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# The far side of revenge

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## Pacifism in modern conflict management

# The far side of revenge

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**Florence Spurling:** Welcome to Encounter on ABC Radio National. I'm Florence Spurling. Kevin Clements is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, and he is Professor and Foundation Director of the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (ACPACS) at the University of Queensland. As a Quaker Kevin Clements is dedicated to pacifism and humanitarian service. As a Peace and Conflict professional he has had the opportunity to demonstrate in often dangerous situations how his religious convictions contribute to his work.

We begin with a working evening in inner-city Brisbane. A group of politicians and social activists have met to discuss the issues surrounding the armed resistance to coalition forces in Iraq. Kevin Clements is one of the speakers.

**Kevin Clements:** I want to start with a quote from Martin Luther King, who said that war was a very bad chisel for carving out a peaceful tomorrow. And I would like to paraphrase a bit and assert that armed insurgency, especially the insurgency which is very often advancing factional, ethnic or militant Islamist objectives, is an equally bad chisel for carving out a peaceful and democratic Iraq. And so the challenge facing all of us interested in peaceful, non-violent futures, is how we achieve those aspirations, given that the Hussein regime was odious, repressive and brutal, that the invasion was illegal, unnecessary and undemocratic, and that millions of people and democratically-elected governments were duped by a cynical US, supported by the UK and Australia.

The ethnic division of Iraq remains as pervasive as it always has been, and the notion that there is a kind of popular front representing all the Iraq people is, I think, quite fallacious.

**Florence Spurling:** Well, I noticed that evening how unpopular the pacifist stance was in relation to Iraq. At another event a few weeks ago at the University of Queensland, Professor Linda Rosenman introduced Kevin Clements at a seminar attended by senior academics, students and the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson.

**Linda Rosenman:** Professor Clements was formerly Secretary-General of International Alert, one of the world's largest non-government organisations working on conflict prevention and transformation in Africa, Eurasia and Asia.

Professor Clements has been an advisor on defence, security, peace and conflict issues to a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations in Australasia, the United States and Europe, including as President of the European Peace Building Liaison Organisation in Brussels. He is a distinguished scholar and has held significant academic positions in Asia, Australasia, the US and Europe, including as Director of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University in Virginia, US.

**Florence Spurling:** So where did it all begin for Kevin Clements?

**Kevin Clements:** I was born in a little town in New Zealand called Opotiki, which only had about 2,000 or 3,000 people, and the reason we were there was that my father had been a conscientious objector during the war, and the Methodist church didn't quite know where to place a conscientious objector (CO) straight after the war because there was a lot of discrimination against COs at that time. But this opening came up in Opotiki, so he was dispatched there, and that's where I was born.

**Florence Spurling:** And how was the

influence of your father's being a conscientious objector experienced by you?

**Kevin Clements:** Well, it was very odd. I don't remember this of course, but just after I was born, the Returned Servicemen's Association in Opotiki decided that they didn't want to have a CO Methodist minister in their midst, so there was a period of about eight or nine months when shops within this small town refused to serve my mother and father until one of my father's parishioners, who'd been a RNZAF pilot in Britain during the war, came over one day and said that he didn't fight the war in order to perpetuate bigotry and that it was a completely unacceptable act to try and punish somebody for being a conscientious objector after the war. So he actually bought us food, vegetables, meat and so forth from his own farm, and then other people eventually started serving us again when it was realised that the church was buying food on our behalf. So that was an experience that I don't have any direct memory of but it was one that went into our family history and consciousness and made me aware of some of the costs of dissent.

**Florence Spurling:** Fast-forward to that University seminar a few weeks ago: Kevin Clements is welcoming Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Currently she's Executive Director of Realising Rights: the Ethical Globalisation Initiative. The Seminar is called Human Rights in an Age of Terror. Professor Clements is opening proceedings, and here are a few highlights of what he said.

**Kevin Clements:** It's my great pleasure to be here with Mary Robinson and good friends to deal with this issue of human rights in an age of terror. Violent conflict is very strongly correlated with minor or major violations of human rights. Political regimes which violate civil and political rights are much more likely to experience political violence than those which don't. Seventy-two percent of states that are involved in civil wars also reported extra-judicial executions, torture, police and prison

violence, as well as the mistreatment of refugees and immigrants. And we're confronting a situation now where in opposition to terrorism, liberal democratic and pluralist governments are adopting policies which strike not only at the heart of constitutional law by removing Habeas Corpus, but which are also likely to become associated with more and more violence in the future; they're going to generate exactly the

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behaviour which they're seeking to avoid.

