Consultant as Container

Assisting Organizational Rebirth in Mandela's South Africa

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This case study recounts an intervention into the senior leadership group of a state-owned organization in South Africa. What started as an executive education program was transformed into a consulting project, a journey of discovery for both the leadership of this organization and the consultants. The turbulent and oftentimes inverted experiences of the work with this senior leadership team are examined via five anomalous events that form the basis for theorizing about how consultants can function as containers for the emotions of the client system. In this project, the consultants' willingness to absorb and work with the leadership's anxiety, hopelessness, and projections enabled the participants to address the many troubling emotions blocking their growth. This article documents the processes and the theory that led this executive group to an independent and mature way of functioning.

Keywords: *containing theory; organizational behavior; South Africa; applied behavior theories; leadership*

PREAMBLE

This is a case study of an intervention with the senior leadership group of CALDO, a state-owned organization in South Africa during the Mandela administration.[1] Berg (1990) delineates five different types of case studies: the comparative, the illustrative,

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the representative, the interpretative, and the anomalous. During this project, we were confronted by many surprises, were repeatedly called on to deal with turbulent dynamics, were forced to make a number of disquieting twists and turns, and were required to do major redesign work on the spot. Hence, the "anomalous case study" label best fits the lived reality of this intervention.

Core to this article are the major theoretical insights developed during our encounters with the leadership group at CALDO as it faced the demands placed on it by a government trying to re-create South Africa after the social, economic, political, and moral carnage produced by the apartheid regime. As the intervention progressed, we discovered that we were holding a great deal of the leadership group's displaced anxiety. But we also found that as we absorbed the group's angst, it became free to experiment with new strategies for change. At another point, we were inspired to adopt a warrior-like stance, responding with considerable strength and firmness when the group's rebellious energies were activated. As we did so, CALDO's leadership group exited a period of depression and despair and accessed its own strength and resolve. Periodically, this group treated us as if we were its "enemy," and for a while we accepted the projections they flung at us. Our willingness to do this seemed to help CALDO's leadership group to overcome its paralysis. Soon, these executives were reclaiming what they had projected onto us, and before our eyes they became increasingly powerful and independent leaders.

In a previous article (Kaminstein, Smith, & Miller, 2000), we discussed the experience of working with this South African organization. There is some overlap in the content of these two articles, but the similarities lie solely in the description of the project. In our earlier publication, we suggested six lessons relevant to interventionists working in such organizations: (a) Construe consultation as colearning; (b) in "foreign" settings, work from first principles; (c) avoid being an agent of colonialism or imperialism; (d) successful consultation demands quality relationships; (e) make coproduction the centerpiece of collaboration; and (f) the consultant serves as a container. It is this last theme that we elaborate here.

What a Mess!

When Nelson Mandela was elected president, the African National Conference (ANC) decided to build a South Africa based on nonracialism. This meant they had to build social structures to serve the needs of all 45 million citizens, not just the 6 million

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whites (*The New South African Yearbook*, 1999). CALDO, a state-owned organization once run solely by Afrikaners and long an instrument of the government's repressive racial war, was given a new agenda by Mandela's government: become commercially viable, create jobs for blacks, develop a business strategy to energize growth, and work with all stakeholders (government, ANC, holding company, unions, regional clients, etc.), many of whom had strong, contradictory agendas. CALDO had downsized (from 70,000 to 30,000). Unions were watchful. Old methods for filling jobs had been banished. Political appointees were in senior positions, and blacks with business strengths had been hired into the executive ranks.

We became involved when Wharton (the Business School of the University of Pennsylvania) was asked to run an educational program for CALDO's senior leaders, 16 Afrikaners and 9 blacks. This overture made sense for several reasons: (a) Wharton had an internationally known executive education wing; (b) for many years between the mid-1980s and early-1990s, Wharton had brought to the Penn campus cohorts of black and so-called colored South Africans to help prepare them for the leadership positions they would be asked to fill once the apartheid regime was ousted from power; and (c) one of Wharton's senior faculty, a South African expatriate, was a long-standing member of the ANC.

Forging an Initial Relationship

To help determine whether this was a project Wharton would take on, two of the authors, Rose and Dana, visited South Africa to conduct some diagnostic interviews with people at CALDO. We found a deeply divided organization. The senior group had severe racial conflicts and was unable to lead. The old guard Afrikaners were proud of CALDO's history, lacked understanding of how to run a competitive business, were bitter about having lost power, lamented the demise of the old culture, saw the new senior group as lacking the expertise to sustain CALDO's operations, and were afraid they would lose their jobs so that so-called incompetent blacks could be promoted. The energetic and ambitious younger whites were focused on the competitive strategies CALDO might pursue. Many blacks thought the old guard was deliberately blocking change. Several had overseas master of business administration (MBA) degrees and wanted to concentrate on the business problems facing CALDO. Other blacks, mindful of apartheid's legacy, felt it was time CALDO created jobs for the disenfranchised.

On completing our diagnostic interviews, we were troubled. We felt scrutinized, lectured at, and discounted by the most senior black in the company. He acted as if he did not know why we were there, even though he was the person who approved our visit and was negotiating all contractual arrangements with Wharton. Eventually, he became less disparaging and spoke about the binds of the bureaucracy the Afrikaner regime had left behind. In contrast, there were two "young Turks," one black and one white, who seemed optimistic about our developing an executive education program and who wanted to tell us their stories and frustrations.

The interview that revealed the most telling data was the one we (Dana and Rose) had with the CEO, an Afrikaner who had worked for CALDO for most of his career. Despite his cordial welcome, his forlorn demeanor, together with the dark, heavily

draped environment that was his office, created an air of gloom. He was worried by the government's mandate to address the business requirements. He knew what to do about them (develop strategy, think profitably, benchmark, restore operational excellence, become a learning organization, etc.) but was threatened by the imposed social agenda and questioned his ability to lead the cultural shifts demanded of CALDO by the government. He was trying to change things by hiring high-quality black talent and sending them around the world for the best educational opportunities. The CEO was working to unite his people across the multiple splits in the organization but to no avail; the more he tried, the more he drove them apart.

CALDO was like a new child to the CEO, and he questioned his ability to father it. He turned the interview into a confessional and began to reminisce and lament about the past. His responses to questions were uttered as if in a trance, almost in the form of a soliloquy; he recounted his failings as a leader and alluded to recent concerns about his role in past crimes of apartheid. The CEO doubted if he could lead any more and was anxious because he might be required to answer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for his role in a strike in the 1980s during which several black workers were killed.

His fears and anxiety triggered ours. We wondered what we had stepped into and what we were being asked to do. We knew, both from past experience and theory, that during diagnostic interviews the investigator can be turned into a repository for members' troubled affect. But could any human take in and hold this CEO's horrible despair? Despite knowing he was ill equipped to lead CALDO at this time in history, the CEO felt he had no choice but to try. He wanted to know how to develop the emotional capacity to experiment in new ways and how to address his organization's challenges with novel approaches.

