

Hope in a Time of Global Despair

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Zachie Achmat is rock-star charismatic. Perhaps the best-known South African AIDS activist and among a group of elite international AIDS activists, Achmat, at 43, looks wiry and energetic. In April, when I saw him in Boston, he was addressing an overflow audience at a conference on development. On that occasion, as on so many others, he was wearing a t-shirt with the slogan HIV positive. These words are not only literally true -- Achmat found out he was HIV positive in 1990-- but they are figuratively true as well. Achmat is positive that although the greatest inequalities between rich and poor, women and men, and gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered and straight peoples manifest themselves in the AIDS pandemic, these inequities can also be reversed. A Muslim by birth, an atheist by choice, he has great faith that in facing the truths inherent in this disastrous epidemic, solutions will emerge. Achmat's message, he says, "is not about being proud to come out and admit that the disease is with us. It's about being realistic. That's when fighting it can begin (Hawthorne, 2003/2006)." I would say that he has hope, a particular kind of hope that I call realistic hope. Realistic hope, and the practice of it, is the theme of my talk today.

It is not a simple task that I have set myself. In fact, it is quite tricky since your realism may be my optimism. Surely, we will find ourselves on shifting terrain, a slippery slope, faultlines. Well, this is a good country to be considering topics that lend themselves to geological metaphors, for Iceland has dazzling cliffs and wide valleys, 100 volcanoes, linear rift faults, the largest glacier in Europe and almost 800 geysers, more than any other country in the world. In fact, we owe the word geysir, lower case “g”, which refers to the phenomenon of spouting hot springs, to the single Geysir by that name in south west Iceland (Harding & Bindloss, 2004). I am delighted to be in this fascinating country making this address and I thank both the scientific committee of IFTA and the host committee of this conference for the wonderful opportunities I have had.

Hope. Western ideas about hope originate with the foundational myth of Pandora, a beautiful young woman who was given as a gift to Epimetheus by Zeus. [I will forsake a feminist analysis of the plot, though I am tempted...] Two versions of the myth exist: In one, Pandora’s adolescent curiosity leads her to open a jar filled with human miseries that she has been specifically instructed to leave alone. Horrified to see what flies out, she is only able to re-seal the jar in time to keep hope inside. In the second version, she opens a box and inadvertently lets out all the blessings known to humankind except hope. In both versions, two ideas are central. The first is that Zeus wants hope to be the responsibility of humans and two, hope exists inside one solitary object.

This latter idea corresponds with the common view that hope is a feeling, an achievement of one person alone. The same premise undergirds the principal empirical investigations of hope. For instance, for the last two decades, C. R. Snyder and his colleagues in the psychology department at the University of Kansas have studied the

psychology of hope (Snyder et al,1996). Here are two items from their Adult Trait Hope Scale: I meet the goals that I set for myself... and... I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.

The scale perfectly captures the individualistic view of hope. Each hope item is designed to measure peoples' convictions that they can accomplish what matters to them on their own. Now imagine an Adult Trait Hope Scale that is predicated on the notion that hope is something you do with others. Here are the same items revised to reflect that hope is the responsibility of the community: I can count on the support of others to help me meet my goals... and... Together, my friends, family, colleagues and I can always find ways to get out of a jam.

The view of hope expressed in the second version pivots the responsibility for its accomplishment away from the individual alone, who may or may not “feel” hope, to the individual in community. Once hope is firmly established as an emerging property of community, realistic hope becomes achievable. Realistic hope as something people do together seems to me also to provide a more accurate reflection of the nature of human relatedness: we are not isolated, but rather intrinsically interdependent.

The Buddha expressed this as ‘the one contains the all.’ (Hanh 1999: 221) Indra’s Net, hanging above the palace of the Hindu God Indra, provides a beautiful image of -- and a metaphor for -- human interrelatedness. The net is infinite in dimension and in the center of its every node rests a jewel, reflecting every other jewel in the net. Today, neuroscientists have identified mirror neurons that fire in our brains when we observe intentional actions performed by others (Rizzollatti & Craighero 2004). This is a physical

manifestation of interrelatedness; our very own nerve cells empathically resonate with others by mimicking them. Neuroanatomically, I am what you do.

From Indra's net to neural nets we see expressions of human interconnectedness. What does this mean for realistic hope? Simply put, we each have a role in its manifestation but our positions in relation to hope determine what we must do. Those who are hopeless and those who witness their despair have different tasks. Some people, some groups of people, some nations, lack and need hope; others, hope intact or untested, are witnesses. For however long these circumstances obtain, they position us differently and call for different actions.

