

# Imagining a World beyond Genocide: Teaching about Transitional Justice

MICHAEL H. SCARLETT

**ABSTRACT.** The study of the ways in which societies emerging from violent conflict and repressive regimes achieve peace and reconciliation through forms of transitional justice, such as truth commissions, tribunals, systems of reparations, and memorialization of the past, offers an opportunity for secondary social studies teachers to address issues of human rights in a positive and humanizing way. In this article, the author provides a rationale for including the study of transitional justice in the secondary social studies curriculum along with suggestions for teaching it. He argues that the study of transitional justice presents opportunities for students to become morally inclusive in their thinking, engage in global democratic citizenship, and study critically important current events unfolding in their world.

---

*MICHAEL H. SCARLETT is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Social Studies Education, at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He taught middle and high school social studies in the St. Paul Public School District for eleven years. His research interests include human rights education, American Indian education, and democratic teaching and learning.*

---

**Keywords:** democratic citizenship, genocide studies, human rights education, peace education, transitional justice

To seek a path between vengeance and forgiveness is also to seek a route between too much memory and too much forgetting. (Minow 1998, 118)

**A**t a 2007 summer workshop on teaching about transitional justice held at the University of Minnesota, some twenty educators sat entranced watching the documentary *In Rwanda We Say . . . The Family That Does Not Speak Dies* by filmmaker Anne Aghion. In her second film on the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide of 1994, in which more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus lost their lives, Aghion documented the difficult process of healing taking place across the country as perpetrators of the genocide are reintegrated into their communities. Aghion captured this unique process by focusing on the face-to-face meetings in which victims were given the opportunity to address those who did harm to them or their families. The emotions expressed by victims were raw and powerful, ranging from dull rage to sorrowful resignation, as they openly discussed the past as a way to move toward reconciliation. Although some victims

expressed forgiveness, not all were willing to welcome perpetrators of the genocide back into their communities. The film is a moving and honest look at the difficult path “between vengeance and forgiveness,” as suggested in the opening quotation from human rights scholar Martha Minow (1998, 118), which is faced by a society emerging from violent conflict. It was obvious by the end of the screening, judging by the participants’ reverent silence and bleary eyes, that this was a powerful tool for teaching about human rights.

Noted genocide scholar Samuel Totten (2006) points out, “Rwanda truly continues to be an open wound—the division and murderous rage have not totally dissipated” (422). This may be true, but the difficult path to peace is underway. Struggling to adjudicate the cases of the more than 100,000 Rwandans suspected of playing a role in the genocide, the government has created a community-based justice system, called Gacaca (pronounced “gachacha”), to speed up the legal process and help Rwanda rebuild. The worst perpetrators of the genocide, mostly the leaders, are currently on trial in neighboring Tanzania by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, but the Gacaca system is responsible for meting out justice to

the majority of those accused of committing lesser acts of violence. Rwanda, of course, is just one example of a country struggling to confront its violent past in an effort to rebuild and create a more peaceful and democratic society. The history of the twentieth century, sadly, is littered with the stories of countries that have suffered violent conflict, repressive regimes, and genocide. The consensus at the workshop was that the difficult path to peace and reconciliation through transitional justice, brought to life by Aghion's documentary, is a neglected aspect of human rights education that needs to be addressed in the social studies curriculum.

Too often, when difficult topics like the Holocaust or other twentieth-century genocides are addressed in schools, the aftermaths of these tragedies are neglected. This is problematic because, by focusing only on the events themselves, students are likely to be left with an incomplete understanding of the impact these conflicts have on the societies and individuals involved. I argue that studying the ways in which societies emerging from violent conflict move toward peace should be a central part of any effort to teach about human rights. The emerging field of transitional justice offers students an opportunity to learn about important issues related to human rights and genocide from a more hopeful perspective that emphasizes peace and justice instead of war and injustice. Instead of viewing those who have suffered through conflicts and repressive regimes simply as victims, understanding their role in transitional justice recasts their stories in an empowering way as justice seekers. And instead of viewing war-torn countries as hopeless and worthy of pity, they are recast as optimistic in their pursuit of peace, justice, and reconciliation. Just as the field of transitional justice is helping countries move beyond genocide, the study of transitional justice in the social studies classroom has the potential to help students imagine a world beyond genocide. In the process, the study of transitional justice addresses impor-

tant themes of social studies education and can motivate students to engage in active global citizenship.

