

meetingplace

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the new Uniya newsletter. We hope that separating our news from that of the Jesuit Refugee Service and adopting a new design will provide a better service to the supporters of both organisations. We will continue to produce a newsletter every three months. They will all be available via email and our website, and every second one will also be printed. We encourage your feedback, and would like to include contributions from our readers in future editions.

Over the past five months Uniya staff have been working hard to clarify and define our vision, expertise and philosophy as researchers and advocates in the social justice and human rights arena. Here is the mission statement we developed: "We research and advocate on emerging social justice and human rights issues relevant to Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Listening to and accompanying those affected by injustices, our research aims to inform and influence public policy and opinion."

The words 'listening' and 'accompanying' are critical. We aim to listen to the needs of those who suffer injustice and those who work with them. We aim to also listen to the voice of discernment and of wisdom in our own hearts. We aim to accompany those we work with, those who suffer injustice by immersing ourselves in their situation and lives.

Our approach is in line with *Globalisation and Marginalisation*, a newly released report by the Social Justice Secretariat of the Society of Jesus in Rome.

The mission statement has become the basis for assessing the projects and research that we might be involved in. For instance, Mark Byrne recently travelled to East Timor (Timor-Leste) to support local groups in their monitoring and documentation of human rights violations related to the current crisis.

Uniya has also been involved in researching the perceptions that non-government organisations in the Asia Pacific region have of their country's relationship with Australia.

Apart from our research and advocacy work, we were blessed to have Fr Peter Henriot from Zambia join us in May for an event at ACU Strathfield. He and former Uniya director Fr Frank Brennan confronted the richness of the pastoral cycle and its relevance and application to the Australian context.

The challenge we were left with was to ensure that we are all participants in a response to policies and procedures that create injustice or diminish the rights of citizens. This is especially difficult when the Federal Government has a majority in both houses of parliament, and therefore does not need to heed the 'checks and balances' afforded by the two-house system of parliamentary democracy.

Details of the upcoming Uniya Seminar Series, "Good Neighbour, Bad Neighbour" – are on page 4. I invite you to join Uniya at this event as we discuss the topical issue of Australia's relationship with Indonesia.

Blessings and Peace
Mary Bryant



meetingplace is a quarterly publication of the Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre

Uniya is a Jesuit centre for social justice and human rights



What's the difference?

By Mark Byrne

Coming from the “wide brown land”, it is a shock to approach a country that can be crossed by a small plane in just ten minutes, with the north coast visible in the distance as soon as the south coast is reached. I was reminded of the famous “blue marble” photo of the earth, a shimmering blue and white sphere floating in the blackness of space, taken from Apollo 17 in 1972. Here, likewise, a tiny island of humanity floats between the vast land mass and archipelagos of Asia and the even more vast island-specked ocean of the Pacific.

Or rather, a half-island. In a mountainous country that has absorbed Austronesian, Indo-Malayan and Latin Catholic influences, there have always been real clan and linguistic differences that have sometimes erupted in warfare. Historians differ about whether or not Timor was a united state before Portuguese explorers arrived in the early sixteenth century. Either way, it was divided into two early in the seventeenth century, after the Dutch East India Company took control of the western half.

The Timorese – east or west – had no say in that division, though the East Timorese mounted a ragged but dogged campaign of resistance to the more recent Indonesian attempt to reunite the island under its control between 1975 and 1999.

According to Freud, we often need to fight the hardest against those most like us in order to affirm our individual identity.

That occupation is likely to have resulted in the deaths, directly and indirectly, of a quarter of the population – a genocide comparable in recent times with Pol Pot's Cambodia and the slaughter by Hutu extremists of Tutsis in Rwanda.

And now, with so little justice achieved since 1999 for past crimes against humanity, the half-island seems, amoeba-like, to be turning in on and dividing itself again, this time under the banners of Lorosae and Loromonu, Easterners and Westerners.

Numerous interpretations have already been offered of the reasons for the present crisis, but a psychological perspective might be relevant, too. According to Freud's theory of the “narcissism of minor differences,” we often need to fight the hardest against those most like us in order to affirm our individual identity.

For instance, Michael Ignatieff, the noted Canadian academic and writer on modern warfare and ethnic

conflict, recounts a conversation he had in the early 1990s with a Serb soldier in which the soldier tried to explain the difference between Serbs and Croats. The assertion of difference was the only real difference: a Serb is a Serb because he isn't a Croat. In his desperation, it came down to which brand of cigarette each soldier smoked.

