

Appendix Six: 'Being Stuck' - Shuttle and Weft Not Aligned in Large Fabric: I Can Hear Jack⁶⁰ – I would hear jack

Being stuck is a position few of us like. We want something new but cannot let go of the old-old ideas, beliefs, habits, even thoughts. We are out of contact with our own genius. Sometimes we know we are stuck; sometimes we don't. In both cases we have to do something.
- Inga Teekens

In this Weave (that is really a pre-Weave –being prepared for the loom) I include my transfer paper, part of the conditions leading to the completion of my PhD studies (the pre-weave) as I explore 'stuckness' in my learning, living and working. I start from a place of being overwhelmed about the completion of my transfer paper in not being able to answer questions of the kind: How should I start? What should be my focus? What should I do?

As I began to write that transfer paper it felt as if I was in a void/vacuum. I could find no flow of thoughts to communicate my ideas. I appeared vacant and under pressure to complete my assignment within the time limit. I manouvred for more time from Jack Whitehead, my programme tutor. In response his curiosity, mutuality, the offer to dialogue and his life affirming energy was communicated as he signed-off, 'Love Jack'.

Jack simply asked. How much time will you need?

This straightened me up, awakened my imagination and encouraged me to embrace my responsibilities (not manoeuvring) for finding a way out of my own unsatisfying condition.

⁶⁰ In this title and indeed in this paper I make a play on the word "Jack". I use the name Jack for my tutor who is Jack Whitehead and I use the term jack to mean nothing.

In doing so, I was challenged to act in my own interest, and despite my wanting to postpone engagement with living theory methodology (action research, appreciative inquiry, living life as inquiry, living I as a contradiction, inclusionality, inquiring with attitude), thinking that somehow through its absence from my consideration I would create space to see me. Instinctively, I would embrace its tools through valuing Peter Reason's guidance in the following quote, *'one can't forever stand on the shore; at some point, filled with indecision, scepticism, reservation and doubt, you either jump in or concede that life is forever elsewhere'*.

I jumped in acting to know my condition.

In 'jumping in' I gave focus to the meaning of participative action research and connected with Robin McTaggart's direction that the purpose of action research is to *'change practices, social structures, and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice, and unsatisfying forms of existence.'*

This evoked thoughts as to the nature of 'stuckness' in my lived experiences, which appeared to have existed over a considerable period of time. In thinking about my ill health, it seemed as if I had lost the 'will to fight', thinking I had done more than enough in my contribution to the 'struggle'. If my time had come, so be it, I was ready. I felt tired and my own inspiring values seemed to have lost their influence, with my passion somewhat displaced. It felt as if my strategies were outmoded, and devoid of its liberation content as focus in Sankofa became exam oriented as the age group of the children raised. I felt trapped in others' visions and dreams, whilst

neglecting and not being able to recall my own. I identified that for me, 'everything was not all right'. I had been remiss in my own care.

The transfer paper for me was an early step in inquiring into the nature of my 'stuckness'. In the context of my overall thesis it was also at a very early stage of the creation of my living theory methods toolkit and really the pre-loom stage. I would be able, as I know now, to commence my process of self-inquiry, name fibres in my tangled warp (my values), reflect/notice their self-impact and act to loosen the knots that stalled the shuttle (me). However, in the process of distinguishing the mêlée of fibres I would come to appreciate a layered and melded warp representing more fully a complex self (valuing Whitehead). Initially, I exacerbated my own condition as my actions brought no release to the fibres. I could not see the wood from the trees. Indeed, I could not hear Jack, nor could I see jack.

The fibres became so knotted as a result of my own intervention that I soon realised that it was not simply a matter of sorting the fibres. The shuttle itself was in need of repair. Internal parts that facilitated the smooth operation of the shuttle were damaged. In me angina was diagnosed. Chest pains that occur as when an area of your heart muscle does not get enough oxygen-rich blood were reported. Angina felt like a pressure or squeezing in my chest and there was an attendant pain in my shoulders, arms and back that evidenced the nature of my discomfort.

Angina I would find out is not a disease. It is a symptom of an underlying heart problem. Angina usually is a symptom of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD), also called coronary artery disease. CVD is the most common type of heart disease in adults. It occurs if a fatty material called plaque builds up on the inner walls of your coronary arteries. These arteries carry oxygen-rich blood to your heart.

High-cholesterol was also diagnosed. High cholesterol affects your heart and blood vessels and increases your risk of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD). High cholesterol causes fatty deposits (known as plaques) to build up inside your blood vessels. About two in three adults have a cholesterol level that is higher than recommended.

In time, with high levels of these fatty deposits the blood vessels supplying your heart may become so narrow that they can't deliver enough oxygen to the heart muscle, particularly when you're exerting yourself. This can cause you to feel chest pain (angina). If a fatty plaque breaks off, it may cause a blood clot, which can block blood flow to your heart (heart attack) or brain (stroke).

Further, high blood pressure was diagnosed. High blood pressure is one of several 'risk factors' that can increase your chance of developing heart disease, a stroke, and other serious conditions. As a rule, the higher the blood pressure, the greater the risk. Treatment includes a change in lifestyle risk factors where these can be improved - losing weight if you are overweight, regular physical activity, a healthy diet, cutting back if you drink a lot of alcohol, stopping smoking, and a low salt and caffeine intake. If needed, medication can lower blood pressure.

I was on medication. The challenge was to change my lifestyle.

The initial self-inquiries commenced (in the transfer paper) were the beginning of this process to change my lifestyle. It would lead to the wholesale re-invention of self, through appreciative inquiry (interrogating my lifeline), collaborative inquiry

(what manner of man is my father) and inspired engagement and embrace of living theory methodology (I as a living contradiction) included with my own narratives and the narratives of others. This though is the focus of the following Weave Seven (Re-invention and Renewal of a Complex Self, Included with Own voice and Appreciating Voice of Significant Others: Quality Change in the Shuttle).

In Weave Seven I evidence the finding of a novel way to communicate my African Voice (living I as Integrated Opposites) through engagement with living contradictions. I show how I came to appreciate the embodiment of the African Voice as a way of being and becoming – my re-invention. I inform on the renewing of my life purpose, living advocacy and world/universe objectives (Berry) as I commit to the African Voice and the Great work being in the room as one. In this re-invention and renewal I would arrive at a changed life position of I'm OK – You're OK and seek to sustain my walk in the world reimagining the universe brightly.

In this Weave –pre weave the focus is on what is going on inside of the shuttle (a tangled warp), the condition (health) of shuttle itself, together with external influences impacting the shuttles ability to pick (live, learn and work), fell (consolidate learning) and batten (embed new practice).

At first my interventions seemed to increase my knotted myself, fastened rather than loosened, as it appeared as if there was no way out. I found old warps that I had a sense had no value in contributing to my present weave. Yet could not be clear whether to just take out or to leave in. I saw damage to the shuttle and simple tests to get it moving with the tangled fibres at play was self defeating. I postponed disentanglement. I postponed repair of the shuttle. The weave (my life) and the

shuttle (me as the weaver, the inquirer in my own research) were stalled. However, when I could I would find energy to return to the melee of fibres and the damaged shuttle. In this way I would be able to make some connections, even though my thoughts on why I was persisting in this activity and the purpose of the activity were blurred. I was unclear of the nature of my design and ideas were not always fully formed. Cited across the transfer paper is the phrase ‘unfinished business’, meaning in a number of areas further engagement/inquiry was still necessary.

There were also occasions where I began to consciously allocate time to interrogate my condition. On one of these occasions I gave focus to Graham’s⁶¹ remark and question arising out of dialogue in our tutor group. Thoughts of what Graham had said appeared as if bells were ringing in my head. His remark was appreciative. His question was provocative and would be a catalyst for my further inquiry.

Graham said:

“Ian I love how you write and if you were to compile a set of short stories I would buy them...”

“But tell me ... What is it that you are trying to do in your study? What is its purpose?”

I had answered Graham when posed his question. Yet, in myself I was unsatisfied with how I had communicated what it was I was seeking to do in my studies and its purpose. Jack would help in sharing what he felt I was communicating in my work with reference to the Great Story and this would also contribute to me thinking of myself anew (considered in Weave Five).

As a result of this encounter I would subsequently embrace Graham’s inquiry of me into my own self-inquiries and pose questions of the kind:

⁶¹ Graham van Tuyl: CARPP 7 member

What I am doing in my work?

What is its purpose?

What am I doing to improve what I do?

What am I doing to improve how I communicate what I do?

What am I seeking to do in this living theory thesis?

This was my initial steer. Later, I would develop this further in the focus on what am I seeking to do in this living theory thesis with the embrace of Graham's inquiry as: 'What am I seeking to communicate? What am I doing to communicate my own influence, in my learning, living and working, and that of others and in social formations that is authentic African, and at the same time understandable to Graham, to my peer group and to the academy? I did not have this understanding at the time, which is very close to the present framing question underpinning this living theory thesis.

However, through my inquiries I would find direction with focus on signal events in my 'Foundational Experiences' (already given some consideration in Weave Four) that inform on influences in my growing up in Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom. I would also find direction in my focus on my first trip to Africa and visit to Elmina Castle that had significant impact towards my 'African birthing' and embodiment of the African Voice as a way of 'being and becoming'.

In particular, the poem, *I Made the Journey*, which recalled my experience at Elmina Castle, the once slave holding fort in Ghana. In sharing with peers in the African community I knew its content communicated foundationally with them. I also came to know of the impact of the poem on peers of a non-African background in the CARPP community (Jason crying and researching on Elmina and sharing wider;

Graham appreciating and sharing with divers others). Jack Whitehead affirming its content and practical application in terms of first person inquiry, 2nd person inquiry and third person inquiry. Further, I came to know it had significance in the academy, as my transfer paper was supported and successful in allowing my continuance on the PhD programme.

In my transfer paper many of these inquiries were iterative and further exploration were necessary. Therefore, as part of this Weave (pre-Weave) I present my thoughts as they were included in the transfer paper. In Weave XXX continue my building towards appreciation of my African birthing as I continue inquiry into the poem, I made the journey. I focus on my visit to Elmina Castle as a rites of passage event and the poem as affording direction to my 'transforming' and continuing evidence of my use of my own narrative in my inquiry.

