INTRODUCTION

On July 27, 1985, four African National Congress leaders and anti-apartheid activists—Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonto, and Sicelo Mhlauli—left a meeting of the anti-apartheid group United Democratic Front (UDF) in Port Elizabeth for a return trip to their hometown of Cradock. They never made it. Instead, the four activists were murdered in brutal fashion by the South African Defense Force. Their charred and mutilated bodies were found several days later in overgrown


sand dunes near Port Elizabeth. The tremendous outcry over the murders of the Cradock Four is regularly cited by scholars as the first salvo in the final push to end apartheid.

This article examines the investigation into the Cradock Four murders that occurred after the end of apartheid. Within that context, this article particularly examines the goals—and limitations—of reconciliation coming from South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This article shows that the TRC regularly pushed for reconciliation, but in the case of the Cradock Four, the family members of the deceased victims were less interested in reconciliation and apt to favor traditional criminal prosecution.

TRC was one of the political compromises following the end of South Africa’s apartheid era. Following an act of the South African Parliament in 1995, the TRC was given the task of “promoting national unity and reconciliation,” and also investigated crimes committed during legalized apartheid between March 1, 1960 and December 5, 1993. Within the provision, the TRC had the power to grant amnesty to those who made full disclosures about his or her role in apartheid-era crimes. The TRC could assign accountability, but ideally not in such a way that further divided the country and rendered a collective national future impossible. In addition to the Amnesty Committee, the TRC had two additional committees: the

8. Lansing & King, supra note 6, at 761.
Human Rights Violations Committee responsible for hearing victims and preparing a report on all those who told stories of human rights abuses; and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, which made recommendations regarding reparations and rehabilitation.9

Walking a fine line between assigning accountability and promoting national unity, the TRC and its leader, Desmond Tutu, offered a justice model different from the more traditional retributive justice model of criminal prosecution. Instead, the TRC utilized a justice method commonly known as “restorative justice.”10 The emphasis of restorative justice is healing the community and restoring the imbalance between victims and perpetrators.11

Like other high profile South African amnesty cases,12 the Cradock Four amnesty hearings garnered considerable international attention, making it an excellent example to reflect on the value of truth commissions and the particular challenges of the restorative justice model. As other nations begin the process of reconciling their collective pasts through truth commissions, the South African TRC and the Cradock Four case illustrates the successes and shortcomings of restorative justice.

This article proceeds with four parts. Section II examines the history of truth commissions, and the creation of the TRC and its goals of fostering reconciliation. Section III explores the TRC’s utilization of restorative rather than retributive justice. Section IV provides an in-depth examination of the Cradock Four hearings and the successes and limitations of restorative justice. Finally, Section V offers lessons learned from the Cradock Four for future truth commissions and the role of restorative justice therein.

I. TRUTH COMMISSIONS IN CONTEXT

The creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 following World War II, established the first international standard of human rights norms.13 Though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights existed for more than fifty years, excepting the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals immediately following World War II, there existed no international mechanism to create

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10. See TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA REPORT, supra note 6, at 125-26.
accountability following human rights abuses until the United Nations-sanctioned tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Consequently, different governments took divergent tracks to restore a nation following civil strife.

As a means of nation-building and achieving some measure of justice, truth commissions have become an increasingly popular option for societies emerging from a conflict or authoritarian rule. Generally, these bodies are established to investigate a party’s history of human rights violations in a particular country, including violations by the military or government. National truth commissions may be sponsored by the United Nations or by a nation’s executive or legislative branch. The main characteristics of truth commissions include: (1) a focus on the past, (2) an investigation of a pattern of abuse, (3) a temporary body, and (4) sanctioned or empowered status granted by the state. In addition to South Africa, notable truth and reconciliation commissions have been created in Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Argentina. Uruguay, the Philippines, Chad, Bolivia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Germany, and Uganda also created some of the earliest truth commissions.

In many cases, truth commissions have achieved significant success in documenting past human rights abuses. For example, Argentina’s truth commission following the 1983 conclusion of the Dirty War and the fall of that nation’s military junta represented one well-known early commission and resulted in the publication of Nunca Más (Never Again), a document recounting victims’ stories and describing military torture and killings. The book remains one of the top selling works of all time in Argentina.

14. Id. at 577.
18. Id. at 600, 604.
24. Hayner, Unspeakable Truths, supra note 15, at 34.
One of the most significant issues surrounding truth commissions is whether participants will be entitled to amnesty.\textsuperscript{25} The notion of amnesty comes in multiple forms (such as blanket amnesty or self-amnesties), but conditional amnesty has achieved the most widespread support in the international community.\textsuperscript{26} As opposed to blanket amnesty, conditional amnesty generally requires that an individual meets a predetermined standard to receive amnesty for his past human rights offenses. Conditional amnesty is typically granted following a determination by a quasi-judicial body that an individual or organization has met a threshold for amnesty as established by a legislative body.\textsuperscript{27} The standard criteria include that the individual has disclosed the full truth about the crime and that the individual in question had a political (rather than personal) motive for committing the act.\textsuperscript{28}

A. Truth Commissions as a Vehicle for Justice

Rather than merely establishing guilt or innocence of individual perpetrators, truth and reconciliation commissions can focus on broad patterns of violence and their causes and, in the process, establish a more comprehensive record of past injustices.\textsuperscript{29} Though commissions may hope for the full truth, rapid reconciliation, accountability to perpetrators, resolution for individual cases, and reparations to the victims, few of these expectations are ever fully realized.\textsuperscript{30}

Moreover, in recent years, there has been a push to expand the right to truth for victims in the context of transitional justice.\textsuperscript{31} For example, in 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution for such a right, thereby calling on states to better facilitate fact-finding related to gross human rights violations.\textsuperscript{32} Additionally, several

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\textsuperscript{25} For a general discussion of the use and approval of amnesty in international law, see generally Charles P. Trumbull, Giving Amnesties a Second Chance, 25 BERKELEY J. INT’L L. 283, 283-345 (2007).
\textsuperscript{27} Id.; see also Leila Nadya Sadat, Exile, Amnesty and International Law, 81 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 955, 1027-28, n. 343 (2006).
\textsuperscript{28} Allan, supra note 26, at 242.
\textsuperscript{30} See generally Janet Cherry et. al., Researching the ‘Truth’: A View from Inside the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in COMMISSIONING THE PAST: UNDERSTANDING SOUTH AFRICA’S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION 17-36 (Deborah Posel & Graeme Simpson eds., 2002).
\textsuperscript{31} See Dermot Groome, The Right to Truth in the Fight against Impunity, 29 BERKELEY J. INT’L L. 175 (2011) (tracing the evolution of the “right to truth” as a concept in international law).
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international conventions have also affirmed a right to truth, such as Article 32 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention, which sets principles governing a state party’s obligations related to the missing and the dead. Article 32 notes the parties “shall be prompted mainly by the right of families to know the fate of their relatives.” Additionally, the Preamble of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, affirms “the right of any victim to know the truth about the circumstances of an enforced disappearance and the fate of the disappeared person.”

B. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

With an extensive budget and a staff of over 200, the TRC was one of the most comprehensive truth commissions ever assembled. Most notably, the commission focused on reconciliation throughout the hearings. The TRC was composed of three different subcommittees: the Committee on Human Rights Violations where victims could tell their stories, an Amnesty Committee where perpetrators could receive criminal amnesty in exchange for the truth, and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee where committee members recommended reparations to policy makers. Unlike

33. Article 32 of Protocol 1 states: “In the implementation of this Section, the activities of the High Contracting Parties, of the Parties to the conflict and of the international humanitarian organizations mentioned in the Conventions and in this Protocol shall be prompted mainly by the right of families to know the fate of their relatives.” Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1), June 8, 1977, 1125 U.N.T.S. 3 [hereinafter First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions].


37. It is important to note that the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee (RRC) only had the power to recommend policy and reparations to the President and Parliament. The Committee did not have the authority to actually create programs or policy. See WENDY
some truth commissions, the TRC also had fairly broad investigative powers and was able to investigate and subpoena witnesses.\textsuperscript{38}

Reconciliation played a central role—if not \textit{the} central role—in the TRC. Though other truth commissions have included reconciliation as an aim,\textsuperscript{39} the TRC incorporated reconciliation to such a degree that reconciliation was an often-stated goal of the proceedings.\textsuperscript{40} According to Priscilla Hayner, a noted scholar on truth commissions and transitional justice, reconciliation efforts even extended to the amnesty proceedings, with one commissioner telling her that decisions were based in part on “what is likely to promote reconciliation.”\textsuperscript{41}

Though the TRC made positive contributions to help South Africa recover from its history of apartheid, the hearings alone may not have been enough to heal the country.\textsuperscript{42} Under apartheid, South Africa was violent, with the fighting directed at all sides, at all levels.\textsuperscript{43} Given the violence ingrained into South African culture during the apartheid years, some scholars have questioned if the TRC actually fostered reconciliation.\textsuperscript{44}

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\bibitem{38} HAYNER, UNSPEAKABLE TRUTHS, supra note 15, at 336.

\bibitem{39} In Chile, for example, the commission determined that divisive symbols should be eliminated and that space should be made for broad public debate on human rights through public forums and cultural activities. While many Chileans argued that reconciliation had been achieved in the years following its truth commission in the early 1990s, Hayner notes that Chileans must continue to navigate the thorny issues of living and working alongside others who either supported or opposed General Pinochet. \textit{Id.} at 159, 324.

\bibitem{40} Cherry et al., supra note 30, at 17, 18.

\bibitem{41} HAYNER, UNSPEAKABLE TRUTHS, supra note 15, at 156.

\bibitem{42} See generally Gavin Bradshaw, Truth, Reconciliation and Resolution in South Africa, 32 AFRICANUS 77 (2002).


\bibitem{44} Gavin Bradshaw questions whether a commission—even if the government is fully committed to the prospect and the entity—can transcend years of violence. Piers Pigou questions whether the TRC can promote reconciliation. He writes that the TRC only scratched the surface of the apartheid conflict and should be viewed simply as the first, formal step in the very long process of inquiry into South Africa’s past that might lead to some subsequent reconciliation in the future. See generally Bradshaw, supra note 42; Piers Pigou, False Promises and Wasted Opportunities?, in COMMISSIONING THE PAST 37 (Deborah Posel & Graeme Simpson eds., 2002).
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II. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

A. Divining Justice: Retributive vs. Restorative

In contrast to classic responses to gross human rights violations emphasizing prosecution, the TRC operated with the purpose of bringing restorative justice. Restorative justice is the theory of justice that advocates for repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. Unlike the more traditional retributive justice, restorative justice’s emphasis is not punishment, but rather healing. Also unlike traditional criminal trials, the TRC was very much a proceeding that focused on the victims under apartheid. The goal was to foster social harmony by healing the victim while returning the perpetrator to standing in the community. TRC Co-Chair, Nobel Laureate and South African Arch Bishop Demond Tutu explained the TRC’s belief in restorative justice:

We contend that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment. In the spirit of ubuntu, the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he [or she] has injured by his [or her] offense.

Tutu refers to “Ubuntu,” a term derived from the Nguni group of languages and incorporating such concepts as sharing, cooperation, harmony, and mutual respect. According to Tutu, the concept roughly translates to “I am human because I belong.”

South Africa’s decision to focus on restorative rather than retributive justice was not without controversy. The widow of slain Black

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46. See generally TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA REPORT, supra note 6.
52. Haldemann, supra note 50, at 678.
54. Tutu, No Future without Forgiveness, supra note 51, at 31.
Consciousness leader Steve Biko challenged restorative justice and its amnesty provisions, and the case reached South Africa’s highest court. The court ruled against Biko and in favor of the amnesty clause, noting that South Africa’s interim Constitution following the end of apartheid had made an explicit decision of “reparation over retaliation” and “ubuntu over victimisation.”

**B. Restorative Justice as a Religious Ideal**

The TRC often couched itself in traditional African values such as *ubuntu*, but the TRC also utilized religion and spirituality in the form of hymn, prayer, silent reflection, and candles in memory of the dead. The religious nature of the proceedings was another source of criticism. One member of the TRC, a former president of the United Methodist Church, acknowledged the criticism, but argued that the religiosity of the proceedings should be viewed within South Africa’s overall religious character.

**C. Scholarly Debate Over Restorative Justice**

By utilizing restorative justice, South Africa gave up much of its ability to prosecute gross human rights violations. Under the TRC’s amnesty provisions, perpetrators of past abuses could receive immunity from both

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55. Steve Biko’s widow writes about her disagreement with amnesty. See generally Biko, *supra* note 12, at 193-98.