### **Defining Transitional Justice**

The field of transitional justice is relatively new, tracing its roots to the Nuremberg Trials after World War II in which the Allied powers put leaders of the Nazi Party on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Although many consider the Nuremberg Trials to have been flawed, they laid the foundation for the codification of international human rights law and set an important precedent by holding accountable those responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. Prior to World War II, perpetrators of human rights violations committed during wartime were often granted amnesty as part of peace negotiations. Since Nuremberg, the world has witnessed several examples of former dictators, military juntas, and human rights violators facing trials and truth commissions as part of their countries' paths to peace and reconciliation. Even though the phrase "never again" has sadly become a cliché, transitional justice attempts to pave the way for less oppressive, peaceful, and democratic societies for countries emerging from violent conflict or repressive regimes. Some of the processes that ease the transition from conflict to peace include giving victims opportunities to tell the truth about what happened to them, establishing reparations for victims, holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, and memorializing the past. Although each post-conflict society poses different challenges, the ultimate goal of transitional justice is not retribution but, rather, in the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2007), to "acknowledge the past, prioritize the needs of victims and restore the humanity of all who are a party to conflict" (6). By facing their dark pasts, countries such as South Africa serve as testimony to the power of transitional justice to heal a country.

The first significant attempts at reconciliation through transitional justice since World War II occurred in Latin

America in 1985 when the former leaders of Argentina were put on trial following nearly ten years of repressive military rule. Since then, the most famous and perhaps the most successful event in transitional justice was South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995. Led by Archbishop Tutu, the TRC was the first attempt by a country to allow the victims of a repressive regime to tell their stories in the belief that simply telling the truth can serve as a form of justice (Tutu 2007). Other significant developments in the field of transitional justice include the ad hoc tribunals in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, truth commissions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the ratification of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002 by 120 nations. Although still in its infancy, the ICC could prove to be an important instrument for allowing countries emerging from or currently experiencing repressive regimes and violent conflicts to seek justice, especially when conditions in the country make it difficult to do so. For example, the ICC is currently seeking to prosecute leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda and leaders of the government of Sudan believed to be responsible for the genocide in the Darfur region of that country. Given the prevalence of civil wars, repressive governments, and even ongoing genocide, it appears that the need to hold the perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions, as well as the need for legal frameworks for doing so, will not diminish.

To address the fundamental racial, ethnic, and religious divisions that are a part of daily life in most post-conflict societies, however, the task of reconciliation through forms of transitional justice goes beyond formal, state-sponsored events such as truth commissions and trials. The nature of conflict in the post-Cold War world requires a paradigm shift in the way that peace building is understood—one that recognizes the importance of human relationships in sustaining peace (Lederach 1997; Rossi 2003; Saunders 2005). In countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Sudan, deep, longstanding divisions have led to fear,

stereotyping, distrust, and a history of violence that make reconciliation impossible without addressing peoples' needs at the grassroots level. According to John Paul Lederach (1997), for a society to imagine a future free of violence and recognize the necessity of interdependence, its members must be given

the opportunity and space to express to and with one another the trauma of loss and their grief at that loss, and the anger that accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices experienced. Acknowledgement is decisive in the reconciliation dynamic. It is one thing to know; it is yet a very different social phenomenon to acknowledge. Acknowledgement through hearing one another's stories validates experiences and feelings and represents the first step toward restoration of the person and the relationship. (26)

Transitional justice, then, is a multi-level, complex process that recognizes the human dimension of conflict and not only seeks justice for the leaders but also addresses the fundamental need for people to confront the past so that they can move forward to a more peaceful future.

