

not always paid for by the government, improvements in domestic animals were infrastructural. Thus, improvements in agriculture were similar to and often fed into internal improvements.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO TRAUMA AND POLITICS: VICTIMHOOD, REGRET, AND HEALING

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Traumatic memories have become central to politics in the West and other Westernized societies. Some intellectuals believe that the attentiveness to victimhood has dire consequences. Most commonly, scholars worry that the focus on victimhood undermines moral accountability, political community, and future-oriented politics. While there is plenty support for those concerns, evidence also suggests the opposite. When we take into account expressions of regret, for example, the attentiveness to victimhood, it appears, leads to increased moral accountability and political solidarity and a revised vision for the future. However, people must be careful how they attend to victims, or the politics of victimhood will obstruct individual therapy, persisting suffering rather than mediating it.

Traumas do not fade easily in our age. Over the past century, Westerners and people living in Westernized societies have become more and more willing to show their wounds and recognize the suffering of others (Barkan 2000; Bartov 2000; Buruma 1999; Confino 2005; Hughes 1993; Maier 1993; Marrus 2006; Novick 1998; Sommers and Satel 2005; Sykes 1992; Torpey 2003, 2006; Winter 2006). As a result, victimhood is a defining feature of politics in the West. But how should we regard this? What is the value of a politics centered on trauma? Is it good that people are so willing to bare their wounds? Is being responsive to everyone else's trauma always commendable? Not surprisingly, scholars are divided on these questions. As Martha Minow suggests, there are fundamentally two sides:

Too much memory or not enough; too much enshrinement of victimhood or insufficient memorializing of victims and survivors; too much past or too little acknowledgement of the past's staging of the present (1998: 2).

This essay assesses both normative positions by considering the consequences of focusing politics on victimhood.

It is intended as a literature review. However, the literature is sweeping, and I opt for a critical introduction rather than a comprehensive survey. I argue that we must come to terms with starkly contradictory processes involved in the politics of victimhood. The West's attention to victims succeeds at just the points where its critics find failure. Critics argue that people's willingness to bare wounds undermines moral culpability, political solidarity, and future-oriented politics; but, considering expressions of regret, in many instances the attentiveness to victims means that Westerners are taking responsibility for events and people that they had not in the past, laying the grounds for a new political future. However, too much emphasis on victimhood and regret can obstruct therapy for individuals, so the politics of victimhood should be approached cautiously.

IN SUPPORT OF THE CRITICS

There are at least three common claims people make against the politics of victimhood. First, claiming victimhood, the critics argue, is an unseemly means of exculpation. Second, holding on to old grievances makes political community difficult. Third, victims wallow in the past, ignore the future, and kill progressive politics. To elaborate the first criticism, victimhood, according to many authors, is a way to shirk moral responsibility. Sandra Westervelt explains that:

[T]he culture of victimization goes beyond a mere increase in the number of people claiming victim status. It also refers to the tendency to use victimization as a justification, excuse, and explanation for wrongful behavior and personal irresponsibility. According to this cultural ethos, victimization confers innocence on its claimant, an innocence secured by having suffered some injustice. The victim may elude responsibility because of this implied innocence.

She goes on to write that "victim" and "guilty" are "becoming mutually exclusive" (1998:7; Finkelstein 2003: 16-38; Holstein and Miller 1990: 108-9; Sommers and Satel 2005: Ch. 3; Sykes 1992). We can see ways that victimhood is a "moral allowance" for both individuals and collectives. After the Second World War, German and French citizens alike "remembered" their oppression under the Nazi regime, while they quickly "forgot" their complicity in the murder of Jews and

other minorities (Bartov 2000; Farmer 1999; Moeller 1996; Olick 2005). Though they may show some remorse, individuals who perpetrated the Rwandan genocide of 1994 are similarly eager to express their own victimhood, resulting from experiences such as hunger, draconian genocide organizers, and Tutsis threatening revenge (Hatzfeld 2005). Official psychological diagnoses may also be a source of absolution. For instance, the Vietnam veterans who committed or witnessed atrocities, including those who admit enjoying the violence when it occurred, are likely diagnosed with the worst cases of posttraumatic stress disorder (Herman 1993: 54; Shay 1994:123; Young 1995: 125-8). The clinical discourse of trauma, as Allan Young has shown, is conventionally explicit in avoiding attributions of guilt (1995: Part 3). Similarly, the commonly held narrative of sexual abuse roots all of a victim's following improprieties in her trauma (Davis 2006). As part of this, a past history of abuse, sexual or otherwise, is often helpful in acquitting female defendants who have attacked or murdered their male partners (Westervelt 1998). Among African Americans, just to give one more example, some women are wary to accuse their abusive partners because they feel that black men already have enough troubles given the severity of racism they must endure (Carbado 1998).

