

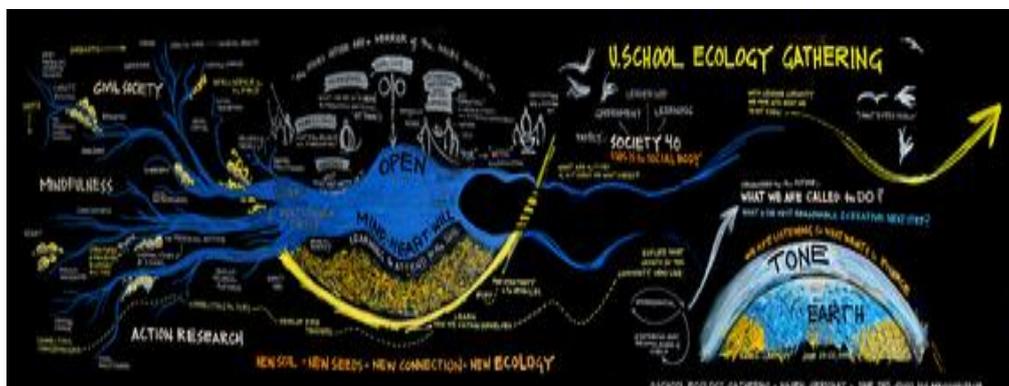
NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS from KHULUMANI SUPPORT GROUP and
REFLECTIONS on 2016



Dear Friends, Colleagues and Associates,

Thank you to each of you for your contributions to our lives and for your support and concern for our ongoing efforts to build a society that works for growing numbers of people in this region of the world. We send you our best wishes for this new year.

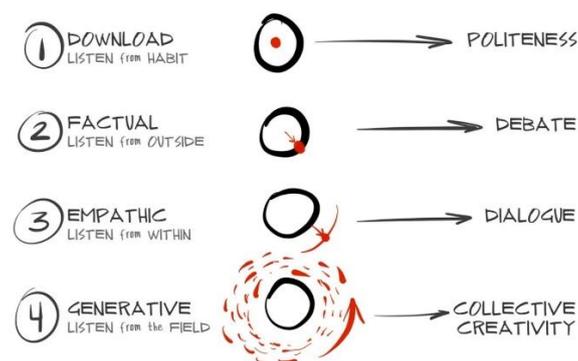
2016 has been a year of some advances and many disappointments in our struggle to realise a more just and equitable society. It is easy to forget that times of despair and difficulty, carry within them the seeds of new possibilities. Otto Scharmer of the Presencing Institute, reminds us that “*Where the danger is, the saving power also grows*”¹ and that it “*will emerge from our global field of inspired connections (when) we succeed in extending the rationality of our minds to also activate the intelligence of our hearts and hands on the level of the collective social field*”. He imagines this as the shift from ego-systems to eco-systems; from being organized as a network to being organized as an ecosystem, depicted by Kely Bird, a graphic facilitator in her image below that describes a process involving new soil, new seeds, new connections and a new ecology,² emerging through enhanced capacities for listening and for conversation.



¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, a German poet,

² Kelsy Bird exploring how visuals can support individuals and systems to more clearly see themselves; See <http://www.kelybird.com/uschoolecology/>

FOUR LEVELS of LISTENING & CONVERSING



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It has been former Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, who has spoken of the importance of listening when she explained how she had seen her task as “*listening well ... (to) hear what is not said*” especially in situations where we are confronted by “*the pain caused on ordinary people by indifference and selfishness*”¹. She also explained that “*At times, we have to stand alone with only hope as our companion. If you stand for the truth and do so long enough, hope does eventually pay. We step out in hope that a better world is possible because of our love for peace and faith in humanity’s capacity to make better choices*”.

In contrast to “*listening to hear what is not said*”, 2016 has been characterised as having seen the emergence of a *post-truth society* – a society in which there are only opinions and in which people *talk at rather than to* each other. Despite living in an increasingly interconnected world, we feel more isolated than ever from each other, according to Richard Raber, writing in Daily Maverick on 2 December 2016. He called for the need to “*regain a common language ... (and to) actively seek to understand how competing social actors conceive of notions we all hold dear: truth, compromise, dignity, agency and prosperity*”, if we are to build lasting human bonds based on the foundations of “*dignity, fairness and justice*” and a “*re-imagined politics of power and solidarity*”. Professor Bert Olivier confirmed the need for recuperation drawing on these possibilities in a particularly degraded and increasingly “*dystopian*” time.³

A source of enormous inspiration and hope that has emerged this past year has been the resistance offered by the indigenous Sioux people of Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota in the United States who have seen thousands of “*water protectors*” join their struggle against the drilling of an oil pipeline to carry crude oil beneath Lake Oahe, the reservation’s main source of drinking water. They were concerned not only about threats to their water supply, but also about the desecration of their sacred sites. The resistance drew on a Lakota prophecy about a black snake that could poison Mother Earth, unless it was stopped. The resistance became an unprecedented indigenous-led David-and-Goliath fight to stop a US\$3,8 billion, 1,172-mile pipeline in a stand designed to contribute to protecting the Earth for future generations, led by tribal leader, Dave Archambault.