We appreciated the clarity with which the CEO signaled his wish for our help, but the character and form of his dependency needs led us to wonder if Wharton could do anything useful for this organization. Also, at a personal level, we doubted that there was anyone at Wharton with the skills or the stamina to address CALDO's burdensome concerns.

Consultation Versus Education

After completing our diagnostic interviews, we concluded that CALDO's senior executives needed process consultation more than executive education. But they rejected this recommendation outright, arguing vigorously, "We want people to educate us about what to do. We've used consultants before and every one of them was very unhelpful." We knew that CALDO had often invited business gurus from the United Kingdom, listened to them briefly, destroyed their arguments, and sent them packing, enacting an old apartheid ritual of dealing with its own feelings of inferiority by humiliating others. The rational response would be to decline CALDO's invitation to work with them. However, in light of how much this organization needed help and the extent to which we had been moved by the noble way Nelson Mandela had orchestrated the transfer of power in South Africa (Mandela, 1994), we concluded that some-

times people like us should go into the worst of situations and give it our best try. We privately knew that the probability of success was low.

The agreement was made. Wharton would run three weeklong executive educational modules in South Africa on systems thinking, globalization, organizational politics, leadership, group dynamics, managing conflict, organizational change, and executive development.

Dana and Rose spent some time working on course design with representatives of CALDO. During these conversations, we talked explicitly about some of the oppressive history of the company, which had been described to us in detail during our interviews. The most senior white member of CALDO's planning group acted outraged when we spoke about the company in this manner. However, a black African consultant, hired to ensure that the black perspective was listened to by all concerned, affirmed the perspective we had gained during our interviews.

The design process was extremely turbulent. It was all but impossible for the people assigned by CALDO to address the issues we thought were critical because they had disparate perspectives on almost everything. As we tried to plan together, it was sometimes impossible to get heard, and we often felt that our opinions were undervalued. We could never tell how they would react to the things we said. Would our ideas be experienced as judgmental or as an indication of our understanding and empathy? Would we be seen as thoughtful, collaborative educators or as enemies of the establishment? Our mood and reactions went up and down almost hourly during the planning stage. We were fighting to find out what was real and often felt like our very survival was at risk. This perception no doubt mirrored the mood of many of the senior executives in CALDO who suspected that their futures were on the line. It was only through sharp-edged confrontation that some clarity began to emerge out of this morass.

As the design process continued, Dana, the person doing this work on our behalf, felt a real clarity of purpose and zeal. The more puzzling or conflictual things were, the more vigorous he became. Dana grilled the CALDO representatives about what it meant that the CEO might have to go before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and told them in no uncertain terms that Wharton would not be party to a program designed to shore up the Afrikaner leadership in the company. The more we heard about the impossibility of CALDO's top executives working together, the more we thought it might be possible. The more sadness, conflict, and rage we saw lurking below the surface, the more we felt the need to express conflicts out in the open. The more we felt that issues, problems, or angers were being covered up, the more we felt the need to tell the truth. However, by the end of the design work we were unsure that anyone could work with CALDO given the chaotic way it functioned and the subtle, unconscious ways they boxed Wharton in. We ended up with many constraints on what we could and could not do with them.

Who Are We?

We, the authors of this article, constituted the core group working on this assignment. There was to have been another member in our group, Leroy Wells, an African

American professor at Howard University and a beloved colleague, but he died suddenly as the project was about to start.

There were several other academics assisting at different points. One faculty member was British academic Max Boisot, a professor of strategic management at ESADE in Barcelona and a senior associate at the Judge Institute of Management Studies at Cambridge University, who had been the founding dean of the first business school MBA program in Beijing. Two African colleagues also participated as faculty during the education modules, an Afrikaner male who is a professor at the University of South Africa and a black Zimbabwean who had previously run the race relations workshops for CALDO. In this article, we have not focused on their contributions because they were tangential to the core of the material addressed here.

Two of the authors of this article (Kenwyn and Rose, along with Leroy Wells) had worked in South Africa in a previous Wharton engagement in 1990. That was during a time of high hopes and dreams come true: Nelson Mandela had been released 3 months earlier from his 27-year prison term; South Africa was filled with expectation and, for that matter, so was most of the world. We felt joyous and filled with anticipation as we prepared to embark on the adventure that would be ours: working in a community-organizing effort with the leadership of several of the black townships.

When we learned of this newest possibility to return to South Africa to work with CALDO, it was almost like a reflex reaction as we flashed back on heartwarming memories and entertained the prospect of yet another unique opportunity. For what could be better? Nelson Mandela was now president of the land that had imprisoned him for a third of his life. What an honor to be able to make a contribution of any kind to his new government!

Early Regrets

Soon after the decision was taken to work with CALDO, we regretted having accepted this assignment. CALDO regularly changed agreements we had made without even advising us, escalated expectations beyond the possible, and then blamed us for being inadequate. They treated us as if we were incompetent, unwilling to respond to the crisis dimensions of their situation, and insensitive to the complexities of South Africa. From their perspective, these attributions were probably accurate. From our end, CALDO was asking for things that required considerable orchestrating while demanding immediate responses, especially when it came to scheduling. It was hard to rearrange calendars on short notice, especially for travel from the United States to South Africa; yet as we worked diligently to adjust schedules, CALDO's liaison, Hans, would call, indicating how frustrated they were with our tardiness. When we eventually did the necessary cartwheels to meet their timetable, CALDO would be silent for weeks and then ask us to postpone or advance our visit by a month, reactivating the same cycle of attributions.

We were assured repeatedly that since all CALDO's senior executives had attended a 3-day workshop on race relations run by a distinguished black consultant, the black-white tensions in their group had been thoroughly addressed. However, during our interviews, we uncovered much evidence to the contrary. It was constantly difficult to

sort out what was true. They claimed to have done what was necessary to heal the racial divide, but when we asked what they did and what they had achieved, their responses seemed equivocal. Several black executives avoided us entirely or acted as if we had been hired by the whites to pursue some secret agenda that could not be discussed openly. We got contradictory messages: "CALDO's leadership has addressed its racial issues and is ready to move on," and "CALDO desperately needs help to get beyond its paralyzed state of race relations." When we asked them to help us sort out what was true, their response was that we seemed overly focused on race and suggested that we were imposing this agenda on them.

Dana had the responsibility of negotiating all the details of the educational workshops with Hans, CALDO's designated liaison with Wharton. It was at this interface that the complexity of working with CALDO became clear.