Hopeless, we must resist isolation. Witness to despair, we must refuse indifference. Neither is easy.

Those who are hopeless must summon the impulse to reach out toward others. It may be something we have done in the past, at a time when a compassionate response seemed likely. But all of us have had moments when we have felt uncertain that those we wanted to trust could bear what we had to share. To practice realistic hope we must resist the temptation to withdraw from others. *The task is to resist isolation.*

The witnesses' task is a related one. In the face of calamities and tragedies that happen over and over again, in our homes and on our planet, we must reject indifference. Indifference exerts its own seductive pull, roping us in by our feeling, first, inadequate and then, overwhelmed. Recognizing these sticky strands is the first step of *refusing indifference.*

The tasks I am proposing are difficult for both positions and while many of us in this room, I am sure, have experienced both positions, today I am going to address myself to only one, the witnesses' task: that is, the task of refusing indifference.

In the first part of my talk, I propose that the way we think about hope makes it more or less possible to embrace fully the task of refusing indifference. In the second part of my talk, I describe steps toward a practice of realistic hope. I provide examples of a practice that I believe allows us to refuse indifference, day after day, as the events of our world, small and global, crash in on us or seep into us, threatening the people, the values, the institutions, the freedoms we hold dear.

Realistic Hope

I have come up with four ideas about realistic hope that I am giving the more formal name of “characteristics.” These four characteristics of realistic hope make it possible to refuse indifference, that is, to do realistic hope. I’ll take each in turn.

1. Accommodating doubt and despair.

Increasingly in our world today, optimism, it would seem, is foolhearty. Realistic hope, on the other hand, is not. In *Disturbing the Peace*, Václav Havel says of hope that it is “definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out (Havel, 1991, p.181)” I like this distinction a great deal because it is precisely the activity of making sense of what life deals us that people do so well with each other, and that we as therapists are so skilled at doing.

Potentially there is no limit to what circumstances or feelings we as therapists can make sense of and help those who consult us make sense of. In this way of thinking, doubt and despair are not antithetical to hope but rather just two feelings or experiences that arise in certain circumstances and which we can make sense of as we would any

other feelings. It is precisely when we eschew doubt and despair, when we banish them or fear them, that we are most vulnerable to creating situations in which tragic errors can occur and hopelessness can flourish.

Let me unpack that. I am visualizing a cartoon by Lee Lorenz that was published in February in *The New Yorker* magazine (Lorenz, 1996). It depicts a warrior on a horse, triumphant above dead bodies and skeletal remains. The caption, “Let the healing begin” would be merely funny if there were not so many people all over the world – leaders among them – who, because they cannot bear doubt and despair, do choose violence to solve problems. Then, when the earth is scorched -- children cower in the corners of the living room, Iraqis lie dead on the streets-- they think the healing can begin. This attitude is connected to clinging to a form of hope that retains its childlike innocence. This form of hope admits no doubt, no uncertainty, no dark night of the soul, no despair. It is rarely a form of hope on which a solid foundation of human relationship can be built, whether within families or between nations. It is not only not necessary to scrub hope of despair to practice realistic hope it is imperative not to do so.

2. Integrating contradictions:

Innocent hope prefers the straight line, the black or white, the simple form. Realistic hope is comfortable with a mess. It accepts that chaos can assort itself into order. It embraces contradiction.

Public life is rife with contradictions as is family life. Realistic hope is easier to sustain since it does not get dashed, as innocent hope may, if contradictions emerge.

Rudolph Guiliani, the man who was mayor of New York City when the attacks of September 11 on the world trade center towers occurred, is becoming a prominent

national actor based on his masterful performance during that calamitous time. But he was not in charge of a city come completely undone, as recent archival evidence makes clear. The wheels of normalcy ran parallel to the terrible unhinging. For instance, within days of the attacks, citizens resumed their practices of asking the mayor for favors – for instance, a photo op with a visitor -- in return for promises of “personal sweeteners,” golf games and elegant dinners (McIntire, 2006). Realistic hope dubs the city no less brave for its resumption of the prosaic norms of urban political life, for its integration of the ordinary into the extraordinary, and finds no unbridgeable contradiction.

