



## **Acts of Reconciliation Walking Through History**

It is hard to overestimate the continuing impact of unacknowledged and unhealed history. Those who feel they were the victims always have longer memories than those who were the victors. Time does not heal wounds. Only healing, actively pursued, heals wounds.\*

We need to acknowledge specific racial history and its impact on our communal life. This is a central theme of Hope in the Cities, which has found that a “walk through history” can break the cycle of guilt and anger and can lead to understanding and forgiveness.

White Americans need to acknowledge the reality of our racial history as it continues to affect African Americans and other minority groups through our structures and institutions. And while most attention has been focused on the American South, northerners must understand the extent to which southerners still resent the failures of the North to remember its own record of racism.

Facts are important, but historical memory may be more powerful. Facts have emotional components which are attached to our hearts and spirits. We need to look within the “package of pain” where historical facts are packed. It is not the facts that challenge us racially; it is the pain that we choose to not get beyond.

The “walk” can be done in a variety of ways. It should involve an accurate, respectful and inclusive public “telling of the story.” What is important is walking with each other and honoring each other’s personal perspective of the community’s history.

The walk establishes an agenda for healing. It enables people of all races to take ownership of shared history. It reveals the record of hurt and allows the conscience of a large number of people to give up avoidance and to be activated in the most positive sense.

\*Joseph V. Montville, Director of the Preventative Diplomacy Program, Center for Strategic & International Studies

### *Guiding Principles*

*Healing our communities is not for the faint of heart. It requires teams of committed individuals who are prepared to work together over a long period of time, and who are willing to model the change and the new relationships that they are calling for in the wider community. Three key guiding principles can help connect communities: honest conversation, personal responsibility and acts of reconciliation.*