Condoning interrogation by torture directly or indirectly through the policy of rendition, (the euphemism which means silver planes land at airports and friendly governments deliver suspects to American authorities to take to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere for a little torture light) and by eliminating potential terrorist subjects in search and kill operations in what amounts to extra-judicial executions, this is really striking at the heart of what makes our societies the kinds of societies that we wish and choose to live in. So the terrorists to this extent are winning, insofar as they're subverting constitutional law, Habeas Corpus, the near universal opposition to the use of torture as a legitimate instrument for interrogation purposes and so forth.

**Florence Spurling:** Peace and Conflict Studies have not always been accepted in the academy, being seen by some in the 1980s as subversive and unpatriotic. But in March 2005, Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Ms Quentin Bryce AC, was in a more appreciative era when she opened the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland.

**Quentin Bryce:** In this global environment the ACPACS seeks to develop a sophisticated understanding of

the causes of hostility, discord and aggression. The Centre is cross-disciplinary and is unique in Australia, bringing together the study of peace and conflict, international politics and development, ADR, mediation and law.

The Charter of the Centre is to be the best source of advice, knowledge and information about violence and conflict in the Asia-Pacific region.

Professor Clements, I am heartened to

see you complement your global focus with special attention to direct and indirect violence within and between our indigenous community in Australia and the European community, seeking explanations for the high levels of contemporary violence in these local communities.

ACPACS is hosting its inaugural conference, titled Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific Region, establishing its position as a leader in the global commitment to resolving conflict and searching for non-violent solutions. I commend Professor Clements and staff for your vision, foresight, dedication, contribution to peace, and it is my pleasure to open officially the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

**Florence Spurling:** In this *Encounter* we're following the life of Professor Kevin Clements, Quaker and peace worker, who seems to have been rather unconventional from the day of his birth in regional New Zealand. Kevin Clements sought Christian ministry in young adult life but for a variety of reasons was interested in the Oxford Movement and Anglican practice. With his wife he went to Oxford to train for ordination in the Church of England, having been inspired by the many urban ministries he had admired in Wellington and other New Zealand cities. But the



practical, applied Christianity he had been looking for in Britain did not materialise for him in the Anglican training system.

**Kevin Clements:** The discrepancy between the promise of the church and the reality I found myself in proved too great. Then I decided that there were other ways in which you could minister, and I was actually working on development issues at that stage, so I moved much more into the sociology of development. We left the theological college, and for the rest of that year in Oxford attended a Catholic monastery, Blackfriars, which was very much embedded in how to make sense of the Gospel within a particular context. They had a very interesting ministry to children with disabilities, and it was a very welcoming, inclusive community. I think I've always been drawn to communities that really do manifest some notion of a sort of incarnate Christ or being.

**Florence Spurling:** Where did the Quakers begin for you? What started that world that now is so central in your life?

**Kevin Clements:** Well I had a Quaker girlfriend when I was about 16 so she was a very direct introduction to Friends, but I always had great anxieties about the sort of shapelessness of Friends. I also thought they were a little elitist initially. They always seemed to me full of intellectuals and people who had a very cerebral understanding of faith. I was interested in Quakerism because of its commitment to the peace testimony and pacifism. At that stage I found it unsatisfactory in terms of religious ritual and expression but then when my wife and I went to Hong Kong, we went to the Anglican Church first of all, but that turned out to be the Crown Colony at prayer. But the Bishop of Hong Kong actually had given his chapel to the Quakers, so we ended up moving from the Cathedral to the Bishop's chapel, where we had a Quaker meeting. It was very actively engaged at that stage in providing relief service to both sides of the Vietnam War through the American Friends' Service Committee. And so again, our desire for some concrete service and witness and action, met with a worshipping community. We moved into that, and

that's basically where we started becoming Quakers.

**Florence Spurling:** At the ACPACS launch earlier this year, Kevin Clements addressed the Governor of Queensland and other dignitaries and in his personal and professional passion for the work of peace-making included a reference from a Seamus Heaney poem.

**Kevin Clements:** It's the parties in conflict themselves who have to start hoping for a sea-change on the far side of revenge, where hope and history might rhyme. And that's both a process and a substance issue. Conflict transformation interveners and peace research centres like ours need to have considerable humility. We don't solve anybody's problems, we have to develop a much quieter, subtler, facilitative role and orientation for the very vexed questions which are challenging the world community, and this national community.