Family life is replete with the challenges of melding the seemingly contradictory into a whole, however discordant the parts may be. Serena is eight and angry. The youngest child in a family I see periodically, she was two when her parents separated for the final time. Her mother is dating for the first time in Serena’s memory and she hates it. “When Paul is there, she is not my mother anymore,” Serena says emphatically. “She looks different. Her laugh is so fake. She’s like a teen-ager. Disgusting!”

Serena’s job is tough. With no memories of her parents kissing or hugging, with no memories of her mother as a wife, she must integrate that her mother is her mother when she is also Paul’s girlfriend. Realistic hope, with its acceptance of contradictions, offers her a platform on which to stand, even when she can’t stand what she must stand.

3. Seeking goals and pathways to them.

Pragmatism is a third characteristic of realistic hope; it seeks goals and pathways to them. We tend to feel buoyed, hopeful, when the goal is clear, the pathway known, and hopeless when the way is blocked, the goal obscure. Despair is the conviction that nothing that one wants is within reach, whether love or security or clean water or health.

As citizens or as therapists who subscribe to realistic hope, we can cultivate a practice of clarifying goals and identifying pathways toward them for ourselves and for others.

Doing this is not necessarily simple. First, there is often a lot of trial and error to define goals and pathways that will succeed. Goals and pathways to them may have to replace each other at a rate one would never have expected or wanted. Second, life deals us circumstances in which we have to select goals and pathways we never thought we could accept. Yet, the practice of re-forming goals and cultivating pathways to them, stretches us, helping us sustain realistic hope.

Clay Ward is an artist affiliated with MIT in Cambridge. Last March, learning that a homeless man was set alight while sleeping in a park, he and a group of artist colleagues staged an art installation on the very spot where the man was assaulted. Believing that all homeless people are entitled to permanent housing, that no homeless person should ever be assaulted, the group scaled their goal to one they could fight for now and developed two pathways toward reaching it. Their poster, a succinct educational tool, stating that a “Safe Bed Is A Human Right” has been disseminated in many parts of the world and their art installation jump started a community response to issues of protection and shelter for the homeless.

Realistic hope is a humble hope. It accepts proxy measures in place of the ultimate goal. It is satisfied to do less than everything that needs to be done in order to ensure that something be done.

4. Celebrates a variety of narrative forms

Every story has a narrative form (Gergen, 1988). Tragedy plunges in a downward slope; comedy rises up after a big bump; romantic sagas curve like a roller coaster. Each

shape signals certain values. This is particularly true with hope's storyline, invariably portrayed as a progressive narrative, a straight line up. Events – life, this narrative shape implies -- get better and better over time. Hope is always on an upward flight.

The progressive narrative form, however, does not depict the shapes that realistic hope can take, for its shape is determined less by the outcome of events than by the responses of the communities of people who support each other through the events. In community, any narrative form – including uncertain ones – can be borne.

Take the city of New Orleans. Lashed by hurricanes in 2005, abandoned by the national government for crucial hours and days, undermined by decades of shoddy workmanship on the very structures intended to protect its citizens, defined by race and racism, the city is determined to return to full swing.

One enterprise, the Gray Line Bus Company, advertises a Hurricane Katrina disaster tour. It gets as close to the devastated parts of the city as it can and then shows FEMA (Federal emergency management association) trailers as the sure signs of hope, the evidence of the city's – and the tour's- promised re-birth. Commentator and New Orleans resident Cheryl Wagner had this to say about the tour, “[It's] presenting a grand narrative [of hope] that takes all the terrible stuff that has happened and makes it O.K.... A bad thing happened, and then it kept happening, and kept happening and kept happening, but now it's getting fixed so you can eat your beignet (Wagner, 2006).”

Wagner has her own hope narrative and it resembles realistic hope. She sees hope in what the people of New Orleans are doing with each other. She points out that ordinary folk are becoming engineering nerds. Women from the rich, and white, side of town are collecting garbage. People are working together to fix the city. Her hope narrative line has many shapes, none conclusive. Realistic hope celebrates that diversity.

Part II

These four characteristics of realistic hope make doing hope more feasible.

Notice I said doing hope not feeling hopeful. As clinicians, as citizens, I think it is far more useful to focus on the practice of doing hope than it is to try to stimulate the feeling of hope. In the matter of hope, I firmly believe, feeling follows action.

There are several actions that serve us well in the practice of doing realistic hope, the first two of which I have already introduced. It helps to be trying to achieve **realistic** hope. And second, it helps to think of hope as a verb not a noun. I'll return to this in a moment.

