EUROPEAN FORUM FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice
Testimonies & Lived Experience Archive

“Stories can be used to empower and humanise.”
— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Welcome to the Lived Experiences and Testimonies Archive. This first edition is not a one-off publication. Rather, it is a first step towards building an evolving archive of testimonies from people who have participated in restorative justice in many different forms, across diverse experiences of harm and injustice and in a range of national contexts. These individuals all share one thing in common, however: the choice to share their lived experience.

Some people speak to the ways in which restorative justice has been able to meet certain needs in ways that the criminal justice system could not. Others reflect on how their involvement in particular restorative encounters or practices has led them to think differently about responsibility and accountability; about punishment and the meaning of justice; and, in some cases, about forgiveness and repair.

The collection also includes reflections on some of the challenges individuals have faced throughout their experiences. They speak to what restorative justice has been able to bring to them personally, as well as its limitations, and to the boundaries or mechanisms they found particularly important. Each person has their own motivations for sharing their insights with us.

For many victims, telling their stories is a way of empowering others who may be facing similar situations, while also providing personal insight into their own journeys. Those who have been responsible for harm often speak to how meeting someone they harmed helped them to better understand the impact of their actions at a human level, assume full accountability and, in some cases, take steps towards repair.

Who is this archive for?

Whatever brings you to the archive, we hope that within it you will find a story that resonates with you. Perhaps you are finding out about restorative justice for the first time, or a personal experience has brought you here. Perhaps you are a researcher, justice professional, mediator or policymaker. Whoever you are, we hope this archive helps you to understand and share stories of restorative justice across different experiences and contexts.

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Supported by the Justice Programme of the European Union

How to use the archive

We ask that you think mindfully about sharing these resources: consider who you share them with, keeping in mind that many of the stories contain traumatic themes, and engage thoughtfully with this personal material. Most resources are open access, but some require a subscription or paid access. Please be mindful of this when sharing a resource, for example, in a presentation.

The materials are arranged by the context in which the restorative practice takes place. Where several sources concern the same person, organisation or continuing story, they are listed together under one entry.

Citation: European Forum for Restorative Justice. (2026). *Restorative Justice Testimonies & Lived Experience Archive.* www.euforumrj.org

This collection was curated by Jesse Laurie (last update: October 2026). To share additional testimonials, please contact info@euforumrj.org.
For contact details of individuals with lived experience mentioned below, please refer to the provided links.
The EFRJ is not responsible for the contents of the specific testimonials.

Gender-based, Domestic and Sexual violence



From Survivors to Survivors: Conversations on Restorative Justice in Cases of Sexual Violence

A collection of 8 testimonies from people who have experienced sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, stalking, and intra-familial abuse. This publication presents their stories in a conversational format, as survivors describe in their own words their experiences of harm, their encounters with restorative justice processes, and the challenges and possibilities these processes created for them.

Jurisdiction	Multiple
Restorative practice	Circles of support, Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	EFRJ Publication
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2023
Source	From survivors to survivors: Conversations on restorative justice in cases of sexual violence



Ailbhe Griffith: Restorative Justice after Sexual Violence

Ailbhe Griffith describes meeting the man who sexually assaulted her nine years earlier and the effect of this restorative process on her understanding of the harm and her recovery. Across a series of interviews, Ailbhe speaks about the preparation for the encounter, the limitations she experienced in the criminal justice system, and the importance of agency choice for survivors. In Alan Gilsenan's film *The Meeting* (2018), Ailbhe, supported by Professor Marie Keenan, plays herself in a dramatisation of the encounter that takes place in a Dublin suburb. In 2026, Ailbhe received the European Restorative Justice Award.

Jurisdiction	Ireland
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type(s)	Interview; video interview; feature film
Open access?	Interviews: yes; film: paid access
Language	English
Year published	2018-2026
Sources	EFRJ interview — sexual violence and the #MeToo movement Video interview — Restorative justice changed my memory The Meeting — film website and viewing information



Zahy Vera: Dancing Restorative Justice

The talk "Dancing Restorative Justice," was hosted by the EFRJ in 2023, and formed part of a series REstART series highlighting the intersection between arts and restorative justice. In this online talk, alongside restorative justice facilitator Pilar González Rivero who supported her in her journey, Cuban dancer Zahy Vera shares her personal story of restorative justice, including her autobiographical dance work *No, gracias: Danzas a una niña rota*, which presents Zahy's experience of surviving childhood sexual abuse and confronting trauma through movement and artistic expression.