One of the challenges now facing the peace research community is that of avoiding complacency. We mustn't become so respectable and so acceptable that we forget the origins of much discontent and violent grievance. In particular we have to work particularly hard to ensure that the violent tragedies of the 20th century are not repeated in the 21st. It's not peace studies that subvert well-ordered societies, it's the fragility of our identities, an unwillingness to accept the identity of others. It's willful neglect, greed and selfishness; it's the blind tolerance of unacceptable inequality and injustice, and the readiness of political leaders to subvert and undermine constitutions and laws for their own purposes. This is what really causes the violence that afflicts the world. We have to work towards achieving the millennium development goals by 2015 if we're to demonstrate to the poorest and the most vulnerable in the world that we have their interests at heart, and that they too are as important and as valuable as us in this room.

In particular we need to focus on ways of building a mutuality of respect across the boundaries of inequality and difference. The preventable death of any one of us, anywhere in the world, diminishes all of us. Why is it that we can shed tears for the deaths of our

own, and none for those of different races? Where's the international mourning for the 18,000 people who died from hunger and disease in Darfur over the past 18 months? Where was CNN when 3 million people died over the last ten years in the Eastern Congo? What's the world doing about Mugabe's odious regime in Zimbabwe, and the poverty and misery he's generated over the past five years? Who's mourning the 100,000 civilians who've been killed alongside the 2000 coalition forces in Iraq?

How do we ensure rich and wealthy countries don't give more priority to security against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction than the elimination of poverty, disease and despair, all of which kill more people each day than are killed in terrorist acts or through the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

I think initially I was a very absolutist pacifist. Now I would describe myself as Einstein did, as a dedicated pacifist but willing to accept that there are situations in which people are not willing to make sacrifices, and they're not willing to place themselves at the kind of risk that an absolute pacifist might. I also think there are instances where pacifists can't say, for example, that South Africans should not have adopted violent means when they had exhausted a range of non-violent means to achieve their ends in relation to apartheid.

For me pacifism is a compass pointer, an aspiration, and within Friends a vocational commitment to try and ensure that there is always that option when people are considering ways of dealing with violence and ways of dealing with highly conflictual situations. In my experience I have found that there is something in that pacifist position, and in a very radical commitment to non-violence which actually expands the number of options available to you. And if you don't have that as an option, it seems to me you only have one tool in the toolbox, and it's a hammer, and your problems look a little bit like nails. Which is not to say that my pacifism hasn't been challenged in different ways. For example, in New Zealand the government appointed me to a Defence Committee of Inquiry to work out ways in which New Zealand

could defend itself while maintaining a rigorous anti-nuclear policy. I was the pacifist on that committee and discovered that I didn't want to confirm the stereotypes of pacifists, so I took time out to discover all about corvettes and tanks and different kinds of defence strategies so that I could open up a conversation with military people. I think that absolute pacifists who are not willing to understand the position of the other side fail to appreciate the motivations that drive others who don't adopt a pacifist position.

**Florence Spurling:** Give me an example. For instance, your major work in Africa: you have a couple of stories that are very engaging about keeping the non-violence option.

**Kevin Clements:** It became very personal for me in Burundi because when I was head of International Alert we were working with a range of military people, politicians and others, and one day were wanting to travel from Bujumbura to Gitega, a city in from the capital in Burundi. One of the military people we worked with, Colonel Mamere, was not prepared to let us travel without soldiers sitting in the back with AK47s. And I wasn't prepared to let that happen, and it didn't. Although I later discovered, incidentally, that he got rid of the armed guard, but actually had a pistol in his front glove compartment.

But that was, I think, an instance where I felt more vulnerable having an armed guard to draw attention to myself, than by not having an armed guard. I also felt uncomfortable about the whole notion of doing peace work with somebody from the military sitting in the back seat. As regards ways in which I think my pacifism has helped create a different orientation to conflict there are a couple of examples I can give. Once we had a very interesting women's program in Burundi, aimed at bringing together Hutu and Tutsi women nurses, community and social workers and government officials, who had found themselves at opposite ends of the genocide, but who were absolutely crucial to knitting the

community back together again. We worked with different groups of these women, in groups of 25 to 30 across the whole country, for about 18 months. Initially the primary focus was on dealing with their traumatic experiences, and figuring out ways in which they

some of the Hutu men that remained behind would rape them and all sorts of terrible things. So they didn't want to come back. But the Tutsi women that had lived there were very magnanimous and forgiving, and felt that it was time to begin the business of reaching out

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could begin talking to one other again, and eventually they did start opening up conversations that were more civil than those they had right at the beginning when they just kept on throwing accusations at one other, calling each other either a genocidaire or a putschist, and a murderer, and so on. All sorts of terrible labels were thrown around.