President Mandela's new government was changing things, and his administration, tornado-like, was generating turbulence composed of a high level of uncertainty and fear. The turmoil was palpable 7,000 miles away in Wharton's executive education offices. Hans had searched far and wide to find the appropriate business school. He had surveyed European and American schools and researched Wharton and its past involvement with South Africa. He was sure he had landed at the right place and was determined to make sure we lived up to his expectations. He called constantly. Although each issue raised was legitimate, each call he placed dumped more of the chaos and anxiety he felt in Dana's lap. Almost daily, Dana received urgent, demanding, and inconsistent messages from Hans. And after each conversation, Dana was visibly upset, frustrated, or shaken; together, we had to sort through what CALDO had passed along to Dana. We also had to be mindful of our own fears. Each input from Hans raised questions about our ability to do this job. We asked, "Who are we to take on this task? Do we have the skills?" In hindsight, we were asking the same questions of ourselves that CALDO had faced on receiving the governmental edict. But even before we had commenced any of the education modules with CALDO, we were being preemptively blamed for things they seemed to know would go wrong.

Trying to Be Educators

Five months after our first contact with CALDO, Dana and Rose went to South Africa to run the first of the three weeklong educational modules planned for the senior leadership group. The first evening was designed to establish the appropriate conditions for learning, a series of exercises to promote an atmosphere of truth and honesty. We were assured again by CALDO's members of the educational planning group and by the professor who ran the race/diversity workshop that there would be no need to focus on issues of race because that subject had been thoroughly dealt with long before we were engaged by CALDO.

We were also told that this leadership group did not like consultants or educators, so we should not expect a warm reception. As we began, the atmosphere was chilly: 26 expressionless, silent faces and motionless, rigid bodies seeming to say, "Prove you can do something with us." We went ahead with what we had planned for the group and listened to the issues and concerns they raised. By the end of the evening, their resis-

tance had lessened, and one group member had publicly said, "If we are going to get anywhere we will have to be more honest with each other." That statement was a clue that we did not yet know how to interpret.

The Unhidden Minefields

As we began the next morning, the seething racial tension in the room was self-evident. This was the "truth" that had been implied in the previous evening's comment about the "need to be honest." Race was an issue, a huge one! Our anxiety increased! Had we been set up? Had the members of the planning group withheld the truth about the state of race conditions at CALDO? If so, was this meant as a subversive tactic to undermine our work, provoke questions about our competence, and threaten our credibility? Or did they just simply not realize the depth of racial tension that still fomented in CALDO?

It was immediately clear to us that no learning about business strategy or leadership would be possible during this educational module while the racial tension in this group was so intense and so visible. Had we continued to ignore these issues of race, the integrity of the whole course would have been in jeopardy from the outset.

We (Rose and Dana) felt compelled to make an intervention. Doing some quick redesign work on the spot, we asked participants to form black and white race subgroups and asked each to record on newsprint (a) how it saw itself, (b) how it saw the others, (c) what they wanted the other subgroup to change, and (d) what they themselves were willing to change. The respective subgroups then reported out on these questions and began discussing how to deal with what was being asked of them. This proved to be a powerful and useful exercise as these executives discovered they could (a) negotiate without acrimony across the racial divide, (b) discuss honestly some of their buried feelings, and (c) break out of old patterns of racial responses. They also realized how many false assumptions they had been operating under.

During this event, the group seemed filled with feelings of disillusionment, anger, cynicism, discouragement, and hopelessness. Sometimes these were balanced by a sense of hope, a wish to keep pushing ahead, and a desire to overcome their differences. In our role, we were often the recipients of these feelings. Rather than being confrontational, we (Rose especially) caringly showed them a way to relate to each other with honesty, firmness, and compassion. Our strength and forthrightness seemed to help them talk openly about some of their hidden feelings. We found that the more forthright we were with them, the more forthcoming they were with each other. The more we labeled and discussed the conflicts we saw in their group, the more they brought these conflicts into the open and the more anchored the group became.

As the week progressed, they grew more collaborative and more eager to learn. Their evaluations indicated that this 1st week of executive education had been a success; they had gained new insights about systems thinking, themselves, their organization, the character of organizational culture, the nature of the external environment, and global competition; they were eager for more; we ended the 1st week believing that the educational model just might pan out OK.

INTERVENTION

Module 2 was held in South Africa 3 months later, with Rose and Kenwyn being the educators/facilitators. Based on what we had observed during Module 1, we thought that for CALDO to deliver on the government's mandate, these executives had to learn how to become a cohesive and efficient leadership group. Hence, Module 2 was designed as an experiential workshop exploring group and intergroup dynamics, leadership, and organizational change, with the centerpiece being self-reflection and group reflection.

Paralysis: It Is Not Race

Day 1 went OK, although it was clear that resistance to learning anything serious about group dynamics was high. When asked what forces made it so hard for them to engage in collective reflection, their response was clear. The group insisted race was the stumbling block but also reiterated their deep commitment not to talk about race again. Once more, they affirmed that for them racial discussion was taboo. The more we tried to get this group to consider what made them stuck, the more intransigent members became.

On the second morning, we attempted one more time to activate a conversation designed to increase their capacity to engage in collective reflection. Right at the point when we believed that some movement might be possible, CALDO's boss from the holding company, who was present that day, interrupted proceedings. He made a riveting, long speech telling them about a recent edict issued by Mandela's cabinet. "Let me summarize," he said forcefully after haranguing them for some time. "This is the message: You MUST increase profits and dramatically increase the number of jobs for blacks. If there is not marked improvement soon on both counts, CALDO will be privatized." The speech had a sobering effect; a pall descended on the room; it was as if they had all been told they had been terminated.

For the rest of the day, the participants seemed depressed, anxious, and hopeless. Over the next few hours, the members of this group went through the motions, doing what we asked of them. But by day's end, it was clear no learning was taking place, and these participants had no intention of engaging in reflection of any kind. This defeated the agreed-on purpose for this module. Their consistent refrain was, "We will not talk about race any more," even though the conflicts being surfaced were about how they functioned as a leadership group, how they dealt with the rest of the company, and how they collaborated with the external organizations with whom they were interdependent. From their point of view, they were surrounded by conflict, all of which they insisted was due to the hopeless history of race relations in their country. But to continue talking about this was simply pointless.

Shifting Roles

At the end of that 2nd day, we (Kenwyn and Rose) were deeply disturbed. We felt unable to function any longer in the educational mode and were sure we would be

blamed for whatever was deemed as having gone wrong. We decided that if we were to be taken down, we would go down together and we would go out with a bang. Our professional opinion had always been that executive education for this group was a mistake. But that was what CALDO's leadership wanted, and it was what the authority figures at Wharton wanted. However, at this moment, we were the ones in the field, and we were half a world away from Wharton. And our "powers that be back home" were oblivious to the plight we were in. Why should we be passive? Why continue to do what our professional judgment kept telling us was wrong?