Further, I returned to my inquiry into Who I Am (given consideration in Weave Four). There was something stirring in me that was encouraging further exploration that direction focused on who I am (identity), my values, experiences, attitude, ways of working and claim to know the influences, in my learning, living and working. I would discover more evidence of 'stuckness' as I continued to engage with living contradictions. However, full engagement is postponed and given consideration in Weave Seven where I progress this engagement beyond consideration of where I had reached in the transfer paper to show how I found a new way of communicating my African as complete, incomplete and wholesome appreciating living I as Integrated Opposites.

I close the Weave with focus on my work with black boys in the Mandiani Project (considered more fully in Weave Nine) and how this work is a stimulus to look into my own relationship with my father and the condition of black men. I offer two poems *Simultaneous Thoughts* and *Black Men/s Rule/s – The Emerging Truth*.

Simultaneous Thoughts is offered as my newly found storied engagement with my father (now passed). The poem *Simultaneous Thoughts* tells of the relationship I had with my father and the relationship I wanted with my father. The poem had emerged as a result of a residential programme working with black boys that focused on their ways of being. One of the challenges was to bring a picture of our fathers. I had found through search that I had no picture. I remembered that I had seen one at my brother's house in the USA. I sent an email to him for him to send me a copy. He sent a copy and I printed off A4 size. As I looked at my father's picture, I composed the poem. I shared this picture and I cried profusely in the arms of my wife. I would also share this poem with my father and bring about change in our relationships. We would dialogue differently and have more meaningful conversations.

I would reflect on my actions and act on my reflections. I would invite my brothers and sons to build closer relations with my father. This would bring my father and his children and grand children closer. It was one of the 'misses' he talked about.

Missing our birthdays, missing our celebrations and missing us. It would create new experiences for us, and as a consequence new life affirming experiences with my father. I knew I longed to see my father. I knew to he longed to see me. We would find a new way of loving each other before he passed away built on a purposeful recognition, an enhanced relational mutuality and an engaging dialogical praxis.

My father had his stories too. He may not have had my picture on his wall. However, I knew his real image of me was in his heart. His picture is on my wall – that is my responsibility. He is also in my heart – that is the nature of the love I have for my father. This would communicate to my father. It would communicate to me. It would communicate to the CARPP community and it would communicate to the academy through the transfer paper. I would share a revised version of the poem ‘Simultaneous Thoughts’ as part of my father’s eulogy on his passing. It would communicate the nature of my African voice to my family. It would communicate the love of my father to the wider African congregation. It would communicate to me the powerful influence of my storytelling and its integral African Voice. It would also tell me that the prospect for change always exist, of my responsibilities of making relationships work, and of my accountability to family and for human flourishing in the widest community.

Black Men/s Rule/s – The Emerging Truth derived from my contribution to a residential for black men who were working with black young men and boys. We were engaged in inquiry and considering the values that we wished to share in our work and how these values were to be revealed/evidenced in our professional practices. The black men on this residential were concerned with practical affairs... practical matters. We were doing what Richard Rorty says is the goal of inquiry, which is *“to achieve agreement among human beings about what to do, to bring consensus on the end to be achieved and the means to be used to achieve those ends”*. The black men would also have agreed with Rorty that if inquiry *“does not achieve co-ordination of behaviour is not inquiry but simply wordplay (Rorty, 1999: xxv)*.

As black men on this residential we were also concerned with Truth, particularly as there are myths that are perpetuated about who we are and what we do that is in

need of contention. However, we were also concerned about how we live and what we do with these myths that we felt was in need of attention. Truth was not the goal of inquiry though, yet we knew through our dialoguing and our experiencing ...through our practices there would be an emergent truth ... truth would emerge.

I completed the poem in January (2004).

I build on this focus on black men in the next weave as I focus on absurdity.

Rendition of my Father's eulogy with Simultaneous Thoughts included close this Weave (pre-Weave) and shows my passionate purposeful recognition of my father, evidence of our enhanced relational mutuality (in my embodiment) and reminiscence of our engaging dialogical praxis.

Evidence of engagement with living theory methodology in the Weave (pre-weave) shows the inclusion of my own narratives as dialogue and informing dialogue with family, peers in my wider African community and the CARPP community (Jason crying, and investigating and sharing; Graham appreciating and sharing with diverse others) and the academy (Jack and Donna appreciating, assessing and publicising). The poems were the result of emergent actions.

The audio-visual materials inform on the collaborative work with black men and boys in the Mandiani Project. Subsequent to the tutorial session though, I have spent some time collecting other materials that would include audio-video materials of me reading my poem to my father, young people in Jamaica reciting my poems and singing my songs and our enjoining on my recent visit to that island. I had also

collected a number of songs that reflected my early conception of nationhood, which life experiences would challenge, but would remain foundational to who I am and what I do. I had created a collage of pictures too, depicting my wider family network that included a photograph of my father and placed it on my wall. I felt that in any of these areas there might have been emergent issues that needed consideration and that their non-consideration may have been responsible for my condition of “being stuck”. A major finding from the doing of the transfer paper was that I could not recover on my own and the inspired collaboration with my sons in the inquiry: ‘What manner of man is my father?’

Here is the transfer paper as a Weave (pre-Weave).

I Can Hear Jack⁶² – I would hear jack

In the 1970s it was heretical to preach horizontal relationships in the research adventure, even in professional life. It became clear to me however that sociological investigation should not be autistic but a rite of communion between thinking and acting human beings, the researcher and the researched. The usual formality and prophylaxis of academic institutions had to be discarded and space given to some sort of down-to earth collectivisation in the search for knowledge. This attitude I called vivencia, or life-experience (Erlebnis) (Fals Borda, 1997, p. 108).

This is supposed to be my transfer paper from MPhil to PhD I am saying supposed, because as I commence writing I know that the deadline for its submission has passed and though I have asked for more time to complete, Jack has responded, “*you will know best whether you need more time to complete the transfer paper*”. He has also posed the question to me as to “*how much more time will I need?*”

I can hear Jack... I really can.

He has re-presented the problem that I placed in his lap, firmly back in mine's. I laughed, at my unpreparedness to the response from Jack, which I should have expected and indeed, half expected.

I can hear Jack.... I really can.

I know that when he says I will know best whether I need more time to complete ... that is what he means. I know too that Jack's response, whether that was what he had intended or not, opened up a way for me to attend to that which I needed to attend to in order to complete my transfer paper. His response, at a stroke diminished much of the stress that had built up within me. This I know was clearly part for my communication to him, probably most unnecessarily, as a result of churned-up

⁶² In this title and indeed in this paper I make a play on the word “Jack”. I use the name Jack for my tutor who is Jack Whitehead and I use the term jack to mean nothing.

emotions related to a deadline, where there had been some collective agreement for the completion of transfer papers and which I knew, increasingly I would not be able to meet.

It was not that I had had no intention of meeting the deadline date. On the contrary, I very much wanted to complete the transfer paper by the agreed date. That this did not happen, I now know though, is not simply, because of my heavy workload, as I had intimated to Jack, although workload did play its part. It was more to do with my sense of being as a result of issues that had emerged within my self-inquiry that held me... that challenged me. It did not, I think, stop me from moving forward, nor did it take me backwards. It did however, rein me in and required of me to concentrate my thoughts. These emergent issues were not essentially to do with the task of completing my transfer paper, but their non-resolution had impacted on the task, and the non-completion of the task characterised my condition...how I was feeling.

I felt stuck. No! I had become stuck. I know this now and indeed had found difficulty clarifying my thoughts as I grappled with the questions related to the commencement of my transfer paper and indeed, its completion. I cannot recall how many times I had started the paper and did not make the headway that I had anticipated. I do know that it was at many times over a period of nearly a year. Then there were those many times where I just sat scribbling thoughts or sat by the computer readying myself to start and just played the card game, hearts, with my electronic friends. Many of those times too, I posed myself the questions... How should I start? What should be my focus? What should I do?

Yet, to each of these questions I found no suitable solutions. I found real difficulty in discerning how to come out of this unsatisfying form of existence (Robin McTaggart)⁶³. Even now as I am writing, I am still somewhat in that condition. The difference as I write this time though is that I feel that having now given recognition to my condition, and I feel more committed, if it is possible, to its resolution. This is interesting; because it is not that I had not recognised what my condition was and is, but it appears that I had no commitment towards its resolution. I had named the condition, but had remained unconvinced that I was stuck. I had toyed with the phrase “being stuck”, not fully acknowledging my condition and as a consequence toyed with myself, thinking that it was not even the right phrase to name my condition. I was in flight, and indeed I may still be, but now I am no longer playing as I have a commitment to attend to my condition, even though I still have problems with the use of the phrase “being stuck”. I have tried other phrases, but I have not found any amongst them, as yet, that is more appropriate for the naming of my condition. Hence, “being stuck” is the phrase that I am using as a direction⁶⁴ to focus on some of the issues that concerns me, commence my transfer paper and make a substantive advancement towards its completion. However, I am really not sure how far this direction will take me, but I am encouraged by the remark of Peter Reason, in his keynote address to the ALARPM 6th World Congress, PAR 10th World Congress, Pretoria, September 2003 in the article *Choice and Quality in Action Research Practice*.

In this article, Reason presents a quote that he loves captured from the great American playwright, Arthur Miller that says:

⁶³ *The Action Research Planner*, Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (Eds), 3rd Edition, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia, 1988.

⁶⁴ direction; emerging pathway for exploration

There is hardly a week that passes when I don't ask the unanswerable question: what am I now convinced of that will turn out to be ridiculous?

Reason uses Miller's statement to prepare the ground for the point that he wishes to make, and given the condition that I am in, I really love his words that are contained in his remark. Reason says:

"... one can't forever stand on the shore; at some point, filled with indecision, scepticism, reservation and doubt, you either jump in or concede that life is forever elsewhere".

I hear you Peter. I have jumped in.