It is important to note, however, that the process of transitional justice is not without its pitfalls and that not all countries that pursue transitional justice are successful. In some cases, facing the past and attempting to bring former leaders to trial can stir up deep-seated hatred and serve to divide, rather than unite, as has been the case in Uganda, where rebel leader Joseph Kony has refused to surrender as long as he faces the possibility of indictment. Also, the idea of an external, international body, such as the ICC, getting involved in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation has made the field of transitional justice controversial, particularly in the United States, which opposed its ratification. Given its newness and the tenuous nature of countries emerging from violent conflict and repressive regimes, transitional justice is a delicate process. According to Luis Moreno Ocampo (2007), chief prosecutor for the ICC, "transitional justice, particularly transitional justice during ongoing conflict, is a new and rapidly evolving field that academics

and practitioners are in the daily process of defining and developing" (9). The desperate need for countries to rebuild after violent conflict, however, makes it a vitally important topic for study, with many case studies providing opportunities to better understand issues of global politics, international human rights, and the root causes of violence in human societies.

### **Obstacles to Teaching about Transitional Justice**

Social studies teachers face innumerable constraints and pressures when it comes to deciding what to teach, or, as is more often the case, what not to teach—making it difficult to add new topics to the curriculum. Given the current climate of accountability at all levels, teachers are under increased pressure to address standards and prepare students for standardized tests that can have very real consequences for districts, schools, and students. The No Child Left Behind Act has caused districts around the nation to refocus their curricula to improve test scores and avoid federal sanctions. Most states have high-stakes graduation tests, often in addition to federally mandated tests, that serve to further focus the curriculum on testing of required subjects. Even though social studies is often "held harmless" when it comes to high-stakes testing, the lack of mandated standardized state and national assessments for social studies has led to fears that the field will be marginalized, especially at the elementary level (Rock et al. 2006; VanFossen 2005). S. G. Grant (2006) has found that even in cases where there are low-stakes tests for social studies, teachers feel the same pressures as teachers in high-stakes subjects such as math and reading. In the absence of standardized tests for social studies, teachers are left with standards and curriculum guidelines that are little more than laundry lists of obscure people and events that even professional historians would have difficulty identifying (Wineburg 2005). According to Sam Wineburg, "today's social studies classes are charged with an impossible task: preparing young people to be active citizens, teaching them content required

by state mandates, and promoting a seemingly endless array of causes" (662).

In the face of this impossible task, social studies educators must make the most of limited time, resources, and support to find ways to make their curriculum relevant. Kenneth E. Vogler and David Virtue (2007) argue that in this new era of accountability, teachers need to use their professional judgment when making curriculum decisions to ensure that "the study of social studies [does not] become [nothing] more than the ability to regurgitate a collection of facts listed in a state-mandated curriculum framework" (57). Wineburg (2005), too, argues that the solution is not to try to teach everything but to instead focus on the skills that will allow students to access increasingly challenging material. Teaching about transitional justice provides social studies educators with the opportunity to teach about relevant, current issues that have the potential to give students the skills needed for active democratic citizenship.

Another significant obstacle to teaching about transitional justice is that most social studies educators probably lack the background knowledge to incorporate it into their curriculum without additional research. However, it both keeps the social studies curriculum relevant by addressing contemporary issues and provides teachers with the opportunity to model the skills and attitudes they seek in their students by requiring them to stay abreast of current international events. Once teachers are aware of the importance of the topic, the issues and framework that define its study, and the resources available to address the specific cases, the study of transitional justice becomes less about becoming an expert in the topic and more about learning how to guide students through the study of this critically important topic. Integrating transitional justice into the social studies curriculum has the potential to deepen students' understanding of history, geography, and current issues while offering a more positive outlook on the future than traditional human rights education.

## Why Teach about Transitional Justice?

Over the last twenty years, human rights education (HRE) has become an important part of state and national social studies standards. According to a nationwide survey in 2000, twenty states currently include human rights in their curricula (Banks 2008). Whereas the

constitutes what curriculum theorist Elliot Eisner (1994) calls the “null curriculum.” Acknowledging the importance of studying the Holocaust, Totten argues that “ignoring ‘other genocides’ either by excluding them from the curriculum or by simply mentioning them in passing sends an implicit message that such historical events and their victims are not as important as the Holocaust”