There is evidence that the attentiveness of victimhood obstructs political solidarity, too. As Todd Gitlin (1995) put it, we are in the "twilight of common dreams." In the past, political struggles predominantly had the goal of assimilation. For example, assimilation was the purpose of Martin Luther King's civil rights movement. But since the 1960s, partly due to the failure of assimilationist agendas, political struggle has increasingly become focused on the recognition, rather than obliteration, of difference. The assimilation of differences is now often viewed as oppressive. Consequently, we have a number of divisive struggles that have been termed "identity politics," "multiculturalism," and the "culture wars" (e.g. Bernstein 2005; Glazer 1997; Hollinger 1995; Hughes 1993; Hunter 1992; Maier 1993; Sykes 1992; Torpey 2006: 28-32).

Through this change in politics, identities are increasingly centered on grievances. Charles Maier correctly points out that "collective memories tend to focus not on the long history of an ethnic people but on their most painful incidents of victimization" (1993: 144). We see this vividly with Jews, among whom the Holocaust has become central to their sense of peoplehood (Novick 1999). This has animated a fervent and typically successful quest for justice and reparations among some Jewish groups (see Barkan 2000: Ch. 1, Ch. 3; Finkelstein 2003). In the United States, a common sense of victimhood was even the basis for *new* ethnic identities during the 1960s. These include categories of self-identification such as "Asian American," "Native American," and "Latino" (Espiritu 1992; Nagel 1996; Padilla 1985; see also Eyerman

2001). The emergence of these identities was closely tied to multiculturalism. David Hollinger (1995) argues that in defining their identity strictly in terms of unique disadvantage, racial groups reproduce old racist categories — white, yellow, black, brown, and red. This is proved by the fact that the language of multiculturalism is easily used for racist agendas (e.g. Murray and Hernstein 1994). Hollinger thinks multiculturalism is a treacherous grammar for identity, because it makes political solidarity difficult. Minorities often draw boundaries among themselves in a struggle to define whose group has suffered the worst racism (e.g. Buruma 1999; Maier 1993; Novick 1999). In the most severe instances, dedication to long-standing grievances has led to war and/or genocide in places like Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The contemporary atmosphere of victimhood is a part of these events. Though, we should also recognize that they are also a vestige of something older and somewhat the opposite: heroic nationalism.

Finally, the critics claim that holding on to past injustices means that people are turning their backs on the future. The argument goes that many, particularly Westerners, have let themselves be shackled to the past, and therefore lack the freedom to transform the future (e.g. Maier 1993; Torpey 2006). Memories of all kinds have had an accelerated presence in culture and politics in the past few decades, a phenomenon which John Torpey (2006) names “an avalanche of history.” As Maier’s words above suggest, memories of past injustices are primary in this avalanche (e.g. Bell 2006; Maier 1993; Megill 1998; Olick and Coughlin 2003; Winter 2006). The attention span of people and culture has limits, so it is safe to suspect that the past is crowding out the future in some instances (cf. Maier 2000: 829). Consequently, the abundance of traumatic memories may be an important reason that the West has no popular utopian projects today or even “a plausible overarching vision of a more humane future” (Torpey 2006: 37).

AGAINST THE CRITICS

There is plenty of evidence that the attention to victimhood is harming moral responsibility, political community, and transformative politics. But critics fail to fully recognize or engage evidence that tells the opposite story (but see Finkelstein 2003; Torpey 2006). The critics focus on the claims of victims in their arguments. To see the opposite process clearly, we should look at the ways that others are responding to those claims, the fact that more and more people, and not just perpetrators, are showing regret for past injustices. While the critics are not wholly wrong, it is also true that in many situations, through regret, the politics of victimhood develops new lines of moral culpability, solidarity,

and transformation. Contradictory processes exist, then.

I will begin where I did above, with victimhood and the nature of moral accountability.¹ While victimhood may exculpate, it also inculpates. More people are holding on to old grievances, but more people are also taking responsibility for those grievances. Perpetrators and bystanders are “taking wrongs seriously” (Barkan and Karn 2006a) and showing regret through apologies and financial compensation for past injustices (Barkan 2000; Brooks 1998; Marrus 2006; Minow 1998; Torpey 2003, 2006; Weiner 2005). Jewish organizations have received millions upon millions of dollars in compensation for the Holocaust; President Clinton apologized for the Tuskegee experiments and America’s inaction toward the Rwanda genocide; Japanese Americans successfully gained financial redress for their unconstitutional internment during World War II; American Indians have regained rights to native artifacts and human remains held in museums; and recently, the Alabama governor officially apologized for slavery. These apologies and reparations are publicly expressed sorrow and commitment to victims. Michael Marrus writes that “to be effective apologies [for historical injustices] must communicate responsibility” (2006: 10; Weiner 2005: Ch. 4), or as Nicholas Tavuchis argues as part of his sociology of apology, “An apology ... requires *not* detachment but acknowledgement and painful embracement of our deeds, coupled with a declaration of regret” (1991: 19).

