



What is the Foundation for Reconciliation?

Founded in 2000 in Bogotá, Colombia, by Fr. Leonel Narvaez Gomez, the Foundation promotes the theory and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation as the basis for positive relationships and individual and societal development. Particularly where cycles of social or political violence have become entrenched, the Foundation provides a methodology to overcome emotional trauma and strengthen social capital.

Drawing on psychology, sociology, conflict mediation and negotiation theory, the methodology uses a variety of techniques to promote personal transformation and optimize constructive co-existence. The Foundation addresses the needs of victims of violence and victimizers to rebuild key pillars of human existence: meaning in life, psychological and physical security, and social integration.

The Foundation's work is accomplished through the creation of community forums, called Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation (Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación or ESPERE).

Currently, Schools operate in Colombia in 350 neighborhoods in Bogotá, Medellín, Barranquilla, and Cali and in Brazil, in Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Sao Paulo and Salvador de Bahia. Plans are in place to extend the Foundation's work to communities in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. We are now exploring opportunities to establish Schools in North America.

The **Fundación para la Reconciliación** has been chosen to receive an Honorable Mention from the 2006 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education for "its efforts in introducing new tools for thought and analysis of human discourse to accomplish work of reconciliation and forgiveness as a practical exercise based on a precise methodology. In 2005, 9,000 peasants from Colombia's poorest areas were involved in a traditional literacy project which included a component of "emotional literacy." The impact of this course, based on the principle and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation, especially among the young, has been very positive."

What are the Schools for Forgiveness and Reconciliation (ESPERE)?

The ESPERE schools are community groups consisting of 10-15 individuals who commit to embarking on an intensive recuperative experience to overcome emotional traumas caused by violence and life's daily conflicts. These individuals come from social service, political, religious or cultural grassroots organizations and participate in



a 10 module workshop that provides them with a step by step methodology in forgiveness and reconciliation. Upon completing their own training, they may initiate new schools in their respective communities. Known as “animadores” (motivators) they also join a network of others who have completed the training and are committed to this work. Through the network they receive continued support and build their collective knowledge.

What does the workshop include?

The Forgiveness and Reconciliation workshops are focused on six dimensions:

1. Cognitive and thinking levels, critical analysis and reflection
2. Feeling and emotional levels, to forgive offenses
3. Attitudes and behaviors
4. Transcendence and spirituality (non-religious or denominational)
5. Capacity for transformation
6. Rituals and symbols

The forgiveness process has six distinct steps:

1. Establishing commitment and motivation
2. Moving from darkness to the light, emotional level
3. Deciding to forgive
4. Seeing with new eyes (the offender and oneself)
5. Understanding the offender
6. Establishing a bridge to reconciliation

The reconciliation process has four steps:

1. Building truth
2. Promoting justice
3. Making a pact
4. Celebrating restitution

Every workshop module incorporates:

- A safe environment
- Opportunities for interaction, questions and dialog
- Personal space to explore “my case”
- Small group work



- Integrated personal transformation
- Inspiration, social, scientific and mediation theory, readings
- Ritual



Where can the forgiveness and reconciliation process be applied?

The Foundation seeks to promote a culture of reconciliation in families, congregations, businesses and schools while giving special consideration to minority and marginalized groups. The methodology offers potential value in all settings where conflict and disagreement can occur. It can be used to:

- create a positive existence and overcome emotional wounds, anger and resentment in vulnerable and high risk populations (e.g., ex-combatants, prisoners, batterers, gang members, political refugees)
- strengthen family bonds as fundamental for the healthy life of a society
- increase productivity and promote a positive organizational climate in business
- increase the effectiveness of non-governmental, governmental and community organizations in meeting the needs of their constituencies
- promote co-existence and exercise of authority in schools

How can I get involved?

- Make a contribution to the Foundation. Send a check to:
Fundación para la Reconciliación
Father Leonel Narváez Gómez, Director
Calle 40 No. 78A-14
Bogota, Colombia
- Become an “Animador” by participating in a training workshop
- Identify community organizations whose work would be enhanced by the forgiveness and reconciliation methodology
- Sponsor a workshop



Purpose and Vision

- Build a culture of peace by bringing the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation to the daily lives of victims of injustice or violence
- Provide a process to heal the wounds of past injustice or violence and engage in peaceful conflict resolution in the present and future, and, thus transform an individual's anger or resentment into the ability to live in dignity, harmony and peace with others
- Promote personal transformation through cognitive, emotional, behavioral and spiritual engagement
- Provide specific resources and tools to:
 - Give individuals emotional control over feelings of hatred and anger
 - Manage conflict with others
 - Build capability for peace at the individual, neighborhood and community levels
- Strengthen institutional mediators in the community by training people in the theory, tools and methodologies of forgiveness and reconciliation, who in turn become qualified to train others
- Establish a network of these practitioners that provides on-going support and further opportunities for learning and development

Through the introduction and practice of this approach, the Foundation's vision is to consolidate a social movement in Colombia, in the U.S. and other parts of the world that permanently promotes new and innovative means of creating community, provides solutions for social injustice and inequality, as well as, pro-active methods for overcoming familial, community and national conflicts.



Operating Principles

- Social capital precedes economic capital
- There cannot be political peace without social peace
- Cities and communities are constructed from the inside out
- It is necessary to embrace the irrationality of forgiveness over the irrationality of violence
- Forgiveness is not forgetting but rather seeing with different eyes
- Without reconciliation there is no future
- Hatred and resentment have grave somatic and psychological effects
- Truth and justice are indispensable elements of reconciliation
- Compassion and tenderness must be reinstated as basic elements of a culture of peace



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