cumstances that lead to conflict can expose fundamental divisions in society that allow repressive, brutal regimes to come to power. The history of Belgian colonization in Rwanda, for example, is essential for understanding the ethnic divisions that sparked the genocide in that country. However, I argue that it is equally important to understand the processes that lead to peace, especially if the goal is to ensure a lasting peace and a more just, democratic society. Questions such as how and when leaders should be prosecuted for human rights abuses, what type of reparations should be given to victims, and what opportunities victims should have to address those who did violence against them are all critically important issues for societies to deal with in the aftermath of conflict. The complex nature of post-conflict societies makes these types of questions particularly thorny, but history has demonstrated that societies that are able to address the issue of justice are more likely to achieve a lasting peace. In this respect, the study of transitional justice has much in common with the field of peace education, in that both are concerned with creating and maintaining more peaceful and just societies by understanding the factors that lead to conflict.

Many who teach difficult subjects, such as genocide, fear that the numbing statistics will cause students to forget that the people who died were real (Totten 1999). This type of subtle dehumanization, which is exacerbated when conflicts occur in distant places, is troubling when it leads students to feel that a group of people is outside of their moral purview. Peace education theorists Susan Opatow, Janet Gerson, and Sarah Woodside (2005) identify this attitude as a symptom of “moral exclusion,” which is the view that a group is “beyond our moral concern and eligible for deprivation, exploitation and other harms that might be ignored or condoned as normal, inevitable, and deserved” (305). An underlying cause of conflict and a major challenge to peace education, moral exclusion can lead to a range of behaviors, from more subtle and individual acts such as rudeness or bullying to more blatant, widespread

---

## Integrating transitional justice into the social studies curriculum has the potential to deepen students’ understanding of history, geography, and current issues while offering a more positive outlook on the future than traditional human rights education.

---

inclusion of HRE into standards may be increasing, William Gaudelli and William R. Fernekes (2004) point out that human rights is still not a term frequently found in “textbooks, curriculum documents and educational discourse” (16). Also, even though there is some evidence that U.S. students are very familiar with the concept of rights in general (Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Lehmann 2001), the international context for human rights seems to be particularly lacking for American students (Stone 2002). David A. Shiman and William R. Fernekes (1999) suggest that “human rights education, particularly when informed by study of the Holocaust and other genocides, requires students to grapple with questions related to ethnocentrism, relativism, universalism, responsibility, conflict, and justice” that are critical for global democratic citizenship (55). Teaching about transitional justice offers the opportunity to teach on the cutting edge of HRE by addressing not just other twentieth-century genocides but also other societies emerging from violent conflict or repressive governments. The contemporary nature of transitional justice makes it a naturally engaging and relevant topic for study.

### *Addressing the Null Curriculum*

Totten (2001) suggests that the study of genocides other than the Holocaust

(309). He fears that this could lead students to the conclusion that the Holocaust was “an aberration of the past,” ignoring the fact that genocide is a problem that “haunts contemporary society” (309). Failure to learn about other twentieth-century genocides has many other negative consequences according to Totten, but the main concern of those who urge the inclusion of genocide study in the secondary curriculum is educating our students so that future genocides can be prevented. Totten asserts that “if students truly come to care about issues germane to genocide, it seems natural that at least some would begin to ask about how genocide can be prevented” (312). The study of transitional justice presents an opportunity to engage students in the study of genocide in a way that recognizes the human need for justice as a prerequisite for peace and also in a way that motivates students to care about issues of human rights so that they are more likely to help prevent future conflicts.

### *Transitional Justice as Peace Education*

An often-cited reason for studying conflict, especially genocide, is to try to ensure that it does not happen again (Gaudelli and Fernekes 2004; Totten 2001). Indeed, understanding the cir-

acts such as violations of human rights and even genocide (Opatow, Gerson, and Woodside, 306). Opatow, Gerson, and Woodside suggest that the study of human rights can encourage students to be morally inclusive, an attitude characterized by a willingness to “extend fairness to others, allocate resources to them and make sacrifices that would foster their well-being” (306). Specifically, they encourage the study of examples of human rights violations, the underpinning documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the “contradictions between a rhetoric supporting human rights and the failure to protect victims or punish violators” as the best way to promote moral inclusion (308).