As I make this jump though, I feel somewhat coy now. This is so, particularly, as I feel that in the email that I had sent to Jack, I had masked the issues that were challenging me. I had fallen into the trap of making an excuse that I felt would be acceptable in an institutional context, rather than explaining how I was being personally challenged to produce a piece of work that I was not in any readiness to produce. I thought that Jack might say, in a matter of fact way, that I would have two/three weeks to complete or at worst that I would just have to make the deadline. Neither of which would have been supportive to me, in that, the drum call would not have been responsive to my rhythms, but to a pace which Jack in some context would have had to set. Jack response though was other than institutional. It was personal. Yet, in giving his response, Jack did not negate his institutional responsibilities. I know that his remark *"you will know best whether you need more time to complete the transfer paper"* offered me a sense of release, by placing the responsibility for what I had to do within my court, but he still left me with that troubling question.

"How much more time will I need?"

This demonstrated Jack's responsibilities in the transaction and even though I know that this question needs attention, at this moment I am unable to answer that question for myself and subsequently have not been able to provide Jack with an answer.

Cheekily though, I have said to myself, "the amount of time that I will need to complete the transfer paper, is the amount of time that it will take me to complete it". So much for my cheek! I really had no idea how long it would take for me to complete the paper until this moment, different from the moment two sentences earlier that had me looking backwards rather than forwards. The cheeky statement though, does have some meaning. It shows that my condition is already changing. My previous unreadiness to complete the transfer paper seems now transformed into a readiness to complete. As I have begun to write and have resolved to work on my condition, I am quietly confident that six weeks should be enough to complete and that is what I intend to communicate to Jack. If I do it in that time I will make a note of it at the end of this paper.

Remember though as this paper unfolds that in the immediate sense Jack has been its trigger ... my trigger ... and I can hear Jack ... I really can. I can hear his utterances. I can hear his musings. I can take hold of his words and find meaning in them for myself, in the context of the academy and beyond its boundaries. I do not know though whether this is because of who Jack is or whether it is because of how Jack does what he does for me... Or even whether it is because I have found new ways of being – who I am and what I do. I am aware though that it could be any of these circumstances, or indeed, all of them. At this point though, I simply have a willingness to just "run wid it", to search for no deep explanation of what is taking

place between Jack and me and me and Jack. I am comfortable with just saying (and I know it is a big statement) that I feel that we are engaged in purposeful conversation. We are dialoguing and in a kind of co-operative enquiry with others, part of my tutor group (Paul, Keith Kinsella, Jason and Graham)⁶⁵ that is facilitating my self-inquiry into *“The Makings and Unmakings in the Making of Me – Affirming and Improving the Professional Practices of an African Storyteller/Educator.*

I am mindful though of Jean’s⁶⁶ comments pertaining to Jack, in her response to a letter⁶⁷ that Jack had circulated within the CARPP community that related to a question posed by Paul Murray to Jack. Paul had asked:

‘Where is the evidence of the critical engagement with the ideas of critical race theorists, critical non-racial theorists and post-colonial theorists in the formation of the identities and practices of individuals you are working with? Where is the evidence of your influence in respect of alerting them to enhancing the quality of their work by making themselves familiar with these epistemologies? (Why should you/they when they can get their PhDs/do their AR writing without making reference to their critical knowledge?)’

This is a most important question and at some point in my own inquiries I will give it some attention, (the attention it deserves... there is some unfinished business here), but my concern here is with Jack and what Jean has to say about Jack. The following excerpts⁶⁸ reveal much of what I would say of the man. On Jack ... Jean says:

I am always struck by your generosity of spirit in the amount of time you are prepared to spend talking about my work... When I talk with you, I know I have your undivided attention and engagement... What is special about our relationship...is that you are prepared to engage and also critique in a way that helps me to make connections and revise my own thinking. Not too many other people do this for me.

You respect the fact that I can be a knowledgeable person, a wise person.... Through your influence, and that of others, I have the strength not to become fixed in one position,

⁶⁵ Paul Hocking, Keith Kinsella, Jason Nickels, Graham van Tuyl (CARPP 7 Tutor Group members)

⁶⁶ Jean

⁶⁷ Paul Murray’s Email:

⁶⁸ Jean’s Email

and to resist theories and forms of theories that try to enclose me in reified social or intellectual structures.

Love, Jean

And I say thanks Jean, for I can hear Jack. I really can hear Jack. I can hear him responding in that energised way with which he responds, to those initial concerns that I had relating to how I wanted to carry out and present my self-inquiry on commencement within the CARPP community. I had conveyed, being suspicious of the academy. I just did not want to read about action research theories and then use these theories to explain my lived experiences. I wanted to explore that lived experience, to see what was there, no holds barred, before consideration of what those action research theories held for me. Of course, the process did not unfold in this way, because from the outset I have had to familiarise myself with action research theories. In doing so, I have had to grapple with its meaning, contend with myriad emotions fuelled by my scepticism of how it had been 'clothed', and yet still give consideration to its usefulness for assisting in the improvement of my professional practices.

However, within this hive of mental activity, I managed to create a space (a level of personal openness) in which I felt I could situate/suspend, relatively speaking, those action research theories. Yet use the 'moment' to focus on me – to reflect on the makings and unmakings in the making of me.

This held importance and it was interesting to read in McTaggart's 16 Tenets Of Action Research (----) that:

"Participatory action research *is a systematic learning process* in which people act deliberately through remaining open to surprise and responsive to opportunities. It is

a process of using *critical intelligence* to inform action, and developing it so that social action becomes *praxis* (critically informed, committed action)...

Participatory action research involves people in theorising about their practices. *This involves them in being inquisitive about and coming to understand the relationship between circumstances, action and consequences in their own lives. The theories that participatory action research develops may be expressed initially in the form of rationales for practice. These initial rationales are then subjected to critical scrutiny through the participatory action research process*".

I can hear Jack. I really can. I can hear his persistence. I can hear his struggle to advance his own learning...searching for greater clarity. I can hear his influence. I can hear and feel and sense his depth of knowledge. I can hear him encouraging. I can hear him creating... creating the space for his flourishing and in turn enabling me to create my own space for my own human flourishing⁶⁹ (Reason) ... I can hear Jack ... I really can. I can hear him giving cues as to what might be useful to read and who has written about a particular subject matter. I also hear as part of that cuing ... have a look at these writers ... their subject-matter ... the content of what they write ... but in what you write or the content of your sharing ... **the soul** of what you want to convey should not be compromised ...that should not be lost. I can hear Jack ... I really can and I am hearing ... I am feeling his support in doing what I have said I have wanted and want to do.

⁶⁹ Reason: "the flourishing of persons as self-directing and sense-making agents located in democratic communities and organizations. For human beings are centres of awareness and action in the cosmos, they are both autonomous *and* inextricably linked with other humans and the rest of creation.

I want to establish inquiry as the practice of persons situated in communities of inquiry, individuals within learning communities. Inquiry thus becomes essentially a collaborative process whose purpose is practical: to contribute to the flourishing of individual persons, the flourishing of human community, and the flourishing of the biosphere of which we are a part. In this vision, inquiry becomes more than the professional activity of academics, and becomes a central characteristic of a well-lived life.

So as I continue on the pathway, in the makings and unmaking in the making of me, I do so with a sense that my self-inquiry has to permit my soul articulation⁷⁰, allow it to breathe. This 'sense' is held powerfully and determines that the quality of research that would have meaning for me and what I do, would be research that is not only an integral part of my being and doing, my human flourishing, but research that has the potentialities for the flourishing of my soul. A research that is integrated into my life and living (integral to my ways of being) and having meaning for how I live, making decisions about that living and taking charge of that living positively.

Peter Reason's suggests that action research has this capacity and the quote below taken again from his keynote address to the ALARPM 6th World Congress, PAR 10th World Congress, Pretoria, September 2003, he states:

Whenever, I talk about action research, I want to assert a fundamental message: in its full articulation, action research is a way of living. There is, in the end, no difference between good action research and living a good life. So in a first-person sense, Judy Marshall writes about living as inquiry (Marshall, 1999, 2001, 2002); Bill Torbert about bringing inquiry into more and more aspects of our lives (Torbert 2001). In a wider second and third-person sense, we can see action research as helping develop learning organisations, communities of inquiry within communities of action and wider networks of inquiry and 'social movements' (Gustavsen, 2003).

These remarks of Reason are engaging, or more appropriately, engages me, for I have an interest in how "*in its full articulation, action research is a way of living ... in the end, no difference between good action research and living a good life*".

I have a concern too that the findings of traditional social science are of little or no use to members of organisations or practitioners as Reason intimates, citing Susman and Evered (1978). Furthermore, I have a concern that the division between academic life and the everyday is not simply historic, it is in the present and felt. So, I am

⁷⁰ Poem: Rebel In Me (Ian Phillips – 1995 – KLAS Radio Jamaica) permit my soul articulation

interested in the direction *“to hold to the idea that action research is one way to break down this barrier between living an inquiring life and research in a formal sense, and to see inquiry as part of a well-lived life, and of a healthy organisation and society”* Peter Reason (2003).

Reason, for me, holds my attention when he states that action research is an attitude toward inquiry, not just a methodology and he shows the importance of understanding this character of action research when he cites Marja-Liisa Swantz, in her description of how she sees action research. Swantz says:

“I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life. For me it is really a quest for life, to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge— knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself...”

Swantz statement really struck a chord within me. In fact, it pulled all the strings and when Reason used the words of (Fals Borda, 2001:31) to show that the purpose of doing it ... doing action research is to ‘understand better, change, and re-enchant our plural world’, the whole orchestra was playing, in this moment, just for me.

However, the music just did not stop there, for Reason⁷¹ took the score to different levels and areas. He continued that this purpose action research applied at a *“social, as well at a personal level”*, and that the aim of participatory action research, using the words of Robin McTaggart⁷² was to:

“... change practices, social structures, and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice, and unsatisfying forms of existence.”

These words of Reason, Swantz, Fals Borda and McTaggart really put me into a spin. I concentrated on each word ... *calling them individually... attitude... quest ... purpose... re-enchant*. Then I began to focus and mouth some of the phrases ... *“no difference between good action research and living a good life”... “action research is an attitude”... “a quest for life”... “living knowledge” ... “social as well as personal” ... “understand better, change and re-enchant” ... challenge practices, social structures*

⁷¹ Peter Reason’s ALARPM 6th World Congress, PAR 10th World Congress, Pretoria, September 2003,

⁷² The Action Research Planner, Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (Eds), 3rd Edition, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia, 1988.

and social media which maintain irrationality, injustice and unsatisfying forms of existence.

