

THE RECONCILIATION FORUM

A forum for Sri Lankans living in Sydney, Australia

OUR NEWSLETTER

We intend to circulate this newsletter each quarter we hope, with as much regularity as possible.

While our newsletter will be a vehicle to communicate the activities of the Forum we would like to take it further, expecting you will engage with us to evolve it into a catalyst to encourage participation and promote dialogue, in the spirit of the Forum.

We seek your feedback and encourage you to submit content. This could be in any form; articles, cartoons, art works, news, the only requirement being that contributions are in line with and reflect the core values of the Forum and our drive to promote reconciliation.

Please send your contributions to reconciliationforum@gmail.com

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?

We have come a long way since our initial meetings in mid 2009, soon after the war ended in Sri Lanka. We say this without in anyway undermining the enormity of the task ahead, and the modest contribution that a Diaspora community like ours could make to promote reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Some of what we have achieved so far;

- **Formed three sub-groups, based on areas of interest and activity**
 1. Social group – to promote social, cultural and artistic activity.
 2. Welfare group – to promote welfare activity that (also) supports the cause of reconciliation.
 3. Workshop group – to promote an in-depth understanding of reconciliation and device strategies.

- **The Social Group organised a social event on the 23rd of November 2010** which was attended by about 100 people. It was an enjoyable evening that included a play produced – written, directed and performed - solely by members of the Forum. The play highlighted, with a sense of humour, the problems caused by the language gap.

There was excellent Sri Lankan (vegan) food, music, and dancing. We will be uploading some photos of the event on our website soon.

Funds raised at the event were given towards flood relief work in Batticaloa.

We thank all those involved in organizing this beautiful event, but wish to particularly mention Dr. Gamani Goonetilleka , Lal Dassanayake, Noel Luther, Gajalaxshmi Paramshivam, and Sris Ponniahpillai

- **The Reconciliation Forum is formally incorporated in New South Wales** under name of Sri Lanka Reconciliation Forum Sydney (ABN No 58 946 833 613)
- **We have launched our website www.slreconsyd.org.au.** It's still in its early stages and await interesting content to be uploaded soon.
- **Logo Competition** We have invited the current participants of the Forum, whose email addresses we have, to a competition to design a logo for our Forum.

WHAT WE HAVE PLANNED FOR THIS YEAR

- Another social event to coincide with the Sinhala/Tamil New Year. (Await more details soon).
- A full day seminar on the theme of reconciliation sometime during the middle of this year. The Workshop Group will circulate more details soon.
- A play and a major cultural event highlighting the theme of reconciliation.
- Further develop the website; use it as a tool to promote reconciliation and dialogue.

All this is in addition to the regular meeting that continues to be held on the last Sunday of every month.

AND, JUST TO RECAP...

WHAT IS THE RECONCILIATION FORUM?

We are a growing group of Sri Lankans working to develop a model of reconciliation as we stand together at the ending of the war in Sri Lanka. This initiative has brought people together to share stories and experiences in a frank and open manner to an audience consisting of both Sinhalese and Tamils resident in Sydney.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE IN?

- Coming to terms with the past is a high priority for the future.
- There must be an acknowledgement of all atrocities and injustices committed on Sinhalese, Tamil, Moslem and other communities.
- To heal emotional wounds through reconciliation, all communities concerned must be willing to forgive and to apologise unconditionally.
- Restoration of dignity through mutual respect.
- Universal respect for the rule of law and good governance, which has been deteriorating over several decades, needs to be restored in order to become a modern nation.
- Acknowledge there is an ethnic problem which needs to be addressed.
- Genuine reconciliation is a prerequisite to stability and durable peace. Prosperity will follow only if there is stability and durable peace.
- We can reconcile at the individual level until government chooses to become a party to the reconciliation process.
- Together as Sri Lankan people we can persuade the Government to participate in the reconciliation process.

We aim to

- **Identify** and understand the sources of mistrust, suspicion, prejudice and fear between the communities.
- **Rebuild** trust, confidence and respect, initially, between Sinhalese and Tamil people living in Sydney that can be sustained and passed down the generations.
- **Encourage** open and candid dialog, initially, between Sinhalese and Tamils to bring greater awareness of reasons for prejudice and injustice.
- **Harness** confidence building measures that can withstand the potential challenges in the future.
- **Foster** greater understanding amongst the youth than has been seen in our generations.

WHO ARE WE?

Since the beginnings in 2009 the group now has a mailing list of over 100 people, whose names we are not publishing to protect privacy.

The Core Group that facilitate the Reconciliation Forum are,

Chrysanthe Fernando

Noel Luther

Indira Gonsalkorale

Prasanna Athukorala

Luther Uthayakumaran

Surjani Uthayakumaran

We will continue to offer a space where Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others may speak and be heard. The challenge facing the Forum is to open avenues of discussion among all Sri Lankans, in the face of all situations that may present.

DO YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE, MAKE SUGGESTIONS? We welcome and encourage greater participation by all moderate minded Sri Lankans who are broadly in agreement with our core beliefs.

We welcome all constructive suggestions that would assist us with the task of reconciliation.

CONTACT: reconciliationforum@gmail.com