





intimate

proximity

The human face of genocide

Colleges and universities are using myriad means to help students truly understand the impact of genocides across the globe.

BY DANA WILKIE

AT THE MURAMBI GENOCIDE MEMORIAL CENTRE, a former school in southern Rwanda where, according to the Rwandan government, 45,000 people were murdered in 1994, corpses lay close together on metal platforms. Preserved with white lime, the bodies frozen in time reveal the horror of the mass killings in this nation nearly 20 years ago.

The orphans of the Rwandan genocide—during which Hutus killed 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus and raped a half million more in just 100 days—have grown now. And they’ve grown accustomed to the memorial’s shocking images. Not so for the Bates College students who accompanied Rwandan orphans to the memorial in 2009 as part of Bates professor Alexandre Dauge-Roth’s course on genocide. Some sobbed. Others were too stunned for tears. A few returned to Rwanda on their own to teach English or to run aid programs in the region. All participated in creating an Internet site that posts the testimonials and photos of the survivors.

“We all have defenses that allow us to intellectualize genocide,” says Dauge-Roth, a French professor who began taking students to the Rwandan capital of Kigali four years ago as part of his course, “Learning with Orphans of the Genocide in Rwanda.” “But when there’s more intimate proximity with the human effects of genocide, the way you relate to such events shifts radically. What’s most important is to find ways to move on and to create connections and dialogues” to prevent future genocide.

Preventing the types of genocides that have led to millions of deaths, rapes, torture, and physical and

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psychologies injuries—in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bosnia, or Cambodia—may seem an audacious goal for undergraduates just a few years beyond their teens. How does a university program—no matter how well funded or how bright its scholars—address the power of political regimes and demagogues bent on inciting the sort of hatred that leads one people to commit atrocities against another?

The answer is multifaceted. Some schools use time-honored tactics, such as face-to-face encounters between people of warring religious or ethnic groups; exercises that promote trust; or seminars that make participants aware of the societal, political, and psychological dynamics that can lead to mass violence. Others rely on the arts—such as theater and radio soap operas—to touch a nerve in their audiences. Some use more modern methods—the Internet and social media—to reach far more people than was possible when some of the world's worst genocides occurred.

Behind these efforts are scholars who come home from sabbaticals bent on illuminating others about genocide; undergraduates who were moved to action by the films, seminars, and speeches of their conflict resolution and peace studies programs; and working men and women who return to academia to acquire more ideas and better organizational and fundraising skills for their nonprofits and human rights groups.

At Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, Dauge-Roth created his course on genocide after a 2006 research trip to Rwanda, where he met the “Tubeho”—a group of about 300 orphans of the 1994 genocide. The orphans live in “reconstituted” families, groups of four to six genocide survivors who have lost siblings and parents.

For three and a-half weeks in 2009, the 11 Bates students—each of whom paid about \$3,000 for their trip and are required to speak French in order to facilitate communication with the orphans—lived with and interviewed Tubeho members. They also visited the genocide memorials, some of which include snapshots of the victims when they were alive—images of newlyweds, a father holding his first son, a young driver standing beside a shiny red car.

“I doubt anything could have prepared me for standing in a building filled with bodies,” wrote Simone Pathe of Madison, New Jersey, in the Bates College magazine. “My Rwandan ‘brother’ Eugene examined the backs of each photo. He was searching for connections. He was looking for names, dates, and places written on the back of the photos. These faces could have been his friends, family, teachers, or neighbors.

“Some of us sobbed. Some were so stunned that tears were too much.”

Pathe, who went on to become a Dana Scholar and politics major, wrote that two older women, both

People displaced by the fighting in Darfur build thin shelters of scrap materials at displaced camps in West Darfur Sudan.





survivors working as gatekeepers at the memorial “embraced each of us, holding us for a long time, as if making sure we would be all right before sending us on our way.”

“That day signified an inversion of the roles we had expected to play,” Pathe wrote. “We were suffering, and the survivors were comforting us.”

For their course, the students wrote papers about their experience, which some later used for further research on the genocide. One student returned to Rwanda on her own to direct a U.S. Agency for International Development program in the region. Others returned to teach English. The students also created a website of the orphans’ testimonials to broadcast the challenges the Tubeho still face following the genocide.

One such challenge is higher education. While the Rwandan government pays partial tuition for genocide survivors through high school, government scholarships for university studies typically go to students who score in the top five percent of academic exams—a reach for most of the orphans.