58. See Ebrahim Moosa, Truth and Reconciliation as Performance: Spectres of Eucharistic Redemption, in LOOKING BACK REACHING FORWARD: REFLECTIONS ON THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA 113, 113-22 (Charles Villa-Vicencio & Wilhelm Verwoerd, eds., 2000) (describing the TRC victims’ hearings as “Christ-centric” and writing that the TRC itself required a suspension of traditional beliefs in justice, law and order and further arguing that the TRC “requires a faith in the mysterium of the event, a faith in the rite [sic] of reconciliation, a belief in the rituals of confession”).

59. BORAINE, *supra* note 45, at 265.

(Against this criticism it must be noted that religion has played a dominant role in the South African society. In the 1991 census more than 70 per cent of those who responded indicated some relationship with one or other of the major denominations of the Christian church. The remarkable growth of the so-called African independent churches is a further indication of the importance that religion plays in the day-to-day life of the overwhelming majority of people in South Africa.)
criminal and civil prosecution if they (1) submitted an application to the TRC fully disclosing their role in past crimes, and (2) demonstrated that these crimes were politically-motivated.60

Much like the South African public, scholars have hotly debated the role of amnesty in the aftermath of gross human rights abuses.61 More specifically, amnesty may contradict the established rule of law and damage the perception that justice requires that people answer for the crimes they have committed.62

On the other hand, truth commissions give a real voice to the victims,63 a prospect that likely could not have been obtained through criminal prosecution.64 Prosecuting mass human rights abuses is a tricky business; until very recently, amnesty—"either by law or by default"—has been the ultimate result.65 For South Africa, one added difficulty is that the judicial

60. National Unity and Reconciliation Act, supra note 6, at ss. 16-22. For a full report on the amnesty process, see generally TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA REPORT, supra note 6, at vol. 6 § 6; see also Christopher K. Connolly, Living on the Past: The Role of Truth Commissions in Post-Conflict Societies and the Case Study of Northern Ireland, 39 CORNELL INT’L L. J. 401, 406 (2006).

61. Diane Orentlicher, Settling Accounts: The Duty to Prosecute Human Rights Violations of a Prior Regime, 100 YALE L. J. 2537, 2595 (1991). Advocating retributive justice, Diane Orentlicher argues that states have a duty to prosecute past offenses, noting that the world community “has resolved emphatically that it will not countenance impunity for massive atrocities against persecuted groups.” Id.

62. See generally id. at 2537-44.

63. For example, Andre du Toit argues the victim-center nature of truth commissions are more congruent with the ultimate goals of restoring human and civic dignity compared to the prosecution of offenders. He notes:

Criminal prosecutions involve an adversarial system. Consider, for example, whether cross-examination of witnesses, including victims, is appropriate in the context of a truth commission. Trials focus on the perpetrators, whereas truth commissions may choose to focus on victims. Perhaps we assume in trials that the focus on the perpetrator is compatible with the victim’s interests. We assume, then, that the victim desires punishment of the perpetrator. If that means the victim must be cross-examined, he is willing to accept it. I do not believe all victims think this way. Many are more interested in the restoration of their human and civic dignity. This may be difficult to attain in the adversarial context of trials.


64. See generally ROSENBERG, supra note 23, at 325, 335.

65. ROSENBERG, supra note 23, at 325, 334. See also TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA REPORT, supra note 6, at vol. 1, 201. “The tragedy is that the former government deliberately and systematically destroyed a huge body of state records and documentation in an attempt to remove incriminating evidence and thereby sanitise the history of oppressive rule.” Id.
system is overwhelmed by crime in the country. The fledgling government had few resources available to investigate, prosecute, and incarcerate potential human rights offenders. Absent a truth commission, a small number of criminal trials are all any country would have accomplished in its quest for justice for victims. Ultimately, amnesty-for-truth with the goal of restorative justice may not have been a perfect solution, but it allowed more South Africans to participate in the justice proceedings. Otherwise, the vast majority of victims would have been entirely shut out of the process.

Finally, the very public nature of the TRC—with its near-constant media coverage in South Africa—may have achieved a measure of retributive justice in its own right. There are differing degrees of retributive justice: strong retributive justice that “can punish” and weak retributive justice that “can shame or extract contrition.” Strong retributive justice is typically utilized to restore a balance of pain, no matter how imperfectly it does so. But even without punishing the perpetrator, the TRC can re-equilibrate the balance of power between perpetrator and victim. Retribution was never the Commission’s goal.

Absolute amnesty for truth is not the same as restorative justice. Restorative justice carries an obligation following violation to make all whole again. On the other hand, under the amnesty-for-truth model, a perpetrator has no further obligation to redress his wrongs once he has told the truth.

66. See, e.g., Michael Wines, Wasting Away: A Million Wait in African Jails, N.Y. Times, Nov. 6, 2005, at A11 (noting that some inmates in Johannesburg have waited seven years to see a judge); Rachel L. Swarns, Johannesburg Journal; Unthinkable Attack Jolts a Crime-Weary Country, N.Y. Times, Nov. 16, 2001, at A14 (noting that South Africa has one of the highest reported rates of sexual violence in the world).

67. Markel, supra note 7, at 389, 394.

68. See generally Rosenberg, supra note 23, at 325, 335. Dan Markel argues that the lack of amnesty would have completely changed South Africa’s transition to a fully functioning democracy. “[I]n the absence of some form of immunity,” he writes, “the security forces and their supporters would likely have mounted large-scale violent resistance to attempts by the fledgling new regime to prosecute them.” Markel, supra note 7, at 389, 394.

69. See generally Rosenberg, supra note 23, at 325, 335.

70. See generally Charles Maier, Doing History, Doing Justice, in TRUTH v. JUSTICE (Robert Rotberg & Dennis Thompson, eds., 2000).

71. Id. at 261, 268.

72. See Markel, supra note 7, at 404 (discussing retributive justice generally and its role of reconciling the lives of victims and survivors to the wrongs committed against them).

73. Maier, supra note 70, at 261, 268.

74. Desmond Tutu makes this clear, writing that “[t]he purpose of finding out truth is not in order for people to be prosecuted. It is so we can use the truth as part of the process of healing our nation.” MARTHA MINOW. BETWEEN VENGEANCE AND FORGIVENESS: FACING HISTORY AFTER GENOCIDE AND MASS VIOLENCE 127 (1998).

For the victim, anecdotal evidence suggests the healing power of speaking about trauma, with truth-telling as a restorative power in its own right. The TRC presented its hearings with a tone of safety, without cross-examining the testimony of victims of torture and other human rights abuses or their surviving family members. As the TRC redefined its objectives over time, it moved away from more established judicial methods.