Along these lines, it seems that the study of transitional justice presents a potentially powerful way to promote moral inclusion that supports the aims of peace education. By exploring the ways that societies recover from conflict rather than just the conflict itself, transitional justice allows the opportunity to learn how human rights have been violated, but more important, how they are also being protected and extended. Studying truth commissions, for example, such as those that occurred in South Africa, provides powerful examples of the ways that the victims of oppressive regimes seek truth and justice by confronting those who committed acts of violence against them. In doing so, a human face is put on an otherwise grim and depressing topic. If students are able to understand that, even in the case of the most oppressive or violent conflicts, people are able to move on and receive some form of justice, hopefully they will be able to envision a world in which conflict is not inevitable and lasting peace is possible.

### *Global Democratic Citizenship*

Getting students to care about events that happen around the world is a significant challenge for social studies educators. Motivating students to action is even more difficult. As mentioned previously, a first step toward getting students to see themselves as both able and

obligated to act involves moral inclusion. Second, it involves embracing a notion of citizenship that transcends national boundaries. Global citizenship recognizes the fluid, interdependent, and transnational nature of our modern, technologically connected world. It is predicated on a belief in a loyalty to all of humanity (Waltzer and Heilman 2005) rather than a parochial view of citizenship based on narrow political allegiances. It is also an action-oriented approach to studying human rights that fits within what Tibbetts (2002) labels a “transformational model” of HRE in which the curriculum is “geared towards empowering the individual to both recognize human rights abuses and to commit to their prevention.” The need for a global conception of citizenship was demonstrated in Rwanda, where the failure of the world community to act had tragic consequences. Sadly, as the recent ongoing crisis in Darfur, Sudan, has also shown, even when the world community is committed to action, such action is often made difficult when the conflict is supported by the sovereign nation itself. The challenge for social studies educators is to convince their students that their actions can make a difference even when the conflict is perceived to be over.

A potentially powerful way to encourage democratic global citizenship is to put a human face on inhuman events. The study of transitional justice is replete with heroic examples of individuals who have faced horrific evils, such as the death of loved ones and systematic rape and torture, and yet have managed to find peace within themselves and even to offer forgiveness to those who have harmed them. Minow (1998), in her work with the educational organization Facing History, Facing Ourselves, argues that students need to know about remarkable people who have been able to “achieve a stance between vengeance and forgiveness” after experiencing genocide or civil war (7). These people can serve as powerful role models. The hope is that when students learn about the courage of Nelson Mandela in South Africa or Paul Rusesabagina in Rwanda they will be empowered to act in their

own communities. Students can engage in service learning projects aimed at raising awareness about the need for the support of human rights around the world or they can raise money or supplies for nations emerging from repressive regimes or violent conflicts. When the past becomes more meaningful, students not only are able to understand its lessons, but also are able to act on them.

### *Current Issues and Higher-Order Thinking*

Perhaps the most salient reason to incorporate the study of transitional justice into the secondary social studies curriculum is the opportunity it provides to teach students about a range of critically important legal, political, and ethical current issues happening around the world. Mary Haas and Margaret Laughlin (2000) argue that “in studying current events, students are required to use a range of cognitive, affective, research, critical thinking and communication skills” (3). Because post-conflict societies often involve multiple parties with competing interests, their tenuous and continuously evolving natures lend themselves to the development of higher-order thinking skills. In the case of Rwanda, for example, in which several different parties were involved—Hutu, Tutsi, Belgian and French business interests, and the United Nations, each with varying degrees of culpability and a role to play in the transition to a more peaceful society—the question of responsibility for justice is intriguing. It seems that whenever and wherever there has been the systematic abuse of human rights, complex issues involving sovereignty, the scope of international legal jurisdiction, and the appropriateness of different systems of accountability make the study of post-conflict societies ideal for the development of higher-order thinking.

The fact that post-conflict societies are always polarized also makes them ideal for studying complex ethical issues. A key problem encountered by societies facing their violent pasts is deciding who is deserving of pun-

ishment, who is deserving of recompense, and when the need for peace outweighs the desire for justice. This becomes especially difficult when there has been fighting on both sides—when the line between civil war and genocidal conflict becomes blurred. An excellent example of the ethical challenges faced by a country pursuing transitional justice is Uganda, where the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army, Joseph Kony, has refused to participate in peace negotiations until the ICC drops its charges against him. The current conflict in Iraq, too, has demonstrated how the efforts to seek justice through tribunals can lead to further divisions within society and can actually exacerbate a conflict. Although systems of transitional justice are never perfect, they are an important first step toward addressing cases of human rights abuses.

