**FOREWORD**

The recent public outcries on racist behaviour and the radical approaches to enforce social justice are but a few examples that South Africa’s painful history is still experienced in the present. More than three centuries of racist colonial and apartheid rule caused enormous suffering and human rights abuse to black South Africans. The same racist policies benefitted white South Africans such that, as a group, they enjoy one of the highest living standards in the world.

The outpour of rage and anger from black South Africans about the persistent largely racially based inequality within the society is but an indication that the 1994 democratic elections were only a ceasefire and not a peace treaty.

Antjie Krog, in her forward to the book Another Country: Social Restitution, writes about this anger. In speaking about what black South Africans want from white South Africans, she writes, “Forming an opinion based on the worst in social media, there is a desire for a personal physical experience: to see Whites impoverished, humiliated and depending for their own most basic needs on the whim and mercy of Black people. At times does it seem as if there is even a wish for a French Revolution scenario: to move into the deserted houses of the rich, run through the enormous gardens, mess in the pools and experience physical revenge by spilling blood? I believe all of this is actually underpinned by an understandable basic yearning: to take over the mines, the houses, the cars, the farms, so that one would never again live the vulnerable life of dread, anxiety, poverty and oppression[suffered under colonialism and apartheid]” [[1]](#footnote-1).

At the recent state funeral of struggle icon, Winnie Madikizela Mandela, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa linked the anger of black South Africans about the lack of real socio-economic transformation with the unhealed historical wounds. He said “We must acknowledge that we are a society that is hurting, damaged by our past, numbed by our present and hesitant about our future. This may explain why we are easily prone to anger and violence.” [[2]](#footnote-2)

Peace researchers highlight that sustainable peace will only be possible after the root causes for the South African conflict are addressed. The Restitution Foundation is of the firm belief that restitution serves as a vehicle to address these root causes.

The word restitution has three meanings: (i) to restore something lost or stolen to its proper owner (ii) to recompense or compensate for injury or loss (iii) to recompense or compensate for injury or lost.

Within the South African context restitution means that white people must do something to address the wrongs of colonialism and apartheid.

A recent survey undertaken by the HSRC highlights the major fault line in the restitution discourse: Most of the white segment of the South African population strongly feels that they have no responsibility to do restitution. Ramaphosa’s address provides a possible answer for this disassociation: “It is only when you experience the real pain yourself that you can recognise it in others and offer comfort”.

This denial from white people indicates a lack of understanding of the suffering caused by colonialism and apartheid and the role white people played in the suffering.

Much restitution advocacy work is still required.

Since its inception, the Restitution Foundation has developed a range of resources to assist in deepening the understanding of why restitution is necessary, what restitution is and what it is not. There are also guidelines to different spheres in life where restitution is required. These restitution resources have now been compiled into this Restitution Toolkit which is available on the Restitution Foundation Website ([www.restitution.org.za](http://www.restitution.org.za)).

The Foundation trusts that the Toolkit will become an important resource that will facilitate restitution transformation. The organisation is aware that our work is work in progress and we do not claim to provide final answers. In our celebration of this document, we are mindful of Krog’s sentiment that “it is important that black South Africans decide what restitution white South Africans should do” and not the other way around. It is therefore important for white people to connect with the wounds of their black compatriots to appreciate the pain and thereafter respond with appropriate restitution actions.

1. Swartz, S 1996. Another Country. Social Restitution. HSRC Press: Cape Town [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ramaphosa, CM 2018. Eulogy by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the funeral of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Orlando Stadium, Soweto. <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/eulogy-president-cyril-ramaphosa-funeral-winnie-madikizela-mandela%2C-orlando-stadium%2C-soweto> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)