Moreover, the TRC’s operation of truth-through-amnesty likely provides a better picture of the atrocities committed under apartheid and paints a fuller picture of the history of the regime (rather than the challenging of truth that inevitably happens in a criminal trial). A court of law is more adversarial with competing versions of the truth, but the TRC hearings, given their structure, are less likely to have explicit denials and legal maneuvering. As one scholar asserted: “truth commission may not establish the full truth, but they narrow the range of permissible lies, such that individuals may no longer reasonably deny the horrors of the past.” In addition, truth commissions’ inclusive nature may enable survivors to regain trust in their own government.

III. THE TRC AMNESTY IN ACTION

In January 1997, seven members of the Port Elizabeth security police applied for amnesty in connection with the deaths of the Cradock Four.

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79. Maier, *supra* note 70, at 266-67; see Colleen Scott, *Combating Myth and Building Reality, in Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* 107, 107-112 (Charles Villa-Vicencio & Wilhelm Verwoerd eds., 2000) (arguing that amnesty was the only way for truth to be discovered); see also Hafner & King, *supra* note 78, at 100 (noting that truth commissions have a greater latitude to sketch a larger picture of the extent of atrocity and responsibility than might be feasible under formal prosecutions).

80. See Hafner & King, *supra* note 78, at 101 (noting that because truth commissions are not formal judicial bodies, they are not saddled “with complex rules of procedure and evidence”).


82. See Hafner & King, *supra* note 78, at 101-03; Minow, *supra* note 76, at 325-29.

The victims’ surviving family members also testified before the TRC about the incident.84

A. Justice from the Victims’ Perspectives

1. Beginning the Hearings

The human rights violations section of the TRC had, on the one hand, aspects of a legal proceeding, but, at other times, functioned nothing like a trial. For example, the witnesses were sworn in when appearing before the TRC.85 Though the Human Rights Violations hearings were less legalistic than the amnesty hearings, victims were still understood to be “giving testimony,” not simply “telling life-stories.”86 After being sworn in, the victims were guided through their testimony by Commissioners, who largely are able to shape the direction of the testimony with their questions.87

In other ways, the hearings depart from a typical legal proceeding. For example, the Commissioners themselves often seemed sympathetic to the witnesses appearing before them. At a memory service on the day before the hearings, TRC Commissioner Wendy Orr sat with the victims’ families, including Cradock Four widows.88 On April 16, 1996, just before the testimony of Calata, Mkhonto, and Mhlauli, Commissioner Alex Boraine addressed the witnesses and the audience at large. Addressing the witnesses, Boraine remarked:

The 27th of June 1985 is a day which will be indelibly printed in your minds and in your hearts and in the minds of many, many thousands and hundreds of thousands of people in South Africa. Many people within this hall and many of us sitting at this table knew your husbands well. We had met them, we had worked with them and like you we heard with horror of the gruesome killing of those four, the Cradock Four.89

The oration from Boraine makes another important point: he knew (or at least knew of) the victims. Such a close relationship between victim and
judge would be considered irregular and questionable in most any legal proceeding.

After Boraine acknowledged his close ties to the victims, he struck a collective tone regarding the proceedings. “[E]verybody who comes to this Commission is as important as anyone else,” Boraine noted. “[E]veryone who has suffered is a sufferer, you have come together and you will be answering questions about something that was very very painful for you.” Following his remarks of inclusiveness, Boraine offered a sentence of hope: “We’re hoping very much that you will find this experience helpful and healing and in the end will enable the Commission to be of some service to you as well.”

Witnesses themselves do no appear “cold.” That is, they have been interviewed prior to appearing before the Commission. In the transcripts, Commissioners often note they have the witnesses’ written testimonies and will utilize them as a guide in oral testimony so that all necessary material is orally recounted. Still, the oral component of the hearings provides an emotional record to compliment the historical one.

The Commission seemed far more concerned about the women’s views about amnesty toward the perpetrators than their financial requests. When the women requested financial compensation from the Commission, there was no response from the Commissioners, who continued with other questions. The Committee’s limited response may be because it had little ability to influence financial reparations.

2. Finding the Truth and Parsing the Ideas of Justice

Even before the end of apartheid, Desmond Tutu has been a vocal advocate for the idea of restorative justice within South Africa, arguing that Africans see justice differently than the traditional Western conception. During the TRC hearings, all four widows and the daughter of Sicelo Mhlauli spoke about justice regarding how it relates to the men responsible for their husbands’ deaths.

When hearing from Nomonda Calata, one of the Cradock Four widows, TRC Commissioner John Smith opened by asking whether Ms. Calata

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90. Id.
91. Id.
92. Id.
93. Id.
94. See Krog, supra note 4, at 75 (writing that the “starting point of the human rights hearings was the indefinable wail that burst from Nomonde Calata’s lips in East London.”).
95. The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee was officially assigned this task, though that Committee only had the power to recommend a course to the President and Parliament. Orr, supra note 37, at 225-31.
96. Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, supra note 11, at 54-55.
97. See generally Calata, supra note 87; see also Gonive, supra note 87.
Mr. Smith: The inquest has made a very general finding about your husband and those who were responsible for his death. Would you want to know the identity of the person or persons who were responsible for your husband’s death, and if so, why would you like to know who exactly killed your husband?

Ms. Calata: I’d be very glad to know this person. If I can know the individuals who are responsible for this I will be able to understand why they did it. Most of the time I can remember that this child, the third born, Tommy does not have a picture of his father and the last born has no idea at all and they always ask how he was and what he will be doing at this time. . . As a mother I always to play [sic] the roles of both parents but I’ll be really glad if I can know what happened so that my children can get an explanation from me, so that I can say it is so and so and so and so. This will probably make me understand. I do not know the reason for their cruelty, but I just want to know and my family will also be happy to know who really cut short the life of my husband. Not to say that when they are old I’m just teaching them to retaliate or to be revengeful, it’s just to know who’s done this and who changed our lives so drastically. (Emphasis added)

Mrs. Calata does not delve into the specifics of what she wants done to the perpetrators if they are caught; however, she suggests that understanding is the most important aspect of these proceedings, similar to the TRC.

The next witness questioned is Sindiswe Mkhonto, the wife of Cradock Four member Sparrow Mkhonto. Commissioner Smith, the questioner, does not ask Ms. Mkhonto her specific thoughts on justice, but she offers them in the course of the proceedings. Here is the exchange:

Mr. Smith: Mrs. Mkhonto, what else do you request this Commission to do for you, how can the Commission assist you?