The end of apartheid in South Africa, twentieth-century genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, and the establishment of the ICC are all events that have had a profound impact on the world and will continue to influence global political development for years to come. The study of transitional justice in the social studies classroom can help students understand these critically important events and explore common themes such as justice, peace, and reconciliation. In the process, students learn to understand how the present and the past connect to each other, making the social studies curriculum more relevant and meaningful.

### **Guidelines for Teaching about Transitional Justice**

#### *Humanize, Don’t Trivialize*

Perhaps the most important guideline to keep in mind when teaching difficult topics, such as genocide, is to avoid dehumanizing those involved by using instructional strategies that trivialize conflicts. I read in disbelief James Brown’s (2007) recent article describing the use of the computer-based simulation “Darfur is Dying” in an introductory college seminar. The simulation, the award-winning entry to mtvU (MTV’s 24-hour college net-

work), allows players to select fictitious animated characters—Darfurian refugees—to forage for water and evade the Janjaweed militia. I share Brown’s hope that the makers of the simulation had the best of intentions, but I also share his admonition that turning the Darfur genocide into a videogame could have dangerous repercussions for a generation that already has difficulty distinguishing virtual reality from reality.

Teachers should also be wary of addressing the issue in debate format when it involves asking students to take on the perspective of morally reprehensible figures or groups. Asking students to take on the perspectives of and even role play as members of repressive regimes can lead students away from the view that there should be international standards of human rights. The best way to humanize the subject of human rights in general, and transitional justice in particular, is to allow the victims of conflict to speak for themselves. The use of documentary film, firsthand written accounts, art inspired or created by victims, and speakers presents the most powerful way to put a human face on conflict. Fortunately, a growing amount of material is available that authentically expresses the experiences of survivors of human rights abuses (some of which are included in the resources of this article [see appendix]). In addition, framing a debate in terms of the obligation of the world community to act or the appropriate form of justice given a particular context can refocus instruction in a way that respects victims’ humanity.

Other appropriate ways to address transitional justice include discussion and role play. The controversial nature of transitional justice makes it ideal for approaches such as structured academic controversy (Johnson and Johnson 1988) and Socratic seminars. Evaluating the responsibility of those involved; what type of justice is appropriate given the circumstances; and what role the United States, the United Nations, and the ICC should play in the processes are all important issues that teachers can use to engage students in substantive and authentic critical thinking.

### *Give Students a Chance to Learn Context*

The study of transitional justice presents complicated ethical and moral issues that can be difficult for students to grasp without understanding the context. Brad Joseph (2005), for example, in his article on teaching about the former Yugoslavia, suggests a sequence for teaching that begins with the historical foundations of the event and ends with a mock trial in which Serbian perpetrators of the genocide are prosecuted for their crimes. Sam Totten (2007), too, recommends addressing five components of genocide: (1) the individuals involved, (2) causes/historical antecedents, (3) events/chronology/ramifications, (4) reaction of the international community, and (5) post-genocide society. It would be impossible to comprehend a society’s need to heal without understanding the underlying causes that led to the conflict. But, instead of making the conflict the center of study, consider using it as an opportunity to learn about the ways in which a society is rebuilding. Fortunately, there are abundant resources for teaching about genocide and other systematic abuses of human rights with which to ground the study of transitional justice.

### *Allow Time for Reflection*

Teaching and learning about difficult topics such as genocide can be both emotionally and intellectually challenging. Incorporating time for reflection is critical to allow students to make sense of the complex nature of conflict. Teachers should, however, play a central role in guiding students through the reflective process. Encouraging students to discuss and write about their thoughts can help them move beyond knee-jerk responses or judgments and appreciate the complex nature of the conflicts. Avoiding stereotyping is particularly important when asking students to be morally inclusive in their thinking. Also, asking students to engage in writing for a purpose can encourage the type of active global citizenship discussed earlier. Consider, for example, framing

reflective writing assignments in ways that are appropriate for a wider audience, such as a newspaper, a blog, or a letter to a congressperson.

