

E-wareness!

Genocide and Human Rights Institute
Teaching Ideas and News
Northern Illinois University

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Welcome to the second issue of *E-wareness*, the electronic newsletter of the Genocide and Human Rights Institute of Northern Illinois University.

Congratulations to Kate Maley, who submitted her suggestion for naming the newsletter. Kate will receive a copy of *Genocide: A Groundwork Guide* for her contribution.

The next bi-monthly competition is for a t-shirt design. See details below!

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1. Teaching Ideas

Faces of Genocide

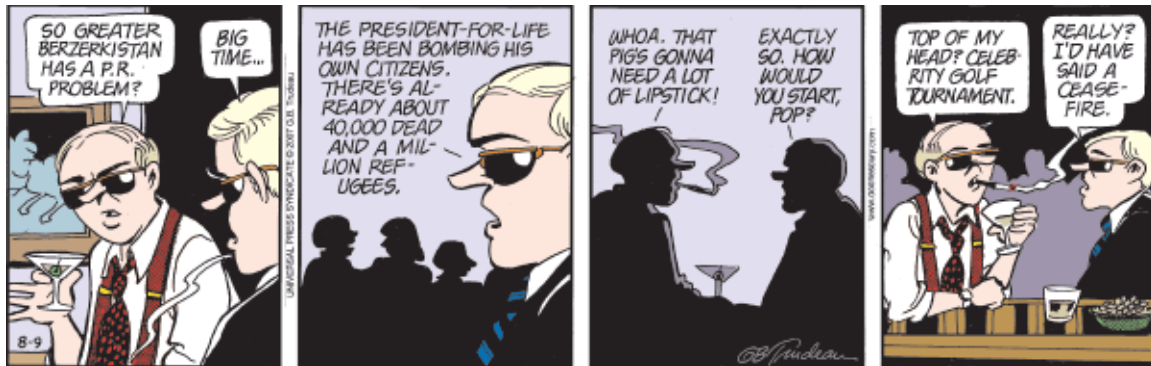
Brian Gustafson submitted the following report: Keith School (Rockford Independent School) recently presented the opportunity to view the "400,000 Faces for Darfur" (Facebook) display. It certainly made the numbers more concrete. A maze of photo pages was taped onto the gym floor. A double band of pages encircled the gym walls. I was reminded of Stalin's observation that "once death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic." Members of the community were able to silently file through the maze that McLean Johnson had taken on as a project and that other students, faculty, and administration had helped to put up.

TeachUNICEF

TeachUNICEF is seeking teachers to pilot test MS and HS lesson plans on "The State of the World's Children." The grade-specific lessons focus on the issues and challenges facing today's youth, including exclusion, discrimination, gender, ethnicity, disability; poverty; HIV/AIDS; and armed conflict and fragile states. For more information, see www.unicefusa.org/teachunicef.

2. T-Shirts

The talk of the lounge at last year's Institute sessions in D.C. was "what would you put on a t-shirt to promote genocide awareness?" At the time it was an exercise that participants used to decompress from the intense nature of our sessions and the whirlwind pace of the program and travel. It was, recently, also quite similar to the subject of a Doonesbury comic strip (perhaps Gary Trudeau ripped us off?).



Well, we think we have come up with a serious answer. It appears as the concluding lines of this e-newsletter: *Do you support human rights? Stop genocide now!* It is a perfect slogan...non-partisan, honest, appropriate, slightly provocative, and engaging. Better yet, it is on topic! So now we start the process...who can design the t-shirts and what color combination? Is there a logo or an image we should put on it? The one who provides the winning design and submission will receive a copy of Lyn Hunt's new book, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, reviewed below.

3. Project Opportunity

I would like to invite you to contribute to an interesting and engaging project—creating a world distortion map of genocide.

4. Reviews of new books on Genocide and Human Rights

Inventing Human Rights: A History. Lynn Hunt. New York. W. W. Norton, 2007. 272 pages. ISBN 978-0393060959. Reviewed by Garry Bass.

.... No doubt the definition of rights, and certainly the language of it, is slippery and easily exploited. The precise content of a right is always up for debate, as are the people who get to hold them. (Under the English Bill of Rights, Protestants were allowed to carry arms sufficient to defend themselves.) Rights are supposed to exist in all times and all places: the enslavement of the Spartan helots and apartheid are what we would call human rights violations. But, as Lynn Hunt's splendid new book [*Inventing Human Rights: A History*] demonstrates, rights as a political program came along relatively late in the day.

Hunt has written a provocative and engaging history of the political impact of human rights, mostly in the eighteenth century. The language of rights grew up in the early and high Middle Ages, and came of age with political theorists from Grotius to Locke. This is roughly the point where Hunt begins. In the late eighteenth century, for the first time, doctrines of human rights gained wide acceptance. In America, they took on political form in the Declaration of Independence in 1776; in France, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. These went a step beyond the English Bill of Rights in 1689, which was rooted in the particulars of English law and history, rather than universal principles that applied to all men--every single member of the human race.