Mrs. Mkhonto: What I request from the Commission is that I’d like them to make thorough investigations about this and please establish who did this to my husband. I do not just want them to be exposed, I want them to brought to court [sic] so that justice can be done. (Emphasis added)

In this exchange, it seems quite clear that Ms. Mkhonto does not favor amnesty for her husband’s killers. What is more, it seems Ms. Mkhonto

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98. Id.
99. Id.
embraces the traditional ideal of retributive justice when she notes that she wants the killers brought to court so that "justice can be done."**100**

The next participant before the Commission is Nombuyiselo Mhlauli, the wife of Sicelo Mhlauli. As the Commission proceedings take their course, it seems that like Ms. Mkhonto, Ms. Mhlauli also wants justice in the traditional retributive sense. The transcript reads:101

Mr. Smith: I’m now going to ask you, the inquest court made certain general findings about your husband, would you want the Commission to use its powers to investigate further to be able to identify the person or the persons who are responsible? In other words would you like to know who were responsible for the death of your husband?

Ms. Mhlauli: I’d gladly love to know the murderers of my husband and they should also come to the fore and tell their story and the reason why they committed such brutal actions, and I think, in order to be able to achieve, what we are all hoping for, justice should prevail, the law should take its course. (Emphasis added).

Given the implications of her final sentence, Ms. Mhlauli seems to indicate that she favors traditional justice where punishment is meted out in exchange for crime. The terms “justice should prevail” and the “law should take its course” work together in greater syncopation when referencing retributive justice.

A bit later in the testimony, an unnamed TRC member Ms. Mhlauli her opinion about amnesty for the perpetrators. Here is the exchange:102

Panel Member: If these perpetrators can explain and give an account and what would you do if they would request amnesty after the Commission has cross-questioned them, and then if the Commission realises that they have expressed their views and also giving their explanation for committing these brutalities. And what if the Commission is satisfied that this explanation is satisfactory and it decides to offer amnesty, what do you say about this?

Ms. Mhlauli: The fact that they should be excused? I’m still moved, and I do not want to lie, because my family have [sic] suffered extremely from this. My children were extremely affected. We have been miserable for quite a long time and it was difficult to guide my child alone as a woman without the support of my husband, especially during this period when the child is an adolescent. Even if I say these people should be given amnesty, it won’t return my husband, but that hand, we still want it. We know we have buried them, but really to have the hand which is said to be in a bottle

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100. Id.
101. Id.
102. Id.
Ms. Mhlauli seems to be against amnesty, though she never annunciates it clearly. Still, she notes that amnesty for the perpetrators will not return her husband or rectify the years of struggle she endured because of his death.\textsuperscript{103} In her testimony, Ms. Mhlauli makes reference to her husband’s hand.\textsuperscript{104} Sicelo Mhlauli’s body was recovered without its right hand,\textsuperscript{105} which was long rumored to be with the Port Elizabeth police.\textsuperscript{106} Ultimately, Ms. Mhlauli’s testimony is strongly in favor of retributive justice, given her dismissal of amnesty for the perpetrators as bringing any change to her life.\textsuperscript{107}

Following Ms. Mhlauli’s testimony, her 19-year-old daughter Bawuli testified before the Commission. Bawuli’s testimony is short, but she annunciates the first strong example of restorative justice, as advocated by the Commission and particularly Desmond Tutu.\textsuperscript{108} When asked if she would like to know the identity of the perpetrators who killed her father, Bawuli responds in the affirmative.\textsuperscript{109} She adds:

\begin{quote}
I would love to know who killed my father, so would my brother, I suppose, because it’s very hard for us right now to do anything, because in order for us to forget, and forgive, we do want to forgive, but I mean I don’t know what to say, we do want to forgive but I mean we don’t know who to forgive, we don’t know the killers, you know. And I must say we’re all upset about this.\textsuperscript{110} (Emphasis added).
\end{quote}

Bawuli’s testimony mirrors the restorative justice language where the victim must also forgive as part of coming to terms with the loss.

Bawuli is the final Cradock Four family member to testify for the day. It seems that her brief testimony has done the most to move TRC Chairman Desmond Tutu.\textsuperscript{111} Though three of the Cradock Four widows are present (Nyameka Goniwe is to testify the next day), Tutu directs most of his closing remarks to Ms. Mhlauli, Bawuli’s mother.\textsuperscript{112} At the close of the proceedings, Tutu responds:

\begin{flushright}
\textit{See Calata, supra note 87.}
\textit{See id.}
\textit{See Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, supra note 178-79.}
\textit{See Calata, supra note 87.}
\textit{See id.}
\textit{See id.}
\textit{Calata, supra note 87.}
\textit{See id.}
\textit{See id.}
\end{flushright}
We are proud to have people like you and your husbands and the reason why we won the struggle, is not because we had guns, we won the struggle because of people like you. People of incredible strength and this country is fortunate to have people like you. And I wanted to say to your daughter [Bawuli Mhlauli], that her father where he is looking down, is proud of her, and you should feel you’ve done a tremendous job with her . . . And that she, your daughter should say, I want to forgive, we want to forgive, after what she has experienced, and seen what happened to her mother and to her father, and she says, we want to forgive, but we want to know who to forgive. We give thanks to God for you, and thank you for your contribution to our struggle, and thank you, even if it was reluctant in a sense, rightly, thank you for sacrificing your husbands. (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{113}

Tutu also brings his conceptions of religiosity into the TRC with his closing remarks. He tells the widows that the deceased Sicelo Mhlauli is “looking down” on his daughter with pride.\textsuperscript{114} Tutu concludes his remarks with an odd choice of words: praising the women “for sacrificing your husbands.”\textsuperscript{115} The words seem strange given that the women spent the majority of their testimony describing how their husbands were arrested and murdered by the South African defense forces.

Nyameka Goniwe, the wife of Matthew Goniwe, testified the next day regarding her experiences.\textsuperscript{116} Similar to the others, part of Ms. Goniwe’s testimony focused on her opinion about amnesty. Commissioner Smith leads the exchange:

Mr. Smith: Now you realise of course that it’s quite possible for persons to come forward and to actually admit to the killing of your husband and to apply for amnesty to one of the committees of this Commission. What would by [sic] your attitude to that. [sic] How would you feel towards these people if they were in fact identified and that you were to know that these are the people who are responsible for the brutal slaying of your husband?\textsuperscript{117}

Ms. Goniwe: Well I look forward to that. I mean I know it’s difficult after suffering such pain and trauma. But we need to know what happened and who they are, and also, I mean they have to need to show some remorse.