I repeated more than once *unsatisfying forms of existence* as this phrase challenged me and encouraged me to look at my own condition. And as I thought about myself... my present circumstances ... on how I had become stuck ... I began to see how my stuckness was beginning to replicate itself in different areas of my life. It was not only related to the non-completion of my transfer paper. My condition needed attention. I had to afford myself that attention, because I know that when I become stuck. I would hear jack. I would hear nothing and no one. I would become dogmatic, closed and stubborn. I would take refuge in self and keep all at arms length. Even those who really care for me are rejected, not because of what they have to offer is not wanted, but 'closedness' would so depict my disposition that its acceptance could not even be countenanced. Kindness would be transformed to indifference. Nothing could be heard as it was said. I would hear jack. I would hear nothing.

The signs of my unsatisfying form of existence though, were already there. As I continued sifting through my stuckness, I became aware that in some areas I had been stuck for a considerable period of time. There were values that I held that had long since lost their significance. I was employing strategies that were outmoded and irrelevant to present living conditions. I had adopted positions that I cannot recall why they had been adopted, but had held on to them. I became trapped in the visions of others and neglected my own. I lived others dreams and dreamt not for myself. I allowed myself to be constrained, imprisoned and ensnared. Actions that I had use in days gone by successfully, now proved futile and the time that I would be need to rethink those actions would not be availed. I had been warned, but still I would hear jack. Even the privileged few that cared for me and just let me be me,

even when they do not want me to be that negative me... negative I ... would be deflated. Their loving strategies foundered, constrained by my unreadiness to do something about that which concerned them and should have concerned me. They would also have been constrained, I think, by a view held of me that suggests that I am able to overcome any obstacles that is placed in my way. Indeed, this is a view that I too have of myself and it seems to be encapsulated in my second most favourite statement, "everything will be alright", which is used by me as an all-purpose remedy for any problem to be solved or anything that is not right. I give this advice to others and hold it for myself too. I would argue that problems can be solved and they are time-limited.

This notion that "everything will be alright" as I considered it further appeared to provide for me an air of invincibility, in a seeming masculine sense. I had not considered it in such a way before, but it seemed an appropriate way to view it. I will have to investigate this further, for previously, I would have seen the statement as just me being confident, having a belief that a way would always be found to overcome any problem - a kind of optimistic worldview. I had not considered its masculine content. There is some unfinished business here too. I also recognised though, that the response "everything would be alright" even though it was once was full of meaning for me, now appeared really superficial, it did not attend to the needs of the holder of the problem, me...(I). It dealt with things external. So even though the problem would impact internally, me saying, "Everything would be all right" did not attend to its internal impact. The shell was highly polished, but that which was contained therein, was knotted and needed sorting. "Everything would be alright" did not get to the heart of things. However, before now, I would find no time for the sorting or would use the time that that was always there for its' sorting

inappropriately. Eventually, I would reach a place where I would not be able to see even the time for the polishing of the shell. The refuse that had been there (stored) for such a long time inside would find ways of seeping out. I had become stuck and “Everything was not alright”. I had not taken care of what was contained therein. The energy to keep polishing was dissipating, but still I remained stuck.

I self inquired further and found another direction arising out of the above to *take care of what was contained therein*. I followed this direction and found focus on my most favourite statement, which was “Take care”. This means take care of yourself, those around you and what you do. These are the words that I utter most and they are the words that I also give away the most, but rarely in recent times have I taken enough notice of these words for myself. That I have needed to take care of who I am, those with whom I have relationships and the things that I do are without a doubt. However, I have been remiss in recent times and it is not because that I have not wanted to care as much as I should have done, nor be as purposeful in my self-caring as I should have been, but this condition of “being stuck” was making its impact. I felt as if my perspectives were being distorted. I was aware that there were issues to be resolved, but the situation proved overwhelming and those same questions posed in my attempt to commence my transfer paper (How should I start? What should be my focus? What should I do?) I used them in trying to attend to those various concerns with my life that were emerging for me. I found difficulty though with my decision-making.

I can hear Jack. I really can...I can hear Jack in his discussion with Pam Lomax: Professor of Education, Peter Mellett: Past science teacher, Pat: Ph.D. student and Ben Cunningham: Ph.D. student in the paper, *“What is it to ask - what this thing, Living*

*Educational Theory, is? Or Living Educational Theory? - what's that?*⁷³ The paper contributing to debates on the nature of educational theory and on the problems of representation and legitimation in new forms of qualitative research and action research explores the dialogical and dialectical nature of living educational theories and argues for the development of such theories, as appropriate forms of representation for the descriptions and explanations of the educational development of individual learners. Legitimation in relation to the standards of judgement is also explored, so as to give consideration to which are appropriate for testing the validity of such claims to educational knowledge.

I can hear Jack. I really can. I can hear him saying:

*Understanding a concept involves grasping a principle and using words correctly. Now if you come to a dialectical understanding of practice...the understandings emerge over time... The principles are not linguistic abstractions. They are actually embodied values of practice.*⁷⁴

Peter responds:

And then if you live those values truly in your practice, I would say that you are expressing your 'epistemology of practice' whereby there has been a transformation away from the list of descriptions and into the thing living in front of me.

"Embodied values of practice" – "epistemology of practice" ... No disrespect Peter, but I can hear Jack. I really can. Be sure though that I hear you too, in response to Jack's proposition for I am challenged to inquire into "*what this thing*, epistemology

⁷³ What is it to ask - what this thing, Living Educational Theory, is? Or Living Educational Theory? - what's that?! Contributor-correspondent: Moira Laidlaw, Narrator-editor: Peter Mellett, Mentor-correspondent: Jack Whitehead

of practice ... embodied values of practice *is*" – “? Or epistemology of practice ... embodied values of practice *what's that?*”⁷⁵

In response to this challenge I spent some time exploring the meaning of epistemology and found that **epistemology** is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature, origin and scope of knowledge. It is derived from the Greek episteme, meaning ‘knowledge,’ and logos, which has several meanings, including ‘theory’. Epistemology then, equates with the ‘theory of knowledge’.

However, this ‘theory of knowledge’, is explained in different ways, which reflect divisions or trends emanating from the early schools of philosophy that have persisted throughout the history of epistemology into the present. There are rationalists, empiricists, Kantians, logical positivist and more. I read too that epistemology is entwined with metaphysics, concerned with the nature of reality and the possibilities and limits of human knowledge. I read further and found that it is a speculative branch of philosophy, which attempts to answer, questions, such as: What is the basis for knowledge? What features would a belief have to have, in order to be an actual piece of knowledge -- not just something that pretends to be knowledge, but which is *actually* knowledge? I thought about this, but would come to no conclusion.

I then read that no consensus exists as to which epistemological beliefs give human beings the most accurate understanding of the truth -- or even whether there is just one 'truth'. *Consequently, when one is thinking about the epistemological features of one's*

⁷⁵ What is it to ask - what this thing, Living Educational Theory, is? Or Living Educational Theory? - what's that?! Contributor-correspondent: Moira Laidlaw, Narrator-editor: Peter Mellett, Mentor-correspondent: Jack Whitehead

beliefs, the overarching question that can be asked is: When can someone say that his or her belief is the truth, and to what extent?

I thought to myself ... oh boy! There are nihilists who believe in nothing, and often, not even a reality, hence for them there is no truth, have addressed this question. Subjectivists, who claim that we are all unique individuals, hence we each see our own, subjective reality and truths have addressed this question. Intrinsicists who believe there is a universal truth, and we just can't see it, but agree that reality are conceptual, not concrete, and have addressed this question. Solipsists who state that they cannot know anyone else is real have addressed this question. Nominalists who believe that our words and concepts are our way of simplifying our reality because we cannot observe, let alone digest, the totality of the overall, 'true' reality have addressed this question. Conventionalists, Irrationalists, Objectivists, Realists, Representation lists, Mysticism, Sceptics and Agnosticism have addressed this question. There are still more and as I travelled this pathway, I am thankful of another pathway being presented as I began to wonder with *all these different approaches* "How can I be sure that my beliefs are true? Is there any guarantee available to me -- some sort of criteria I might use -- in order to decide, as well and as carefully as I possibly could, that indeed what I believe *is* actually true?"

The alternative pathway was by offered Peter Reason, in his keynote address to ALARPM 6th World Congress; PAR 10th World Congress, Pretoria, and September 2003 in the article Choice and Quality in Action Research Practice. In this article, Reason makes the important point for me that "if we start from the idea that creating knowledge is a practical affair, we will start not, as in traditional academic research

from an interesting theoretical question, but from what concerns us in practice, from the presenting issues in our lives”.

This was instructional for me and when I read in that same article Richard Rorty words that “We cannot regard truth as a goal of inquiry”, the literature that I was reading on epistemology somehow became a little more difficult to read as my unsatisfying condition re-permeated my consciousness. I continued to be challenged.

In the throes of this continuing challenge I took the questions -How should I start? What should be my focus? What Should I do? ... To my tutorial group. My colleagues offered much support, but I left at the end of the day with a couple of Graham’s⁷⁶ remarks ringing in my head.

“Ian I love how you write and if you were to compile a set of short stories I would buy them...”

“But tell me ... What is it that you do? What is its purpose?”

I know I responded to Graham in the session, but continued thinking about his remarks on the train back London and I am still thinking about his remarks now. So there too there is some unfinished business. I also left at the end of the day enthused, my colleagues had felt that I would find a direction and I felt that I would find a direction too. In fact when I left the session I considered that I had a direction, which I could follow. That direction was to focus on some of what I am calling my foundational experiences. These were experiences that had occurred in the recent past and included my first trip to Africa, my work with black boys and men as part of the Mandiani project and my new focus on the relationship that I had with my

⁷⁶ Graham van Tuyl: CARPP 7 member

father. I had shared some of these experiences with members of the tutorial group as a possible direction for consideration in my transfer paper and felt that such a focus would evidence my ontology, my epistemology of practice, an essential feature of what the transfer should be about.