Our plight, which in some minor way mirrored CALDO's predicament, emboldened us. We decided to unilaterally change our relationship with CALDO. In the morning, we would tell this leadership group we were dropping the executive educational model and were offering ourselves to them as consultants; if that did not work, we would quit and return to the United States right away, acknowledging to anyone who cared to know that we had failed. We felt energized by this decision. At the very least, we would not be wasting our time on pointless educational activities, but more important, it opened us to the possibility of actively creating something together with the CALDO participants.

On the doorstep of exhaustion, we (Kenwyn and Rose) both knew that we would be of no use to anyone else if we let ourselves be split off from each other, which we sensed was slowly happening. We could feel in our bones this plight coming on. We had been there before with each other and knew the telltale signs. Had we become split off from one another, we would have been rendered ineffective and soon might be as paralyzed as was this group of executives. It seemed wiser to try to do what everyone had been so invested in avoiding rather then obediently carrying on with a program destined to fail.

The next morning, we announced to the participants that we had decided to end our role as executive educators and to offer to build a consulting relationship with them. The CALDO executives did not reject this idea. We were pleased by that. But they said it was thoroughly irrelevant what we chose to call ourselves because everything we were doing with them was a complete waste of time. We appreciated their honesty. They saw us as the cause of the impasse we all had reached. We saw the group's paralysis coming from three sources: (a) The numerous warring camps within the group, all of which were aligned around some aspect of the national agenda (ANC, government, labor, the old Afrikaners, the holding company, etc.), were in opposition to each other; (b) when battle lines were drawn between factions with opposing agendas, they made it a racial issue, rather than confronting the actual dispute; and (c) the group was determined to blame us for what was wrong and acted as if they were powerless to change their plight.

We forcefully announced that for us to continue working with them we needed to know the ground rules they would use to moderate their own group behavior. The group was invigorated by this request and within 30 minutes produced a dozen norms, which, if honored, would radically alter their group's functioning. Most prominent was "we will deal with our conflicts directly and not use third parties to avoid addressing our disputes." The group then proceeded to break this norm in a bold and visible way.

Dump the Consultants

When we tried to reconvene the group after a break following the norm discussion, the group passively resisted. The rebellion was on. In time, the CEO came in and said, "We all agree that what *you* are doing is *useless*! There's no point continuing." We asked, "Who are you representing?" He said, "Four blacks." We replied, "That's no basis for a decision." A few minutes later he returned, saying, "Everyone agrees this is pointless." We responded by vigorously asking the group to return to the meeting room. The group reacted favorably to our increased energy.

Our opening statement was,

> We accept being dismissed, but you've just grossly violated one of your new ground rules—to deal with all conflicts directly and not use intermediaries. To honor your new norms your group must fire us directly and not use the CEO as an intermediary.

The group was shocked and excited to be confronted in this way.

In the ensuing conversation, four things emerged. (a) Several blacks said the CEO had not represented their opinions. They did not want us to leave but wanted everyone to take the discussions more seriously. (b) Many were angry with the CEO and wanted us gone because they were afraid we would flush out this rage, which they would not know how to handle. (c) The many factions in their group opposed each other, and when they got gridlocked, they looked for someone to blame. They had made us the most recent target of their displaced hostility. (d) They hated their paralyzed state and wanted us to stay and help them get unstuck. What resulted from their norm violation was the turning point we all needed.

Reaching for Leadership

The rest of the week was very productive. First, after an honest assessment of their own leadership capability, they concluded, "We have the leadership abilities to run the system as it was in the past but not to deliver on what the new government wants." Second, they decided to deal with this reality directly. Third, they appointed seven of their members, four blacks and three Afrikaners, to a task force to determine how CALDO could get the leadership skills it needed.

By the end of the week, the 25 CALDO executives had navigated difficult impasses, established and begun using ground rules to regulate their own behaviors, developed an inventory of leadership skills they both possessed and lacked, started addressing their own internal conflicts rather than blaming others for their paralysis, and worked seriously on future initiatives, under the guidance of the subgroup whom they had empowered to lead them. They were beginning to act and feel like a group.

One poignant moment symbolized the shift. A black executive asked the CEO if creating the task force undermined his authority. The CEO was touched and responded, "I need all the help I can get and am thrilled you are taking up the challenge this way."

Heart to Heart

As a result of this shift to a consultative model, we directed our energies toward assisting the task force. As a first step, 3 months after Module 2, they came to Wharton for a week. The idea was to give them a few days away from the work pressures so they could dedicate time to the task they had taken on and get the help they needed. However, once these seven executives arrived at Wharton, it was clear that they were battle weary from the turmoil of South Africa. Needing rest and recreation, they focused mostly on forming meaningful bonds with each other.

These four blacks and three Afrikaners discovered that they got close by telling each other stories about how hard it was to bridge the racial divide in South Africa. Illustrative of these experiences were the following: One black reported that his ANC colleagues treated him as a traitor because he spent so much time with whites; one Afrikaner spoke about the many friends he had lost because he now welcomed blacks into his home. These task force members learned that the more they honestly expressed the differences between them, the more they had in common and the more unity they felt.

During this time, it was clear this task force needed us to provide a psychologically safe space to sustain their new forms of relating while they told each other the heart-rending stories about surviving apartheid and ridding themselves of this social scourge. We also served as international witnesses to the remarkable journey they were taking to transcend the racial divisions that had torn their country apart. Our listening to their struggle and our clear admiration for the dignity with which they were transcending their differences were our contribution to the bonding of this subgroup.

Reconciliation

At the end of their Philadelphia stay, these seven from CALDO were invited to address 48 participants from 20 different nations attending an executive program at Wharton that week. Together, they told the story of growing up under apartheid, what it was like giving birth to the new South Africa, and the tough work entailed in the former oppressor and oppressed becoming genuine partners. This was a moving and informative educational event. The fact that they could function so effectively as a multiracial team in such a presentation was evidence that they had at last forged authentic and robust relationships across the racial divide once separating them.

One Afrikaner's experience serves as an example of the deep personal changes reported that day.

> When Mandela took over, I was angry and depressed. I had been running an operation covering a fifth of South Africa. I once had my own fiefdom to rule. I lost it all. I was moved to a small office in Jo-berg, and made to live in an evil city where I didn't feel safe, physically or professionally. I was bitter. I have skills CALDO couldn't afford to lose. I felt needed and used at the same time. When Wharton first came to South Africa, I did not want to participate. What could I gain? I thought they would only help the blacks and had nothing to offer us Afrikaners who had lost our very way of life. Yet here I am a year later. I am excited about the future of CALDO and the role I am playing in South Africa's future. I hated the changes I was forced to make. I hated having to look at my own racism. I

hated learning about the awful things Afrikaners did to the blacks. But listening to all they had to endure wiped out my own bitterness. I figure if my black colleagues can come through 300 years of violent oppression with such poise, I can get over my paltry bitterness. I did not know I'd lost my soul. Now I just might regain it.