According to Ignatieff, religious and cultural differences are common in most nations, but are usually unimportant when there is a strong state (and a healthy economy, he might have added). When state authority collapses, however, these differences become paramount, because they provide a way for people to “circle the wagons” and inhabit a world of relative safety. “If you/they won't look after me,” it is a way of saying, “then I/we will!”

Lorosae and *loromonu* are translated from Tetum as “sunrise” and “sunset”, and were traditionally applied to the eastern and western ends of the whole island, thereby distinguishing the people of the Portuguese colony from those of its Dutch counterpart. It has come as a great surprise to many East Timorese to find the terms applied to divide up the new country along supposedly ethnic lines, since they do not correspond to the old clan and linguistic divisions.

The idea of an east-west cultural divide within East Timor itself was promulgated by the Portuguese. Because westerners did not actively oppose them, they became known as *kaladi* (friendly or passive), whereas the easterners were more defiant, so were known as *firaku* (strong or hotheaded). According to some, this distinction, which affected the way some parts of Dili were settled, was reinforced by the Indonesians, presumably under the principle of “divide and conquer.”

Now that the old enemy has left, these Portuguese markers of difference are being invoked to classify “us” and “them”, mostly by the use of the terms *lorosae* and *loromonu* rather than *firaku* and *kaladi*. But few would argue that the current east-west divide, which started with some disaffected soldiers and spread to the smouldering suburbs of Dili, is the main one in the new country. It is more a case of who has benefited from independence (not many, as it turns out), and who has languished in poverty and powerlessness.

Because some soldiers from the west believed they had been discriminated against by the military leadership, which came more (but by no means exclusively) from the east, and there was debate about whether those from the east or the west had contributed more to the independence struggle, this divide became a flashpoint for grievances.

support, will involve twenty human rights monitors working in the camps and the districts to collect information, which will be entered into a human rights database established last year by the UN and the local human rights NGO network. A report will be produced which will recommend measures related to justice and peacebuilding. It will be used by the Timor-Leste Government's Providore's Office for Human Rights and the UN Special Independent Commission of Inquiry.

The other main aim of the trip was to further Uniya's involvement in transitional justice processes, especially around *Chega!* ("Enough!"), the report of the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR in Portuguese). Uniya, through ACTJET (the Australian Coalition for Transitional Justice in East Timor), is arranging for formal public launches in Australia around 30 August, the anniversary of the referendum in 1999 which led to independence. The launches will feature one of the former CAVR Commissioners, a

representative of the East Timor government and a response from an Australian with a history of involvement in that country. We have also offered assistance to the post-CAVR Secretariat, which has been hamstrung in its local dissemination work by the political crisis and the consequent lack of a national budget.

Good relations were also established with Australian aid agencies working in East Timor, and with the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Dili and Baucau dioceses. As a result, Uniya may be involved in providing research assistance to the peacebuilding initiatives that will begin to take shape once the crisis has passed.

Uniya has launched a public appeal to help with our human rights and peacebuilding work in East Timor. If you can help, please call Uniya on (02) 9356 3888 for details or use the donation form on page 3 of this newsletter.

Not one place, but many

The island of Timor, in one of its mythic representations, is described as a half-submerged crocodile, wary and waiting. In another mythic representation, Timor is mother earth itself, accepting, long-suffering, supportive of all who rely on her. Geologically, Timor has been described as a 'tectonic chaos'. Linguistically, the island is a babel of languages and dialects. Historically, for centuries, it has been a divided island and a source of continuing dispute. Its local populations have long resisted outside interference and have been fiercely defensive of their different local cultural traditions. From these perspectives, Timor is not one place, but many.

James J Fox, *Out of the Ashes*, ANU E Press, 2003



Children in Lliquica

UPCOMING EVENT

Good Neighbour, Bad Neighbour

What's the difference? Australia's relations with Indonesia

The 2006 Uniya Seminar Series will focus on Australia's relationship with Indonesia. Prominent people in this area will be brought together to tease apart the qualities of a good and bad neighbour and suggest ways forward for better relations. For full details and venues, please visit our website at www.uniya.org.

Melbourne - 2 August

Speakers: Richard Woolcott AC, Assoc Prof Damien Kingsbury and Prof Frank Brennan SJ AO

Wollongong - 8 August

Speakers: Prof Adrian Vickers, Duncan Campbell AM and Prof Frank Brennan SJ AO

Sydney - 16 August

Speakers: Sidney Jones, Prof Peter King and Prof Frank Brennan SJ AO

Adelaide - 22 August

Speakers: Dr John Bruni, John Martinkus and Prof Frank Brennan SJ AO