I am troubled though as I write those two words ... ontology and epistemology... there is some unfinished business here too... I have an urge to explore their content more for I have much that I have to share, but at this time I am unready ... it is the those foundational experiences that are holding my attention for they had encouraged much self inquiry and had made impact beyond self. Furthermore, I already had much material relating to these experiences that included some writings and some audio-visual tapes. I had three poems that captured my first visit to Africa, the collaborative work with black men and boys and the relationship with my father. The audio-visual materials also captured the collaborative work with black men and boys in the Mandiani Project. Subsequent to the tutorial session though, I have spent some time collecting other materials that would include audio-video materials of me reading my poem to my father, young people in Jamaica reciting my poems and singing my songs and our enjoining on my recent visit to that island. I had also collected a number of songs that reflected my early conception of nationhood, which life experiences would challenge, but would remain foundational to who I am and what I do. I had created a collage of pictures too, depicting my wider family network that included a photograph of my father and placed it on my wall. I felt that in any of these areas there might have been emergent issues that needed consideration and that their non-consideration may have been responsible for my condition of "being stuck".

Re weave

I recalled the poem that I had began composing in the dungeon at Elmina Castle⁷⁷. I remember my unpreparedness in being there, even though a very close friend had warned me of how my experience at Elmina would be unsettling. It would be my “birthing” as he termed it. I know now what he meant, because I have a different sense of self since that visit. I had walked upright before. Now I know why such a gait is important. The poem that I composed spoke to that experience, but it was not only my birthing that held importance. The poem in itself was a collaborative construction, because it was revised in a number of ways before the version that appears in this paper was completed. In composing this poem I felt at each stage that I had to share what I had written with different colleagues who had travelled with me from Goldsmith University. We dialogued and I made changes where I felt changes were necessary.

The first public airing of the poem though came at a plenary session that included the members of our group and our Ghanaian hosts. It proved to be a most powerful and moving experience for the whole gathering. There was hardly a dry eye in the place and as I completed two of my colleagues hugged me so tightly that I knew the power of the poem’s words – the power of the story – the power, in that moment, of the storyteller. There was also a spiritual or some other dimension to the poem, which I had no understanding of, but it was the direction that I followed. Each stanza had 20 lines and comprised of 120 words. The significance of this I am still not wholly sure what it means, but when I returned to England I looked up the symbolical significance of the number 20⁷⁸ and the number 120⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Elmina Castle: trading outpost and "slave factory"

⁷⁸ 20: Symbolism

- Represent the God solar for the Mayas.

I also shared the poem with the tutorial group, the session previous, to the one where Graham had made those remarks that I consider as unfinished business. I had shared the poem via email before the session and one of the members in order to get a better understanding of what the poem was about looked up some background information on Elmina Castle and shared it with colleagues in the group. I arrived late for that particular session, but found that the poem, together with the information attached to it by the tutor group member had proved a powerful experience. I shared with the tutor group some of the background to the poem and then recited, "I made the Journey" which follows:

I made the Journey

I made the journey
 To the door of "no return" in Elmina Castle
 To complete my personal "birthing"
 Heeding the call of my ancestors to come Home
 Feeling ill-prepared as they walked with me at Elmina, They counseled ... use lived
 experience to understand
 Why your life's journeys have brought you here
 Know who you are ... who you are not
 Know where you are from ... where you are from not
 Search out your footprints
 Respecting those of others
 Tell the story ... inform
 Disassociate fiction from fact

-
- Represent "the fundamental differentiation which creates in the world two relatively antagonistic poles, and particularly the opposition: spirit-matter", according to R. Allendy.
 - J. Boehme calls this number "the Devil", that is to say the material world opposed to the spiritual world.
 - The number 20 is considered as ominous for saint Jerome because it indicates the universal fight, but it also represents the source of all energy of the world.
 - This number is represented in Hebrew by the letter caph, in form of opened hand, to seize and hold. The eleventh mystery of the Tarot, which corresponds to this letter, and consequently with this number, is "the Force" which expresses energy, the activity, the work, according to R. Allendy.
 - Number associated to the resurrection or to the reincarnation, according to Creusot.

⁷⁹ 120: Symbolism

- Represent the power and the glory of the Christ-King.
- Essentially, this number is associated to one of the Forces of cosmic Trinity. According to the sacred geometry of Esseniens, it is the place of the cosmic geometry of the Without-Name, to the third of His force of creation: $360 \text{ degrees} / 3 = 120$.

The values to behold though blurred are still in tact
 Remember
 We are one with you
 You are one with us
 But more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we

In ancestral years
 Two hundred, three hundred, four hundred
 May have been amassed
 Since through that door of no return
 My ancestors reluctantly passed
 Unbounded or chained I may never know
 And questions of how they came to be in this place
 Or from which lands they came
 Or how far they had journeyed - near or far
 May well remain unanswered - I cannot be precise
 But through this door of no return I know they left
 I know this place ... the walls ... the smell
 Elmina Castle ... this cell
 Here too, Yes! I did dwell
 Remember ...
 They are one with me
 I one with them
 And more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we

I know how they must have felt
 Being chased, caught ... captured
 I know they gave their best
 Dancing and weaving through obstacles
 Skirting pass outstretched arms ... flailing nets
 Bravely attempting to escape captivity
 Or would have ... if not surprised
 I know the conditions they faced
 When journeying or ensnared
 Ashamed, insulted and full of fear
 Shackled, hungry, in a whirl of despair
 And I know the treatment meted out to them
 In those darkened dungeons
 Or in the light, made dark by the actions of evil men
 Oh they raped our women in those cells
 Remember ...they are one with me
 I ... one with them
 And more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we

I know their sense of loss
 I know the pain they suffered
 And I know too, that in their defiance
 They were caused to suffer more
 Certainly, certain death
 It is to their condition that I bear witness
 And awaken the spirituality within me
 To make claim to and reclaim
 That which has been bequeath to me
 My ancestral inheritance
 I call on the ancestral spirits that flourished
 In those great kingdoms of Nubia, Egypt, Ethiopia
 Of Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Zimbabwe ... others
 To say I know Elmina ...
 Here was not the beginning
 Remember ... they are one with me
 I am one with them
 But more than that spiritually
 For we are one
 And one are we

Yet it's to Elmina I've come
 I am in the cell from which you left, never to return
 Ancestral spirits you brought me here
 And willingly I've journeyed
 Retracing the path from whence you came
 Pacing the ground with measured steps
 How wrenching the experience must have been
 To leave ... never to return
 Defiant I now return
 And kneel in the place you would have knelt
 With arms outstretched
 Remind myself of the awful scenes
 That must have been the prelude
 To the tortuous journey over the seas on slave ships
 Then on to the killing fields of the Americas
 Remembering ... One with me
 One with You
 But more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we

Yet, I know your calling is not to avenge,
 But to regain inner peace
 That unified sense of being
 Which offers us a release
 For you, it is the impossible return
 For me, it is knowing I have been here too
 Which completes my birthing

Not to be born again, for in personal years,
 Over two-score and ten has passed
 Since entering this physical world
 But my enjoining with you
 I've bared my feet,
 To leave my footprints here beside yours
 With you, I'll turn my back on that door of no return
 Walking away... knowing the cycle is now complete
 Remembering ... One with me

One with You
 But more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we

Some urge ...I should forgive
 Forgive those who perpetrated such an inhumanity
 On their fellow women and men
 Those whose evil actions caused so much hurt
 Those who's profiteering
 The product of Africans suffering ...continue to thrive
 Those who in their wrong-doings
 Have sought no forgiveness
 Those who made my ancestors symbols of hate
 Forgive ... higher authorities will make that call
 Yet there is no hatred in my heart ...
 Love is its foundation ...
 Akwaaba ...I welcome strangers again,
 But I'll be wiser when men state their mission - I must
 I'll never forget the betrayal of trust
 Know ...my ancestors are with me
 I ...with them
 But more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we

With the journey to Elmina now complete
 Reflecting I know there are many
 Who have made their footprints large
 I owe them a great deal ...for laying the foundations
 And though I felt ill-prepared
 It is their strength, wise counsel, simplicity of being
 That prepared the way ...forged a way of being
 In which belief in an inner spirituality ...
 Respect for others ...
 Honesty and a sense of responsibility
 Self-reliance and respect for hard work
 Resourcefulness, belief in education
 Resilience, courage and integrity
 Informed an identity – of the African in me

Know ... That my ancestors are with me
 I am with them
 But more than that spiritually
 We are one
 One are we
 Blossoming in a wholesome unity

I feel this poem speaks for itself. Some days later Graham would seek permission to share it with his boss and whenever I have the opportunity to read it at gatherings the experience has always been a most powerful one.

However, even this powerful experience did not jolt me into action. For it was at the tutor session subsequent to this recital, where I would pose the questions (How should I start? What should be my focus? What should I do?) I would leave with Graham's remarks ringing in my head.

At that session I also recited another poem entitled 'Black Men Rule/s', which had been near completion, but not completed. I had recited it once before in making my contribution to a residential for black men who were working with black young men and boys. We were engaged in inquiry and considering the values that we wished to share in our work and how these values were to be revealed/evidenced in our professional practices. Hence, the point that Reason makes that "if we start from the idea that creating knowledge is a practical affair, we will start not, as in traditional academic research from an interesting theoretical question, but from what concerns us in practice, from the presenting issues in our lives", is of importance here. The black men on this residential were concerned with practical affairs... practical matters. We were doing what Richard Rorty says is the goal of inquiry, which is "*to achieve agreement among human beings about what to do, to bring consensus on the end to be achieved and the means to be used to achieve those ends*". The black men would also have

agreed with Rorty that if inquiry *“does not achieve co-ordination of behaviour is not inquiry but simply wordplay (Rorty, 1999: xxv)*. An important part of the residential would be the attendance on the Saturday of 40 young people with whom we would engage and put to the test with them those ideas and actions that had been agreed that we would implement. The young people would come and we would work with them as we had worked on ourselves. We had a starting point... The young people would have theirs... We were existential (in the moment) and in concrete ways were trying to reflect as much as we could the aspirations of the young people. To the young people we would *“pose this existential, concrete, present situation ... as a problem which challenges them and requires a response — not just at an intellectual level, but at a level of action (Freire, 1970:85)*.