Mr. Smith: Are you saying that just coming forward and applying for amnesty would not be sufficient, that you would also maybe require a person to show remorse for what they have done.

\textsuperscript{113} Calata, supra note 87.
\textsuperscript{114} Id.
\textsuperscript{115} Id.
\textsuperscript{116} Goniwe, supra note 87.
\textsuperscript{117} Id.
Ms. Goniwe: Yes. They have to show us remorse, that they’re sorry for what they did. I don’t say that, I mean it would immediately make us happy, it’s a challenge, we’re going to be challenged in that kind of way, and grapple with that, inside and it will take a long time. Healing takes a long time. (Emphasis added).118

Ms. Goniwe seems to also favor restorative justice as advocated by Tutu, with the condition that the perpetrators show remorse for their actions.

Though Ms. Goniwe notes that she can only forgive the perpetrators if they show remorse, there is no such remorse requirement for the perpetrators to qualify for amnesty.119 Thus, while Ms. Goniwe might require remorse to personally forgive the perpetrators, the Commission itself will pay no heed whatsoever to whether the perpetrators are sorry for their actions.120

At the conclusion of Ms. Goniwe’s remarks, Chairman Tutu closes the proceedings. In this instance, he does not praise the efforts to achieve restorative justice, but instead offers his praise to the four women and all South Africans who have struggled against apartheid. Tutu remarks:

All of you were very young when this happened, and one of the things that I think has impressed us is how you have been supporting each other, I mean, even yesterday, just sitting together, and you were really children when this awful thing happened. . . we are an incredible country with some quite extraordinary people. I mean that you can laugh, you can sing, you have hope even you [sic] have been traumatized. It gives great hope for this land . . .maybe South Africa is God’s favourite, because, and it’s good, that we must hear the pain of everybody, and for people to know that this freedom was not cheap and that people must learn to nurse it, because it was bought at a very very great price.121

Though reconciliation might have been the stated ideal, the victims at the Cradock hearings stated a goal of reconciliation on a very limited basis.122 Most participants in the truth hearings sought retributive justice.123 Though some individuals understood that the political compromises between President Nelson Mandela and former President F.W. de Klerk that brought an end to apartheid meant that there would be no retribution, the editor of

118. Id.
120. Id.
121. Goniwe, supra note 87.
South Africa’s largest black newspaper suggests that the majority of black South Africans were initially unaware that there would not be criminal prosecutions. Of those victims, “[m]any were ordinary people who could not be bothered by the niceties of political arrangements between Mandela and de Klerk and who felt that the law of natural justice should be followed.” In addition, many in the black press felt that “justice was the only foundation for a lasting reconciliation.”

B. Restorative Justice As Seen in the Amnesty Cases

1. The Amnesty Proceedings

The amnesty hearings were held for ten days in February and March 1998 and then recessed until June, when the final amnesty application was examined. Seven individuals applied for amnesty in relation to the case. Six of the applicants committed the crime itself or helped in the planning of the murders. A seventh amnesty applicant applied for amnesty because of his role as an accessory to the crimes after they were committed.

Before the first witness in the amnesty hearings spoke, the attorneys from all sides addressed the court. In the case of the victims and the perpetrators applying for amnesty, the written application was a critical
component of testimony.\textsuperscript{134} For the perpetrators, it was used as a jumping off point in the quest for “truth.” During the amnesty hearings, nearly all the applicants made reference to their amnesty filings.\textsuperscript{135} In some instances, a defendant was asked to read a piece that he had written regarding the crime. Unlike the human rights violations proceedings, there was less collaboration between the Commissioners and the amnesty applicants.

\section*{2. The Amnesty Hearings in Action}

The first amnesty applicant to take the stand was Johan Martin Van Zyl, who also went by the nickname “Sakkie.”\textsuperscript{136} Van Zyl was a member of the South African Defense Force who, as part of his duty, helped plot the interception and murder of the Cradock Four. J.A. Booyens, the attorney for amnesty applicant Sakkie Van Zyl, walked him through his testimony. According to the testimony, Van Zyl claimed that Colonel Van Rensburg summoned him to the Colonel’s office and told him the troubles in the Eastern Cape required “the elimination” of Matthew Goniwe and his associates.\textsuperscript{137} As part of the attack, the goal was to make the crime appear to be the work of vigilantes or AZAPO (Azanian People’s Organization), a rival black political organization to the UDF (United Democratic Front).\textsuperscript{138}

When Van Zyl’s attorney asked about the murders being against the laws of the country, Van Zyl replied: “I knew strictly speaking that it was an illegal operation, but I knew and I felt that it was an authorised operation . . . that I could and should continue with it.”\textsuperscript{139} Under the amnesty provisions, an individual’s violent action must have served some political aim, rather simply being an act of violence.\textsuperscript{140} In regard to amnesty, Van Zyl told the Commission: “I am applying [for amnesty] because I feel that the crimes in which I participated formed a part of the political struggle of that time. Unfortunate as it was, it was nothing else but that and that is what I base [my amnesty application] on.”\textsuperscript{141}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotenum{134} See Milena Sterio, \textit{Rethinking Amnestiy}, 34 \textit{DENV. J. INT’L L. \\ 
& POL’Y} 373, 382-83 (2006).
\footnotenum{135} See TRC Transcript, \textit{supra} note 131 (statement of Johan Martin van Zyl, amnesty applicant) (this transcript can also be found at: http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/pe/cradock2.htm).
\footnotenum{136} TRC Transcript, \textit{supra} note 131 (statement of Johan Martin van Zyl, amnesty applicant).
\footnotenum{137} Id.
\footnotenum{138} NICHOLSON, \textit{supra} note 3, at 34-35.
\footnotenum{139} TRC Transcript, \textit{supra} note 131 (statement of Johan Martin van Zyl, amnesty applicant).
\footnotenum{141} TRC Transcript, \textit{supra} note 131 (statement of Johan Martin van Zyl, amnesty applicant).
\end{footnotes}
After a spirited exchanged where the applicant’s truthfulness was questioned, the Commission asked Van Zyl if he enjoyed carrying out the operation. “No, Mr. Chairman,” Van Zyl replied, “To the contrary.” The chairman asked why Van Zyl committed the crime. “Mr. Chairman, I have asked myself that question many times,” was Van Zyl’s response. But the response was not adequate for the Chair, who pressed Van Zyl for a more formative answer. Ultimately, Van Zyl responded, “I think at that time I was just so motivated that I was prepared to do anything for this country. Which in retrospect was misplaced, but I have no other real explanation as that.”