Perpetrators are not the only people accepting liability for past injustices. The Holocaust is the emblem of contemporary victimhood and the lens or standard by which Westerners often understand many atrocities (Buruma 1999; Maier 2000: 826-7; Novick 1999; Powers 1999; Torpey 2006: 37-41). One lesson that has developed in memories of the Holocaust is that the passive bystander is a moral failure. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, for example, find a direct link between memories of the Holocaust and international declarations to prevent future genocides, promises that were put into action during the conflict in Kosovo

1 First, I should comment that the argument that victimhood undermines moral culpability is odd, because it ignores that societies have always had rituals of purification, which can absolve people of guilt. In fact, much of culture has historically been centered on exculpating people from profaning the sacred (e.g. Hubert and Mauss 1964). Soldiers, for example, had a hero’s welcome—medals, parades, celebrations, heroic monuments—to exculpate them from killing. It is quite likely that Vietnam veterans vocalized their trauma because it was a solution to the fact that they were not privy to the hero’s welcome, the old purification ritual (e.g. Neal 2005: 101; Shay 1994; Young 1993: 114). To the extent that victimhood may be used for absolution, it is difficult to say it threatens moral responsibility any more than previous rituals of purification. At least the difference is only one of quantity and not quality.

(2002: 97-103; 2006). We should not overstate these truths, because the claims for prevention do not always mobilize people. Witness the lack of outside intervention in Rwanda, the Bosnian War, and the recent genocide in Sudan. Nonetheless, because of or as part of the lessons drawn from the Holocaust, passive bystanders are increasingly expressing regret. This includes Clinton's apology for America's inaction toward the Rwandan genocide. Additionally, for example, the French Catholic Church has apologized for not acting against the deportation of French Jews under the Vichy regime, and Prime Minister Blair apologized for England's inaction during the Irish Potato Famine.

Keeping in mind that the regret I am talking about intends to communicate a strong sense of accountability — though not necessarily guilt, as I suggest below — apologies like Blair's show that people are taking responsibility for events that occurred generations before. It is a moral failure to be a passive bystander to atrocities going on in our presence, but it is also a moral failure to be a passive bystander to the past. Acts such as Blair's apology for the Potato Famine and redress for Japanese American internment ultimately involve people accepting liability for decisions that they did not and could not make.² Furthermore, it is not just state representatives taking responsibility for injustices over which people today had no control, individual citizens and nongovernmental organizations are as well. I have already mentioned the Catholic Church in France. Another example occurred in Australia. The nation's government published a report in the 1990s verifying that the state was responsible in separating aboriginal children from their families. In turn, thousands of individuals and non-governmental organizations apologized for this treatment of Australia's indigenous people (Celermajer 2006: 157).

Some criticize this proliferation of liability. For one, it can mutate into collective guilt. Critics worry about positions like the one staked out by the director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. The director believes that one virtue of the museum is that it teaches "the passive bystander's inadvertent guilt" (quoted in Cohen 2001: 167). Critics are concerned that this kind of thinking mystifies individual responsibility (see Olick 2005). But collective regret need not distort individual guilt. Accepting liability for an injustice is different than accepting that

² Though, an ontology of the state as a continuous entity through time is space may be implied. State apologies, which involve a condemnation of past regimes, are partly meaningful because they suggest that the current state is owning up to its own past actions (see Booth 1999; Olick 2007: 14; Olick and Coughlin 2003). As a result we are in a paradoxical situation where states are repudiating past regimes with the effect of expressing identity with them.

you are guilty of it (cf. Celermajer 2006: 162-72; Jaspers 2000 [1946]; Weiner 2005). People can willingly assume the costs incurred by the improprieties of others without claiming to be perpetrators.

A concern related to worries about collective guilt is that apologies and reparations obscure justice (cf. Warner 2002: 12). However, this also need not happen. Even if victims accept apologies, the perpetrators do not have to be forgiven (cf. Barkan and Karn 2006b: 13), and if people want penal justice, apologies and reparations do not have to replace criminal prosecution but can supplement it. Take, for example, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC's goal was to build community between whites and blacks by uncovering the truth about crimes and suffering under apartheid. The Commission allowed individuals who confessed their crimes of humanity to apply for legal amnesty, but authorities could deny these applications. Admitting guilt did not guarantee a perpetrator was safe from prosecution. As the TRC shows, reconciliatory and punitive justice do not have to be mutually exclusive (Minow 1998: Ch. 4).

By expressing accountability through apologies and reparations, new solidarities are being formed. In refusing to be a passive bystander in the present or to the past, apologies and reparations imply that the regretful will take part in the lives and history of victims. Regret expresses that the regretful and the victims are part of the same moral community (Barkan 2000; Celermajer 2006; Tavuchis 1991: 122-3; Weiner 2005), their histories are intertwined (cf. Weiner 2005: 132-3), and their fates are interdependent (cf. Olick and Coughlin 2003: 46-7; see also Durkheim 1984 [1893]). Regret has real centripetal qualities. The stated goals of regretful behavior is often societal restoration and reconciliation, and though it is unclear whether apologies and reparations are a cause or effect (Barkan and Karn 2006b: 9), restorative and conciliatory styles of conflict management tend to be most popular among those who are socially close (Black 1976: 30, 47; Tavuchis 1991).

