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Hello dear community,

It is with pride and joy that we bring you this special edition of the *Coming Home* newsletter, which highlights the inaugural three-day Festival of Compassion, held in Cape Town, South Africa, and online.

For the first time, the Global Compassion Coalition gathered academics, activists, healers, artists, and practitioners around the theme of compassion in thought, feeling, and action. What follows is a rich report written by Alma Viviers, Communications Officer for the Festival, sharing a glimpse into the conversations, practices, and rituals that unfolded during these unforgettable days.

With the sounds of a rousing singalong led by Mpume Mthombeni still reverberating in the hall, participants quietly tied red threads together, weaving a collective strand that Festival Curator Fadia Williams pegged to a centerpiece representing the Palestinian art of *Tatreez*. In this simple, silent ritual, three days of weaving the spiritual with the scientific, listening with participation, the political with the personal, and the individual with collective and planetary care came to a close.

From September 10–12, the inaugural [Festival of Compassion](#), hosted by the Global Compassion Coalition (GCC), brought together academics, activists, healers, artists, and practitioners in Cape Town, South Africa, and online. Structured around the three dimensions of Head, Heart, and Hands, the program invited participants to move through understanding, feeling, and embodying compassion in action.

In her opening address, GCC Chairperson Dr. Mamphela Ramphele welcomed participants: *“We’re coming home to Africa, our common ancestral home, to reaffirm what it means to be human. It is here that humanity first evolved eons ago, and we are coming home to the common wisdom of our ancestors.”*

She underscored that the world is crying out for compassion, noting that this festival represents a significant moment not just to listen to and embrace those who are suffering, but also to confront the structures of power and money that cause so much pain in our world.





Founder and President of the GCC, **Rick Hanson**, echoed the same sentiment in [his keynote](#), emphasizing that the founding principle of the GCC rests on a simple truth: the world is a mess, benefiting the few at the cost of the many. He challenged assumptions of what we accept as normal: *“Normal? Normal for 10,000 children to die daily of starvation? Normal? That our world spends 3 trillion dollars on military spending? Normal? That a billion people go to bed hungry? This is not normal. It is an amazing fact that for thousands of years our ancestors lived in their bands on the basis of what scientists call ‘care and sharing.’ They cared for each other with compassion; they shared their food and their fates with justice.”*

Hanson highlighted that the biological blueprint of empathy, collaboration, kindness, and caring was gradually woven into our DNA from those early bands, making us hardwired for compassion, and called for a return to our true nature.



Poet Malika Ndlovu ended the day with a poignant reflection on grief, exploring the question: “What have we lost?”

Workshops on the opening day challenged participants to sharpen their intellectual grasp of compassion. Etsko Schuitema explored *Compassion and Intent*, drawing from leadership practices that bridge divides. Sehaam Bateman offered *The Gratitude Road Map*, showing how daily practice deepens compassion. Daiyaan Petersen’s *Colonial Shadows* uncovered Cape Town’s hidden histories of slavery and exile, while Rishad Ahmed examined *The Meta Crisis and AI*, exploring conscious leadership and technology.

Speaking to compassion in action, James Akoon, Suzy Dzimbiri, and Peter Waiswa shared their experiences as National Coordinators of the GCC’s [Connectors Program](#) in South Sudan, Malawi, and Uganda, respectively, highlighting the value of the network. Peter summarized the challenges: *“The need is big and the resources are not there. The world decides to build walls instead of bridges. It is becoming more fractured and fragmented, which leads to greater apathy.”*

Turning to the Heart of compassion, Dr. Niki Petrocchi opened Day Two with a reminder of the courage it takes to care: *“Compassion means that I am courageous enough to see. However, the first part of the process is a stress response. But instead of escaping, we choose to go in the direction of the suffering, with an intention to heal, to soothe, to help.”*

Day Two’s workshops invited participants into embodied, emotional practices. Kathryn Lovewell led *Coming Home to the Heart*, using play and storytelling to cultivate inner kindness. Desireé English and Tristan Johannes facilitated *A Call to Wholeness*, applying reconciliation methodologies to gender healing. Thulani Makhoba introduced *The Loving Classroom*, embedding compassion in schools, while Alex Nunn’s *The Power of Action* connected happiness in the self to compassion in the world.