The only hint of restorative justice comes next when the TRC Chair asks Van Zyl if he has met with the victims’ families. Van Zyl says that he has been advised to wait until the proceedings conclude and the amnesty results have been announced. “And do you intend to do so, irrespective of the results?” the chair asks. Van Zyl replies, “I have no objection.” After being asked to clarify his answer by the chair, Van Zyl remarks, “I do not know if there is any wish from their side to speak to me.” Such an answer is telling. Restorative justice might be a lofty goal, but Van Zyl seems to know nothing about it. He has no idea whether the families even desire to speak to him about the event, let alone forgive his role in the murder, which would seem to be the ultimate aim of restorative justice.

3. Restorative Justice in the Case of Eric Taylor

The most explicit example of restorative justice from any participant in the Cradock Four case came from South African Defense Force (SADF) member Eric Taylor. Taylor had participated in the Cradock Four murders in 1985. Over the ensuing years, he came to realize that his actions committed on behalf of the apartheid regime were wrong. During his amnesty hearing, Taylor noted that his political point of view began to change around 1990, when apartheid came to an end and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. In addition to a changing political opinion against apartheid, Taylor testified that for many years he carried a burden of guilt about his role in the Cradock killings.

142. Id. The attorney opposing amnesty pointedly questioned van Zyl about his honesty, repeatedly questioning whether the home was bugged with a listening device. Id.
143. Id.
144. Id.
145. Id.
146. TRC Transcript, supra note 131 (statement of Johan Martin van Zyl, amnesty applicant).
147. Id.
148. Id.
As a result of his guilt, Taylor met with the families of the Cradock Four in 1997 to offer remorse for his crimes and to request forgiveness.\footnote{150 Id.; Nicholson, supra note 3, at 180.} There was some disagreement between Taylor and the families, however, about what exactly could be revealed prior to his amnesty hearings. Recounting that meeting in his amnesty testimony before the TRC, Taylor offered that “[I]nitially, in the light of my amnesty application I told them that I was there because I was admitting that I had killed these people and I’m asking their forgiveness. There was a bit of conflict of interest at a certain stage because they asked me to provide them with certain facts. I explained to them initially that if I should do that it would have an influence on my amnesty application and also I would expose myself to make those facts known at that forum [the TRC amnesty hearing].”

A Dutch Reform minister brought Eric Taylor and the victims’ families together in April 1997, but the meeting provided little resolution.\footnote{151 Id. at 180.} Upon meeting, Nomonde Calata “refused to shake [Eric Taylor’s] hand, but the others did so briefly, looking down at the floor.”\footnote{152 Id. at 181.} Appearing before the families, Eric Taylor asked for the forgiveness of the families. Since the meeting was prior to the submission of amnesty applications, Taylor would not discuss certain details of the event. The families left the meeting to confer. When they returned, Nicholson describes their reaction: Nomonde Calata “told [Eric Taylor] that they had traveled many hours to attend the meeting. There was not going to be any quick absolution for murdering their husbands. No facts; no forgiveness. Taylor looked at [Minister] Coetzee and shook his head. His eyes misted with tears and Dominee Coetzee put a reassuring hand on his shoulder.”\footnote{153 TRC Transcript, supra note 151 (statement of Eric Taylor, amnesty applicant).}

During his amnesty hearing, Taylor describes the emotions of the day he met with the victims’ families:

[Meeting the families] is one of the most difficult aspects of the whole process, it was a very emotional occasion because I had this desire, an almost expressed desire which I felt. I wanted to meet these families, it was really a need which I felt. Amongst others, especially from a Christian point of view, I don’t think amnesty at that stage was more important for me than reconciliation\footnote{153} [Emphasis added].

Reconciliation requires the cooperation of both sides: victims and perpetrators. The victim meeting indicates remorse on Taylor’s part for his role in the killings, particularly since he arranged to meet the victims’ families without external prompting. The idea of restorative justice seems to be best demonstrated in this exchange, where victims and perpetrators return to equal footing and are able to become part of the community again.
Yet this was not the outcome of the meeting. The victims were unable to forgive Eric Taylor. Restorative justice was not attained.

Interestingly, during the hearings, the TRC commissioners seem flippant about Taylor’s remorse and his decision to meet with the families. During the hearings, Taylor’s attorney asked him where “from the depth of your heart came the idea to talk to [the families]?"154 The attorney opposing amnesty responded, “He told the witness where it came from Mr. Chairman but anyway we will have to see.”155 With that remark, the Chairman responded, “Maybe he was talking about different ventricles” in reference to Mr. Taylor’s change of heart about the killings.156 While one must remember that while remorse has no bearing on the amnesty decisions, the reaction of one commissioner toward the witness is telling of the role restorative justice played within amnesty hearings.

4. Restorative Justice in the Amnesty Hearings

For all the talk about restorative justice and the need for reconciliation, there was little of it on display with regard to the amnesty hearings of those involved with the Cradock Four. The only example of any question of remorse in questions coming from the Committee happened during the testimony of Sakkie Van Zyl, who expressed regret for his actions. Eric Taylor offered remorse prior to the hearing and recounted his meeting with the victims’ families while testifying before the Commission. While the family did listen to his confession, full forgiveness did not ultimately happen. And while Taylor clearly expressed remorse during the hearing, the attorney for the families opposed amnesty for Taylor and attempted to cast him as dishonest and holding back the truth.

The hearings for victims and the amnesty applications served separate functions, and the notion of restorative justice were much more explicitly addressed in the human rights violations hearings. Is reconciliation and restorative justice only a one-way street? Must the victims initiate the healing? In the least, victims must be somewhat open to hear from the perpetrators before any sense of restorative justice can be reached. The human rights abuses proceedings operated to shape national consciousness—or more specifically, that the hearings and media selections of testimony have been “made to ‘fit’ a particular narrative of a ‘new’ South African history.”157 If this is the case, then it makes sense for forgiveness to figure prominently within the human rights hearings, as South Africa’s black majority and white minority collectively work to move beyond its apartheid past. The amnesty hearings, on the other hand, do not fulfill the

154. Id.
155. Id.
156. Id.
157. Grunbaum-Ralph, supra note 86, at 201.
role of reshaping the collective consciousness. Consequently, forgiveness and remorse figure less prominently.