They broke through that barrier because they realised that there was nothing to be gained by naming and blaming after the conflict. And they started opening up the conversations which were always a bit difficult, but then they wanted to find out about how they could work on generating higher levels of personal security for themselves, security from armed rebels and security from the army and the police and others, and how they could do some income generation and get better food security.

One day we had one workshop in a border area where a group of Hutu refugees in Tanzania came back into Burundi and met up with some of the Tutsi women from the village that they both lived in; they wanted to come back and see their lands and to meet up with the women that they used to work with. But they felt really insecure about that. We provided an acceptable cover for the preliminary meeting but they were worried about coming back when we weren't there. They thought that they would come back and the Tutsi men and

across the border and bring these women back home again. They weren't able to persuade the women in Tanzania that they would be safe until they decided to develop a way of signalling that it was safe to come back, and that the women in the village would assume responsibility for their safety. Their village was near a little hill on the border region and they decided that the women in the village would be there at 6 o'clock in the morning and if the women from Tanzania came to the hill and sang the first verse of a song they used to sing together this would be the signal. If it was safe, the women in the village would then sing the second verse, and that would be a signal they could all come together. I wasn't present when this happened, but my women's manager was, because she felt it was important to have some accompaniment there. It was one of those stunning, grassroots experiences of making peace, when out of the silence of the early morning the women on the hill started singing, and the women in the village responded, and they came together. It represented a willingness to acknowledge the difficulties and the traumas and the hurt, but also a willingness to think about a forgiving action and then to develop their own ritualised way of making sure that the women were safe and they could meet and visit their old plots of land and so forth.

**Florence Spurling:** Did you meet with



intractable or ideological opposition in some of your experiences as a peace worker?

**Kevin Clements:** Yes, I've had a couple of instances where we've brought people together in good faith, expecting them to respond in good faith to the situation we'd created, and then discovered that far from being interested in peace, they were actually interested in perpetuating the discontent and the conflict because of their own criminal activities. And that's always very sobering, because it undermines your trust in the other person, and it creates an extraordinarily bad atmosphere for negotiations.

**Florence Spurling:** So it's a betrayal?

**Kevin Clements:** In the instance I'm thinking of it was a very clear betrayal because the person concerned had no interest in pursuing a negotiated settlement to the conflict, and had every interest in making sure that the divisions persisted, that the republic that had broken away from a country continued in its independent existence so that they could pursue their own criminal activities.

**Florence Spurling:** So what did that mean to you as a Quaker? Where did your particular religious faith come into play in a situation as disappointing as that?

**Kevin Clements:** I don't think I'm different from anybody else. In that instance I reacted angrily and I was quite frustrated by the situation. Although it was odd: the next day, in fact, I started looking at ways in which you could begin rebuilding the relationship with somebody who was a criminal. That did result in a different relationship, a more cautious relationship, but one in which I was aware of the situation and could then act accordingly.

**Florence Spurling:** There was a sense of starting again, a persistence in that?

**Kevin Clements:** Yes, starting again with fuller knowledge of the person with whom I was dealing. I think that's one of the things which Quakers are well-known for, that in different circumstances and situations there is a willingness to persist, even with the most impossible of people, in the hope that sooner or later, by appealing to the goodness in the other person, it's going to be possible for them to begin seeing

the world in a different light, in a much more positive and instructive one.

**Florence Spurling:** So that would be the difference between a Quaker's perspective as a peace worker and a humanist peace worker – there would be more of a level of persistence, in your experience?

**Kevin Clements:** There's a religious injunction within Quakerism to persist, to go for the long haul, to view peace-making as a marathon rather than as a sprint, knowing that these kinds of problems are very deep-rooted, and they often have their origins in a long history. It's important that we work with those people so that they can, in their own time, begin addressing traumatic experiences and deal with them when they feel able to do so.

**Florence Spurling:** So seeing the God in everyone, seeing that spark of the eternal in everyone, is that a tough call when you're as betrayed and disappointed as you've been in some situations?

**Kevin Clements:** I think so. I think you have to remind yourself that within that person who has betrayed you, there is another person, a better person waiting to emerge. And sometimes that is an act of faith against reality.

**Florence Spurling:** Has it had results for you, though?

**Kevin Clements:** I've had a few occasions when simply by sticking with people who are feeling traumatised and angry, who haven't got the slightest interest in peace, simply by accompanying them and their anger, you get a small transformation in attitude.

**Florence Spurling:** But accompanying someone with a criminal intent wouldn't be possible in the sense of accompanying their intent. I mean that distinction between the intent and the person is probably a fine line you're always walking, isn't it?