### *Use Transitional Justice as a Springboard to Action*

Transitional justice has the potential to empower students to engage in active global democratic citizenship. Incorporating transitional justice into service learning projects can be a powerful way to encourage students to think globally and act locally. Many urban communities, for example, have refugee populations that have recently escaped violent conflict and may be actively involved in the transitional justice process. For example, for the first time, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is taking testimony from expatriate Liberians in the United States. Learning more about the global repercussions of transitional justice, in particular the ways in which conflict abroad directly impacts the United States, can help students recognize the interconnectedness of conflicts as well as identify opportunities for involvement.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers with the courage to address issues such as genocide and human rights in their classrooms are faced with the dilemma presented by Minow's (1998) quote at the beginning of this article. They must seek a route between too much memory and too much forgetting. Schools are institutions where the memories of a society are passed on to new generations. For students in countries not directly affected by violence, the question becomes finding the path between apathy and action, rather than a path between vengeance and forgiveness. Teaching about human rights through transitional justice provides the opportunity to address critically important events in recent history, such as the genocide in Rwanda and apartheid in South Africa, from a perspective that emphasizes the ways in which countries face their pasts and heal, rather than by focusing on violence. By giving

instructional space and time for the victims to tell their stories, students have the opportunity to learn important lessons about human nature, which will encourage active global citizenship.

In her recent presidential address at the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Meeting in San Diego, Gayle Thieman (2007) reminded teachers that the first challenge they face is one of living in a global age:

We must help our students understand and address global issues. Our students need to learn from, and work collaboratively with, individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue.

The incorporation of transitional justice into the social studies curriculum speaks to this new sense of purpose in a globally interdependent world. Building a more peaceful, democratic world takes courage and hope, which is exactly what transitional justice seeks to accomplish. Incorporating case studies into a geography class; using the themes of peace, justice, and reconciliation in a twentieth-century world or U.S. history course; or simply following the stories of countries emerging from violence during current events are all ways that social studies teachers can carve out time to teach transitional justice in an already crowded standards-based curriculum. The decision to do so also takes courage and hope, but the rewards are worth the effort.

### **REFERENCES**

Banks, D. 2008. Promises to keep: Results of the national survey of Human Rights Education 2000. Human Rights Resource Center. <http://hrusa.org/education/PromisestoKeep.htm> (accessed March 14, 2008).

Brown, J. 2007. Teaching about genocide in a new millennium. *Social Education* 71 (1): 21–23.

Eisner, E. 1994. *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. 3rd ed. New York: MacMillan.

Gaudelli, W., and W. R. Fernekes. 2004. Teaching about global human rights for global citizenship: Action research in the social studies curriculum. *The Social Studies* 95 (1): 16–26.

Grant, S. G., ed. 2006. *Measuring history: Cases of state-level testing across the United States*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Haas, M., and M. Laughlin. 2000. Teaching current events: Its status in social studies today. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 24–28.

Johnson, D., and R. Johnson. 1988. Critical thinking through structured controversy. *Educational Leadership* 45 (8): 58–64.

Joseph, B. 2005. Teaching about the former Yugoslavia. *The Social Studies* 96 (3): 133–36.

Lederach, J. P. 1997. *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace Press.

Minow, M. 1998. *Between vengeance and forgiveness: Facing history after genocide and mass violence*. Boston: Beacon.

Ocampo, L. M. 2007. Transitional justice in ongoing conflicts. *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (1): 8–9.

Opatow, S., J. Gerson, and S. Woodside. 2005. From moral exclusion to moral inclusion: Theory for teaching peace. *Theory into Practice* 44 (4): 303–18.

Rock, T., T. Heafner, K. O'Connor, J. Passe, S. Oldendorf, A. Good, and S. Byrd. 2006. One state closer to a national crisis: A report on elementary social studies education in North Carolina schools. *Theory and Research in Social Education* 34 (4): 455–83.

Rossi, J. 2003. Teaching about international conflict and peacemaking at the grassroots level. *The Social Studies* 94 (4): 149–57.