As he spoke, a glow and excitement were in his eyes. He had unwillingly given up power, privilege, and status. However, he had confronted his bitterness, was joyful about the inner stamina he had found and the support he felt from blacks and whites alike for the changes he was making. Hearing him speak, we could see that his transformation on an individual scale mirrored what Mandela and the ANC had been striving for on a societal scale.

Our consultation continued for another year. For the remainder of our interactions with CALDO, this group of executives was no longer paralyzed and was able to work on its internal relationships in a productive way while addressing the massive problems South Africa was facing.

A CONSULTATION FILLED WITH ANOMALIES

What was so challenging for us about this consultation were the numerous anomalies that we had to deal with. Among the three of us, we had more than 50 years of consulting experience and were steeped in the knowledge base and the theories that define our field. Yet it seemed we were constantly on unfamiliar territory as we tried to work with CALDO. Looking back, the anomalies provided a great window into understanding CALDO, ourselves, and our interactions. We have chosen to organize our analysis of this case by discussing five anomalies we confronted and what we learned from them. However, before launching into this analysis, it is imperative that we lay out a number of concepts that we used to understand what had transpired.

The Consultant as Container

The central theme of this article emerges from a question: When an organization is going through change, who will serve to contain the attendant chaos? When there are multiple parties in conflict, it regularly happens that the consultant is called on to hold, on behalf of the warring parties, their conflicting perspectives, their hopes for a transformed relationship, and their contempt for the pain created by the change process.

What Is Meant by Being a Container?

The most basic image of containing comes from physical vessels such as vases, buckets, barrels, dams, and so forth into which liquids can be poured. If the boundary holds and the liquid does not alter state by evaporating, it will remain contained. The analogy is limited—feelings are not like liquids and cannot be put in a bucket—but when we say a person acts as a container for the group's emotions, we mean she or he is holding, bounding, confining, and fencing in the affect of that system.

The essence of this concept is familiar and needs little explication. When therapists speak (e.g., Minuchin, 1974) about the "identified patient," they mean that one individual has been filled up with (is carrying) the pathology of the family as a whole, and the individual's symptoms are best construed as a manifestation of collective dynamics. Group writers refer to an individual being made into a "scapegoat" (Wells, 1980), which means the split-off emotions (Klein, 1959) of multiple members have been placed into one person who is asked to cart the unwanted affect away. Systems in disarray often dismiss the leader and search for a new one, which means the subordinates will no longer follow (place their followership in or attach their followership to) the individual currently serving as the "leader" (Berg, 1998).

Bion and the Concept of Containment

While working with CALDO, we thought often of the "container and the contained," a notion that entered the lexicon of group thinking via Bion's (1961) book. However, Trist (1985) reported that the containment concept had been used by those working at the Tavistock Institute for a long time before it was actually written about. It first emerged when a therapist became depressed about the lack of progress his group of patients was making. Bion argued that the therapist had been pulled into carrying the emotional part of that group of patients that did not want to change. He challenged the therapist to do more than just sink into these feelings and suggested the key task was to "hold" these depressive feelings for the group as a whole, so the group of patients could explore the part of itself open to change. Thus was born Bion's view of a therapist serving as a holder of the group's emotions, the equivalent of the transference-countertransference idea Freud (1912, pp. 141-151) had developed for dyadic relationships.

The converse, that a group can function as a container of individual members' emotions, was formulated by Freud. Working off McDougal's writings, Freud (1922) suggested there was a link between the emotional condition of individuals and the functioning of groups. Freud thought individuals did best when the groups to which they belonged were stable, when members understood the nature and capacity of the groups, when groups had strong norms shaping the interactions among members, and so forth. When these attributes were absent, individuals tended to be psychologically unorganized (Trist, 1985). This was an early statement of the view that groups serve as a container for chaotic and anxious feelings of members (Jacques, 1955; Smith & Berg, 1987; Wells, 1980).

Taking this another step and working with Bion's (1961) basic assumptions, Brown (1985) claimed that a group in a "dependency" condition tries to place its strength in the leader: When "fight-flight" is stirred, it puts its own "badness" into an external enemy, and when "pairing" occurs, rage and despair are warded off by the creation of hope-filled illusions. Hence, a leader can be made into a repository for the group's anxiety about its own competency, or an enemy can be turned into a container for the projected negativity associated with internal group conflict, or an illusion can be manufactured to hold the repressed emotions.

ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

Anomaly 1: To Get Out, Get In

CALDO's authority figures refused to hire any more consultants because they hated experts. But they seemed not to notice that the executive education model placed the teachers in an expert role and the executives in a dependency relationship with the professors. We recognized this bind. So why did we enter such a doomed arrangement? Because we wanted to do this project, and this was the only relationship we could create. The special draw was that South Africa was in a state of flux, and Mandela's message was not just for CALDO. It was for us too. It said, "Get serious! This country is changing, and those joining the effort need to understand that." CALDO knew that old formulas would not work and wanted to find a new way of being. This was especially attractive to us because at that time our workplace, Wharton's executive education arm, was losing its innovativeness and was in terrible shape in terms of race relations. To work with an organization that wanted to reinvent itself was invigorating.

We knew that taking on the tasks Wharton had assigned to us, given the way it was constructed, was unlikely to succeed, but we did it anyway. Why? Because we were the ones at Wharton who felt committed to being in a relationship with the peoples of South Africa whom we knew, from long and direct experience, had been struggling for generations to get out of the binds their history had created. Ultimately, we accepted this assignment because we were attracted to its importance.

Gaining entry to the client system is a significant part of the diagnostic, action-science, or consultative process. What happens during entry is filled with critical data if one has the theory to understand it and methods to detect the salient nuances latent in the system's functioning. It also provides many clues about what the long-term client-interventionist relationship might be like (Alderfer, 1980; Alderfer & Smith, 1982; Smith & Zane, 1999).

We recognized that the entry process with CALDO would never be over; every point along the way was going to be an entry moment and would require us to have our antennae up, to be flexible, and to ride out the perturbations a relationship with chaos was certain to produce. We hated the feelings this created, but it kept us on the creative edge, constantly improvising and having to accept the likelihood of failure. We were regularly pulled into their anxiety, which quickly fused and became hard to differentiate from our own. We were trying to get them to enter processes they wanted to avoid because they felt unable to deal with the systemic complexity and emotional angst such exploration triggered. Likewise, we had to enter minefields we would have preferred to sidestep and to engage in processes that were sure to tie our hands, limit our effectiveness, and foster feelings of incompetence in us. As interventionists, we were in as much of a learning dynamic as the client system.

