

Truth & Reconciliation Process

A process to discover and reveal past pain (actions and/or accusations), in the hope of coming to resolution and a new way forward.

*Any sincere attempt to bring peace and unity among [human beings]
is welcome in Auroville.
~The Mother, 30.7.68*

*Peace through human unity:
Unity through uniformity is an absurdity.
Unity must be realised through the union of the many.
Each one is part of the unity; each one is indispensable to the whole.
~The Mother, Oct 1969*

"If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies." ~ Desmond Tutu

Problem: Broken or Lost Trust Among Aurovilians

In Auroville, we have a big Dream to manifest. Yet one of the challenges we face in moving constructively forward is our lack of trust in each other. Some of us have done things that have hurt others, which then leads to being judged and labelled, sometimes even excluded from Groups or energetically ostracized from the community. If we want to build a society based on Human Unity, we need to find a way to reintegrate these people into our community. We need a process that allows for these people to be heard and understood for their actions, as well as encouraging them to take responsibility for the impact of their choices. Together, we need to find ways of rebuilding the broken trust and healing our relationships. This might happen simply through deep listening for all parties, or we might need to design creative action plans that support the people in question to redeem themselves, and support the rest of us to forgive, so that we can all be respected, deserving members of the community.

Community Feedback Process & Removing Nominated Names from the 3-Day Selection Process/Committee

The Temporary Feedback Review Committee has the challenging task of reviewing all the feedback given, deciding which feedback is substantial, and then finally delivering this message to the Nominees and telling them that the community isn't approving their candidature.

For the Nominees-in-waiting, this must be a very difficult message to receive, not to mention humiliating, infuriating, and possibly even detrimental to our larger community functioning.

Even though there may be valid reasons to exclude a person from participating in the 3-Day Selection Process (and/or becoming a member of a Working Group), we can't leave a process such as this dangling – we need to come full circle and take responsibility for the consequences of excluding one another.

These people need a chance to be heard, and also to hear and acknowledge what the community's genuine concerns about them are. We need a space to look at what can be done concretely to start to repair the wrongs and restore our broken and lost trust in each other.

Otherwise we never give people a chance to start anew. Some people have been "rejected" from previous Selection Processes, and it seems as a community we haven't offered them any remedial support.

Our proposal hopes to respond to this need...

Phase 1: “Rejected Names”

To offer a Peace & Reconciliation Process for those Nominees removed from the 3-Day Selection Process/Committee, so that hopefully we can contribute to healing and restoring trust between these people and the community, and so that these people can possibly have a chance to join future selection processes.

Phase 2: Larger Community

Adapt and ameliorate the Truth & Reconciliation Process, based on the feedback and assessment of Phase 1. If we get a sense that there’s meaning in this process, we could expand and offer the space to others in the community suffering from loss of trust.

Proposed Timeline and Concrete Action

1. Confirm your interest to be a part of this project

- Would you like to be a part of this project, and how so?
- Would you like to join the core team and support with developing the process together?
- Or would you prefer to be a Silent Observer, either of our team meetings and/or of the Truth & Reconciliation Process itself (when we start working with “real cases”)?
- Any comments to share right now?
- Time-Frame:

2. Develop our Truth & Reconciliation Process

- Group work (facilitated by Restorative Auroville?)
- Process to be designed in alignment with Restorative Practices (a philosophy based on applied nonviolence, community healing, and restoration)
- Time-Frame:

3. Implementation – Hearing “Real Cases”

- Schedule meetings for “real cases”
- Time-Frame:

4. Review and Assessment

- Review what worked, what didn’t work, what can be improved
- Make any necessary modifications to our T&R Process
- Time-Frame:

Step 2: Developing our Truth & Reconciliation Process

Brainstorming IDEAS...

i) Elements to include in T&R Process

- Steps and practice similar to Restorative Circles, but adapted
- Hope to combine different modalities that we have available to us
- We need a process that's new and different from anything we've ever done before
- We need a non-judgemental process
- Getting inspiration from Mother's 12 Qualities, in particular Goodness, Equality, Generosity, Peace
 - at the level of values, we are all equal
- Are our decisions conducive to peace?
- How can we be responsible AVians and start to repair, instead of waiting for the "accused" to repair?

ii) Collaboration and Feedback

- Share with WC, AVC, Participatory WGs Study Group, Koodam, RAS
- Get endorsement and feedback, incorporate feedback
- Within community: more general info and awareness about T&Rs in the world and a desire to have such a process in AV
- Share proposal with community, GM? – get feedback

iii) Make public that this process exists and is ready to use

- Voluntary
- Invite people to use it
- Can be adapted for individual requirements – individual must request it
- Especially: those in pain and who want community "clearing;" those who received negative feedback for Selection Process; those who would like to join Selection Process again and still have feedback to clear
- Start with cases where it's easier to reach closure, so that we can build trust in the process
- Start with cases where the "accused" is willing to come

iv) Intention / what are we trying to achieve?