**Kevin Clements:** Exactly, and if they are criminal that's one of the challenges confronting all peace-makers – how do you work with people who you know have engaged in criminal and violent kinds of behaviour, while still appealing to the shred of humanity within them, without conferring impunity upon them? That is the challenge.

**Florence Spurling:** I guess for Quakers, theologically, you're

universalists. Whereas some Christians view humanity as only some can be saved in terms of the Christian understanding of salvation, for a Quaker all eventually can be redeemed or brought to a rightful understanding. Is that a correct understanding of what Quakerism is?

**Kevin Clements:** I think it clearly is a universalist faith in the sense that everybody, no matter what race, religion or creed, has a potential for being true sons and daughters of the eternal, and of reflecting that eternal spark within their own lives. I think that is right at the heart of Quakerism.

**Florence Spurling:** Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, was welcomed earlier by Kevin Clements and the subject is 'Human Rights in an Age of Terror'.

**Mary Robinson:** It's important to reinforce the values, the true values of our societies, and if we compromise those then we have done a terrible disservice and made us all less secure in the longer term. The undermining of the Rule of Law and of no torture, and the endless detention of people without trial, without any reference to their families etc, I mean how far these matters have gone. We must also link the idea of addressing the divides in our world because it's not that poverty causes terrorism – that would be a gross oversimplification. Indeed those who have carried out acts of terrorism don't tend to be very poor, they tend to be educated and have some of the benefits of society. But they're angry, they're humiliated, there are many reasons why they do this, and there's a manipulation that can go on, the kind of manipulation of referring to things like Guantanamo Bay. So we need to reassert, as the Madrid agenda does, the standards, but we also must tackle the divides.

**Kevin Clements:** There are terrorists committing criminal acts, and they have to be dealt with in a criminal fashion, as has been done in the UK very efficiently by the British police. Declaring a war on terror was always a mistake, linking it to old notions of the Crusades and so forth, just fuelling animosity and antagonism. We've got to overcome that very simplistic, dualistic perception of terror, terrorism, terrorists and non-

terrorists. I don't think it's helpful in terms of us understanding what's driving them, nor is it helpful in terms of us protecting ourselves from any particular threat they might make to us.

I don't think you need to excuse terrorist violence, just as there's no excuse for state violence. There are some mitigating factors for why the British police shot an innocent Brazilian, but there's really no excuse for that at another level, because violent acts by nature are irreversible, they have traumatic consequences for everybody, and they should only ever be used in the absolutely last circumstance after every other option has been exhausted.

Somewhere between excuseniks and understanding which confers impunity and creates a space for terrorism, there is a way in which you can engage those who are committed to terror without justifying their behaviour. I think it gives you a better possibility of understanding what's really driving the terrorist. And that's exactly the challenge that we're facing right now: how do we understand the mind of the terrorist so that we can better prepare ourselves to deal with whatever threat they might throw at us?

**Florence Spurling:** Do you have any sense yourself of the building blocks of where negotiation and discussion could even start to take place?

**Kevin Clements:** I had a French physiotherapist in London who would never go to the centre of pain, she would say that we had to unfreeze the pain from the outside. I think that's one of the challenges in relation to this. We need to work quietly into the centres of terrorist activity by working with those on the outside, and then gradually moving closer to the centres. This is what people are beginning to do now with courses on Arabic Studies and so forth. But it seems to me that we've got to make a particular effort to begin opening up conversations with those that we haven't had conversations with. I think there's a whole history here. If you look at the old studies on social distance done in the 1950s, Turks and Arabs were always the least desirable

neighbours in most Western studies. So there's always been a long and persistent antagonism towards people from the Middle East, and it's deeply ingrained in us in terms of the Crusade mentality and so forth. And there's been a pattern of 300 years of humiliation from the West against Islam.

## We need to work quietly into the centres of terrorist activity by working with those on the outside, and then gradually moving closer to the centres.

**Florence Spurling:** During his time working in London recently, Kevin Clements had a conversation with a high-ranking diplomat from the Middle East.

**Kevin Clements:** And then he said when Westerners addressed him, they would extend their hands for a handshake, but he says 'They weren't shaking hands with me, they were shaking hands with oil and gas.' And then he said, 'We've had 300 years of this persistent humiliation.' When you get that kind of history reflected in the treatment of Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where you get a persistent pattern of bias and hostility, privilege on one side and relative poverty on the other, it underlines that deep sense of humiliation and shame. And I think that is probably the best explanation as to why people become suicide bombers. It's not that they're personally poor, many of them are actually quite affluent, or that they're uneducated, it's just that they, or their parents, had humiliating experiences that challenged their own sense of themselves as whole people. And then they find themselves in an Islamist group where there is a larger identity to which they can anchor their fragile identities, that, as my friend Vamik Volkan says, becomes a way in which those larger group identities fill the cracks of vulnerability that are revealed from the humiliating experiences they've had.