I want to sketch in several more actions, each of which could be a paper unto itself, so indulge me in my choice of breadth over depth.

Seek inspiration in the arts. Realistic hope-inspiring work is out there, though, of course, what inspires will be different for each of us and will depend on the context for which we seek hopefulness. Politically, as someone from the United States of America, it is inspiring for me to think of the risk Lisa Charde took in 2002 to exhibit an image of the American flag in our post 911, post Patriot Act country. It captures the feelings of so many of us, the flag as strait jacket. The work, titled "(un)Patriot(ic) Act," expresses her concerns about making domestic surveillance -- and all forms of governmental intrusions into our private lives -- acceptable in the name of freedom. It inspires realistic hope because someone is wrestling with essential dilemmas and finding ways to render them powerfully visible.

Cooper Greene has also done so in this now familiar image, making the black hooded and draped man with electrical wires attached to his body in the infamous Abu Ghraib prison just one of several people in an ipod advertisement. The image makes it clear that we live in a culture that can commodify anything, even torture.

This image by an 11 year-old girl, living in a domestic violence shelter in Boston also inspires hope. She and her mother, along with several other mothers and their sons and daughters, participated in a series of group therapy sessions in which the moms, having told the stories of their abuse to each other during previous sessions, supported each other to tell their stories to their children, ages 6-15. The children and staff served as a reflecting team, at first, until the circles were reversed, at which time the mothers witnessed the children's stories of their lives in the homes they had all fled. The tumultuous evening closed with us all holding hands in a circle, calling out a single word that expressed our feelings. Her drawing was made one week later; it captures a moment in time. The Spanish words translate -- security, community, family, understanding, peace, mothers, sons, unity, respect, love and then, love conquers hate. Big words, chosen by this young girl, to express a direction and an intention.

Train ourselves to register realistic hope. We are used to the progressive narrative of hope, which we learn when we are young. We learn its visual tropes – rainbows, butterflies, looking up – and its auditory ones – laughter, song, the vocal lilt. But the images and sounds of realistic hope may well be different.

James Nachtway is a renowned photographer who has covered wars, conflict and critical social issues for over 30 years. I have selected four of his photographs to consider, each of which, on first look, may produce a feeling of discouragement, even despair. They depict two Bosnian men weeping at a grave, a woman leaning over an emaciated woman dying of AIDS, two men who are landmine victims with two prosthetic legs attempting to walk, and an Indonesian beggar man with one arm and one leg bathing his children in a polluted canal. Yet, when given the instruction to look for what is hopeful in each photograph, most people are able to do so. Additionally, they describe a transition from distress to hopefulness once given the instruction to notice what is hopeful. It is easy to see hope in the rainbow, but we must train ourselves to see realistic hope in the face of conflict, poverty, violence, illness and all the other scourges with which the planet is afflicted and afflicts itself.

And of course for us, as therapists, the task is not only to see hope but to train ourselves to hear it. Recently, a colleague of mine at the Family Institute of Cambridge, Betsy Buckley, showed a portion of an interview she had done with a 32 year-old former heroin addict, the mother of two school-aged children who had relinquished her children to her own mother, who had been abusive to her. The children had recently been reunited with their mother by the Department of Social Services. The counselor, Betsy, said, “Why didn’t you want your kids to see you using? Why didn’t you want them around the life you were living?” Mother: “I thought it would be safer for them.” Counselor, “You made this decision, not DSS. What does this say about your hopes for the children?”

Ms. Buckley skillfully heard realistic hope amidst the mother's tale of turmoil during her days of addiction. In helping the mother amplify an account of herself as someone who wanted a more stable life for her children than she could manage at that time, Ms. Buckley reflected back to the mother that she is someone who took steps to achieve realistic hope for her children.

Turn hope from a noun to a verb. Ms. Buckley's trained ear led her to ask a good question, pushing into the word hope and opening it to fresh meanings. I have found that turning hope from a noun to a verb can generate new thinking about hope.

A while ago a client named Anna whom I had seen a few years previously returned for consultation. A divorced woman in her mid-forties, she had just had a mastectomy, which she had been assured would cure her breast cancer. She said, 'The mastectomy has cut hope off at the knees. It's mangled my hope that my life will ever be different.' Remembering her abusive family history, eventually in the session, I asked her to reflect on how this history might be contributing to her hopelessness at this time. Cooperatively, Anna began telling her family story using disappointment, loss, and shame as her organizing themes. She cried and we were both moved by what she shared. But I felt no traction. I could offer companionship in her sadness, anger and grief but the path we were on was not producing direction.