Similarly, to return to the claims of victims for a moment, the call to have one's unique suffering recognized may enliven old conflicts, but it also assumes the victim's identity is dependent upon the audience, whether it be perpetrators, the state, bystanders, or other collectivities (see Taylor 1991: Ch. 5). Victims bare their wounds as askance that others acknowledge their membership to a community. This is fulfilled if the community expresses regret.

To talk about the issue in a related way, showing your victimhood, as Luc Boltanski (1999) suggests, proposes a kind of contract of commitment from your audience. This contract is not just for the present but for the future, too. Consider what Nicholas Tavuchis writes about apologies in general:

Whatever else is said or conveyed, an apology must express sorrow. If the injured party believes that the offender is generally sorry, additional reassurances are superfluous. In some arcane way, then, *one's future actions come to be seen as immanent in the evanescent speech that expresses one's present sorrow and regret* (1991: 36, emphasis added).

The contemporary manifestation of victimhood and regret, specifically, has an eye toward the future. Laura Hein suggests that:

[D]emands for reparation—like all claims for remembrance—are forward-looking rather than backward-looking acts. ... Politically speaking, the fight is over which aspects of the past are honored, accepted, or repudiated in the present. ... [D]emands for redress are really about claiming humanity in the present by demonstrating that this status was unjustly denied in the past. ... *When successful, the former "victims" have institutionalized themselves as individual people with legal clout in the future, comparable to that of other citizens* (2003: 130-1, emphasis added; Torpey 2006: 90).

Brian Weiner makes a similar point, arguing that "national apologies and forgiveness provide the possibility of political renewal," because "[o]ne forgives a past deed primarily for the future—for the hope that the future holds a renewed relationship" (2005: 171; Barkan 2000: 321; but see Crocker 2006: 53).

That a major goal of victimhood and regret is to secure full citizenship reminds us that, in many instances, the past is merely a point of departure for addressing discrimination that continues up into the present (cf. Torpey 2006: 55, 64-5). Ron Eyerman (2001), for example, shows that the memory of slavery figures prominently in the culture of African-Americans because they have yet to be fully emancipated (see also Torpey 2006: 122, 124). And Nathan Glazer (1997) argues a related point I have already suggested: multiculturalism and its valorization of grievance is a reaction to the fact that the movement for civil rights did not fully solve racial discrimination. Confronting past injustices is a way to deal with present inequalities and build communities anew.

Jeffrey Olick and Brenda Coughlin put it this way: "[C]ollective memory is now often one disgusted with itself, a matter of 'learning lessons' of history more than fulfilling its promise or remaining faithful to its legacy" (2003: 38). People often look to the past not always to

wallow in it but to transcend it and create an alternative. What might elude some students, however, is that the new vision of the future differs from past ideologies—nationalism, socialism, communism, imperialism, etc.—because it is *proscriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. We see this in Minow's summary of the political goals for facing past injustices: "To mark the defeat of terror; to set in place safeguards against future collective atrocity; to communicate the aspiration that 'never again' will such abominations happen" (1998: 22-3). Indeed, a full vision of the future will require some ideal which Westerners and others want to fulfill; but even if that has not yet arrived under current politics, it does not mean that traumatic memory and regret are summarily antithetical to prescriptive change. There is good reason to believe that the definition of norms is necessary before people trust each other enough to move toward a single future together. While it may make progress difficult at times, attention to victims may also engender transformation.

To finish this section, I want to consider a criticism that blankets the points I have made about regret: regret changes little because it is not spontaneous. The current climate of regret is unreliable or dysfunctional because it is induced through power-plays (e.g. Arendt 1963: Ch. 2; Cohen 2001: 132, Ch. 9; Finkelstein 2003). For instance, after the Second World War, German citizens were not talking about the Jews sympathetically (e.g. Moeller 1996; Olick 2005), but the West German state still awarded a hefty sum of restitution to Israel. The choice was clearly the result of pressure by other Western governments, especially that of the United States (Barkan 2000: Ch. 1). Also, even in our atmosphere of apology, groups usually face a difficult struggle to merely have their suffering recognized by a wider audience, let alone attract regret for it. Though the historical record was unambiguous, Japanese American activists fought for approximately a decade before the state finally admitted to the unconstitutional internment of their group during the Second World War. It took approximately another five years before the victims obtained financial compensation. And recognition and redress were only possible because Japanese Americans had a uniquely high amount of political and economic capital for a minority population.