Then acts like suicide are ways in which the larger community can somehow vindicate the personal humiliation that's been experienced. This sort of explanation makes a lot of sense to me.

**Florence Spurling:** But making sense is a complex process, according to where you sit with all of this, for example the

relatives of those killed in the London tube stations and on the London bus, the relatives of the Brazilian man shot. The Quaker idea of seeing God in everyone would be an almost impossible call for the victims and relatives of victims to do with the people who murdered their loved ones, or even the police action with the Brazilian man. How do you respond – you would have worked with people with that level of anguish when you've done peace negotiations?

**Kevin Clements:** Yes, there's absolutely no way in which they can move towards a position of forgiveness or reconciliation at this stage. It is, as you say, far too raw for them, and completely inappropriate even to try. So what peace-builders and those working with people who have experienced trauma try and do is to accompany those people, or work with them and develop a relationship, which enables the third party to stand with them in their grief and anguish, as they come to grips with what they've just experienced. If you diminish that trauma by moving towards some premature act of forgiveness or reconciliation there will never be any chance of real healing. But on the other hand, if you go to revenge, then very often you compound the trauma, and it becomes very difficult to begin addressing the grief. That's one of the interesting challenges – how do we begin developing processes whereby we



can mourn with people as they go through grieving processes, and do that in a way which will mean that they don't feel that the only response they have is to start attacking, to take revenge and to slaughter those who've slaughtered their own. That just generates the vicious cycle of violence and revenge and counter-revenge and more revenge.

**Florence Spurling:** Judith Butler from the University of California talks about the importance of respecting the right to mourn on both sides, that grief and suffering and mourning have to be available and respected on both sides of any conflict. Would that resonate with you in what you're saying?

**Kevin Clements:** Absolutely. I have this little pain calculus, which goes as follows: There were 3,600 people killed in the World Trade Centre which was a complete calamity, and there are 3,600 grieving families, but we know that there have been 14,000 people killed in Afghanistan since then, up to 100,000 in Iraq, there are 3.5 million people who've been killed in the Congo, and about five million people are going to die of AIDS this year in Africa. We don't grieve for all of those other deaths, each one of which is as important to their families as the deaths of the 3,600. There's no way in which you can start comparing my grief with your grief, but it says something about the limits of our empathy and compassion that we can turn on the television and be greeted with a major crisis in Niger or Darfur and see people dying in front of us, and don't have a capacity to grieve with them. I think we've become numb to that, and that I think is generating some real problems in terms of privileging the grieving of our own families and our

communities, our own states and nations, and not thinking about the grief that afflicts others.

**Florence Spurling:** Professor Kevin Clements, Quaker and Director of the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland.

The launch of the Centre in March this year was held in conjunction with a Conference called Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific. The keynote address for the Conference was given by Greg Urwin, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum.

**Greg Urwin:** While peace-building is very much a matter of appropriate institution-building and policy-making, it remains essentially a matter of values. The quest for peace is a quest for coherence or unity. In order for that quest to be meaningful in Pacific societies, those who assist in peace restoration must have a good understanding of what coherence and unity means for Pacific peoples.

**Florence Spurling:** This is Encounter on ABC Radio National, and the story of Professor Kevin Clements, Quaker and peace worker, has led us from a small town in New Zealand to London, Africa, and now on to Brisbane, where his Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies consist of both a local and global focus.

**Kevin Clements:** We can't deal with conflicts and the violence in other places until Australians and New Zealanders first deal with the fundamental conflict that lies at the heart of our own societies; that of the original displacement of Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples. And so a good part of our Centre's work is aimed at studying this issue – what it has meant

to Aborigines from colonisation to the present, and what it has meant in terms of violence against Aborigines, both direct violence, and indirect violence. It's an absolute indictment of Australia that the average life expectancy of an urban Aboriginal male is about the same as that of an African male, in one of the most affluent countries in the world. So that's where we begin, we begin at home with the violence that's been done to people within our own local community.