'How is this going for you?' I asked.

'Terrible.' She said. 'I don't want to talk about why I feel hopeless. I feel worse than when I came in.'

‘What is the work you need hope to do for you?’ I asked her. *‘What do you want hope for?’*

These questions took her off guard and were immediately generative for Anna. Without hesitation she answered, ‘When I have hope, I have the ability to imagine something good and then I can take steps to do it.’

‘So what does hope actually do?’

‘It illuminates the corridors. It helps me see the way out?’

‘What about now? Is there a beam of light shining anywhere in the corridor? Can you see anything at all?’

‘Truthfully, right now, there is a tiny beam and I can see a few steps ahead of me.’

‘Who’s holding the light?’

‘I am.’

‘Is that OK with you?’

‘Damn it, you know it’s not.’

We were off and running. The questions had elicited an image that invigorated Anna and gave her many angles to explore. It triggered her imagination and unblocked her thinking, moving her out of the painful emotional rut she was in. It freed her to work on the very real dilemmas in her life. For instance, she wanted to know: Who could hold the flashlight when she got tired and why there were so few candidates for that position? How was she deciding which part of the corridor to illuminate and how did she know it was the best place? If she took the cancer as a wake-up call, where might she shine the light?

My questions concretized hope as something we do. In the same way that as a writer I ask myself what work I need a word to do in a sentence, people can interrogate hope, the verb, inquiring what they need it to do.

Use global resources. Many of us bemoan the homogeneity of globalization. I loathe finding Starbucks on a corner in Rome; am disconcerted by finding South African safari T-shirts in the St. Louis airport. But there are also extraordinary benefits. Globalization permits conversations across identities and boundaries in ways that many of us could never have imagined. For instance, as we all know, the internet, that world wide web of information that connects the planet, links us creatively to thinkers and clinicians everywhere.

The other day a young mother consulted me by email about her 9 year-old son, Paul, who, in her words:

has been having increasingly regular episodes of... increased heart rate, panic, fast breathing, very vivid images of scary things, he won't drink liquid that he imagines could be blood...
Sunday night his Dad sat with him and asked if it would help to picture an invisible protective shield around him that mommy and daddy could make for him. His fear escalated and Paul explained that he had visually morphed the shield image into a slicer that would cut him.

Fortunately, she also wrote me that when he was not having fear episodes he appeared comfortable and well functioning. I suggested that she and her husband look at a Finnish web site produced by the Helsinki Brief Therapy Institute, called "Bam, the Kids' Wizard," which is a computer program that helps children overcome bad habits or fears, depending on which unit you choose.

A few days later, I got a follow-up email.

Paul is using the website from Helsinki and I do think we are seeing little signs already of some improvement. It set us up to tackle this together. Paul's episodes have been much briefer in duration and he is able to communicate through them....we don't feel that he is off on another planet in his mind the way we did before. ...Now we all have a common vocabulary to work with.

My parents are here this weekend and Paul has employed them as part of his "support network" (an idea inspired by website), and that has been another positive: their love and recognition of his bravery in facing his fears.

This is what globalization can mean. I like that people in Finland are helping a family in suburban Connecticut. This form of cross boundary conversation, virtual though it is, engages our imagination and helps, in the words of the philosopher Anthony Appiah, "to gain experience with the ideas of others," (Appiah, 2006, p.85) which, after all is what will make this world a safer place. John von Neumann, one of the great mathematicians and polymaths of the last century, said, "in mathematics you don't understand things, you just get used to them" (quoted in Appiah, 2006). Borrowing resources from wherever we can find them supports our getting used to each other. It increases the pool of people with whom we can imagine ourselves doing hope.

Look for courage. Students often ask me what they should be looking for when they sit with families. Early in my career, I answered, "Look for moments of strong feeling." Then, a few years later, I replied, "Look for patterns." Then, for even more years, I answered, "Look for gaps in the stories people tell." Now, I answer in all of these ways, plus I suggest that people look for courage.