Day Three opened with a Fire ceremony led by Storm Joy Cookson that reminded us of our own inner spark that spurs us into action. This day was guided by the question: “What will we build?”

The last day of the Festival turned toward action, beginning with a powerful candle-lighting ritual led by Storm Joy Cookson, reminding participants of their individual spark as they moved from knowing to doing. Dr. Mamphela Ramphele and Ebrahim Rasool reflected on the persistent fractures in South African society, not only in the socio-spatial legacy of apartheid but in the minds of those who were oppressed. Ramphele called for the vital and unfinished work of liberating our minds and returning to the ancestral knowledge of what it means to be human and live with dignity.

Workshops on the final day moved participants toward action. Françoise Gallet shared *Cultivating Compassion through CBCT® Training*, strengthening compassion as a skill for daily life. Neil Coppen presented *Sculpting Empathy through Public Storytelling*, drawing from Empatheatre’s award-winning practice. Dr. Izolda Heydenrych’s *The Other Side of Face Value* revealed how empathy can challenge first impressions. Finally, Dr. Daniel Ellenberg’s *The Paradoxical Power of Self-Compassion for Men* explored healthier masculinities and resilience.



Dr. Mamphela Ramphele and Ebrahim Rasool discussed the continued work of liberating our minds from oppression in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Across these moments, the Festival affirmed that compassion is not a sentiment but a radical, embodied force for societal repair — a practice of coming home to self, community, and planet.

Beyond Cape Town, smaller “satellite events” were hosted in local communities around the world, extending the circle of compassion into diverse contexts. From Kigali (Rwanda) to Manila (Philippines); from Umuahia (Nigeria) to Santiago (Chile), these gatherings reflected the Festival’s ethos of connection, offering spaces for reflection, ritual, and action across different geographies.



Festival of Compassion satellite event in Kigali, Rwanda.

There's still time!

If you'd like to enjoy this vibrant three-day event, you can register on the [Festival website](#) for an [Online Pass](#) (now just \$49) to gain lifetime access to the recordings and resources.

We are also happy to offer anyone in financial need full access to the Festival's offerings for free. Don't hesitate to reach out via [this form](#).

Compassion as revolutionary force

As the Festival drew to a close, one theme became unmistakably clear: compassion is not simply a feeling, but a radical force for justice, repair, and renewal. It was fitting, then, that the final keynote spoke directly to this truth.

Pregs Govender's powerful keynote, [Love in the Time of Genocide](#), is now available to watch in full on YouTube. Her message on love as a revolutionary force for justice, dignity, and courage resonated deeply with Festival participants, and now it's yours to revisit and share.

If her words move you, please help spread them by sharing the video with your networks along with a link to the [Festival website](#), where you can still register to gain lifetime access to the Festival content and more. Also subscribe to the [Global Compassion Coalition YouTube Channel](#) to be notified as a selection of new recordings get premiered.

Finally, we are honored to share this invitation from our friends at **CCARE**:

Remembering Dr. James R. Doty



The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education ([CCARE](#)) community invites you to a special gathering in honor of their beloved founder — and GCC Board Member — Dr. James R. Doty, who passed away July 16th of this year.

This online event will celebrate Jim's life and legacy through stories, photos, meditation, and ritual. Please bring a candle to light in his honor.

📅 Thursday, October 2, 2025

🕒 12:00–1:30 PM PT

👉 Register [here](#) to receive Zoom details.

May the threads of compassion we've woven together continue to ripple outward, binding us in justice, dignity, and love.

In togetherness,
Fabiana Fondevila
Editor, *Coming Home*



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