Dauge-Roth created a nonprofit that collects donations to pay for college scholarships for the orphans. So

far, the nonprofit has awarded 11 scholarships in the past four years, each worth about \$1,500, to help cover tuition, transportation, and materials. Last year, seven of the scholarship recipients earned college degrees.

“The students discovered how fragile it is to reconstruct yourself after an event like this,” said Dauge-Roth, who will take a second group of students to Rwanda next year [2013]. “It put into perspective how fortunate most U.S. students are.”

Defining Genocide

Compiling statistics about global genocide can be tricky, in large part because university peace studies programs, conflict resolution programs, and war studies programs can all define the term differently. The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame tries to bring together leaders from all three disciplines—as well as from NGOs and human rights groups—to address the dynamics that give rise to genocides.

The United Nations definition of genocide is “the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national

Bates college student Sara Bravmann speaks with Rwandan genocide survivor Alexis Mutimukunda at the Ntarama Memorial in Rwanda.



group,” though what constitutes enough of a “part” to qualify as genocide has been the subject of much debate among scholars. The UN definition tends to exclude whole categories of people whom Kroc Institute Assistant Professor Ernesto Verdeja believes were victims of genocide. As a result, he said, many scholars have tried to develop definitions that he believes more accurately reflect widespread exterminations of people.

“This means there are many definitions out there,” Verdeja said. “Some scholars are interested in mass killings—what process, dynamics, conditions lead to this and what conditions can stop that. To them, genocides tend to happen in context of war, such as in Bosnia. Others are interested in the slow process of destroying cultural identity, as happened here in the U.S. with Native Americans, or when the Australian government took Aboriginal children considered of mixed race and gave them to white families, which many scholars consider the destroying of Aboriginal identity. In Darfur, there is debate over whether people are dying there because of the intentional result of government policy, or the carrying out of a counter-insurgency program.”

A mother sits with her son in a small temporary shelter after being displaced by fighting in West Darfur Sudan



Why Genocide Happens

Trying to determine why genocide happens can be difficult.

“It is not easy to single out one cause that leads to genocide,” says Alejandro Baer, associate professor of sociology and director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota. “Genocide is a collection of actions that unfold over time and the factors are different in societies at different levels of political development. While it is surely not the only cause for genocide, ideology is often a key dimension of it. An ideology that singles out an enemy community (in ethnic, religious, racial or even political terms) qualifies as a universal warning sign of a potential ethnic cleansing or genocide.”

Several higher education institutions have centers dealing with genocide that aim to understand the causes and effects of genocide—and help educate students who will one day go out into the world and hopefully advocate to stop it—or, even better, prevent it from happening in the first place.

The Strassler Center Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University “trains students, educators, and activists to develop a sophisticated understanding of genocide,” says Mary Rein.

The Strassler Center has a doctoral program in Holocaust History and Genocide Studies in conjunction with the History Department and a doctoral program in Psychology of Genocide in conjunction with the Psychology Department, as well as an undergraduate concentration. The undergraduate concentration is interdisciplinary and offers courses such as “Introduction to History of Genocide”; “Holocaust: Agency and Action”; “Genocide, Denial, Facing History and Reconciliation”; and “Social and Cultural Psychology of Genocides,” among others.

One undergraduate pursuing the concentration in Holocaust and genocide studies is Shelby Margolin.

“I have grown up surrounded by ghosts of the Holocaust,” she explains. While none of her family was directly affected, her father felt deeply connected to the event through his Jewish heritage. He collected more than 700 survivor testimonies and took Margolin to hear survivors speak at events during her childhood.

“I always felt reassured that as long as people knew about the experience of Holocaust survivors, then the promise of “never again” would ring true,” she explains. But she says, “Then reality hit.”

During Margolin's seventh grade year, her camp counselor told her about the genocide occurring in Darfur, Sudan. "I was appalled that a "modern day world" could sit idly by and watch as genocide was happening before our very eyes," she says. "I decided to take action, and my efforts reflected my family's conversations and focused on raising awareness about the victims and targets of genocide."

Margolin chose to attend Clark because of the concentration in Holocaust and genocide studies.

"While I chose this concentration to continue my activism efforts, my education has proved to be so much more," she says. "I now see that it is essential to acquire deeper knowledge about genocide in order to substantiate anti-genocidal efforts, and believe that effective activism must start with thorough education."

While the Strassler Center is scholarly center that doesn't do work "on the ground" to stop genocide, it does "prepare students to work in those settings," says Rein.