I presented on behalf of our residential group to the young people...

“Our themes are uniqueness, respect, awareness and love...how you are today and in each thing that you do today let these qualities be evident in who you are and what you do....”

The young people would add *“honesty”* to the themes that had been presented.

The words of social theorist, Alasdair MacIntyre, have much import here, relating to our actions as black men, when says that action research practice is:

“... any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised, in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended”.

We were also held in McTaggart and Kemmis notion that in the *“action research genre, that knowledge is not produced with a view to later incorporation into practice as it is in other research. Knowledge production is embodied in the enactment of*

*emerging understanding. That is, the research aspect of participatory action research is not an end in itself, it defers to practice”.*⁸⁰

As black men on this residential we were also concerned with Truth, particularly as there are myths that are perpetuated about who we are, what we do that is in need of contention. However, we are also concerned about how we live who are and what with do through those myths that we felt was in need of attention. Truth was not the goal of inquiry though, yet we knew through our dialoguing and our experiencing ...through our practices there would be an emergent truth ... truth would emerge.

We moved forward knowing that not only for the young people, but also for ourselves, that ways had to be found to:

“... promote (their and our) empowerment toward (their and our democratic) participation and the having of a voice in society for realizing (their and our) human urges as well as to enhance (their and our) contribution to and involvement in the search for deeper articulation of an ideological vision of a more humane world” (Rahman, in press 2003).

I completed the poem in my travels over the December and January months (2003 - 2004) and I have added a preamble to what was shared with the tutorial group and on the residential, because when I first penned poem, it was responsive to experiences on the residential and felt somewhat parochial when I shared it with the tutorial group. Therefore, I sought to find a way for its content to be understood outside of that context of the residential. Thus, I felt it was necessary for the addition. The poem was also renamed Black Men/s Rule/s – The Emerging Truth.

Here is the poem... Black Men Rule/s - The Emerging Truth”.

Preamble

About black men's way in the world
 On one hand much has been said about us,
 Much have been written about us
 That's simply not true
 On the other hand little has been said
 Little has been written
 Which contends the falsehoods that have been perpetuated

 Yet these words that have no truth

⁸⁰ McTaggart and Kremmis

Have meaning - a seeming life of their own
 As the lack in contending them
 Creates an imbalance
 A climate in which dishonesty exists and thrives
 Humanity negated and denied
 As the perpetrators of falsehoods take advantage
 Of peoples ignorance
 And in their own propensity to disrespect
 Purport their lies as facts
 Opinions as universal principles
 Misrepresenting the truth
 Making a discipline of ill-disciplined thought
 That distorts what it means to care for each other
 That counteracts any commitment to change for the better
 That celebrates courage only in the rights of their wrong-doings
 Convincing not only those amongst their number
 But challenging those on whom the lies have been told
 The dispossessed - black men

In a climate of dishonesty though,
 The opportunities for the dispossessed to challenge are few
 Power is held by the dispossessors
 Those perpetuating the falsehoods
 They determine the conditions
 In which thought, relationships and experiences have been shaped
 They determine the conditions
 In which image, position and the character of events are held
 They determine what the story is -
 Why it must be told -
 How it is to be told -
 Where it could be told -
 When it should be told
 And in such a situation
 Those on whom the lies have been told
 The dispossessed - black men
 Are challenged to find appropriate responses

Some of the dispossessed do indeed fight back
 (Some say possibly all of them in their own way)
 On that inclusional thought though
 I hear it, but will suspend judgement
 I have a view about what really makes the difference
 Yes, it is the fighting back
 The fighting back that is borne out of the defiant tradition
 It is that fighting back which is so critical to the understanding of the whole story
 For it evidences a display of contention
 Against all odds
 To uphold the undistorted truth,
 To remind us of a history of achievement
 Before our dispossession

Of continuing - unrequited accomplishments
 Whilst dispossessed
 It is this character of defiance that really makes the difference
 For out of this defiance
 Bequeath to us are understandings of the world
 Derived from lived experiences, purposeful actions and alternative stories
 That speaks to the spirit identified in Claude McKay's "Lest We forget"
 Quoted by Churchill in rallying the troops during WW2
 And encapsulated in a central phrase in McKay's poem
 "Backs against the wall, but fighting back"

However, some of the dispossessed (black men) are complicit
 (Some say possibly all of them in their own way)
 That inclusional thought I also hear
 And again I will suspend judgement
 For I have a view of the complicity of the dispossessed
 In their dispossession
 In a world where they have only a tenuous connection
 A slippery hold even on their debased societal position
 And they, their experiences, events and stories are marginalised
 I have a view of the lies battering on their conscious state
 And invading, seeping increasingly into the deepest vestiges of their unconscious
 Corrupting their thought processes - their conscientiousness'
 Until that critical moment when they are faced with a life choice
 To contend the lies
 Or accept the falsehoods as their own truths
 On contention I have already articulated
 On acceptance that is a more than complex story
 For the dispossessed gives character to the lies
 Which, in turn, characterises them
 A caricature of absurdity in an absurd world
 Black Skins - White Masks as Fanon says
 As they come to believe
 Not only to accept that which is not true
 But to convince themselves that there is value
 In investing in that which they know is false
 The vilification of their own selves
 And as distorted as this may seem
 Within the thinking, consciousness and beliefs of black men
 The falsehoods are given life
 They present that at worse that their station is sustained
 And conjure that if there is no rocking of the boat
 No opposition to that which is not true
 The future holds the prospect for advance
 Opportunities for personal recognition
 And the offer of higher status

Out of such absurdities – myth is created as truth
 There appears no distinction
 Myth is truth – truth is mythical

This is the dilemma
 That is at the centre
 Of how the black man makes sense of himself
 It is the life puzzle to which he must attend
 In which his own reality is denied
 And the rules by which he has to live
 Are in view, but just beyond range of focus
 Surrounds, but still not within firm grasp
 Are audible with full intensity, but the teller now makes no appearance
 An air of impossibility governs the black man's experiences
 There is no prospect for change
 Yet out of such conditions is borne
 The qualities to challenge the myths
 Its antithesis – there is every prospect for change
 That is so evident in the qualities held by the dispossessed - black men
 When we say different
 When we write different
 When we recapture the true meaning of honesty
 When we dispel ignorance and create a new awareness
 When we have self-esteem and self-respect as foundation stones
 For building positive relationships
 When we celebrate community
 When we are committed anew
 Beyond material considerations
 To a holistic view of being human -
 Caring about what humans say
 Caring about what humans do
 Having the personal courage to tell the truth
 The whole truth and nothing but the truth

Of course it will take a special effort
 Success is encouraged through our coming together as men
 This I know is no easy task
 But our enjoining has importance
 In adopting a critical stance
 In being strategic in our decision-making
 With the collective acting for the individual
 And the individual acting for the collective
 It is through such a relationship
 This character of cooperation
 That true stories of our lived experiences will emerge
 The myths fully explored
 Fact separated from fiction
 And the agenda for taking action
 To change our condition stimulated
 That indeed is our task
 It is the initiative in which we all are held
 Black men rule/s ... denied
 Black men rule/s ... myth
 Black men rule/s ... challenged

The Emerging Truth

I've heard that to each other
 Black men cannot talk
 That's the character of stories
 That's been told
 We have no relationship
 That would inform on emotions - on a level
 And as black men amongst us
 There exists no leadership for action
 We only talk about doing
 But it is not just talk we should be talking
 We should be walking the walk
 Yet, no matter what has been said
 We're in an initiative in which we are held
 To change our condition
 Which we know is
 And have to be black men led
 Yes, we are talking
 In conversation - dialoguing
 Evoking thoughts
 Derived from self-inquiry
 And sharing life principles
 Our inner most values
 That inform on ourselves
 And our professional practices
 Walking the walk
 In the service of black boys and young men
 Black men walking
 Black men talking
 Thinking, Sharing, Acting
 Black Men Rule/s

I hear that as a black man
 In my home - to me – homage must be paid
 That is the tradition -my leadership accepts no contradiction
 I am first to eat - It is I who wear the trousers
 To my every whim and fancy women and children move
 For any different order will counsel my defeat
 But we know only too well that defeat is in acceptance of such a state
 The challenge is to find new ways,
 Transforming house into a home, escalating cooperation, celebrating family
 Paying homage where homage is due – not to man –
 But to our ancestral spirits
 So irrespective of what has been said
 Remember we're in an initiative in which we are held
 To change our condition
 Which we know is

And have to be black men led
 We'll take no back seat
 We'll have self-respect
 Give to others respect that is their due
 We are challenging self
 Critiquing our principles
 Preparing the ground
 Adopting a critical stance
 To journey on and beyond
 Taking responsibility for that which is ours
 Yet showing no neglect in our care for others
 Black men walking
 Black men talking
 Thinking, Sharing, Acting
 Black Men's Rule/s

I hear that black men are like boys
 We look only for women who can mother us
 Who know that the way to our hearts is through our stomachs
 And can continue with the pattern of us being watered and fed
 And oh boy how we just love to brag about how many children that we have
 These are performance standards on which our judgements are made
 Yet to our responsibilities as black men
 Very few of us let our voices be heard
 Often with-holding our emotional being
 Reigning in our hearts
 Distorting our loving relationships – not finding new paths
 Yet, no matter what has been said
 Know that we're in an initiative in which we are held
 To change our condition
 That we know is
 And have to be black men led
 And is about loving relationships
 Being at the centre
 Informing our every message
 Guiding all our actions
 Being a principle and a quality
 Untainted, powerful and alive
 A love without fear
 Delivered with care
 For it is from truest of hearts
 That in the interest of black boys and young men
 We share
 Black men walking
 Black men talking
 Thinking, Sharing, Acting
 Black Men's Rule/s