Having gained entry into dynamics that could well prove counterproductive, how were we going to exit them? For outsiders to be helpful to the systems they consult, it is essential, from the beginning, to be thinking about how to get out, to shed the relation-

ship, to imagine how the client system will function without our presence. Given the Wharton-CALDO contract, we were always debating how to get out of what we were getting into. Like them, we had to go into things we wanted to be out of, even while assisting CALDO to exit dynamics they wanted to be free of. Like them, to discover how to shed the things weighing heavily on us, we had to go further into what we wanted to avoid.

Anomaly 2: Confronting the Racial Taboo

Race had been a heavy burden for South Africans for a very long time. It was an all-consuming feature of their life, and they were never free of it. Yet the members of this group wished to move into a new future, accepting their historical realities, without having race as the only thing they focused on. We soon learned that whenever CALDO's leadership group was in conflict about anything, they fell into the groove of invoking a racial explanation as to why they were fighting, immobilized, or whatever. This was such a dominant pattern that if we (Dana and Rose) were to have any legitimacy during the first module, we had to earn our stripes. Only afterwards did we realize that to create an authentic relationship with them, we had to lead them into a place they did not want to go and then create a process through which they could learn how to go to this awful place whenever they needed without being paralyzed by it.

There was nothing special or unusual about the racial exercise Rose and Dana conducted during Module 1. The complexity was in proposing it, pulling it off, and having the CALDO participants experience a release from doing it. This was challenging and energizing for us because we were confronting a taboo; we had been told over and over again, "Do not explore race; it will trigger a rebellion and undermine your credibility." We were well schooled in the tradition that said pay attention to the data provided by the system, conduct good analyses of the data, and be guided by solid theory. But in this case, what data were we to attend to? Everything was contradictory. And what theory was relevant? Who in the international community had a clue about how to deal with the complexity of South African race relations? Where was the body of theory for us to draw on?

Although not articulating it in these terms at the time, Dana and Rose were working with paradoxical theory (Smith & Berg, 1987): When there are contradictory data, hold all the polarities central and let the tearing be the data that are attended to. Our left (rational, digital) brains pulled us to go in one direction, to accept that race had been adequately discussed, as members of CALDO claimed. Our right (intuitive, analogical) brains reasoned that if so much energy was being invested in avoiding something as powerful as race, perhaps the participants had to visit this from time to time, so they could move onto other critical topics, keeping race in consciousness without making it figural all the time by legislating it to be irrelevant.

By leading the participants into this discussion of race, we were working with Bion's (1961) fight-flight dynamic. Would we drag the participants, fighting and screaming, into the very thing they wished to flee? Or would we collude with their flight processes and unwittingly contribute to a compensatory fight dynamic in another arena of this group's life? The questions that emerged in the moment seemed

endless. But in the seconds available for us to act, we were swimming in the crisscross-ing currents defined by Bion's fight-flight dynamic.

The racial exercise asked participants to be explicit about what they projected onto each other as a consequence of their different races and their historical heritages. As we did this, we were mindful that our race and our heritage evoked different projec-tions than theirs did. However, the very fact that an African American woman and a Caucasian American man were able to collaborate easily on such an exercise led them to project onto us a sense of safety that we suspect had a contagion effect. At the very least, they did not go nuts when we asked them to do this task.

Anomaly 3: Shattering Expectations!

A moment of great complexity for us occurred on the 2nd day of Module 2 when CALDO's boss, Jeff, a high-level government official who answered to a member of Mandela's cabinet, hijacked the workshop and launched an attack on the participants. We doubt that this was premeditated or intended. Words just started pouring out of his mouth, and soon it became a tirade. Nor was his statement new; he was reiterating what the CEO had told them many times before. But the way he said it and the moment he chose to cut loose totally redefined the day's agenda and made it feel like an attack.

We label it as a "hijacking" because Jeff was there as a participant. On Day 1 of Module 2, we were surprised to see him. As a man in his late 30s, Jeff had attended one of Wharton's educational events in the mid-1980s held for South African blacks who someday might be running South Africa. When Jeff showed up unannounced and said he would like to be present for this workshop, both for his own learning and as an act of support for what we were doing with CALDO, we were taken aback but were willing to accommodate to the reality that he was present. We had not seen him or spoken with him over the past decade, although we knew of his role in the Mandela government. If we had prior warning that he might come, we would have discouraged him or at least interviewed him and made sure he bought into the purpose of this workshop. But dur-ing that 1st day, he had melded in well, taken his place as a participant, and created no ripples. That is why his outburst midmorning of Day 2 caught us off guard.

One of the key decisions in running experiential workshops of this kind is determin-ing who in the power hierarchy is to be present. The dynamics grow more complex with each new level of the hierarchy that is added. We already had the CEO, his direct reports, and many of those whom the second tier supervised. Jeff's presence made it a little harder, but all seemed to be coping OK—until he cut loose. From then on, every-thing was impossible. To make matters worse, at lunchtime a participant told him he was being disruptive and asked him to leave. Before we had a chance to work out any-thing with him, reflect on his input, or extract learning from his actions, he was gone. Jeff never returned.

One expects this level of unpredictability in the boundary relations of a community center, but to have it happen with a government enterprise like CALDO caught us unprepared. We knew CALDO's boundary relations were chaotic, but we thought we had prenegotiated everything we needed to so an event like this would not occur. In a heartbeat, we saw that we could not count on anything; we had to be infinitely more

attentive to unpredictable events and be more tough minded than is usually required of educators. Jeff's actions showed us that we would have to fight to gain and sustain the conditions necessary to support the work we were doing. And we had to stop presuming that what representatives of CALDO said could be counted on. Anything could shift at any moment.

The anxiety in the CALDO group created by Jeff's lecture was almost instantaneously fused with our own ongoing anxiety about whether we could function as professionals in this setting. It became obvious to us that we were in a perpetual dogfight, whether we wanted it or not. To maintain the boundaries, we had better get ready for a struggle, as we could not know what was going to be thrown at us next. There was nothing typical about CALDO, and we had better come to grips with that reality quickly.

CALDO's executive group, apart from being in despair about their own condition, did not hold us in high esteem. Although they had wooed us, indicating how impressed they were by Wharton's reputation, their reluctance to let us educate them was very strong. By now, their group had descended to as low a point as groups usually go without totally fragmenting. We suspected that if we, Wharton's representatives, were not physically there, they probably would have just gone home and skipped the next few days. But such a large investment had been made in this event that they felt compelled to stay. But we knew that we were already being seen as their jailers, the ones keeping them in a place where they did not want to be.

Their expectations had been shattered; so had ours. We clearly needed to mutually generate a new way of working together.