Ideally regret would always be heart-felt. However, the sincerity of apologies and reparations does no matter much in practice. The political discourse of victimhood often uses the language of emotions, but that should not divert us from the fact that it is indeed politics. And in politics, consequences, not intentions, matter (cf. Arendt 1963: 93-4). The political pressures that provoke apologies and reparations will also likely bind them. Once regret is shown, a precedent is set. In other words, the politics of victimhood requires that people must act as *if* their regret is heart-felt. One author shows that German reparations to Israel helped engender a new morality toward minorities, especially Jews, in

West Germany (Barkan 2000: 22). Another shows that Western states, sincere or not, must express and act upon regret for past injustices if they are to maintain their political legitimacy (Olick 2007; Olick and Coughlin 2003). Again, we should not overstate the promise of politics here; American Indians, for example, have received apologies and restitution but remain dispossessed. Still, the effectiveness of politics and not the degree of sincerity is what is at stake.

POLITICS AND HEALING

Regret works. It might not work as well as we would like, but it still has real effects. However, we cannot judge regret by its political consequences only; we have to take into account the distinctly psychological effects of regret. Through apologies and reparations, individuals, organizations, and states are taking moral responsibility for people and events that they had not in the past. In showing regret, Westerners are expressing new overarching solidarities and defining a new normative order. But the political goods do not directly translate into psychological goods. I agree with Minow that if facing the horrors of the past is going to be productive, people have to walk a fine line between vengeance and forgiveness (1998; see also Levy and Sznajder 2006). Or in other words, resentment is an acceptable response to past injustices, but people cannot allow it to be all-consuming (Olick and Demetriou 2006). In drawing a line between vengeance and forgiveness, my goal here is to tie the political processes I have been discussing to the processes of individual healing. I am trying to discern the ways that attention to victimhood and victims may or may not be therapeutic, a measure of effectiveness that goes beyond political goals. My main argument is that to the extent that people are concerned with individual healing, they must consider tempering their political ambitions.

Connecting the political to the therapeutic requires bridging a methodological gap. The normative and theoretical claims I have presented thus far are predominantly concerned with collective or structural processes. The concept “trauma” has a different meaning in this context than when referring to individual psychology. I suggest we differentiate between “trauma” as a political concept and trauma as a clinical fact. The political discourse of victimhood and regret has adopted the language of therapy (Torpey 2005: 15; Warner 2002: 12-5; see also Nolan 1998), and “trauma” has become a popular concept for talking about all kinds of victimhood (see Shephard 2001: Ch. 27). The word “trauma” has cache, so political actors often use it as a provocative label to emphasize that an event was victimizing. From a scientific perspective, its meaning in these instances is metaphorical rather than

literal. We can call this usage, as one reviewer suggested, “chosen trauma.” Without a doubt, when “trauma” is used in political discourse, it might inadvertently capture an event through which a substantial number of individuals have been clinically traumatized. That number may include trauma victims contemporary to the event and/or those who are temporally distant, an experience I will discuss below. However, we cannot assume this situation every time the word “trauma” is used in political discourse. Its usage in politics is almost never intended to be so precise as to strictly capture the experience of widespread clinical trauma. This is especially true when people in the present claim to be “traumatized” by events that happened to their parents, grandparents, or earlier ancestors.³ I am not suggesting that people who use trauma in a loose or metaphorical sense have not experienced harm, psychological or otherwise; I am only suggesting that they are not referring to the experience of trauma as it is *clinically* defined. Although the ways that political processes help or hinder therapy is an important issue for all types of victims and my arguments may apply to other psychologies of victimhood, my concern in this section is with healing among clinical cases of trauma.

To begin, remember that while “trauma” is often a political tool to abnegate liability or facilitate solidarity, for many it is also a painful psychological experience. This is something that often gets lost in the literature on the politics of victimhood, especially among scholars and victims who anoint traumatic memory with special moral authority. Consider the work of Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996), a prominent scholar of trauma writing in the humanities. She takes traumatized people as a

3 My argument is that only individuals can be traumatized in the scientific sense. Others disagree with this. Some argue that we can speak of “collective” or “cultural” trauma that is both collective and psychological, which dissolves the distinction I make between structural and individual processes (e.g. Alexander et al. 2004; Erickson 1976; Neal 2005; Olick 1999: 343-5; Stamm et al. 2004). We need to be careful with a concept like “collective trauma,” however. The phenomenon it describes often is either explained by individual trauma, subsumed by Emile Durkheim’s notion of “anomie” (1951 [1897], 1984 [1893]), or, if it implies a collective consciousness, is empirically spurious. A corporate entity cannot be traumatized, though it might display behaviors that are reminiscent of trauma symptoms. Also, an individual might experience her trauma as collective even though its etiology is truly individual. Unfortunately, these issues have not been adequately explored. None of this, furthermore, is to say that social and cultural factors do not influence the experience of trauma at the individual level. In fact, culture is central to the emergence and course of trauma among individuals (e.g. Chemtob 1996; Davis 2006; Erickson 1976; Kleber et al. 1995; Micale and Lerner 2001; Parson 1985).

