**What is the relationship between restitution and restorative justice?**

Restitution plays a critical role in restorative justice. Because restorative justice seeks not just punishment but the healing of the community, it requires more of both the perpetrator and the victim than retributive justice does. Unlike retributive justice, which frames wrongdoing as a violation of law and a crime against the state, restorative justice recognises wrongdoing as a violation of relationship and a crime against people and community. As part of the process of healing the wounds, then, the perpetrator must acknowledge that injustices have been committed and participate, along with the victims and wider communities, in seeking solutions that will repair the frayed social fabric. Making restitution—doing what is in the power of the perpetrator to restore justice and set right what was wrong—is a critical piece of this.

For our context, the language of perpetrator and victim may seem off-putting. Most white South Africans have been passive beneficiaries of the apartheid system rather than active perpetrators of its evils. But nonetheless, the beneficiaries continue to accrue the wealth, education and social capital that were reserved for them under apartheid and benefit from injustices which continue to be perpetuated in many ways today. By voluntarily choosing to make restitution, they take responsibility for the advantages they have gained and attempt to break the cyclical nature of those advantages by redistributing both material wealth and the wealth of education and skill.

In so doing, white people begin to right the imbalance that has long existed between communities. By investing in disadvantaged communities, not out of a sense of largesse but a sense of the demands of justice, we take seriously the lives and struggles of our brothers and sisters and make concrete moves towards demonstrating that we rise or fall together as one nation.