Anomaly 4: Defusing Projections

We took a bold and unorthodox move on the third morning of Module 2. In effect, by declaring that we were no longer willing to be educators, we dismissed the CALDO executives as students. And by proposing that we enter a consultative relationship, we asked them to do the opposite of what they had claimed to want. This action emerged from several theoretical considerations.

The internal factions of this group had bickered endlessly but never got beyond expressing their strong differences. We had confronted them with the need to make a decision: go along with us, reject us, or cocreate something together. Our "facilitator" approach had been making their internal conflicts more entrenched; rather than fight with us directly, they resisted us by becoming more invested in their fights with each other. When we lifted the struggle to a new level, they had to collaborate with each other, at least long enough to figure out what to do with us.

We were well schooled in classical group and intergroup theory, summarized as follows: When a group feels lost, conflict among members surfaces about how to proceed; this prompts the longing for a way out, for a deliverer, for a leader with a vision able to mobilize the followership of the people (see Smith & Simmons, 1983). The search for a leader functions as a flight from the group's internal fights, which, if successful, transforms the flight into dependency on the leader. Much of the authority of the leader results from these dependencies of the members. If the leader fails to free the group from the binds paralyzing it, members may increase their dependency on that

leader, placing her or him on an even higher pedestal, a process akin to deification, which Slater (1966) claims will continue until the leader is experienced as remote, un-contactable, and out of touch, whereas the group members become victims of their self-generated reality. Because this process is beyond the leader's capacity to grasp, when that leader eventually behaves inconsistently with the members' self-constructed real-ity, he or she is likely to be viewed as a false god, and a revolt will occur. However, the revolt against the leader is a false war. It is not the leader whom they need to depose but the receptacle of their shared fantasies and their dependencies. The revolt against the leader, which started as a flight from the fights existing in their group, has been made into a second-order flight from the secondary conflicts created by the complex feelings associated with their dependencies.

At CALDO, we did not see anything akin to this process occurring between the members of the senior group and their CEO. However, we noted that they had placed Wharton on a pedestal; that they were desperate for a dependency relationship with us; that they quickly saw us as remote, aloof, and out of touch; and that they were unwill-ing to follow the initiatives they had asked us to take on their behalf. Had we been recruited so that they could pour into us the feelings usually expressed as a revolt against the leadership? The CEO had lost his capacity to influence his senior executive group in any positive way; the prospect of his having to answer to the Truth and Recon-ciliation Commission declared he was "damaged goods" and not a fit repository for the shared dependencies of subordinates; it also was obvious to all that the government was keeping him as a caretaker until a new leader could be found.

Furthermore, the conflict in this senior group stemmed from the nation's and CALDO's racial history. There was no leader at CALDO whom blacks and whites would make into a joint repository of their dependencies. The racial makeup of this group remained skewed in the whites' favor, and the ongoing retention of the CEO, an old-guard Afrikaner, meant that the blacks still had to fight to achieve equality and social justice. The internal strife in this group was real, but members were exhausted from cycling through the same endless grooves of racial attributions, getting nowhere. Bion (1961) might have said, "They were in flight from the fights they would no longer tolerate."

They did not know how to deal with our refusal to support their remaining "stuck." From their perspective, we had been hired to lead the way, to be dependent on, and to get them unstuck. For after all, we were their teachers, weren't we? Instead of behav-ing as they expected, we agreed with them that they were lost and assured them that we did not know how to get them "unlost" or even what being "unlost" meant. However, we offered to join them in their lostness and see if we could together create a path that might lead them away from the destructive cycles they were in. We discouraged them from being dependent on us and offered to support them in finding the strengths within their own ranks. We let them know that trying to make us feel incompetent was alright, but such attributions would not paralyze us. We made clear that when they fought with us, we were able and willing to be strong, to use our power if need be, and invited them to mobilize their own strengths to deal with us.

In Module 2, when the executives tried to dump us and we fought back, the mask over the group's inner schisms was ripped off and the deeper issues became obvious.

This sobered them, and they elected to confront their own inner splits rather than continue fighting with us. They knew they needed help and were willing to accept our assistance. On discovering how to speak the truth with us, the "enemy," they seemed able to be truthful with each other. As they confronted their own differences, the conflicts were less paralyzing than they had been when avoided. It was then easy to see that they had the skills within their own group to address what ailed them. From then on, they let us participate with them in examining the choice points facing them and in assessing the consequences of going along one path versus another. Using Bion's language, by exiting our educator role, we announced that as they fought against us, we would pair with them, and when they passively resisted us, we rejected the dependencies fueling their resistances. On that day, we worked consistently to keep moving around the hidden dynamics (at least as we understood them), hoping that their group's covert processes might come into awareness and become addressable. They both hated and loved this. But from then on, we were living in relationship with them, and as these CALDO executives found a way to authentically interact with us, they developed more constructive ways to relate to one another.

Anomaly 5: Microcosm Group Accelerates Maturation

The most creative result that emerged from our work with CALDO was the formulation of the transformational leadership task force. Our suggestion that it be developed had been prompted by our belief that a subgroup had a better chance of managing their collective emotions than did the group as a whole. In addition, we hoped to trigger the creation of a new internal social structure that could engage in reflection on their behalf. However, the key issue was to ensure that the task force be a genuine microcosm of their group as a whole (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). This meant it had to be balanced in terms of race, gender, functional and business groups, and so forth. All the internal factions also had to be represented while keeping it relatively small.

The dynamics of the senior executive group changed radically when they formed a task force of seven members and empowered them to lead CALDO in determining what leadership skills they needed to hire or develop to deliver on the government's charge to them. This task force took many initiatives that conflicting factions previously had found unacceptable and thereby freed the whole group from paralyzing emotions. As the task force sifted through and sorted out the larger group's conflictual and troublesome emotions and took up its assigned role, the group as a whole was able to get on with other explicit tasks that CALDO needed to address. Once the transformational leadership task force was created, it was evident to all that no individual person, either white or black, was capable of holding all the complex racially charged feelings. It required a mixed-race group to be in this leadership position. And as they demonstrated their capacity to take in all that the larger membership flung at them, they were seen as trustworthy and hence entitled to the support and dependency of the subordinates.

When the task force came to Wharton to do the work the senior executive group assigned to them, we were again confronted with how unpredictable it was to interact with CALDO. The task force had asked us to put together a structure for their delibera-

tions. However, once again they proceeded to ignore much of what we suggested. Nevertheless, we were fine about their reluctance to follow our lead. For some of them, being in Philadelphia was the first time they had been out of South Africa, and for all of them, they had been so entrenched in their cultural struggles for so long that being away gave them a chance to take a deep breath.