I hear that as black men we boast and lie
 About our sexual conquests

We have no power in anything else
 Our brains are in our loins
 That it is the women who rule in our homes
 Over us they have much control
 Our balls are in their hands
 Yet that circumstance to anyone else we cannot relate
 But it is not only our testicles that they should be holding
 Its our hearts, our minds
 Our lives to them we should entrust
 They have always been more than ample partners,
 Protectors of our well-being
 Empowering in their relationship with us
 So really, no matter what has been said
 Acknowledge that we're in an initiative in which we are held
 To change our condition
 Which we know is
 And have to be black men led
 What we present - Is who we are - We don't hold back
 And whatever we bring to our conversations
 We know it is the material for advancing our learning
 And even if we were to shed a tear
 We know that would be all right
 For we are accepted as we are
 And it's our self-acceptance
 That creates the conditions
 For us to move with purpose
 To do what we have to do
 For ourselves - for black boys and young men
 Black men walking
 Black men talking
 Thinking, Sharing, Acting
 Black Men's Rule/s

I hear that the black family is in crisis
 In this unit black men are absent and play no part
 We don't have good relationships with our fathers
 Find it difficult to father
 Munch less be a man
 Yet in this initiative in which we are held
 To change our condition
 We are aware of the unique contributions
 That we have to make
 We know the risks that must be taken
 To shape - make claim
 Take aim and target
 The tasks that we must do
 With ourselves and with other men
 To remind ourselves of those qualities
 That make us exceptional
 That makes us special

That makes us unique
 That informs on our purpose of being in the world
 Being true to ourselves, our families and our community
 Having honour as men
 Unique African men
 Black men walking
 Black men talking
 Thinking, Sharing, Acting
 Black Men's Rule/s

Since the tutorial session where I initially shared this poem I have missed the subsequent two sessions. This has not helped my condition, but possibly that too is a reflection of the condition. What I do know though that until Jack's response to my email for more time, I remained truly stuck. Finding a direction had proved difficult. I was unclear of how I should present my story, even though as can be seen from the foregoing there was much material with which to work. As I have begun to write though (Donna Ladkin), the story which I wish to tell has emerged and is emerging and is leading, I feel now, to the completion of this transfer paper.

I had seen the signs of what I should have been concerned with and to some extent, I have already began attending to them in this paper, because they are derived from those emergent personal, professional and foundational issues that have impacted on me at all levels. However, I had failed to take full cognisance of their import and the challenge that they posed and now pose to me. That challenge is for me to be different, to do different and to change self. I had seen the signs, but I felt uncomfortable with dealing with these issues that were presenting themselves, particularly as I held a disposition of being relatively comfortable with being who I am and what I do. The issues that were emerging though challenged that comfortableness.

It was not that I had not been challenged to be different, to do different and change self before, because I am acutely aware of my engagement in an on-going process concerned with understanding self, relations with others and the things that I do as life or professional practices. This process of self inquiry pre-dates my involvement with CARPP and for me, seems as if it has been a life long activity that had commenced somewhere in the distant past. This self inquiry process prior to CARPP though was characterised by long periods of lull and short periods of spurt. The periods of lull is not presented here to represent that nothing much was happening with the exploration of self. It is here to amplify its distinction from those spurt periods, which had occurred at various times in the unfolding of my life and were recognisable by the increased momentum and energised way that I searched for a better understanding of who I am and what I do. At CARPP though, though the process is still characterised by periods of lulls and spurts. The periods of lull had greatly diminished and the periods of spurt had been more sustained. The momentum once again had been gathered for self-inquiry and that energised way of being, characteristic of the periods of spurt. That energised way of being had been a consistent demeanour as I have dialogued and worked collaboratively with members of the CARPP community on the makings and unmakings in the making of me – affirming and improving the professional practices of an African storyteller-educator, until recently.

However, I had become stuck. The challenge to be different, to do different and change self that made me feel so uncomfortable was persistent. I recognised that the “defiant self” that I so treasure and the “privileged self” who is so well cared for by so many, were working against my self-interests. I defied the signs that I had seen

relating to my condition and being a “protected specie”⁸¹ was shielded from hurts/tasks for which I had responsibility and that I needed to attend to myself. Qualities that had held me in good stead conspired to determine my demise. These qualities enclosed me when they should have awakened my awareness, imprisoned self when I needed to liberate that self and ensnared me when I needed to spring the traps, free myself and move creatively beyond the self imposed boundaries. I took the only direction that made sense to me and should have done so when those questions came up of How should I start? What should be my focus? What should I do? I returned to my originating self-inquiries relating to the makings and unmakings in the making of me and reminded myself of where I had reached in that particular journey. Surprise... surprise. What I found is below (see Diagram One).

As I looked at the diagram I remembered how I had utilised the concept of “living contradictions”⁸² to stimulate self-inquiry to construct it and to develop this depiction of myself as a contradictory, multi-layered and multi-phased man with wide-ranging contrary quantitative and qualitative experiences, from which I had derived beliefs that had been synthesised through those experiences and through reflection over time. I had stated that these synthesised beliefs underpinned my values and informed my attitude and actions, which were strategic, experimental, professional and creative. Furthermore, I claimed that I shared and presented aspects of myself, my experiences, beliefs, attitudes and actions for modeling; assisted in creating inquiring, relevant organisations and encouraging self-empowerment amongst young people and adults. I felt then as if I had begun a redefinition of myself.

⁸¹ Protected specie: well cared for

⁸² living contradictions

Diagram One



Simultaneous Thoughts

Since my return to England I have not been through the doors of Sankofa (there is some unfinished business here), particularly as it was not a decision I had taken consciously. I know though that it was a decision that I had to make given my condition. I needed time to think about my condition ... about Graham remarks ... all my unfinished business. Life did not stop, because I became stuck. Life did not stop, because of my contrariness. Life continued... decisions were made and actions taken... even though in my stuckness I felt that I had played no part in those decisions and actions. I know better now and the story, "Simultaneous Thoughts", which follows shows why I know better.

I cried profusely. I cried uncontrollably. I really had no inkling that I would be so moved. Yet, I cried loudly, cradled in the arms of a most special friend, as I came to a tearful halt on recital of the following words:

*The absence that I have felt
For such a very long time,
Of you in my life and I in yours
Together, very little time we have spent*

I was shaking and felt perturbed that the tears had come so easily. I was concerned that these words, contained in a poem, entitled "Simultaneous Thoughts", which I had been reciting, could have triggered such a tearful state. I had commenced my rendition with a sense of positive self-accomplishment, with a set of words that really did say what I wanted to say and just could not understand why the tears had come.

However, as I self-searched for reasons related to my tearful state, no easy answers were afforded to explain my condition. I felt such a sense of loss, though triggered by the words, were beyond the words. I recalled that I had spent most of the previous evening composing and had been eager to complete, so as to make full use of the energy flow that had been stirred within me, as a result of receiving electronically, a picture of my father that I had requested from my brother residing in Florida.

I had made this request, of my brother, because I knew he had such a picture. I did not have one and nor did any other family member residing in the United Kingdom. The picture was needed for an exercise that would form part of the residential training programme for black men, organised by the Mandiani Project, in which I hold the position of coordinator. The Mandiani Project⁸³, aim is to provide a

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| Objectives for the Mandiani Project |
|--|
| To provide a comprehensive range of personal developmental experiences for a minimum of 40 black boys aged 10-13 years within a supportive environment. |
| To provide informal learning experiences that encourage the young person's personal achievements and has as integral the advancement of their educational attainment. |
| To provide opportunities that enable the young people give consideration to their responsibility in determining who they are, their educational development and the building of effective relationships within their families and communities. |
| To provide opportunities that enable parents to have more effective relationships with their children and to be proactive in the development of their communities |
| To provide opportunities that enable professionals to work more effectively with black boys in the borough within a community development framework |

comprehensive, accessible and high quality personal developmental programme for a minimum of 40 black boys aged 10 – 13 years across the Lewisham borough, related to the black communities concerns regarding levels of crime, violence, disaffection and social exclusion amongst black boys and young men. The residential sought to encourage workers on the project, black men, to give consideration to their thinking, sharing and acting in relation to self, relationships and professional practices.

However, the picture that my brother had sent did not arrived in time for the residential. I attended without a picture of my father. This lack of a picture though caused me to do much soul searching, as to why I had no picture of my father and as I did this, quite surprisingly, I felt somewhat ashamed. Nothing on the residential contributed to this shamefacedness that I was feeling though, it was simply the product of my own thoughts. In response to these feelings of shame I tried to rationalize why I had no picture of my father. I told myself that pictures were not important. It is what is in your heart that is important. It is the real life experiences that are important. Then, almost resignedly, with a hint of disdain, I said to myself, anyway my father did not play any major part in my life. I stopped myself going down this route, for I realized that I had had such thoughts before and recognized that whenever I had been called to explain why I had no picture of my father, the place that I would reach would be that 'he played no part in my life'. The same way that I explained his photographic absence, was the same way that I explained to friends that he had died long ago, the same way that I would write deceased on forms that wanted information on my father.

I was really surprised that I had come back to this place, particularly as I thought I had begun to work on this aspect of myself as a result of my work with young people. With them, I had begun to see how absent fathers still remained to play an important part in their lives and I had begun to realize how my father played an important part in my life and continued to do so, despite him being on the periphery of my lived experiences. All of a sudden my justifications for the absence of my father in my life seemed hollow. I realized that here was another opportunity to explore the relationship that I had with him and once again I was spurning that opportunity. I simply was not giving recognition to how important this exploration was for my own well-being.

I know I had recognised that before, for I had felt a great need to communicate with him. This need to communicate with him had been stimulated initially by some work, undertaken as part of the Mandiani Project, which involved a group of black men 'thinking, sharing and acting' on self, their relationships and work activities. As a result of this process I had resolved that I needed to see my Dad, to dialogue with him, to have a different kind of conversation with him. I just did not want to catch up with the intervening years as we usually did. I had not seen him for over seven years, which would have been the length of time since I had visited Trinidad. I was amazed at how fast the time had flown past since that last visit and had felt a need to have a different kind of conversation with my father. I wanted him to hear my story. I wanted him to share his. I wanted to have a conversation that had meaning for me and some real purpose. However, it was not simply a set of words that I wished to

communicate to him, but it was my attempt to try and capture a sense of the relationship I had with my father.