sort of an ethical *avant garde*. For her, trauma victims carry the promise of a politics centered on victimhood. In one way, they are models for others because they testify to people's powers of survival. They have overcome the impossible; they lived through an event which should have killed them. But trauma victims are important ethical agents also, possibly more so for her, because through their traumatic memories, they have a privileged knowledge about past injustices. For Caruth, this is because traumatic memories have a pristine quality; she believes they are veridical. Sometimes agreeing with her reasons and sometimes not, many others accept that only trauma victims can fully "bear witness" to past injustices (with Caruth, see for example Edkins 2003: 46-56; Felman 1995; LaCapra 2000; Novick 1999: 200-1; Robert 2006).

Because of their misery, then, trauma victims become a shrine—a sort of walking monument. The worth of atrocity survivors is in their disorder. This makes healing difficult for two reasons. First, it can lead to an identity crisis. When an individual's identity is centered on her trauma, healing would destroy that identity, "which itself would be a new loss" (Volkan 2006: 119). Second, to heal becomes an ethical affront, because as a result of therapy, victims lose their capacity to reveal the truth about past injustices (cf. Leys 2000: 109). Victims themselves often follow this kind of argument, wanting to remain haunted by their memories of suffering. Many feel that they have survived only to tell the story of atrocity and that to be healed is to forget, which is a dishonor to those who lost their lives. For psychologists like Henry Krystal (1995), this moral posture is a symptom of the trauma, part of a regression to child-like affects. Extreme stress diminishes the victim's emotional capacity, meaning that she is easily seduced by her trauma and its perceptual distortions; she lacks the efficacy to do nothing more than submit to her pathology.

In preserving pathology, trauma victims not only make therapy paradoxically undesirable, they also risk passing their disorder on to others. A breadth of research has shown that trauma symptoms can be passed across generations (e.g. Fierke 2006; Kidron 2004; Nagata 1993; Rakoff et al. 1965; but see Figely and Klebler 1995). "Transgenerational transmission" is often unintentional, but some go as far as to intentionally pass on their trauma to descendants. One child of a Holocaust survivor, for example, claims that:

I want my kids to ... learn to take on the responsibility
I had ... if I press them they will experience the burden
I carried, I will transmit the problem to them as third
generation just as it was transmitted to me (quoted in
Kidron 2004: 529).

If scholars want victims to remain walking monuments, they, like the victims, are being seduced by the trauma and the horrors that precipitated it (see Young 1993: 201-6). I agree with authors like Ian Buruma (1999) that traumatic misery is a disturbing badge of pride. Atrocities dehumanize the victims. Trauma is one aspect of that dehumanization because traumatic disorder is an experience of circumscribed emotional and cognitive abilities. And trauma in general, makes normal civilized life difficult, if not impossible (e.g. Herman 1992; Shay 1994). As an audience to victims, we do not want to maintain their partial humanity by perverting trauma into a central basis of their identity, especially their moral identity.

The people that turn trauma into a virtue are often those who assume that the traumatized are the most politically relevant (e.g. Caruth 1996; Herman 1992: 207; see also Bell 2006: 28; Kidron 2004; Leys 2000: 109; Novick 1999: 201). However, this assumption is fallacious. There is no empirical reason to add more stress to victims by expecting them to carry such heavy moral and political burdens. As I have suggested, a lynchpin in arguments that turn misery into a shrine is that victims carry some sort of pristine truth about injustices. This supposedly makes them morally special. However, in a number of guises, psychologists and other scholars have found or argued that traumatic memories are highly adulterated and are not accurate historical records (Laub 1995; Levi 1989; Leys 2000; Young 1993).

Even if trauma victims did carry a pristine account of atrocity, just because people know about suffering does not mean that they will act against it, as Stanley Cohen has made clear in his exploration of denial (2001: especially Ch. 6, 185-7). Resources and strategies for mobilization are often as important or more important than knowledge of victimization or sympathy for victims.⁴ The actual victims are not necessary to wage politics. Consider the Japanese American movement for redress, a model case of activism for reparations. The original victims played only a small part in the struggle for restitution, especially in its initial development. It was second-generation Japanese Americans, whose experiences were quite distant from that of their parents, who were responsible for winning reparations for the internment of their mothers and fathers during the Second World War (Hatamiya 1993; Takahashi 1997; Takezawa 1995).