- To listen
- To repair – take responsibility and forgive
- To redeem reputation
- To restore trust in the community

v) "Accuser" comes forward and initiates process

- Meet "accused," clarify issue, clarify rules of the game, check willingness to proceed
- Announce that the process will take place, short descriptions (News, Auronet, community reps (doesn't exist yet))
- Invite facilitators – those who can hold space – many!
- Invite registrations / encourage people to join
 - "accused," "accuser", others
 - "accused" can invite "support people"
 - those impacted/touched by issue
 - silent observers
 - participants must state intention for wanting to join
 - how to register? Phone/email/in person/RAS?
- Open to all (who register), like a public hearing
- All sides of the issue should be well-represented
- Group size: between 15-30 people, or more?

vi) “Pre-Circles”

- Facilitators meet with all who registered
- Rules of the game – how the space is held, dialogue process that we’ll follow
- Tell the truth, full disclosure

vii) T&R “Circle”

- Time, date and location is fixed
 - Peace Table?
 - Unity Pavilion?
- Time-Frame: Over a few hours or days? Or Like a 3-day Process?
- Rules of the game: Speak in a circle, Speak to the centre, No back-and-forth discussion, or arguments, shared power
- Do we include table work?
- How to include 12 Qualities?
- Hopefully a shift happens
- How do we create that deep container/support the shift?

Possible Questions:

- If you were in this person’s shoes, what do you imagine he/she was looking for/seeking at the time he/she chose to act?
- If you were his/his best friend, what would you advise him/her to do now?
- How did your action/non-action contribute to this outcome?

viii) Action Plan/Remedial Action

- Action items that are feasible within 3 months or 6 months
- How creative can we be?
- Facilitators’ role to inspire creativity
- How can we inspire self-responsibility?
- A caution we need to give: that this T&R Process may not lead to rehabilitation, forgiveness, positive outcome – it needs everyone’s willingness if we want to move forward

Possible Questions:

- What would you like to see him/her say or do that would rebuild your trust in him/her?
- What would you like to offer in way of supporting a positive outcome?
- What actions are you (“accused”) willing to take?

ix) “Post-Circle”

- Evaluate/assess where we are now
- Has change taken place?

x) Transparency / Inclusion of wider community

- How to get the “healing” out there / accepted / trusted?
- Develop strategies for transparency and larger community sharing:
 - process recorded by AVRadio and available on file at Koodam for anyone who wants to listen (not take home?)
 - written report in News/Auronet (by facilitators, get some written feedback from “accused” and some participants)
- Word of mouth...

xi) Evaluation/Assessment of Process

- Review Process after each session/season and make improvements

Additional Comments:

Engaging and including the Tamil culture:

- We need to include Tamils in this T&R design
- We need to be sensitive about cultural differences
 - eg: for Westerners, “sorry” is very touching and can start to restore connection, but in the Tamil culture “sorry” isn’t said in the same way

Languages:

- We need to find a way to translate the process into our different languages, and to allow people to speak in their native languages

Defining “Acceptable/Non-Acceptable” Behaviour and Dealing with it:

- We need clarity on what’s acceptable/not acceptable behaviour
- We need to move towards more transparency
 - one of our biggest problems is how much secrecy we have (and how much gossip it breeds)
- We need to stand for integrity and to dare to deal with unacceptable behaviour, but with compassion
- We have to start dealing with our problems
 - at the moment, we don’t deal with the real issues, but nonetheless we ostracize

Recommendations for 3-Day Selection Process:

- All AVians should be allowed to be part of such community processes (no exclusion)
- Feedback needs to be signed (no anonymous feedback should be accepted)
- Feedback needs to be more direct, not via a TRFC messenger (feels like a dirty job)
 - maybe with a live facilitated process?
 - the feedback giver needs to also take his/her responsibility for delivering the message and how
- Feedback needs to clearly state what happened and explain its impact on the individual or community
- At present, the TRFC messenger represents a community that isn’t mature/respectful
- The same people are always the ones giving feedback
- We need follow-up and remedial action, so that these people have a chance for a fresh start

Old AV conflicts:

- Hope to resolve old AV conflicts
- Hope to learn about forgiveness
- Hope to rebuild community and trust in AV