Saunders, H. 2005. *Politics is about relationship: A blueprint for the citizen's century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shiman, D., and W. R. Fernekes. 1999. The Holocaust, human rights, and democratic citizenship education. *The Social Studies* 90 (2): 53–62.

Stone, A. 2002. Human rights education and public policy in the United States: Mapping the road ahead. *Human Rights Quarterly* 24 (2): 537–57.

Thieman, G. 2007. Crossing borders, building bridges. Presidential address delivered at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, San Diego, November 12–16.

Tibbetts, F. 2002. Emerging models for human rights education. *Issues of Democracy: An Electronic Journal of the U.S. Department of State* 7, no. 1, <http://italy.usembassy.gov/pdf/ej/ijde0302.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2009).

Torney-Purta, J., J. A. Amadeo, and R. Lehmann. 2001. Civic knowledge and engagement at age 14 in 28 countries: Results from the IEA civic education study. ERIC Digest. <http://www.ericdi>

gests.org/2001-4/civic.html (accessed March 18, 2009).

Totten, S. 1999. The scourge of genocide: Issues facing humanity today and tomorrow. *Social Education* 63 (2): 116–21.

———. 2001. Addressing the ‘null curriculum’: Teaching about genocides other than the Holocaust. *Social Education* 65 (5): 309–13.

———. 2006. Rwanda: A nation resilient in the aftermath of genocide. *Social Education* 70 (7): 415–22.

———. 2007. Workshop on genocide. Lecture presented at the University of Minnesota in conjunction with Minnesota Human Rights Week, Minneapolis, October 13.

Tutu, D. 2007. Reflections on moral accountability. *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (1): 6–7.

VanFossen, P. J. 2005. “Reading and math take so much of the time . . .”: An overview of social studies instruction in elementary classrooms in Indiana. *Theory and Research in Social Education* 33 (3): 376–403.

Vogler, K. E., and D. Virtue. 2007. “Just the facts, ma’am”: Teaching social studies in the era of standards and high-stakes testing. *The Social Studies* 98 (2): 54–58.

Waltzer, K., and E. Heilman. 2005. When going right is going wrong: Education for critical democratic patriotism. *The Social Studies* 96 (4): 156–62.

Wineburg, S. 2005. What does NCATE have to say to future history teachers? Not much. *Phi Delta Kappan* 86 (9): 658–65.

## APPENDIX

### RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

#### Books

Hayner, P. 2002. *Unspeakable truths: Facing the challenge of truth commissions*. New York: Routledge.

Minow, M. 1998. *Between vengeance and forgiveness: Facing history after genocide and mass violence*. Boston: Beacon.

Power, S. 2002. *A problem from hell: America and the age of genocide*. New York: Basic Books.

Roht-Arriaza, N., and J. Mariezcurrena, eds. 2006. *Transitional justice in the twenty-first century: Beyond truth versus justice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

#### Web sites

Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota: <http://www.chgs.umn.edu/>

Human Rights Library at the University of Minnesota: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/>

International Center for Transitional Justice:

<http://www.ictj.org/>

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights: <http://www.mnadvocates.org>

Search for Common Ground: <http://www.sfcg.org/>

This Is My Home—A Minnesota Human Rights Education Experience: <http://www.hrusa.org/thisismyhome/>

United States Institute for Peace: <http://www.usip.org/>

#### Films

Aghion, A. 2002. *Gacaca: Living together again in Rwanda?* DVD. Brooklyn, NY: First Run Icarus Films. (A film about the system of community-based justice in Rwanda)

———. 2004. *In Rwanda we say . . . the family that does not speak dies*. DVD. Brooklyn, NY: First Run Icarus Films. (A film that chronicles the release of a genocide offender back into his community)

Gabriel, I. 2004. *Forgiveness*. DVD. Cape Town, South Africa: Giant Films. (A film about post-apartheid South Africa)

PBS Frontline/World. 2006. *Bosnia: The men who got away*. DVD. Boston: WGBH. (A Frontline special on the former Yugoslavia)

Reid, F. 2000. *Long night's journey into day*. DVD. Berkeley, CA: Iris Films. (A documentary about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission)

Copyright of Social Studies is the property of Heldref Publications and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.