

Feature:

Rachel Erwin, MA, MFT



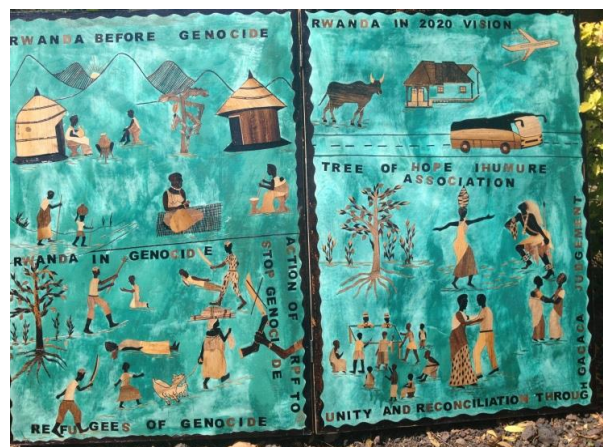
When Rachel Erwin, MA, MFT heard Francine Shapiro's personal story of how Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs was created- she was inspired. Trauma Recovery/HAP's effort and mission aligned with her passion for providing treatment to underserved populations. After she attended her first EMDR therapy training, she joined Trauma Recovery/HAP as a volunteer trainee. Her continued efforts within underserved communities have allowed her to make a difference in the lives of many.

In 2009, Rachel became the Clinical Director of the SAGE Project in San Francisco, an innovative and groundbreaking non-profit agency dedicated to healing and transforming the lives of individuals who were survivors of sexual exploitation. The SAGE Project and Trauma Recovery/HAP had already partnered in the past to create a focused Traumatology training for this peer-led agency. This created opportunity for the providers to receive pro-bono EMDR treatment while being trained and informed of the underpinnings of the symptoms of their clients. It became an effective model for healing the healers, while providing effective treatment to their clients.

Her passion for EMDR therapy blended well with her work at SAGE. She designed a twelve-week pilot project

where resourcing and skill building was provided within a group context. Each participant received individual EMDR therapy sessions, NADA (*National Acupuncture Detoxification Association*) auricular acupuncture treatment after reprocessing sessions and biweekly network chiropractic treatments with intensive trauma informed case management to ensure stability. The transformation that resulted was noteworthy: all eight individuals were able to maintain sobriety, leave abusive and exploitive relationships and enroll in a community college program to become community mental health advocates. Many of these clients are now implementing effective trauma-informed treatment within the community mental health system.

Rachel along with other members of the Karuna Project, a group of human rights advocates, joined Mediators Beyond Borders on a project to train paraprofessionals in trauma-informed mediation on the Rwandan/Congo border - a place where there is on-going tension and lingering effects of the 21-year genocide that occurred. Rachel was able to treat many genocide survivors with EMDR therapy and witnessed deep healing within the community of providers as well as the individuals and families they served. A year later, Rachel returned to Rwanda and trained eighteen paraprofessionals in traumatology, and connected with other providers from Africa, including an Executive Director of a community based organization from Nigeria who sought EMDR therapy training from the US. This was provided at no charge through Trauma Recovery/HAP.



Rachel's work resulted in an invitation to take her pilot project to military veterans who were incarcerated in the San Francisco County Jail. She then became involved in another project brought to the forefront by a documentary, "The Invisible War", which exposed the issue of military sexual trauma. The project, "Artemis Rising" was designed by Rachel and other collaborators to provide fourteen individual sessions of EMDR therapy to participants over a fifteen-day period. In addition to EMDR therapy, the sessions also included other integrative treatments proven to be effective for the physiological effects of trauma. The retreats were held in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, at Boulder Crest Retreat, the nation's first privately funded rural wellness center dedicated exclusively to our nation's combat veterans and their families.

The results were remarkable and the success of this program brought Rachel to her current position as lead therapist for the Boulder Crest Retreat where she and her team continue to design and implement programs for combat stress and military sexual trauma. Through a generous grant from Trauma Recovery/HAP and Boulder Crest, Rachel has successfully trained a group of therapists/ psychiatrists from local Vet Centers, Walter Reed and NICOE (National Intrepid Center of Excellence) in EMDR therapy.

What began as an inspiration has now come full circle as Rachel's work with EMDR therapy continues to inspire therapists and provide relief for many who work through the trauma's they have survived.



Trauma Recovery/HAP training with Rachel at Boulder Crest Retreat