

Reflections on Worldwork 2008  
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One thing that stands out for me at from Worldwork was the group discussion in the middle with the South Africans. As a teenager in college I was very involved with the antiapartheid movement, and helped organize student strikes and a building occupation. The liberation movement always felt to me like a shining ray of hope for Africa and for the world to overcome colonial inequalities and put the world's wealth to work for human needs. Seeing Mandela on his tour after release from prison was one of the most moving experiences I've ever had.

Over the years the developments in South Africa have been disheartening. I understand the central role the white elite and corporate economics have played in undermining true economic control by the people there, and how the majority government was limited from the very beginning and up against impossible odds. But the corruptions in the movement and the deterioration of the country have also had an internal dynamic harmed by the limitations of even such an idealistic and humane cause itself. My own thoughts and feelings over the years have drifted to a pessimism, despair about movements for change and the possibilities of justice in a world controlled by remote corporate interests and undermined by the dynamics of human nature and competition.

The group discussion at Worldwork taught me something very powerful: that the spirit of hope and truth is still very much alive in South Africa. The country's condition is the condition of all of us in this world economy, and South Africa needs the heart and friendship of the world community now, as it did then. The movement there has not failed: it has instead revealed more clearly the work all of us still have to do, and reminded us of all the richness and warmth we already have with us. This brings back to me the hope and inspiration of South Africa, which was always the hope of all people everywhere to learn to live in a new way, to truly put colonialism and racism behind us and stand for something different.

Worldwork brought black and white South Africans together to share an intimate and powerful glimpse of the ongoing conflict there. That glimpse feels to me like a great gift, because of how strongly it has rekindled my sense of hope and possibility. It reawakens with me, after so many years, the absolute certainty I had as a teenager activist: The certainty that it is worth believing in humanity's uncanny ability to always find dignity and a way forward.