufferers determined to sustain the punishment unflinchingly...The knout was made of the hardest whipcord, of an unusual size. The cord was put into salt water till it was saturated, it was then put into the sun to dry; by this process it became like wire, the eight-one knots cutting the flesh as if a saw had been used.” (Hughes 2003:404)

In Norfolk Island, the convict Laurence Frayne, cut to ribbons by the lash, had to make the voyage to Norfolk Island on the *Lucy Ann* in October 1830 with maggots crawling in his back and no chance of a wash or a bandage.

People often suppose that penal systems recruit sadists, but “cruelty is an appetite that grows with feeding, and few people receive an epiphany of their own sadism in the abstract; they must see their victims first.” (Hughes 2003:460) Some people retain their spirit, even though others become reckless. Laurence Frayne comments on the reality of violence:-

“if you endeavour to take out of (a prisoner) that manly confidence which ought to be cherished in every civilized human being, you then begin the work of demoralization, and it will end in the very Dreggs of debasement and an insensibility to every species of integrity and decency, and eradicate every right feeling in the human breast....there is a certain pitch to which you can work upon man to bring him to fear...but exceed that and you make him reckless. (Hughes 2003:482)

Let us consider the reality of violence in the year 2000 as seen by Julian Burnside QC:

In late 2000 a family fled Iran. They were members of a small quasi-Christian sect which has traditionally been regarded as "unclean" by the religious majority. Their lives have traditionally been marked by persecution in every conceivable aspect. The recent history of Jews in Germany and Poland is a sufficient reminder of what happens to groups who are regarded by the majority as "unclean". The family's flight was triggered by a terrible event, the details of which are too terrible to relate at a luncheon like this. They arrived in Australia after a terrifying voyage across the sea and were locked up in Woomera. The family comprised mother and father in their thirties, and two daughters aged 7 and 10.

In Woomera, month after month, their condition deteriorated. In particular, the 10 year old girl who ceased eating, stopped engaging in self-care activities, had trouble sleeping and began scratching herself constantly. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service of South Australia learnt of the family's plight and went to examine them. They wrote a report which included the following passages:

*"(She) does not eat her breakfast or other meals and throws her food in the bin. She was preoccupied constantly with death, saying 'don't bury me here in the camp, bury me back in Iran with grandfather and grandmother'.*

*It is my professional opinion that to delay action on this matter will only result in further harm to (this child) and her family. The trauma and personal suffering already endured by them has been beyond the capacity of any human being and I foresee that this family will require intensive and ongoing therapy for some time to enable them to conciliate and recover."*

Despite the urgent recommendations in that report, the family was left where they were. A further report was sent and, after weeks of delay, the family was finally sent to the Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre: Melbourne's own concentration camp. When the family was moved, the South Australian authorities urged that the 10 year old daughter needed daily clinical attention. Nevertheless, for another three weeks nothing happened: no-one saw the family, no-one paid attention to the obvious psychological and medical needs of the 10 year old. Not long afterwards, on a Sunday night whilst her parents and her sister were at dinner, she hanged herself.

She did not die. When she was taken down, she tried to swallow shampoo because she had seen adults kill themselves that way in Woomera.

The family remained in immigration detention for another year. At last, after they had appealed to the full Federal Court, they were finally granted protection visas. (Burnside 2003)

Another witness tells of how asylum seekers are deported by plane:

Squeezed between two security officers I can only define as goons, the man was handcuffed, with a chain leading to a restraint at his waist, and to cuffs at his ankles. But perhaps the most shocking was the gag. The man had layers of black gaffer tape around his mouth, bound so tightly that it was cutting into his face. Above the tape, his eyes were wildly panicked... He was manhandled into the seat, and a blindfold placed over his eyes.