The resistance at Standing Rock has been one of the longest and largest confrontations between police and non-violent direct-action activists in the United States. Those opposed to the pipeline had to endure blasts of water from fire hoses⁴, directed on them in sub-zero temperatures as they stood for hours on a bridge over the Missouri River, on North Dakota Highway 1806 near Standing Rock, while the elders sang a Lakota prayer

³ Bert Olivier, Mail & Guardian Thoughtleader, The feeling of living in a ‘dystopian’ present.

⁴ The use of fire hoses to quell protests were phased out in the United States during the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960s. Its reintroduction has raised many questions

song. An estimated 200 people were hurt in this action. Without visiting the site, North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple had declared a state of emergency which allowed for six surrounding states to send in militarized reinforcements. This was coupled with 24-hour aerial surveillance of the growing encampment, despite the huge signs hanging at the entrance to the camp site stating “We are unarmed” and despite the only activities being circles of women sewing traditional long skirts; wood being chopped to keep the sacred fire around which prayer ceremonies were held, burning; and youth racing their horses against each other. Newcomers to the camp received daily briefings on the strict code of conduct at the camp – respect for all people and no weapons, alcohol or drugs. The camp was strengthened by people from more than 200 Indian nations, joined by thousands of military veterans and other Americans who were drawn in by their sense of shame.⁵



On the night of 4 December 2016, the hoped-for but little expected news came through that the US Federal Government had refused to issue the permit needed by pipeline builders, Energy Transfer Partners, to run their pipeline under the Missouri river at its confluence with the Cannonball River at Lake Oahe. Jo-Ellen Darcy, the Army assistant secretary for civil works who oversees the Corps of Engineers, issued a statement “conceding defeat” on 4 December 2016 in which she proposed that “The best way to complete that work responsibly and expeditiously is to explore alternate routes for the pipeline crossing” and to follow an Environment Impact Assessment process that is envisaged as taking two years to complete. Darcy explained that the Corps recognized the demands of the “water protectors,” the indigenous and the non-native people who had assembled in protest camps at Cannon Ball, North Dakota, since August 2016. The indigenous activists had won an extraordinary victory. As Bill McKibben suggests, this victory will never be forgotten and will influence events for centuries to come.

Back in South Africa, the resonances with the struggle of the Amadiba community in resisting the mining of titanium in the dunes along their coastline, are evident with government working with the mining company to make sure the mining takes place, despite the two decade-long struggle of the community against the desecration of their land and their

⁵ Bill McKibben, The Guardian, The victory at Standing Rock could mark a turning point. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/04/standing-rock-victory-turning-point>

way of life. As at Standing Rock, the issue has been about who decides what benefits the people who live on communal land. In South Africa, communal land belongs to the community, not to the chief or to the state. From the time that the Amadiba community organised against the mine, the company has tried many underhand approaches to forcing the community to accept the mine, including providing Chief Lunga Baleni whose chieftainship is disputed, with a four-wheel drive vehicle; with promises that the case opposing his chieftainship would be dropped and that he would receive 4% of profits generated by the mine, if he supported the mining project.

As the struggle continues, Amadiba community members are aware of who has shifted their support in favour of the mine, because these individuals inexplicably receive food, money and guns.⁶ The community has gone to court requesting a declarator that the consent of the community must be obtained, before any mining can commence. In this struggle, the Standing Rock victory takes on greater significance. The Amadiba are standing for genuine consultation, not the shallow process in which government effectively imposes on a community what it wants consultation to mean. This is an expanding terrain of struggle in South Africa with the state for the most part, having imposed its wishes on communities in a pretence of consultation. As at Standing Rock, the Amadiba oppose “playing along with a fundamentally flawed process” in which community views mostly fall on deaf ears.⁷ It is for this reason that Khulumani celebrates the extraordinary victory at Standing Rock and its implications for traditional communities in South Africa. The Standing Rock victory demonstrates that legal rights are not just idle promises, not just nice things to have, but that the struggle for the material guarantee of safe drinking water and the right to community self-determination⁸ can be won.



Amadiba land on the Pondoland coast of the Eastern Cape: Photo credit: Mark Oldade, IOL.

See also the Land and Accountability Research Centre at UCT:
<http://www.larc.uct.ac.za/news/murder-deepens-mining-nightmare-rural-communities>

In South Africa, the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Bill that should provide for traditional authorities to abide by the mandates of their communities, is presently in a process of community consultation for which there has been very limited preparation for Khoi-San communities whose issues should be addressed in such a bill. The bill is considered to be fatally flawed in many respects⁹, especially in relation to the many unaddressed issues facing Khoi-San communities in South Africa. Khulumani has been involved in assisting the Eastern Cape Coboqua community in formulating their submission of concerns related to this poorly formulated and inadequate legislation. (The submission can be found on Khulumani’s website www.khulumani.net)

⁶ Saturday Star, 31 December 2016: Amadiba community fights proposed mine.

⁷ Rozina Ali, The New Yorker, 6 December 2016: Will the victory at Standing Rock outlast Obama?

⁸ The Historic Victory at Standing Rock: What it means, what the law says, and what comes next <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/12/the-historic-victory-at-standing-rock/509558/>

⁹ Submissions of the Helen Suzman Foundation on the Traditional Affairs Bill of 2011.



Victory at Standing Rock: Photo Stephanie Keith, Reuters

May 2017 be the year in which progress is made in the service of the realisation of justice, redress and social and economic rights for all, remembering that *"If we consciously choose to be a positive influence in the world, we will always find opportunities to make a difference."* Thuli Madonsela