Globally, we're looking at our immediate neighbourhood, and there are many instances of violence and collapse, a lot of which have been caused by colonisation, and fundamental challenges to notions of traditional identity and custom. We're working in East Timor, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, for example, in partnership with locals as they come to grips with what is their core identity and how it is being challenged by modernity. How do they make sense of tradition and custom in a so-called modern world? What is progressive about returning to that tradition? And what's reactionary about it? So there's a lot of work being done currently within Pacific Island countries. We're a theory, research and practice centre; I believe very strongly that we shouldn't be just a theory research centre, and so that means that we're engaging in a variety of different kinds of peace practices, both within Australia and in countries in our immediate region.

**Florence Spurling:** Kevin Clements is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, and his respect for their teachings of pacifism and seeing God in everyone is central to all that he does at the office and in the field.

**Kevin Clements:** For me, Quakers are enjoined to not only respond to that of God in each other, but I think they are also forced to respond to the vulnerable in the other. And they may be the same thing. If you stop thinking of God as omnipotent and as actually weak and vulnerable and existing, being in our vulnerability, that's maybe where the essence of the divine begins. In fact, that is the whole point of the incarnation and so forth, it begins with vulnerability in terms of the birth experience and the birth story, and then we have to figure

## contributions

Contributions to the **ADR Bulletin** for 2006 are welcome

Please submit articles or notes (between 500 and 4000 words) for publication to:

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Submissions should be presented as a Word file, attached to an email.

out ways in which we respond to that birth-baby experience. That is the epitome of vulnerability. Each one of us has that inner child within us as adults, that part of us which is most fragile, the most insecure and the most dependent on affirmation and inclusion.

It is also most dependent on being seen as part of a friendly, loving community. If that inner child is bruised and hurt and traumatised in some way or other, then it manifests itself in adult pathology.

**Florence Spurling:** Kevin Clements' father, as a conscientious objector in regional New Zealand in World War II, knew the costs of dissent. Kevin Clements also honours the memory of a peace-committed Lutheran pastor in Nazi German, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who joined the Resistance and the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Nazis in 1945. We begin by talking about how Bonhoeffer cannot be described as an absolute pacifist.

**Kevin Clements:** Yes, when his sister-in-law, Emmy Bonhoeffer, was asked to explain how he moved from being pacifist to becoming part of the assassination plot, Bonhoeffer apparently said to her, 'If I see a madman driving a car into a group of innocent bystanders, then I can't as a Christian simply wait for the catastrophe and then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering-wheel out of the hands of the driver.' And I think that is the challenge. My father faced that challenge as a pacifist during the Second World War as well, because he was imprisoned, but then he was also agonising about how he would have dealt with the obvious and manifest evil that was being perpetrated by the Nazis at that time. I think that is the challenge to pacifists, how to stand by when evil is being done when you don't have any obvious answer to it. It's an agonising place to stand, because others feel they have the answer but one of the things that we've discovered is that if you win a battle, you still have to negotiate a peace. When you win a war, you still

have to figure out how to do the post-war reconstruction and you've still got to confront all of the traumatic experiences of that war and that violence.

But Bonhoeffer deliberately chose to

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go back into Germany, when he could have lived out the war in the United States, and he chose to join an intelligence agency so he was able to work from the inside, so he could begin seeing something of the way in which the Nazi party's own pathology was destroying what he knew to be the strengths and true values of Germany, and German culture. And I think he epitomises that pacifist dilemma brilliantly.

**Florence Spurling:** He did bring that into a very brilliant focus, certainly, and there have been others who have taken a slightly different route, a different emphasis, because of different contexts, and different circumstances, for example Martin Luther-King Jnr and his concept of the intentional sacrifice for peace. There have been some examples in your own experience with your father, with your own commitment to being unarmed and unprotected in situations of violence. So at the end of the day, where do you think you would sit? Your situation has obviously never been as acute as Bonhoeffer's nor even as your father's, but at the end of the day what have been the instincts that have come to the fore in your mind and experience when you've done peace work in the field, and as you form your own activities and work projects here in the Pacific and South East Asia?

