

Healing and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa

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Like many other societies that have dealt with the question of how to achieve closure of a past oppression while simultaneously working toward national reconstruction and reconciliation, South Africa turned to the concept of a truth commission. Testimony constituted the central mechanism in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process. This presentation reflects on the use of testimony as a mechanism for psychological healing. With reference to studies that analyzed transcripts from public hearings of the TRC and transcripts from interviews with key role-players, multiple understandings of healing are identified. The presentation points to key questions about the relationship between individual healing and national reconciliation.