I was not able to assist him in any way. I left the plane in Melbourne wondering if they would remove the deportee's gag to allow him to eat or drink any time over the 12 hour flight back to Bangkok...Through the tape he could not utter a single sound, an image that so sums up the voiceless state of the people that 'we' determine to be unfit for our country...I need to tell this brief chapter of his story as it is also our story. It is a story of what our nation sees as a reasonable measure to protect our borders.

(Chirgwin 2004)

Lindner describes currently living generations as finding themselves in a crucial historical transition from an old honour world to a vision of a future world of equal dignity. Human rights ideals represent an encouragement for underlings to continuously challenge domination and oppression. It is time for egalization of the human race.

### **Case Study**

The hall mark of the scientific method is the testing of ideas against experience. I have my own research to use here – surely the most micro of micro, a case of the humiliation of an older woman in a small town in Australia.

Lindner's idea of constructive change, stepping outside of the master-slave dyad and thinking autonomously was put into action. An older office worker, about to resign her receptionist position because of bullying, lived out the theory. A friend told her of "bullyonline" which informed her that persons who bully could be sociopaths, and would not change. The change had to come from the person being humiliated by writing every harassment down. She wrote a case study going from 2004 – 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2005. She was monitored every moment by her supervisor and her supervisor's brother. There are many similarities with convict control:

All persuasive surveillance

Ceaseless criticizing

No choice with lunch hours

When trying to learn computer skills, asked to do shopping

In front of customers, made to clean up sick (vomit) from outside footpath

Criticized in the way she did this –

Name and photograph left out of communication of business

Not invited to conference

Telephone calls with clients were monitored

Humiliated because of age – not having mobile phone expertise

Accused of stealing \$100

Work hours changed – made to feel humiliated and insecure

Asked to tell a lie to a customer

She made the invisible visible. She communicated some of the major situations to the Administration, such as the theft of \$100. This loss was found to have come from a mistake by the person who was harassing her. Her final “coming out” from humiliation was when she refused to lie, as asked by her supervisor. She has not resigned. This was an option when she first started to read the “bullyonline” material because of the physical effects the harassment was having on her body. She felt nervous, had flutterings in her stomach, could hardly sleep. When I probed her why she considered the “truth” to be so important, she said the “truth” was “right” and to lie was “wrong”. She has no religious belief. As a child she was given such books as “Anne of Green Gables” to read, and she formed her moral beliefs from that source. When we continued the discussion, she said “I don’t have a belief in God. We have to have a code to live by. My belief is Human Rights.”

We see here, in action, the effect of friendship plus a knowledge base that can be accessed. Lindner sees human rights as asking the arrogant to bend to humility, and the humiliated to rise to humility, so that the master slave gradient may collapse to the line of equal dignity and humility.

### **Integrating Knowledge**

Australia is now very diverse. The percentage of foreign born population is 24.6 per cent, the world's highest. In Melbourne more than 240 nationalities, and everyone in social life, religious leaders, politicians, police, councils and schools are working together to teach local standards of conduct. We have been thinking over the ideas of Lindner, and her call for egalisation, a coming down from the arrogance and pride of the person who humiliates, and a rising up from being humiliated, speaking your truth in quiet dignity. We have added McLuhan, Mills, Phillips and Scheff to the mix. We live within the resonance of our consciousness being "inner" and "outer" at the same time. Asking what kind of thing we are brings to a more rounded, deeper understanding of society. The Web and Part/Whole approach is a tool to thinking positively and suggesting ways and means to bring more fulfillment to people, instead of watching them fall into alienation, anomie and addiction.