Above all, rights themselves are supposed to be beyond debate. Nothing beats a right. After the middle of the eighteenth century, Americans and (somewhat more grudgingly) Britons

increasingly talked about rights as universal, not particular to a given country. When the Americans and French solemnly declared, in 1776 and 1789, that their undeniable rights had been violated, they were trying to render uncontroversial a view of government that was in fact fiercely contested: that the point of government was to secure these rights of man.

Hunt grasps the novelty, and the preciousness, of this intellectual transformation. Although she clearly believes in moral progress even unto her own day, she does not allow herself the smug luxury of assuming the superiority of the current age. She properly condemns Jefferson for owning slaves, but she insists that the really important point is that the flawed Jefferson and his flawed contemporaries nonetheless rose far above the mores of their day: "How did these men, living in societies built on slavery, subordination, and seemingly natural subservience, ever come to imagine men not at all like them and, in some cases, women too, as equals?"

Hunt dwells on the shock of the violation of rights. One does not have a philosophical reaction to the photographs from Abu Ghraib, even if one's principles are offended; one first reacts viscerally. Hunt argues that "we are most certain that a human right is at issue when we feel horrified by its violation." As she notes, in the most famous articulation of the human rights ideal, Thomas Jefferson wrote only that the truth of rights is self-evident. But for rights really to be self-evident implies a widespread emotional recoil from their violation. Hunt is not troubled that Jefferson ducked the issue of rationally deriving rights from first principles. She thinks that the idea of human rights comes not from reason but from experience. What really counts, Hunt argues, is not so much the abstractions of equality and universality, but "the newfound power of empathy": the sense that the suffering of others is like our own...

To read more, see Gary Bass's review in the May 3, 2007 issue of *The New Republic*. Additional reviews can be found on H-NET by Johann Neem and others.

Past Institute participants would be most interested in this book as it both accepts and challenges several of the leading contentions of Micheline Ishay's book, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (University of California Press) which was one of the two central readings for the Institute.

Genocide: A Groundwork Guide. Jane Springer. Toronto and Berkeley: Greenwood Books, House of Anansi Press, 2006. 144 pages. \$15.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-88899-681-7.

Springer has written a superb historical and political overview of genocide for advanced middle school and high school age students. Beginning with current events in the Darfur region of western Sudan Springer puts forward a conceptual and chronological account of how the world has experienced, defined, and dealt with genocide since the conclusion of World War II and the post-war efforts to atone for the Holocaust. As the book covers various concepts and developments that arise in the history of modern genocide, Springer also adds numerous sidebars that reflect on historical antecedents and philosophical concepts and dimensions that further the study of genocide. Her study includes coverage of gender, sexual violence, Native Americans, victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, as well as the more recent topics of justice, reparations, and memory.

Springer's work is deeply grounded in the best genocide and human rights scholarship that has emerged over the past twenty years. Her work not only lays the foundation with the time-proven historiography but also engages some of the cutting edge contemporary works as well. While the length of the book is appropriate for its intended audience and use, it also leads to the single-greatest concern with the work—its sweeping generalizations and cursory coverage of the topics. In its efforts to give as broad an examination of the topic as possible, it ends up not doing sufficient justice to any one of them. However, it is a work that is clearly written, well documented, and would serve as an excellent foundation for a course that included numerous supplemental readings giving more depth and focus on many of the topics. Even taking into account the fact that the number of books available for such a purpose is small, this work is an excellent choice for use in the classroom and is likely to remain so as the number of offerings in this area will undoubtedly increase in response to the growth in attention and importance given to genocide in the nation's schools.

A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights. Elizabeth Borgwardt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005. 437 pages. \$35.00. ISBN-13: 0-6740-1874-5.

This fantastic book was reviewed on H-NET by Carol Anderson of the University of Missouri. Please log on to the H-NET website to see the review. What follows is my personal synopsis. Basically, this book is an excellent choice to help frame the larger social and political questions of human rights and genocide that are dealt with by Samantha Power in *A Problem from Hell*. Borgwardt details how Americans have come to see themselves as "cosmopolitan" when it comes to Human Rights, but that this self-perception and the definition imposed are often at odds with the fundamental premises in other cultures. This is not surprising, she contends, when one understands that our notion of internationalism, globalism, and human rights are extensions of the premises and promises of the nation's domestic New Deal. Accordingly she examines, very carefully, the elements of the nation's domestic renewal as they shaped our attempts to also remake the world in the post-war era. If you have read Powers' book, you will need to read this one to fully understand American behaviors when it comes to human rights.

5. Genocide Education in Cambodia

Please see the attached webpage file for an article from the *Washington Post* on the lack of genocide education in Cambodia. Do we need to debate this issue? Is ignorance the cause of future genocides?