Jurisdiction	Spain
Restorative practice	Art and Restorative Justice; Indirect restorative dialogues
Resource type	EFRJ Publication
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2023
Source	Dancing Restorative Justice - REstART



Lisbet Pérez: How I used Restorative Justice to Heal Myself and My Family

When Lisbet Pérez was first told about restorative justice, she was initially skeptical, yet the principle of healing and repairing harm ultimately led her to embark on her own personal restorative journey, prioritising safety and restoration for herself and her family. As a domestic violence survivor from an immigrant background, today, Lisbet is a advocate of restorative justice who uses her personal experience to push for change and to empower fellow survivors, immigrant women and their families.

Jurisdiction	USA
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Online Article
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2024
Source	How I used Restorative Justice to Heal Myself and My Family



Sophia Murphy: Survivor of Childhood Abuse and Sexual Assault

Sophia Murphy is an Irish survivor of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of her father and of neglect and a failure of protection within her family. Through interviews, television appearances and podcasts, she speaks about trauma, shame, bereavement, recovery and the importance of being heard, listened to and believed. She also describes meeting her father through a restorative justice process supported by Professor Marie Keenan, how it enabled her to confront the harm that he caused her and others and work on establishing boundaries for her future. Her public testimony and advocacy encourage other survivors to seek support and to speak about their experiences on their own terms.

Jurisdiction	Ireland
Restorative practice	Facilitated victim–offender dialogue
Resource Type	Podcasts, radio and TV
Open access?	Mixed; some press coverage may require a subscription
Language	English
Year published	2018–2026
Sources	Having the Chats with Peter and Sophia — Restorative Justice, Real Healing: conversation with Professor Marie Keenan (Spotify) The Women's Podcast — Restorative Justice / The Walsh Sisters: Sophia Murphy, Janet O'Brien and Marie Keenan (Spotify; 2025) The Kavanagh Sisters, episode 31 — Sophia Murphy: Survivor of Childhood Sexual Abuse (YouTube interview) The Late Late Show — television interview on Sophia's experience and speaking out (YouTube)

Interpersonal Crime



Recovering from Crime - Restorative Justice in Action

The RJC and Why me? have co-produced *Recovering from crime – restorative justice in action*, a film that provides an insight into what a real restorative justice conference looks like. Recovering from crime is based on the transcript of an actual restorative justice meeting between a burglary victim and the person who carried out the offence, with actors portraying the people who took part. It was directed and filmed using a technique called verbatim, where the actors are fed their lines through an earpiece.

Jurisdiction	UK
Restorative practice	Restorative Conference, Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Vimeo Video
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2015
Source	Recovering from Crime - Restorative Justice in Action

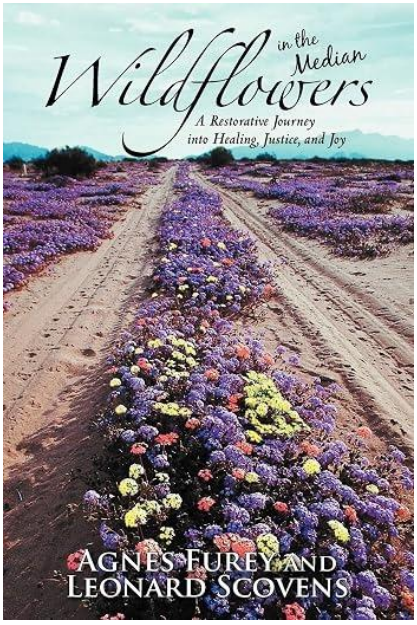


Repairing Harm - Carmen and Roman's Restorative Justice Experience

Restorative justice conferencing helped home invasion victims Carmen and Roman to process and recover from the event, whilst helping the person who broke into their home repair the harm he caused to them and turn his life own around.