The endeavor is to test the theory that cycles of violence in Australia stem from the sadistic relationships in our convict roots. We started off the discussion with what kind of "thing" a human being could be. It is a "thing" that gets food from the environment to give it energy. It also needs stroking, physical touch, encouragement and affirmation to grow. This affirmation actively affects the brain and makes it "more conscious" of other people and its environment. As it thinks and reflects on its experience, this "thing" creates a noosphere – a sphere of thinking, over the entire world. Today, this thinking sphere has evolved into a knowledge base that can be accessed by computers. This thinking process has also brought forth an idea that we are human beings, different from our plant and animal environment and that we have "rights". In the past legal rights were only for those in power. Today we have advanced to a state where human rights should apply to all human beings. The English overlords in Australia thought the convicts had lost all their rights because they were convicted of a crime (poaching, stealing a loaf of bread). Today it is still difficult for the Australian

Government to give equal rights to asylum seekers – who they have chosen to identify with border protection and terrorism issues.

Living in isolation was always part of humiliating punishment. – Both the convicts and the asylum seekers were sent off to islands, or desert places, without proper medical help. The continual monitoring of their behavior and harassment brought about psychological stress, yesterday and today. With no way out, self harm to death was the ultimate effect of this humiliating behavior. Humiliation brings violence against the self. Cutting their own wrists, stitching up their lips, both asylums seekers and convicts made choices to die, rather than live under such conditions.

Concerted action comes from dignified people who want dignity for all. Their concerted actions, working together both locally and online virtually, are the new institutions that are forming in Australia, and also in the world. They tell the “truth” from their observations of human beings; all human beings need to be respected. Her “truth” that to lie is wrong, based on her belief in Human Rights, enabled an older office work to regain her health, and the freedom to enjoy her job.

### **Building up the Spirit**

I agree with Lindner that feelings and acts of humiliation are increasingly the most significant phenomena to be reckoned with in a globalizing world. Electronic communication is dismantling the old hierarchal systems, because knowledge is available to all. It is also true that relationships between groups at local and global levels require continuous nurturing. Our education, organization and discipline could start with the family. “Our culture, with its emphasis on the individual and the peer group, has not invested energy and money in the family systems approach within the community. Moreover, many programs of family life are base don pathology and counseling instead of prevention and enrichment.” (Sawin1979:128) The late Dr. Margaret Sawin

spent her whole life creating and teaching a family enrichment program called “Family Clusters.” She believed, and so do I, that “the most important area of family life is the development and continuation of self-worth. This is the foundation block for the individual, for the family, and for the society.” (Sawin 1979:131)

Local communities can take responsibility for looking at the family as a whole unit, just as the world is gathering in and looking at itself as one world. The global world is made up of local communities, and if we all take good care of our micro, the macro will flourish. It means that we all have to work for a safer, sounder community that affirms itself in education and in discipline. “In the clamor of the many there lies the power to snatch wish fulfillments by force; sweetest of all, however, is that gentle and painless slipping back into the kingdom of childhood, into the paradise of parental care, into happy go luckiness and irresponsibility. All the thinking and looking after are done from the top, to all questions there is an answer; and for all needs the necessary provision is made. The infantile dream state of the mass man is so unrealistic that he never thinks to ask who is paying for this paradise. The balancing of accounts is left to a higher political social authority, which welcomes the task, for its power is thereby increased; and the more power it has, the weaker and more helpless the individual becomes.” (Jung 1958:59)

There is no time for an infantile dream today. The more we are “ourselves” the more we are able to make the decisions for life. Viktor Frankl, survivor of a concentration camp, said these decisions could “determine whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom...in the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision and not the result of camp influences alone.” (Frankl 1972:104/5)

The concerted action of the many groups coming together for human rights in Australia has been very successful. We are still only a minority, as the Howard Government has gained another political term in office in 2004. But the consciences of even his own party members show that we cannot treat people, and especially children, with isolation and lack of respect and human dignity. Detention has also cost Australia a lot of money. “The average cost of detention from the last financial year is \$37 million per year. In addition \$230 million has been spent in the past 3 years on capital costs at detention centers.” (Rural Australians for Refugees 2005) “It is estimated that at least 10,000 unauthorized arrivals have passed through the detention regime since July 1999, including 3899 children. Thirteen people have died in detention, four others were killed upon being returned to their country of origin.” (Editorial Age 19/7/1005)

The World Socialist Web site posted a revealing story:

“On paper, the government is in a powerful position, having been re-elected last October with a substantially increased majority over the Labor Party. On July 1, the Liberal-National Coalition will acquire control of the Senate for the first time in 25 years.