The picture that had been sent electronically by my brother though, brought my father into full focus and as I stared at his picture, recalling how I had rationalized his absence photographically. I had already begun to learn those thoughts were incorrect. From my heart, I began to write and that I had completed by the morning was in itself energising. I immediately sought an ear to listen to my heart-felt words. I offered no warning of its content and began:

Simultaneous thoughts

Dear father ... recently I had this urge to see you
 As I have been in conversations with other black men
 Relating on the important figures in our lives
 And father I know ... that for me, you are amongst them
 I have held you high
 I have talked about you with pride
 I've remarked on your accomplishments
 The high positions you've held
 How you never liked England
 And how beautifully you sang
 Then father, running alongside, invading my memories
 Were Simultaneous thoughts
 That cried
 I wish you were there for me
 To hold me high
 To talk about my accomplishments
 The lofty positions that I have held
 To know of my experiences and how I felt about being in England,
 And that I too could sing... though ne'er as well as you

Dear father... recently I had this urge to see you
 I've felt as though time was running out ... if not for you certainly for me
 This was not in the sense of you or I passing on ...
 It was more in the sense of missed opportunities
 Things we should have done, but never got around to do
 That if accomplished would make a big difference to our living
 Would put our unnecessary troubled minds at ease ...
 Would make our hearts pulsate and dance to new beats
 Would make us walk as if in the company friends
 Light, bouncing, protected and warm
 Then father, running alongside, invading my memories
 Were Simultaneous thoughts
 That cried
 Time's really running out ... Your 80th birthday is near ... My 50th has past
 Much water is under our bridge unfiltered ... that should have been attended
 to Muddied are our waters ... in it much refuse is contained ...
 And our loving memories in that still water may be so deep, so entangled...
 That to unearth, bring into the light, may cause pain ... moments of silence
 But words never say all ... its to our feelings ... which we must give sense

Dear father ... recently I had this urge to see you

I have talked to my sons about this feeling
 And have told them about you
 And that they must try and see you too
 I have told them about how black you are
 So black ... that your complexion is blue
 And that I am so proud of that ... so proud of you
 I've have told them what a handsome man you were
 How tall you walked, the respect that was accorded to you
 And how sporting and athletic were your abilities
 Then father, running alongside, invading my memories
 Were Simultaneous thoughts
 That cried
 Oh father I wish you knew my sons
 So they could see you
 And you see them too
 You would be proud of them
 Proud of me too
 To see what manner of men they have become
 Walking tall amongst other men

Dear father ... recently I had this urge to see you
 Yet, I came to know that on no wall of mine's was there a picture of you
 In no album of mine's did your image appear
 I was saddened, frustrated ... For it seemed to confirm
 The absence that I have felt
 For such a very long time,
 Of you in my life and I in yours
 Together, very little time we have spent

It is here that the tears came (and they are coming again) and even though I had been reading with some degree of emotion and was passionate in my rendition, as the subject-matter of my poem warranted such a disposition, I was perplexed. The tears that came triggered a complex set of emotions within that truly rocked me. It dampened the inner warmth with which I had commenced the reading of the poem and encouraged greater introspection.

At first I felt the tears must be the result of unconsciously held feelings relating to the character of relationship that I have had with my father. That they pointed to some sense of loss related to the absence of my father in my life. That they represented an outpouring of the inner pain or hurt related to that sense of loss, over some considerable period of time. In that moment I thought about the last time that I had seen him. It was some eight years ago in 1995. This would have been the last time I had visited Trinidad. I remember taken him to a cricket match at the Queens Park Oval and was surprised at how his physicality had deteriorated. Aging and the incursion of glaucoma had jointly impacted on his increasing loss of pace, movement and sight. He remained quick-witted though, as was evidenced in the way that he responded to a taunt from one of the spectators, whose view he was blocking at the cricket match. We had been seeking some respite from our "natural seats", the grass verge, beyond the boundary and behind the fence, because there was a lull in the play. We had been standing. However, as we re-seated ourselves on the recommencement of the play, a spectator taunted my father, because of the

considerable length of time that he was taking to re-position himself. The spectator fired at him:

"Ole man, ole man, we ent pay we money to see you, you know. Is Lara we come to see!"

(Lara has just made 400 runs at my time of writing ... tremendous ... this is an aside)

My father retorted, whilst continuing his movement to reposition himself, with:

"Who you calling old man...You know who you talking to ... Yes, people like you have to pay money to see my backside ... you can't watch it for nutten".

I do not think that the spectator heard my father's retort, for I thought it may have been drowned in the applause that greeted Lara's short-arm jab to deep gully to reach his fifty. I heard it though and was pleased that that fighting spirit of my father remained in tact. I was pleased too that he had re-seated himself.

I had been most pleased to be out with my father. It was really a rare activity. The only other occasions I remember going anywhere with him would be to the Savannah, where he sometimes took me to watch him play cricket. I enjoyed these outings with my father and always looked forward to them. As I recall his absence in my life though, and I know that there were times when we must have lived in the same house, it is very difficult to remember his being in my life in any sustained way. My recall of his presence, his involvement and any stage has been minimal.

When my father left Trinidad for England, in 1955 I was about three years old. It would be some five years later that I would see him again in the flesh on his return in 1960. During that time, only a series of photographs capturing images of father, mother and older brother, in a place of prominence, on the wall in Papa Leo's home, my home too, in Lodge Place, had kept how he looked in my memory. Two years later I would leave Trinidad, with my mother, on completion of her four-week vacation, to go to England. My father would remain in Trinidad. He would make one more trip to England, for about three months, but within five years of my departure from Trinidad, my parents would be divorced. That event occurred over some 37 years ago and the location of my father in Trinidad, whilst my mother, with whom I lived, was resident in the United Kingdom for much of that time has meant that opportunities to see my father, whilst I was growing up were negligible, and remained so in my adult life. In terms of my lived experiences, my father had been no more than peripheral to that experience. I thought that this must be the reason for my tearfulness as I read the following words once more.

The absence that I have felt
For such a very long time,
Of you in my life and I in yours
Together, very little time we have spent

I thought yes, this must be it, because even though in my adult life there have been greater opportunities to see my father, at times whilst I was holidaying in Trinidad, the amount of time would not have totaled a great deal. Furthermore, the meetings with my father, initially, were always awkward and uncomfortable. There was no

lack of warmth, but somehow we had difficulty in engaging, or more appropriately, I found difficulty in communicating with him. My father had a way with words. He was a polished speaker, but when necessary, as at the cricket match, he could mix it. Over the years, I was never able to get more than a glimpse of my father mixing it. In the main he spoke with polish and that is how he conversed with me. Our conversations proved challenging for me and always had a hint of formality. They followed a pattern, whereby we exchanged pleasantries, he talked about his health, I talked about me and we alternated in quizzing each other about particular individuals, part of the wider family networks, whilst sharing a beer or two and a piece of cake. I was always pleased to see my father even though my emotions performed tricks. The time would fly by fast, I would have enjoyed having made the visit, but would leave feeling that I had not really got what I wanted out of meeting with my father. Some terrain for discussions appeared blocked, particularly that related to my mother and his new wife. However, possibly, more important, was that there was no discussion either of the character of the relationship that I held with my father. This was my father, but no fatherly responsibilities he held for me. This was my father, and no accountability did I consider that I had to him. Or so I had thought.

I composed myself and started to recite the poem again. When I reached the words *"The absence that I have felt; For such a very long time; Of you in my life and I in yours; Together, very little time we have spent"*, the tears flowed once more, but with watery eyes I continued:

I began thinking ...this has to change ... And I know that it is not right
 That in my home, on my wall, there is no picture of you
 Then father, running alongside, invading my memories
 Were Simultaneous thoughts
 That cried
 Oh father ...have you a picture of me...Is that picture on your wall?
 Or in a treasured album that you hold dear
 Or are you like me ...No picture on the wall ... no picture of me
 Do you feel like I do ... the absence that I feel ...the yearning to see you ...
 To reengage our lives
 Make our lives light ... make our wrongs right

Dear father ... recently I had this urge to see you
 Now I can see you ...I have your picture with me – waist up
 Sent electronically from across the sea
 I am looking at your face ... I'm surprised ...there is a scar on your forehead
 And I am wandering ... if you'd been hurt
 That receding hairline is a sign of your aging
 That upper body of yours seems to have lost some of its power
 But those eyes remain piercing
 Insightful, purveying beyond mere horizons
 And that stature ... that is yours ...remains upright.
 Then father, running alongside, invading my memories
 Were Simultaneous thoughts
 That cried
 I know if I was with you now...You would see my face
 And you too may be surprised by my aging
 Grey-speckled head of hair... grey beard

A fulsome and meaty figure...Not scrawny anymore
 But I too have piercing eyes... that look beyond the surface of things
 I have that upright gait that only true pride in self brings

Dear father ... recently I had this urge to see you
 To see you I now know I must
 I need to talk with you ...Connect with you
 Engage in purposeful conversation
 I want to laugh and joke with you
 Have a drink with you ...Share stories of times past
 Talk about the future ...And live each precious moment
 I want our time to be filled with happiness
 Man to man ... I know we'll dialogue
 I just can't wait – you are so big in my life
 Then father, running alongside, invading my memories
 Were Simultaneous thoughts
 That cried
 Father..if only you knew how often I had felt this way
 Would pretend that we were talking, connecting, engaging, laughing, joking,
 Drinking, sharing stories, imagining the future, living each precious moment
 Yet Father, talking man to man – You've really missed too much of my life
 I've wanted your real presence... no picture ... no imagined image of you
 Seriously Father, I've an urge to see you ... to put this pretence right

I shared this poem with my father. It was a significant moment. We no longer have the conversations we had before. I heard my father say that his children were his world and listened when he shared the hurt that he had felt as he charted a litany of the things that he felt that he had missed, not being part of his children's life. I will see my father gain soon. Our conversations would be different. I would be different with my changed self. My father's picture is on my wall in purposeful recognition of his importance in my life. I would continue to transform my unsatisfying circumstances with the integrous application of living theory methodology.