Jurisdiction	Australia
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Film
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2024
Source	Repairing Harm - Carmen and Roman's Restorative Justice Experience

Serious Violent Crime



Agnes and Leonard: A Restorative Journey into Healing and Justice

The book *Wildflowers in the Median* compiles the prison correspondence between Agnes Furey and the man who murdered her daughter and six-year-old grandson. Through a curated collection of letters, poems, and reflections, the book traces the restorative journey of both writers, Agnes and Leonard, towards compassion and understanding of the other. Their exchanges are portrayed in the documentary *Another Justice* (Chloé Henry-Biabaud and Isabelle Vayron, 2019).

Jurisdiction	USA
Restorative practice / encounter	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Book
Open access?	Available to purchase
Language	English
Year published	2012
Source	Wildflowers in the Median



A Fatal Punch: Why I Met the Parents of the Man I Killed

This episode of BBC Radio 4's Radical with Amol Rajan tells the story of Jacob Dunne, who killed James Hodgkinson with a single punch in 2011 and was later convicted of manslaughter. After Dunne's release from prison, James's parents, Joan and David, began a restorative justice dialogue with him, seeking answers about their son's death. The episode explores how this relationship contributed to Dunne's personal transformation, education and later work campaigning for criminal justice reform. It also reflects on accountability, forgiveness and rehabilitation, while connecting Dunne's experience to wider questions about youth violence, deprivation, relationships and approaches to reducing reoffending. Jacob's story is told in his autobiographical book *Right from Wrong: My Story of Guilt and Redemption* (2022) and in the play *Punch* (2024).

Jurisdiction	UK
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Podcast or Audio Record
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2025
Source	A Fatal Punch: Why I Met the Parents of the Man I Killed



Fania Davis: A Radical Commitment to Social and Individual Healing

Fania E. Davis came of age in Birmingham, Alabama, during the birth of the civil rights era. Those formative years, particularly the murder of two close childhood friends in the 1963 Sunday School bombing, crystallised an enduring commitment to social transformation. Over the following decades, she was active in the civil rights movements in the United States, advocating for Black liberation, women's rights, prisoners' rights, peace, economic justice, and the cessation of violence to racialised people and apartheid. Learning with African indigenous healers catalysed Davis's search for healing justice and ultimately led her to found and run the Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth Foundation. Fania is now a leading international voice at the intersection of racial and restorative justice.

Jurisdiction	AL, USA
Restorative practice	NA
Resource type	YouTube Video
Open access	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2024
Source	A radical commitment to social and individual healing



Janet O'Brian: A Mother's Journey After Her Son's Tragic Death

In 2017, Janet O'Brien lost her eldest son Luke on a night out in Tallaght, a suburb of Dublin, Ireland. Luke was just 20 years old, and died following an unprovoked, one-punch assault. In the years that followed, Janet sought answers about her son's death, meeting with members of the ambulance service, the mother of the man who killed her son, and eventually decided to meet the man himself. Today, Janet speaks with prisoners about her experience, finding comfort in speaking about her son, whilst making an impact in her community.

Jurisdiction	Ireland
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	YouTube Video
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2026
Source	Restorative Justice In Ireland: A Mother's Journey After Her Son's Tragic Death (with Ian Marder) 'I needed to ask him to change his ways': A mother on confronting her son's killer

Political Violence, Armed Conflict, and Genocide



Fatima and Sophie: Two Mums Affected in Different Ways by the Brussels Terrorist Attacks

An encounter between Fatima, the mother of a young man who became a jihadist, and Sophie, the mother of a victim of the 22 March attacks in Brussels. The mothers engage in dialogue about their grief, loss, and the lasting impact of political violence on their lives. Through their conversation, they recognise shared experiences of mourning and suffering, and reflect on the human consequences of violent extremism. Their story, together with others with lived experience of the Brussels attacks, is told in the documentary *Au-delà de nos larmes* (Françoise Wallemacq and Chergui Kharroubi, 2023) and in several books written by the members of the collective *Retissons du lien*.

