

## SEEDS OF PEACE

### TONY ROBERTSON AND TRANSFORMING MASCULINITY

*We live in a complex time where we have to come to terms with  
the paradox of men's power and men's pain...  
Both sides of contemporary men's experience are real,  
and both have to be taken into account.*  
(David Tacey *Remaking Men*)



The second major theme of the Decade to Overcome Violence – *the use, abuse and misuse of power* – is acutely focussed in the lives and behaviour of men. Whilst much today is rightly done by women to address the personal violence they face and inflict, silence still surrounds many of the issues and struggles related to the violence suffered and inflicted by men. To break through this silence is often a very challenging task. Yet, at a time of such signs as rising suicide rates among young men, such courage is increasingly demanded. One such example is set by **Tony Robertson** in Brisbane.



**Tony Robertson** has had an extensive career in community service and education over thirty years. This has included study and placement as a volunteer development worker in the Philippines and in Papua New Guinea with PALMS, as well as work in community welfare and education in Australia. Building on this experience, and deeply committed to principles of inclusion, equity and social justice, Tony brings a highly creative and energetic presence to all that he does.

#### **Community Jester and Story Teller Fella**

Two key roles which enable Tony to open up channels of peace for individuals and groups are those of *Community Jester* and *Storyteller*. For, as Tony reminds us, by using imagination and rituals of challenge and celebration, personal integrity, community and collaborative living can be reclaimed:

*'The Jester is the ancient voice of protest and social reflection in the courts of power. In these times of economic rationalism and social pragmatism the Jester assists groups and individuals to critique and challenge the systems and structures that alienate people from decisions and power'*

Similarly, as the *Story Teller Fella*, using traditional and contemporary material, Tony is able to bridge cultural backgrounds, enabling fresh meaning in the lives of children and others.



## SEEDS OF PEACE

### Peace and Justice activism

Tony is also active in various issues of peace and justice, including Indigenous Reconciliation and campaigning against war (as in this banner after the Iraq invasion)...



### Transforming Masculinity and Overcoming the Violence of Homophobia

Above all however, Tony's peacemaking is related to his personal journey as a Gay Catholic man. This provides a particularly personal challenge:

*As a gay man who came out late in a very conservative family I have had to learn to live alone in lots of ways. Neither our religion nor our family heritage encouraged difference. Sometimes it's tough being the 'Rainbow Sheep' in the family.*

Tony thus calls on others to 'enjoy the diversity that we offer to the human family and join us as we confront the prejudice, violence and alienation that keeps so many people from celebrating their sexuality.' For sadly, as he reminds us:

*'The culture of homophobia has become a culture of death for too many young people in our church and Australian community.'*

Tony's commitment to transformative paths and rituals for men is for the benefit of both straight and gay men however. Tony affirms, for example, the insights of Richard Rohr, who points out how authentic male spirituality often begins at the place of men's darkest moments and greatest pain. For many men, that painful place is the 'father wound', the sense of emptiness and deep loss they have about their father (in Tony's case, a great inspiration and yet also later a place of separation). But the wound may also be loss of a job, failed relationships, questioning the meaning of life, or simply having climbed the ladder of success only to realise the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.

Tony's own journey is thus a story for others to follow too, to confront our own violence and find the source of peace and power within and between us:

*I am like my father in many ways. I have his strength and resilience and his passion... Yet we both hide much of our lives deep inside where no-one has access, except perhaps the spirit of healing who alone can break through the heavy heart.*

### Sources and more information:

<http://www.geocities.com/robertsontony>