Many times during that week, we wondered if we were adding any value. However, once more we discovered that they needed us to be in a very different kind of relationship with them than we expected. All they required of us was to serve as a caring host and to be international witnesses to the remarkable changes they were undergoing.

We were grateful that by the end of this phase of our work with CALDO, the members of the task force were acting as the shapers of their own destiny, appreciating what Wharton had offered but no longer seeing us as either the vilified or the miracle workers. Our initial job was done, and they were completely focused on the critical tasks facing them.

REFLECTION

Throughout this consultation, we were caught up in many complex processes, but often before we could recognize them, we had to first experience them. We were asked, on behalf of the warring parties in CALDO's leadership ranks, to hold their conflicting perspectives, to cherish their hopes for a transformed relationship, and to manage their contempt for the pain created by the change process. This demanded that we become learners in this process. What was not clear was what we were going to do with the affect we took in from their warring factions, how we could respond to their desperate hopes for renewal, or how to manage the contempt that infused most of their interactions. Each anomaly we bumped into progressively heightened our realization that we were being asked to hold the anxiety of the senior leadership group, to become like warriors so the strength and power of their group could be engaged, and to manage the journey out of vilification without being construed as miracle workers.

From the beginning, we—the diagnosticians, facilitators, educators, and consultants—recognized the emotions paralyzing CALDO's leaders. Though at the time the swirl of emotions we experienced was opaque, we now think that what happened can be understood using Bion's (1961) basic assumption terms. When they acted as if they wanted to destroy us, this was a displacement of the fight-flight dynamic in their group. When they clung tightly to us, this was an expression of the dependency needs attending every group's striving for new life. When they manufactured the hope-filled illusion that Wharton could save them, they were caught up in the pairing dynamic. We did not run away or get aggressive, overfeed or deprive them, destroy or buy into their illusion. Instead, we worked with these dynamics, trusting (hoping is more accurate) that the group would mature and reclaim what it was dumping in our laps.

Only when our work was done did we understand that what was asked of us paralleled larger themes in both CALDO and South Africa as a whole. The chaos and anxiety in CALDO's senior group resulted from upheaval and change in the very fabric of the South African nation. Our stand as warriors mirrored the traditional position many

freedom fighters had taken on so that societal change in South Africa could be advanced. The most notable was Nelson Mandela who became a warrior for peace to help his country avoid civil war. His toughness and determination helped make peace possible. His unflinching honesty and warrior-like stance helped his country face the realities involved in making a transition from the horrors of apartheid to a democratic society. Finally, our brief trip from vilification to miracle workers was like a shadow play of the remarkable journey Nelson Mandela had taken. For years, Mandela was vilified by the Afrikaner government, and only after years in prison did he become a hero and miracle worker for South Africa. Wisely, Mandela has resisted being cast as a god in human form. His posture helped us recognize the importance of never succumbing to any client system's wish for someone to save them from themselves.

As consultants, we confronted the chaos the senior leadership faced with the imperative of transforming the organization to meet the social and business mandate of a new and different administration. We have discussed the various ways in which our consultative and educational roles evolved. Day 1 in the first module, for example, was a time when we departed from our educator and facilitator roles to assume in some ways the role of therapist by creating the conditions in which blacks and whites could address the pain and rage that resided between them. The redesign of the event helped to defuse racial tension. They had entered an emotional territory that could hurt if explored, yet might undermine their successful development as leaders if it remained unexplored. The provision of a mechanism to address these deep racial tensions cleared the way for blacks and whites to take a first step in plowing through many of the numerous racial assumptions that doggedly divided them. As a result, they were strengthened and gained new insights; their work laid the foundation for more meaningful collaboration between the two racial groups.

In the second module, we continued to deal with the discord, chaos, and temporary depression of the senior leadership group as they realized the dearth of skills they possessed to lead change and transformation. However, they eventually addressed their deficiency by choosing seven of their peers to serve as a task force. This task force now became the newest holder of the tumult for the larger leadership group. Along with the more purposeful task of devising a strategy for becoming better equipped to lead, this group now helped to manage the conflicting factions within the leadership of the organization and sustained the transformation effort in CALDO as a whole.

We came to see South Africa's socioeconomic well-being resting on organizations like CALDO. Despite the overwhelming challenges it faced to reverse its historically oppressive image and its repressive leadership role in apartheid, it now additionally symbolized the hope for a new day. Under Mandela's administration, this organization was charged to show its mettle in a different way: increase profitability, grow the economy, develop a new infrastructure that ensured that blacks and whites worked in collaboration, place qualified blacks in more executive positions, and provide jobs for blacks and people of color.

In CALDO, as well as in other organizations, the oppressed and their former oppressors were asked to create the new South Africa. This scenario was different from what blacks and whites expected. For decades, blacks had been preparing for a war of liberation, a war that never occurred; whites, the former victimizers, expected to

become the new victims. The instruction from the new administration to collaborate across these fiery racial lines seemed to foil the years of emotional preparation for a real war. Yet racial conflict seemed to abound, often appearing to be the underlying theme of the incessant, paralyzing, and neurotic-like in-fighting that occurred in the interactions among members of the leadership group.

We believed the organizational conflict between the races we were witnessing was an enactment of the collective pent-up emotions borne of the expectations of post-apartheid life and that these embattled episodes were a substitute for civil war, an occurrence that history shows is hard to avoid after a struggle for liberation.

The hostility and turmoil on the streets of South Africa were enormous and palpable, a veritable powder keg. One wondered if enough societal vehicles could be created to keep the myriad volatile emotions in check. We came to believe that the organizational conflicts that we observed were fulfilling a function for the country as a whole. The ritualized venting of racial tensions by these leaders within places like CALDO might be serving as a release for what would be too volatile for the nation if left to be expressed on the streets. The repetitive cycle of these gridlocked emotions, although having nothing to do with the actual running of the organization, might be serving as a safety valve and therefore help the whole nation.

South Africa as a nation can be thought of as symbolizing the hope for all of Africa. It is advanced in a number of areas, noted Ngcaba, the director general of the Department of Communications in South Africa, due to the significant "leg up" it had on the backs of those it subjugated and exploited for 300 years ("Access to Cutting Edge," 1999). Nevertheless, should South Africa achieve its social and economic aims for itself, it would lift up all of Africa.

South Africa represents an experiment in overcoming oppression without targeting the former victimizers or creating a new group to persecute. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has sought a way of healing the country (Tutu, 1999). Whether this nation will succeed is difficult to predict; nevertheless, the fact that its people are willing to embark on such a journey is inspiring for the whole world.

NOTE

1. CALDO is a pseudonym. All names and details about this organization and its employees have been disguised to protect anonymity. We wish to acknowledge our debt to the South African executives with whom we worked, grateful that they were willing to let us into their world and teach us about what it means to work and live in the new South Africa.

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