Genocide education has taken on many dimensions. In post-war Germany, the people of the former Third Reich in the occupied territories controlled by the U.S., France, and England were forced to sit through a viewing of a US War Information film on the Holocaust as well as the post-film discussion and "reeducation." But teaching about the Holocaust did not enter into the nation's educational curriculum until the 1970s with the advent of laws which made it a crime to deny the Holocaust. In Rwanda, the government banned the teaching of all Rwandan history for twelve years (it finally was allowed in 2006), on the premise that the history could not be separated from teaching about the division between Hutu and Tutsi as implemented and exploited by the Belgians during the colonial period. But this also had the negative effect of educating an entire generation that has little or no knowledge about the events that ravaged their nation. This is a topic for future discussions. Anyone wish to begin the conversation?

6. GHRI Alum goes to the Middle East!

The Ministry of Education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has offered Christina Meyer a one year position as an Educational Advisor. Christina will work with local school principals to assist them in developing curriculum, policies, and teacher training practices. She hopes to be able to use her time abroad to learn more about the perceptions and thinking on genocide and human rights from a global perspective. Congratulations Christina!

7. Facing Sudan documentary screening

The film, *Facing Sudan*, portions of which Institute participants viewed last summer as part of our session on Darfur, has been accepted to the **Illinois International Film Festival** and is the featured documentary on closing night. The film will screen at 5:30 pm on Sunday, September 16 at the historic Arcada Theater in downtown **St. Charles**. For more information, you can visit the fest's website at <http://www.illinoisinternationalfilmfestival.com>. Keep checking the site for ticket and price information, which should be available soon.

Likewise, Bruce Janu, the film's director, has also announced a forthcoming, limited release DVD version of the documentary. If you are not already on the film's website, contact Bruce at bjanu@bellbookcamera.com to subscribe and get all the latest updates on the project.

8. Report from Cyprus

As a result of working with both the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus for the past two years, as one of the Institute's case studies, I was invited to visit the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus during their annual "20 Temmuz" commemoration. The "20 July" events reflect on the events of 1974 when Cyprus had fallen into complete collapse and genocide was initiated. On the 20th of July, Turkey, under terms of the decolonization treaty agreed to by herself, Greece, and the United Kingdom, intervened (or invaded, depending upon one's perspective) to halt the killings and restore order. For many people this day is a day that only served to make "the Cyprus Problem" more intractable, more volatile and exacerbated human rights violations. For others, it was a day of reconciliation, preservation and a positive bow to the international rhetoric of "never again." The two sides, obviously, cannot agree. When visiting North Cyprus, however, what I saw was an incipient nation struggling to survive, struggling to proclaim itself viable in the international order, hoping for recognition, and wondering why their status is in such limbo. Yes, the island has been divided since 1974 and Turkish troops remained on the island (in violation of the same treaty that gave them the right to intervene, but only until order was restored) and Cypriot sovereignty is one of the messiest affairs in the modern state order. But I was struck by the similarities of the TRNC's quest for recognition with the American Revolution, the plight of the Hawaiians, the current efforts to form Somaliland, and even the division, internationally accepted, between India and Pakistan that came hard on the heels, in 1947, of the formation of the U.N. As I stood at the wall dividing Nicosia/Lefkosia down the center, with the TRNC and Turkish flags flying on one side and the RoC and Greek flags flying on the other, I was struck by how sad the situation is (see picture below). Both sides have committed killings, have exacerbated the tensions, have played their hands as best they can, and still no resolution. What I saw in the no-man's land just past the wall was a series of bombed out buildings, gun emplacements, anxious members of the military—TRNC, RoC, UN and NATO—and no positive gains for either side. I plan to begin work on a book about my visit (and future travels as well) and the history of Cyprus as well as start laying the groundwork for a summer study program in Cyprus. It will all add to the growing dimensions and stature of the Institute and hopefully, in its own small way, help both sides reach an acceptable and promising solution to their "problem". I have been invited to speak this coming March in the UAE on this very subject and will keep you posted and, hopefully, have a chance to meet up with Christina!



9. Summer 2008 Opportunity

Dar al Islam Teacher's Institute is a two-week residential institute in Abiquiu, NM for social studies teachers. It is free to all participants except for transportation costs to and from Albuquerque. The institute focuses on increasing understanding of Islam among all people of the United States. The 2008 Institute will be in July (see www.daralislam.org for details) and will be their 19th.

10. Survey

This is the second installment of this newsletter. I have tried to keep you abreast of developments in genocide and human rights education and activism. There is too much out there for me to include everything, so it is my hope that this plays just one small part in your efforts to keep abreast of the news, develop a broader understanding of the history, and project and plan for teaching these subjects in the classroom.

But I want to hear from you. What would you like to see included? Are there areas I am neglecting that would be beneficial for you? Website reviews? Research resources? New lesson plans? Please feel free to drop me a line, tell me what is positive, what is negative, and what needs added.

*Do you support human rights?
End genocide now!*