Jurisdiction	Belgium
Restorative practice	Community Mediation and Dialogue
Resource type	Online Article
Open access?	Yes
Language	French
Year published	2021
Source	Fatima, maman de djihadiste, et Sophie, maman de victime du 22 mars: "Nos larmes sont les mêmes"



Christelle Giovannetti and Mohamed Abrini's Talk 10 years After the Brussels Terrorist Attacks

10 years after the attacks of 22 March 2016 in Brussels, Christelle Giovannetti, a survivor of the attack in Maelbeek metro station, visited convicted perpetrator Mohamed Abrini in prison for a conversation. "I have found inner peace," she tells Belga. Alongside mediator Nancy Van Eynde, Christelle speaks about how such a conversation helped her to process the events of the attack, describing how, "I didn't close the book, but I turned a page".

Jurisdiction	Belgium
Restorative practice / encounter	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Online article
Open access?	Not specified
Language	Dutch
Year published	2026
Source	"Ik wilde het gewoon begrijpen": 10 jaar na aanslagen spreekt overlevende met dader Mohamed Abrini



Jo Berry and Pat Magee: Restorative Dialogues after the Brighton Bombing

Jo Berry and Pat Magee reflect on a relationship developed through more than twenty years of dialogue. Magee, a former IRA member, planted the Brighton Grand Hotel bomb that killed five people, including Jo's father, Sir Anthony Berry MP. After Pat's imprisonment and release under the Good Friday Agreement, Jo sought to meet him. In this podcast with Marina Cantacuzin, the two explore the benefits and complexities of their continuing relationship, Jo's work as a speaker, educationist and peace activist, and Pat's memoir *Where Grieving Begins*. Their story is told in the documentary *The Hardest Bridge* (2026).

Jurisdictions	UK, Ireland
Restorative practice	Self-organised Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Podcast; YouTube Video
Open access?	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2021
Source	The Forgiveness Project with Marina Cantacuzino Where Grieving Begins with Patrick Magee



Agnese Moro and Maria Grazia Grena: Justice Beyond Punishment

During a 2016 public event in Rimini, restorative justice is explored through testimonies from people directly affected by political violence in Italy. Criminologist Adolfo Ceretti joins Agnese Moro, daughter of Aldo Moro, and Maria Grazia Grena, a former member of armed organisations of the 1970s, in a discussion introduced by Marta Cartabia. Speaking on their involvement in a sustained dialogue process between people harmed by political violence and former militants, they reflect on responsibility, acknowledgement and the possibilities of justice that seeks more than punishment alone. Their stories are also in *Il Libro dell'Incontro* (Il Saggiatore, 2015).

Jurisdiction	Italy
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	YouTube Video and Transcript
Language	Italian
Year published	2016
Source	"Così le nostre vite sono cambiate". La giustizia oltre la pena Meeting Rimini — Trascrizione



Franco Bonisoli, Manlio Milani and Giorgio Bazzega: Three Lifes, One Possible Dialogue

In 2025, Franco Bonisoli, Manlio Milani and Giorgio Bazzega came together to reflect on the effects of political violence, their experiences of grief, victimhood and restorative justice. Drawing on their involvement in the *Gruppo dell'Incontro*, they discussed responsibility, grief, anger and dialogue between former perpetrators and those harmed by violence. Their testimonies highlighted restorative justice as a way to confront painful histories without erasing differences, while creating space for recognition, accountability, listening and the possibility of rebuilding relationships. Their stories are also in *Il Libro dell'Incontro* (Il Saggiatore, 2015).

Jurisdiction	Italy
Restorative practice	Restorative dialogues; circles
Resource type	Online Article
Language	Italian
Year published	2025
Source	Giustizia riparativa: Bonisoli, Milani e Bazzega: tre vite, un dialogo possibile



José Aguilar: Choosing Restorative Justice

José Aguilar recounts surviving an attack by ETA on 23 December 1988, aged 26, while serving as a Civil Guard officer in Alsasua. Responding to a grenade attack on the barracks, he stepped on a booby-trap bomb, losing one leg and sustaining severe injuries to the other. He describes resolving to forgive while wounded and participating in a restorative encounter with former ETA members in 2022. The video and the radio story *El abrazo (the embrace)* explore this experience and his subsequent work sharing his story and educating for lasting peaceful coexistence.