5. The Amnesty Decisions

Following the conclusion of testimony, the Amnesty Committee of the TRC reached its decision. For six of the seven applicants, amnesty was denied. The only applicant receiving amnesty was Eugene de Kock who did not participate in the killings, but advised on the cover-up after the attacks.

In order to qualify for amnesty, the Amnesty Act required that the offense must be an “act associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past” and the applicant must have “made a full disclosure of all relevant facts.” The Commission questioned whether the amnesty applicants fulfilled either aim. On the one hand, the Committee questioned whether all the murders were necessary, when Matthew Goniwe seemed to be the main target. Specifically, the murder of Sicelo Mhauli seemed to be the most questionable since he was not a resident of Cradock and the amnesty applicants claimed that the murders were committed to ease unrest in the Cradock area. But the Commission does not ultimately determine whether all the murders fulfilled a political objective, because the Amnesty Committee ruled that the applicants have not been forthright before the Commission. More specifically, the Committee found that “[the amnesty applicants’] forgetfulness on crucial issues regarding the events so often referred to over the years and their lack of explanation surrounding the order, planning and execution of these offences does not lend itself to a favourable credibility finding.”

In the view of the Committee, memory of the events mattered. The Amnesty Committee’s view of memory is an interesting departure from traditional testimony. It was important for amnesty that perpetrators remembered what they had heard over the years, not merely what they actually remembered. In traditional testimony, however, an individual is expected to separate the two: he is expected to recall only actual memories, not what has been reported over the years in the press. The ultimate justification was that the applicants (excluding de Kock) “failed to disclose everything they know about the murders.” Consequently, amnesty for the perpetrators in the Cradock Four killings was denied.


159. Id.
CONCLUSION

This work explored the idea of restorative justice within the Cradock Four case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Though the notion of restorative justice—with both victims and perpetrators restored to their place in the community—might be a noble idea, in the Cradock Four case, it remained only an idea that did not translate into reality. Some factors complicated restorative justice and made the push for restorative justice unequal between victim and perpetrator. For example, the promotion of restorative justice itself differed depending on the hearings. In the human rights violations case, victims were asked their thoughts on reconciliation, reconciliation was particularly encouraged, and Committee Chair Desmond Tutu was quick to praise any victim who offered forgiveness. In the amnesty hearings, Commissioners themselves seemed unmoved and unconcerned about restorative justice or fostering much reconciliation between the perpetrators and victims’ families. Instead, those hearings operated much like a court, with the goal of finding the facts, but offering little in terms of reconciliation.

As much as reconciliation through restorative justice was pushed in the victims’ hearings by the TRC, some of the victims seemed unready to embrace the concept. In the end, two of the witnesses seemed to favor the more-familiar retributive justice, though three others did express a willingness to forgive the perpetrators. In the amnesty hearings, Eric Taylor, the one perpetrator who best exemplified the ideals of restorative justice received no acknowledgment from the TRC. His application for amnesty was ultimately denied.

Reflecting on the amnesty decisions, one scholar posited that, “At best [they] were unpredictable and arbitrary. At worst, they entailed an unconscious selection process that sanitised the apartheid past and its uncomfortable lack of political orthodoxy.”

The Cradock Four killers did not receive amnesty, with the only amnesty nod going to an individual who helped cover the crime.

The difference of victims’ and perpetrators’ emphasis on restorative justice may ultimately be the result of the natural order of forgiveness. The wronged party must be ready to forgive before any reconciliation can occur. In this case, victims may be willing to meet with perpetrators and accept repentance. A perpetrator cannot bring restorative justice without a receptive victim. This may explain why perpetrator Eric Taylor’s attempts at reconciliation were unsuccessfully received.

Restorative justice is a noble concept. Who wouldn’t want to heal victims and restore the wrongs of the past? Of course, restorative justice is easier in theory than in life, where the scars and pain are not abstract. In the end, the reliance on restorative justice relies on a romantic version of a pre-
colonial past, a vision Desmond Tutu echoed when he claimed that African justice was more concerned with restoring balance rather than punishing. Though ubuntu might be used to promote an inclusive nationalist ideology, ubuntu itself glorifies an imagined past.

The TRC’s emphasis on reconciliation may have even been counterproductive. As the TRC took its course, it became increasingly clear that reconciliation could not simply come through a Commission. With the understanding that full reconciliation could not be achieved in such a short time, Committee Chair Desmond Tutu even began to change his position, arguing that the more reasonable goal for the TRC was to promote reconciliation rather than fully achieve it.

The Cradock Four hearings exemplify the complexity of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it looked to balance many objectives. The TRC was, among other things, about bringing reconciliation, uncovering the truth, recognizing and healing victims, and fostering equality. The TRC stands alone among truth commissions in its attempts to bring reconciliation. Reconciliation was an aim of the TRC, but the transcripts of the Cradock Four case show that full reconciliation was ultimately not achieved.

As a test case, the Cradock Four hearings show the limits for a truth commission to achieve reconciliation through the means of restorative justice. Though a Commission can encourage restorative justice on numerous fronts, the divergent victim opinions about reconciliation emphasize that the decision to forgive can only be personal.

161. Minow, supra note 76, at 341.
163. HAYNER, UN SPEAKABLE TRUTHS, supra note 15, at 156 (noting that A Market Research Africa poll revealed that two-thirds of South Africans felt that the truth commission revelations had made South Africans “angrier” and had “led to a deterioration in relations between races.”).
164. Id.
165. In fact, later news stories after the TRC depict the Cradock Four widows as holding out hope for retributive justice in the form of prosecution. For example, in 2002, Nomonde Calata told one American reporter, “We are still waiting for the perpetrators to be judged for what they did.” In 2009, Calata re-iterated those remarks, noting, “If these people get prosecuted and found guilty for what they did, that is the one thing that will set me free . . . I have learned that when people have wronged you, it’s something that hurts you so much you long that justice must punish those people.” Similarly, in the 2009 article, Sindiswa Mkhonto stated, “We have no husbands, no nothing. I can’t forgive.” See Karin Brulliard, Apartheid’s Intractible Legacy, WASH. POST., (Feb. 15, 2009), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/14/AR2009021400537.html; Andrew Maykuth, For S. African Widows, Truth Without Justice: They Still Wait for Reparations—While the Killers Walk Free, PHILADELPHIA. INQUIRER, June 13, 2002, at A15.