**Kevin Clements:** Maybe I should illustrate this with a comment from my father as well. When my father was dying, my daughter was holding his

hand and said, 'Well, Granddad, what are the recipes for a good life?' And he said, 'The recipe for a good life is to have courage, love, and hope.' I think that's the major challenge facing a pacifist, and that's why I think religious

pacifists in a sense are better able to move in this direction than humanists. That is, to have the courage in a conflict situation to be willing to sacrifice yourself, to bring the pain of the situation on to yourself, rather than to inflict it on others. That of course was the challenge of Gandhi, and Martin Luther King and all the others that have adopted the non-violent witness. The challenge for me personally if confronted by those situations is, whether I would have the courage to make that sacrifice. I think it's one thing that we all need to address, because one of the anxieties about the war on terror is that we're developing legislation all around the world now where liberty is being sacrificed for security. The powers of the police and the intelligence services are expanding and so forth, and it's becoming more and more difficult to express yourself freely without a sense that there's somebody watching and monitoring what you do. I think it's not impossible that in the next five to 10 years, we're all going to be confronted by situations which are going to demand some courage, and a willingness to dissent bravely from orthodoxy, because you know that the orthodoxy is the orthodoxy of people who see no alternative but violence, and no alternative but repression, and no alternative but the heavy iron fist of the state on people. I think we're moving into a situation where that challenge may be closer than we actually think. ♦



## diary and happenings

- The 8th **National Mediation Conference** entitled **No mediator is an island: Celebrating Difference – learning from each other** Will be held in Hobart, Tasmania from 3-5 May 2006. If you would like further information on presenting or attending see [www.mediationconference.com.au](http://www.mediationconference.com.au).
- **ACDC** is holding a one day course aimed at those who handle complaints in an organisation, entitled **Complaint Handling – A Complaint is a Gift**. The workshop aims to give participants an understanding of the importance of active listening, suspending judgment and the use of appropriate body language and eye contact. Summarising, clarifying and paraphrasing may also be explored. The course is being held in Sydney on 19 April 2006. For more information on ACDC courses see [www.acdcld.com.au](http://www.acdcld.com.au)
- **ACDC** is also holding a one day workshop for Executive Officers; Compliance and Risk Managers; Human Resources Managers; Internal Auditors; Systems Designers; Policy Developers and Complaints Managers entitled **Conflict and Dispute Management Systems**. The workshop aims to give participants an understanding of various ADR processes and their application within organisations. The course will be held in Sydney on 26 April 2006.
- **ACDC** is also holding **Stage 1-3 Certificate Courses**. **Stage 1 Accreditation Courses** are being held in Sydney on 24 January, 22 March and 3 May 2006. **Stage 2 Accreditation Courses** are being held in Sydney in February and March 2006. The available categories include Workplace Mediation, Local Government Mediation, Family Mediation and Conciliation. **Stage 3 Accreditation Courses** are being held in Sydney in March and June 2006. This three-day accredited workshop is the recommended practising level certificate.
- **CEDR** is holding three **Mediation Skills Training Courses**. Fast Track courses (five consecutive days with a weekend break in-between) will be held on 1-3 and 6-7 of February 2006 and the 17-19 and 22-23 May 2006 in Victoria, London. A residential course held outside of London will take place from the 20-26 April. If you would like to book a place or find out more about the course, contact the training team, +44 (0)20 7536 6000, e-mail [training@cedr.co.uk](mailto:training@cedr.co.uk)
- The **Trillium Group** is conducting **4-day ADR Workshops** in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney in early 2006. The workshops aim to teach participants how to use Principled Negotiation and how to mediate disputes. To register or for more information, visit [www.thetrilliumgroup.com.au](http://www.thetrilliumgroup.com.au) or call 1 800 636 869 toll free or 02 9036 0333.
- The **Professional Certificate in Arbitration** is being offered as a joint venture between the **Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators Australia** and the **University of Adelaide**. This course aims to qualify skilled practitioners in the field of arbitration. The qualification of Professional Certificate in Arbitration, awarded by the University of Adelaide, will be granted on completion of the required components of both courses. The **general course** is being held on the 19-20 May 2006 and the advanced course will be held on the 15-16 September 2006. If you would like to book a place or find out more about the course, contact (08) 8303 4777 or visit [www.adelaide.edu.au/arbitration/course/](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/arbitration/course/).
- The **Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies** is offering several courses in 2006. An approved Queensland Law Society training course on **Mediation** will be offered, catering for the needs of a variety of professionals in dispute resolution contexts. The course is taught as an intensive 4 day seminar. An **Advanced Mediation Course** designed for participants who have completed basic mediation training and have some dispute resolution experience will also be offered. The course is an intensive 4 day seminar. An **Advanced Mediation Course** designed for participants who have completed basic mediation training and have some dispute resolution experience will also be offered. This course is designed for participants who have completed basic mediation training and have some dispute resolution experience. Topics may include working with the cultures of the mediator, exploring current theories of cross cultural mediation, communication issues, worldview and mediation and cross cultural issues and power. For more information, please contact +61 7 3346 9964 or +61 7 3346 8742 or email: [mediate@uq.edu.au](mailto:mediate@uq.edu.au).

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