Jurisdiction	Spain
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Video testimony; radio interview and article
Open access	Yes
Language	Spanish
Year published	Audio/article: 2024; video: not specified
Source	Video testimony — La elección de la justicia restaurativa Cadena SER — El abrazo, audio and accompanying article (2024)



Combatants for Peace: Stories of Transformation

2026 marks the 20th anniversary of Combatants for Peace, a joint Palestinian-Israeli peacebuilding organisation that has grown over the last two decades out of an encounter between former members of the Israeli military who had refused to serve in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and a group of former Palestinian fighters. Today, the organisation is committed to 'non-violent co-resistance and collective liberation' to achieve peace rooted in justice and equality. In this collection of stories of transformation, members speak about their personal background and what moved them to meet, and eventually participate in peace activism alongside 'the other'. Their stories are also portrayed in the documentary *There is Another Way* (2025).

Jurisdiction	Israel, Palestine
Restorative practice	Multiple
Resource type	Online article
Open access	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2026
Source	Stories of Transformation - From Enemies to Allies



The Parents Circle Families Forum: Bereavement, Dialogue and Peace

These resources bring together lived-experience testimony and organisational reflection from the *Parents Circle – Families Forum* (PCFF), which connects bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families through dialogue and peace work. Robi Damelin and Layla Alsheikh, who have each lost a child in the conflict, share their experiences and reflections in an interview compiled from email correspondence with Claudia Christen-Schneider. In another contribution, Shiri Ourian, then executive director of American Friends of the Parents Circle, reflects on personal stories, relationships and the lessons of the organisation's work.

Jurisdiction	Israel, Palestine
Restorative practice / encounter	Community Mediation and Dialogue
Resource type	EFRJ Publication
Open access	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2022 and 2024
Source	EFRJ interview — Our Message Can Also Be Adapted to a Polarised World (Damelin and Alsheikh) EFRJ reflection — The Power of Our Pain: Lessons from the Parents Circle (Shiri Ourian)



Portraits of Reconciliation: Testimonies from Rwanda

In this New York Times collection, survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and individuals responsible for harming them describe their experiences of loss, responsibility, apology and forgiveness. Pieter Hugo's paired portraits accompany first-person accounts gathered through work with AMI (Association Modeste et Innocent) and Creative Court. Among those featured are Viviane Nyiramana and Jean Pierre Karenzi, who killed Viviane's father and brothers. The testimonies describe how relationships changed through a supported reconciliation process, while revealing different degrees of closeness and the practical challenges of living alongside those responsible.

Jurisdiction	Rwanda
Restorative practice	Facilitated restorative dialogue (within a transitional justice setting)
Resource type	Photographic testimony collection with written first-person accounts
Open access	Open
Language	English
Year published	2014
Source	The New York Times - Portraits of Reconciliation, photographs by Pieter Hugo and text by Susan Dominus

Multiple



Testimonies from Canada: The Restorative Opportunities Digital Storybook

The *Restorative Opportunities Storybook*, produced by Correctional Service Canada, presents testimonies from people involved in its national Restorative Opportunities victim-offender mediation programme. The resource includes written, audio and video accounts from victims, offenders and mediators, describing their motivations for participating, their experiences of dialogue and its impact on how they view accountability, understanding, healing and, in some cases, forgiveness. Alongside the digital storybook, Angie, a participant in the Restorative Opportunities programme, shares her personal experience of restorative justice in the two-part Episode 10 of the *Prisons Inside/Out* podcast. Joined by programme mediator Dennis, she recounts taking part in a face-to-face encounter with the man who took her brother's life.

Jurisdiction	Canada
Restorative practice	Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM)
Resource type	Compilation
Open access	Yes
Language	English
Year published	2024
Source	Testimonies from Canada: The Restorative Opportunities Digital Storybook