Furthermore, involving trauma victims in political struggles can be psychologically harmful for individuals (cf. Cohen 2001: 248; Olick 2007: 148). The search for apologies and reparations, to the extent that

4 Kieran Healy's (2006) finding on blood and organ donation is divergent but instructive. He finds that the logistics of organizing donation is a better predictor of giving than the altruistic intentions of individuals.

individuals place their hopes for recovery in it, can in fact perpetuate trauma. Psychologist Judith Herman writes of trauma victims, “the struggle for compensation ties the patient’s fate to that of the perpetrator and holds her recovery hostage to his whims” (1992: 190). If the victim cannot receive adequate justice or the perpetrator shows no regret, then she remains in pain. But it is also wrong to think that justice alone will heal. Again Herman’s words are enlightening. She argues that:

The fantasy of compensation ... often becomes a formidable impediment to mourning. ... Prolonged, fruitless struggles to wrest compensation from the perpetrator or from others represent a defense against facing the full reality of what was lost. Mourning is the only way to give due honor to loss; there is no adequate compensation. ... Paradoxically, the patient may liberate herself from the perpetrator when she renounces the hope of getting any compensation from him ... which permits her to pursue her just claims without ceding any power over her present life to the perpetrator (*ibid*).

Herman suggests that the goal of compensation can hinder recovery (see also Olick and Demetriou 2006).

Beyond the goal of obtaining regret, the *process* of soliciting apologies and reparations, or any kind of justice, can be harmful. The politics of victimhood and regret emphasizes the need to recognize the truth about suffering for communal restoration or reconciliation. The act of uncovering the truth about atrocity may or may not facilitate some kind of *political* “healing.” However, too much truth can certainly obstruct healing for individuals. For example, the act of testifying can be extremely distressing for trauma victims (Minow 1998: 128-9). Also, victims do not necessarily need to know the truth to heal; often they need only to find the appropriate language and framework for understanding the role of the event in their lives. Pierre Janet argued, for example, that therapy requires a “liquidation” of memory, some distortion and forgetting (Herman 1992: 41; Leys 2000: 105-116; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995; see also Young 1993: 176-82). The search for truth, valorized by restorative and reconciliatory justice, might be extremely painful for victims if it forces them to relive the trauma in ways that do not promote *psychological* reconciliation.⁵

On one hand, too much emphasis on compensation holds the

⁵ Please differentiate my arguments about politics and therapy from any claims about scientific inquiry. The liquidation of truth is never useful in science.

victim hostage to the perpetrator and frustrates healing. On the other hand, as David Crocker rightfully argues, punitive justice can have both therapeutic and reconciliatory power alongside the politics of regret (2006; Minow 1998: 71). Trauma victims have lost their sense of safety in the world, and atrocities break down the trust between the perpetrators and their targets. Retributive justice can give the traumatized some sense of safety, and it can build trust among conflicting parties by affirming the fair rule of law. The fair rule of law likely helps restore community, too, but my argument here is that it can restore an individual’s faith in safety, which is necessary for healing.

As with restorative justice, however, people should not put too much emphasis on retribution. First, we have to consider how much additional stress any kind of politics might put on victims. Second, the quest to prove guilt or provoke regret is a commendable political goal, but it can only be psychologically therapeutic if it is considered a small part of a larger therapy regime for individuals (cf. Herman 1992: 190). Given both considerations, it might be best to accept that the politics of trauma are best left to those not directly affected, which means people will have to conduct politics with some, but not too much, memory (cf. Olick 2007: 148).⁶

Let me say a few final things about overcoming trauma in regard to Enlightenment ideals. Quite a bit of the politics of victimhood has an anti-Enlightenment timbre. Enlightenment ideals are blamed for the atrocities of the twentieth-century (e.g. Bauman 1989); the moral clarity of “Reason” is often disregarded as a tool to understand atrocities (e.g. LaCapra 2000; Levi 1989; Neiman 2002: Ch. 4; Rorty 1993); and universalism is forgotten as a means to progress (e.g. Barkan 2000; Glazer 1997; Maier 1993, 2000). As a result, rather than resting on the high ideals of the Enlightenment, much of the attention to victims takes the form of practical discourse. The normative order that victims, perpetrators, and bystanders are creating is negotiated (Appiah 2005: Ch. 6; Barkan 2000). It is, to quote Levy and Snzaidler, “not derived from reason, but rather based on common experiences of human wrongs” (2006: 98). Similarly, Elazar Barkan maintains that “the novelty of the

⁶ Though I have restricted my discussion to the targets of injustices, we should not forget the trauma of perpetrators. As I have said, they are diagnosed with some of the worst cases of trauma, and some have argued that trauma might be a cause for certain instances of perpetration (Lifton 1995: 139-42). I invite the reader to consider some of the ways that my arguments might pertain to perpetrators. For example, we should not expect perpetrators to put too much therapeutic weight on confessions of guilt or the receipt of forgiveness. Also, we should be careful about attributing the moral burden of full disclosure (cf. Olick 2007: 147-8).

discourse of restitution is that it is a *discussion* between the perpetrators and their victims” (2000: xviii, my emphasis). This pragmatic deliberation may be the only viable solution in an age where an emphatic faith in Enlightenment ideals is often mistrusted.