One example is Tibi Galis, executive director of the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. Galis is still pursuing his PhD from Strassler while he heads the organization. The Institute aims to "create a core of government officials who will be in place to perhaps intervene, prevent, provide humanitarian assistance," according to Rein. Its mission is "building a worldwide network of leaders with the professional tools and the personal commitment to prevent genocide" and it is the first organization of its kind in the world.

Fighting Genocide Through Art

At 36, Jean de Dieu has a degree in English African culture and enrolled this past summer in the Conflict Transformation Across Cultures (CONTACT) program at Vermont's SIT Graduate Institute. A native of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, he embarked on his graduate studies to strengthen a radio soap opera he created with Radio La Benevolencija Humanitarian Tools Foundation (La Benevolencija), a Dutch NGO that broadcasts radio soaps, discussions, and education programs on how to deal with the societal and political pressures that can lead to mass violence and genocide.

Those living in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo [DR Congo] remain victims of mass killings, torture, and rape at the hands of armed groups operating in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Kasai-Oriental. The conflict has led to an estimated 5.4 million civilian deaths since 1996. Also in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, the rebel Forces Democratique de Liberation du Rwanda have burned



Early Warning Signs of Genocide

BARBARA HARFF, professor emerita of the U.S. Naval Academy, developed a methodology to determine which regions in the world are at risk for genocide to occur.

In 1994 Vice President Gore put together a panel of experts (then known as the State Failure Task Force—now the Political Instability Task Force) to improve forecasting of revolutionary and ethnic war, political instability, and "geno/politicides."

"I was the token genocide scholar because I was one of the very few quantitative people in my field and I had developed a dataset identifying 46 cases of genocide and politicide since WWII," says Harff. "I coined the term "politicide" to describe mass slaughters that targeted political and class victims, as in Cambodia. This systematic effort remains the only one currently in use, for example used by the U.S. government and, likely, by Sweden and Switzerland, and possibly the Netherlands."

In the early 2000s, Harff ran a program for the U.S. government tracking high-risk countries identified using the aforementioned model. "I tracked 70 indicators on a daily basis," she explains. "This was a dynamic early warning model that tried to close the gap between the likelihood of genocide and its onset. A very abridged version of early warning indicators is used by the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Prevention of Genocide, formerly Juan Mendez and later Francis Deng."

Harff's genocide risk assessment research has been published and is incorporated in textbooks such as *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (2011).

Regarding the prevention of genocide, Harff says that "risk assessment is the first step to getting policymakers' attention—it has to be better than educated guesswork" and that "these days systematic quantitative analysis is a must because it is widely used in the policy as well as in intelligence communities."

Risk assessments can result in action if they "are accompanied by suggestions of what to do, when, and in what situations," says Harff. "Reasonable (cost-effective measures) response scenarios that promise a modicum of success are an essential ingredient to prevent escalation to genocide. I have written extensively on how early warning signals can be used to halt escalation, for example stopping hate propaganda, checking arms flows to rebel groups, discontinuing aid to suspect governments, or conversely providing incentives."

Harff cofounded the Genocide Prevention Advisory Network (GPAnet.org) with Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer. Each year she prepares an updated global risk assessment of countries at risk of geno/politicide, based on the early warning methodology she developed, that is published on the GPAnet.org website.

—Elaina Loveland



villages and killed residents. Human Rights Watch estimates these attacks have killed more than 1,000 civilians since January 2009.

De Dieu's show is broadcast in the DR Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi—regions all touched by genocide or civil and ethnic wars that led to millions of deaths, injuries, and psychological trauma. The show depicts protagonists and villains from different ethnic groups who resolve conflict through stories of political elections, for instance, and romance.

"The soap tackles a lot of topics we can find in any society in conflict—the psychological needs of the population, the lust for power," said de Dieu, whose show gets funding from the Belgian government, the United Nations Development Programme and the United States Institute of Peace. "We sensitize listeners on the steps that might lead to mass violence and genocide, and hopefully provide tools to resolve conflict peacefully and to prevent violence. It's important to target local leaders and societal organizations to help people resist the manipulation of hot-headed leaders."

La Benevolencija has signed partnerships with 25 radio stations in four DR Congo areas—Maniema, Ituri, and North and South Kivu—and has created focus groups of people from various ethnic backgrounds to give feedback on the soap. In some regions, 85 percent of the population is following the soap opera, according to Paula Green, CONTACT's founder and director.