Yet, when backbenchers Petro Georgiou and Judy Moylan unveiled their proposed amendments to the Migration Act in a Liberal Party room meeting on Tuesday, Howard reportedly responded furiously. He immediately rejected any suggestion of permitting a free conscience vote by government MPs in parliament, apparently telling the party room: Mandatory detention is not a matter of conscience. It is a government policy.

Revealingly, he declared that the government owed its political success to the policy and that he would not be changing it. Those at the meeting told journalists his mood was very, very angry. Howard insisted that the proposals be deferred until next Tuesday for a full-scale internal debate

and appears to be determined not to allow any vote on the bills in parliament at all.

Later, Howard reiterated his stand by publicly defending Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone, who has come under mounting criticism over a growing list of wrongful detentions, illegal deportations and physical and mental abuse of detainees. Howard insisted that Vanstone was administering this policy in a sensible and flexible fashion and trying to achieve the balance between compassion in appropriate cases but also the maintenance of a very strong border protection and immigration policy.

Over recent weeks, the reality behind this very strong border protection and immigration policy has begun to emerge in the mass media, which, up until now, has played a key role in covering up the governments criminal practices during the past decade. (Head 2005)

The Bill was not put to the Parliament, the Government changed its mind and softened its mandatory detention guidelines so that there would be no children left in detention centers. The cycles of humiliation that we have traced from convict days can be overcome by cycles of affirmation. Isolating human beings in detention on Pacific Islands, yesterday and today, goes against the universal declaration of human rights. This declaration is the most widely accepted international convention in human history. It animates people such as Julian Bernside QC and the Rural Australians for Refugees to act together to put these rights into practice. There is less chance of feelings and acts of humiliation increasing and more chance of inner growth for the world of “insiders.”

### **Conclusion**

We have shown that local micro changes may be embedded within larger global changes. We now live in world of electronic communication where we are both discarnate and incarnate (both “inner” and “outer”). Our case study, the office worker, learnt how to cope with bullying on line, and the people working for the

victims of the “Pacific Solution” in Australia also kept in touch on line. There was weak reporting of the asylum seekers’ plight in the beginning, and a weak Opposition in Parliament House.

On Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2005, the last of the children in immigration detention were released. “The release followed an agreement last month between Prime Minister John Howard and Liberal M.Ps led by Petro Georgiou who opposed the Government’s immigration detention policies. Federal Human Rights Commissioner Sev Ozdowski said it had been a long road to reach this milestone. It had been finally achieved with a lot of hard work by a large network of NGO’s, community groups and individuals, whose genuine compassion and belief in this cause has finally resulted in change.” (Jackson 2005)

My faith in democracy and freedom of speech has been greatly strengthened by being part of concerted action in making sure that the asylum seekers who came to Australia were treated with dignity and respect. It was difficult for a minority in Australia, who made the invisible visible, to live with the harsh treatment of men, women and children locked away and harassed day and night. (Our asylum seekers were woken up every night with a torch to be counted).

What kind of thing are human beings? They need affirmation for them to grow in consciousness. From this base of friendship they share information as well as love. Information, both local and virtual will help them discuss new issues of human rights, and come to conclusions that they can speak out and put into action. “The most tragic of all, in the long run, is the ultimate attitude, ‘it doesn’t matter.’” (May in Kane:1976:110) “Potential powers of creativity are within, and we have the duty to work assiduously to discover these powers.” (King in Kane 1976:108)

The Pacific Solution of both the English Government in our convict past, and the present Howard Government, was overwhelmed by the concerted action of people who believed in human dignity. Dignified people bring dignity to all. Cycles of humiliation can be healed by cycles of affirmation.

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