But I also agree with Anthony Appiah that the Enlightenment was not the “wrong project,” but that it was “insufficiently Enlightened” (2005: 250; see also Rorty 1989). In fact, it is a vestige of the Enlightenment that we care for victims, that we find their suffering so unjust — indeed, that we think targets of violence and discrimination are “victims” at all (see Taylor 1989, 2007). Old Enlightenment ideals provide hope that suffering can and should end, a hope that sometimes gets eschewed in the politics of victimhood and regret. Unreal hopes to end suffering can set people up to be traumatized, so I think in some regard they have to resign themselves to the fact that violence and cruelty will happen, often without atonement by the perpetrator. This is not a new position (cf. Cohen 2001: Ch. 10; see Lasch 1979; Neiman 2002; and Taylor 2007 for histories of lowered expectations). Through my research on rape survivors, for example, I have found that a certain acceptance of suffering is therapeutic for victims by their own accounts. This includes both an acceptance that their trauma is permanent and that cruelty is an indelible feature of the world.

But to fully give ourselves over to cruelty and mere survival, rather than harbor hopes to overcome, is to give up faith in humanity, ours and that of others (cf. Becker 1973; Lasch 1979: 49-51). People must have some goal of safety, and believe that while suffering is always possible, so is happiness. Rape survivors who have dealt with their trauma therapeutically maintain hopes of flourishing alongside their resignation to pain and cruelty. They have experienced man at his most evil, so they know how evil he can and will be. But rape survivors also know that they survived and can even thrive. Their acceptance of cruelty is only therapeutic because it is matched by the realization that life is not entirely violent. In part, they know that they can flourish by the help of good people. Authentic sympathy does not matter in the politics of victimhood, but it is an important therapeutic. As a person suffering, rape survivors have a unique chance to experience the deep compassion of friends, family, and sometimes even strangers. The compassion of others is one point of departure for hope in happiness. Faith in reason, however, is another. Enlightenment ideals are a language of possibility, and they can help people recognize that safety and freedom is possible in a world where inhumanity is a permanent fact.⁷

⁷ Caruth (1996) argues that the witness of survival is inherent in the experience of trauma. However, there is no empirical evidence to prove this. In

CONCLUSION

We must, in other words, accept the inevitability of suffering but hope to flourish. This is one of many ironies that characterize trauma in the West. Westerners are preoccupied with their own victimhood and the victimhood of others probably more than they have ever been. Like any political figuration, this attentiveness to victimhood can be distorted, perverted, and can have unseemly consequences, so it is no surprise that critics of the politics of victimhood have some noteworthy concerns. But I have shown that while critics find things falling apart, we can also see important instances in which morality, political community, and goals for the future are coming together. If those developments are going to be therapeutic, however, we should remain skeptical of them, knowing that they can frustrate individual healing. We have to walk a line between vengeance and forgiveness, between too much memory and not enough, between too much resignation and too much hope. We must recognize that our efforts to solve trauma, even when successful, can engender the inverse.

reality, just the opposite is true. Trauma victims are prone to see themselves as hopeless and not having actually survived (see Herman 1992 and Krystal 1995).

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ROCKING OUT BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL: TRANSNATIONAL INDEPENDENT MUSIC INDUSTRY IN TAIWAN

Wendy Hsu, Music
Carey Sargent, Sociology

We are a funny duo in Taiwan. One of us is a 1.5-generation Taiwanese American; the other is a white New Englander, both living in the American South. In Taiwan, we straddle the three-part identity of tourist, researcher, and performer.

Last year we went to Taiwan for a mini-tour playing in three major cities as two thirds of experimental music trio Pinko Communoids. This year, we returned mostly in the name of "research." But in reality, theory and practice go hand in hand. We revisited the tracks that we trekked, reconnecting with the friends we made last year. Because of the short length of our stay, we comfortably think of ourselves as tourists with a "research eye."

In one month, we immersed ourselves in the independent (indie) music scene in Taipei, going to concerts, talking with musicians and music enthusiasts, and collecting media about indie music in Taiwan. In our preliminary research in Taiwan, we set out to experience Taiwanese indie music with no particular "comparative" agenda relative to our research in US-based indie music-culture. Nevertheless, our intellectual lens brought us to pay special attention to the interaction between the local and the global, noticing trends of transnationality in the production of local identities.

The island of Taiwan has a complex history of transnational crossings. The Dutch and Portuguese occupied Taiwan in the 17th century until the Chinese took the island and ruled it for three centuries. Continually pushed from their land, Native Taiwanese were disenfranchised during these and later occupations. In 1895, China ceded Taiwan to Japan, resulting a 50-year occupation that ended when Japan lost WWII. When the Communist Party took Mainland China in 1949, the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) opposition fled to Taiwan. Aided by the United States throughout the Cold War, KMT military leader Chiang Kai-Shek governed the island under martial law. However, by 1978, the United States and the United Nations sought to rebuild relations with China and no longer recognized Taiwan as a sovereign nation. In the late 1980s, Taiwan formed a two-party