
Violence: Introduction to Personal Accounts of a Victim and a Perpetrator

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The deep scars which political violence has left on the lives of all South Africans reveal both common and contrasting patterns. The differences depend on where, by choice or circumstance, people are located within the political and broader social order. It also depends on the nature of their roles in the events concerned.

The symptomatology of post-traumatic stress disorder is encountered across the board. The meaning which people give to their experiences of violence, and the ways in which they strive towards integration and healing, naturally differ from context to context.

In the two articles which follow, an ANC activist and an ex-SADF soldier tell their stories. Among the many points of contrast between the two accounts is the sense of underlying strength and purpose on which the activist engaged in a struggle for justice seems to have been able draw, as opposed to the growing sense of personal disintegration of the person perpetrating and exposed to the extreme effects of violence. A violence, which he abhorred from the start, and which he eventually comes to understand as emanating from an unjust system. Important roles for therapy and community support emerge from both accounts.

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