These are times that require courage. Of all kinds. Nations, communities, families would do well, in particular, to notice and honor whistle blowing courage. James Hansen is a climatologist at NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Agency of

the United States. In 1988, he was one of the first climate scientists to present evidence of global warming and in the following years, though many other scientists agreed with him, others, many handsomely supported by the energy industry, attempted to undermine his credibility. This year, Dr. Hansen was told by his superiors at NASA that he was no longer free to talk with the media. In Hansen's words, they attempted to "muzzle" him. But with the support of some of his NASA colleagues he blew the whistle (Krugman, 2006).

Carl is fifteen. I agreed to do an emergency consultation with Carl, his parents and younger sister, because Carl had been aggressive with every member of the family and they were on the verge of extruding him from the family. His mother feared he might have bi-polar disorder and an evaluation with a psychiatrist was already scheduled.

The session was tumultuous. I met with the family in virtually every combination until I was fairly satisfied that Carl was a whistle blower, sacrificing his own stellar academic career, his friendships, his love of art to bring professional attention to his parents' abusive relationship and to the climate of violence that permeated their home. Meeting alone with Carl, I put forward my hypothesis, suggesting he was brave not bad. At the same time, I cautioned him about the unintended consequences his radical efforts might have for him and wondered when he might feel that it was time for a trained professional to take over the job of attending to the evident dysfunction in his family?

Realistic hope depends on people taking chances, on having the courage to take risks. But doing hope together means that it is incumbent on us all to notice, reach out and support the whistle blowers, the risk takers, the brave so that they do not stay out on a limb, like Carl, but instead are joined there, like birds on a telephone pole.

Realistic hope requires cooperation. While this famous poem of Emily Dickinson's on hope is beautiful -- hope is "the thing with feathers/ that perches in the soul...and never asks a crumb of [us] (Dickinson, 1997) " – on the contrary, I believe that hope demands a great deal of us. It requires that that we work with others to create the conditions for realistic hope to thrive.

Work toward participation. And who are those others? They are any and all of us. How fitting that I speak about creating the conditions for active participation in Iceland, where in 930 C.E. the first national parliament was established by the Vikings, the Althing, 45 kms east of where I stand now, granting rights for free men – although not slaves or women – to participate in governing themselves. They would not have known what we know now: that the inability to participate can make us ill.

This is so in terms of public life and intimate life. In public life, recent studies have shown that there is a social gradient in health that has been observed worldwide: the higher the social position, the better the health. This distinguishes Ph.Ds in Sweden from those with master's degrees as well as black men in the United States who have four times the income of men in Costa Rica, but who, with lower social status, have 9 years shorter life expectancy (Marmot, 2006, p.1305). Lack of control and low social participation, researchers tell us, have a powerful influence on disease risk.

Lack of control and low social participation are fine ways of operationalizing Maturana's phrase, which was brought to my attention by Juan Luis Linares: obstructed love makes us ill (Linares, 2006). Therapists can assist families in unblocking obstructed love, thereby increasing active participation and decreasing disease and dis-ease. Realistic hope thrives on the active participation of its adherents and, frankly, can only exist where these conditions pertain.

Stretch the boundaries: These times are times that create dis-ease. In response to this dis-ease, many of us will pull in, turtling, by pulling in our heads. It doesn't help. As therapists we sit with people who have tried this maneuver and found that it failed to produce the connections and vitality that they longed for. Some, out of desperation or intuitive knowing, have taken a leap of faith and pushed their own boundaries, whatever they have been, and done something radically different. What a privilege to watch a husband, hitherto paralyzed by his wife's apparent inconsolable grief, weep in her presence at his own seemingly futile caring. Or to learn that a sister, who by her own standards failed to protect a younger sibling from their father's abuse, who has never been able to tell this messed up, drug addicted favorite brother of her remorse, writes a letter of apology. These two, like so many who we have encouraged to break free of constraints or, who have burst forth on their own and shown us the way, achieve something new and shining and hopeful. Disastrous times, violent times, require nothing less.

I want to leave you with sounds and images of people who are stretching the boundaries. In a moment you will hear four Canadian musicians, members of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, play a section of the second movement of Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer's String Quartet No. 3. Having spoken to them about what they are thinking while they play, I know they are grappling with the hardest issues of our day, violence, discord and war. Yet, they are willing to break with convention, to do what they have never done before with their instruments and with each other. Through the tenderest attunement, the most sensitive appreciation of the other, they perform realistic hope. We, their audience, never lose sight of what is grave and yet we are also inspired to action. May we rejoice in doing realistic hope together. And now, in what will take three minutes, they play.

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