Bringing Together Different Sides

Green's CONTACT program has also turned out graduates who have created NGOs that provide Internet access to young adults from warring Middle East nations so those adults can get to know one another, and an NGO that works with educators and government officials in opposing factions to discuss rebuilding initiatives in Bosnia.

A psychologist by training, Green will often start her courses by assembling students from different ethnic and religious groups—many of which have

Turkish Student Studies the Armenian Genocide in the United States

UMIT KURT was born in the city of Gaziantep in the southeastern part of Turkey to a Kurdish mother and "half-Arab and half-Turcoman" father. Before becoming a doctoral student of history and Holocaust and Genocide Studies (currently in his third year of study) at Clark University, he studied political science as undergraduate at Middle East Technical University in Ankara and received a master's degree at Sabanci University in Istanbul from its Arts and Social Sciences Department.

Umit became interested in studying genocide after he "came across mass atrocities and forced deportations of the Ottoman politicians carried out against non-Muslim groups within the Empire, Armenian first and foremost" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

"Violence and annihilated policies against Armenians executed by the leaders of Union and Progress Party that was the governing party back then led my focus of attention towards genocide," he says. "The most destructive policies were carried out against Armenians so as to obliterate them as a nation, religion, race, and a group of people."

Umit decided to come to the United States to pursue his doctorate because he could not

find a scholar in Turkey with whom he could study the Armenian genocide. "As a matter of fact, scholars are not that bold to study on such an allegedly 'thorny' subject matter," he says.

Umit chose to attend Clark to study with Taner Akcam, a renowned scholar of the Armenian genocide.

While studying the history of the Armenian genocide, Umit says that he has come to believe "that the formation of the Turkish national identity has a problematic and destructive potential and constitutes the source of many current-day problems...the national identity that forms the nation state often situates its own identity on the destruction of those that do not belong to that identity."

And he says that "facing the 'Armenian question' is a critical factor to start such a discussion and Turkey's—and perhaps my own—coming to terms with the past."

After finishing his dissertation, *The Emergence of New Wealthy Social Strata between 1915-1922: The Local Elites Seizure of Armenian Property in Aintab*, and obtaining his PhD, Umit hopes to stay in academia and believes that his work "will contribute to the widespread recognition of Armenian Genocide all over the



Umit Kurt

world, of course, particularly in Turkey," he says. "What I aim to do with my own study is to shed light on an utter historical truth, the Armenian Genocide, to recognize it so that it would never happen again. If you want to prevent genocide, you should first recognize and make an official apology for that."

Umit believes it is important for higher education institutions to provide an opportunity for students to study the history of genocide and genocide attempts because "students should be aware of past atrocities, mass killings, human right violations, colonial violence, and every kind of exterminatory policies of any nation against a race, religious groups, nation, or a group of people so that they will get" greater attention, he says. An awareness of these horrific events "will enable [students] to be judicious, responsible, and virtuous people who give huge importance to human life. In that way, they would also get involved...to prevent any genocidal policies no matter where they are being executed."

—Elaina Loveland



According to the United Human Rights Council, more than 100 people continue to die each day and 5,000 die each month. The Sudanese government disputes these estimates and denies any connection with the Janjaweed.

Davis attended Green's CONTACT program, she said, to sharpen her organizational and fundraising skills. For three and a-half weeks last spring [2012], Davis met some 60 other students from around the world—many of them with

Cynthia Davis meeting family and students in front of Ariang Primary School built by the villagers through Hope For Ariang, an organization founded by native and "Lost Boy" Gabriel Bol Deng. Cynthia is a board member of the organization and runs the Sudan Canvas Project, which raises awareness about genocide.

longstanding histories of conflict—and using trust exercises and role-playing to break through prejudices.

"We will do exercises uncovering our multiple identities," Green said. "We're not just Muslim, or Pakistani. We examine the identities people have in common...such as we're all women or teachers or NGO workers or athletes or musicians. There are many things that unite people as well as the things we're taught are supposed to divide us. When students recognize the humanity of each person they're meeting, that person ceases to be a stereotype and becomes a full human being. And it's hard to hate that."

One of the triumphs of these exercises happened this past summer [2012], when an Algerian woman in the CONTACT program announced that she had been taught to hate Jews.

"This is the fifth day of the program, and she's sitting next to a Jewish woman from Connecticut," Green recalls.

The Jewish woman from Connecticut was Cynthia Davis, who runs the Sudan Canvas Project, which raises awareness about genocide and violence by exhibiting the works of artists who paint about genocide in the Sudan. The November 2011 exhibit drew some 50 artists and raised \$18,000 to help buy a bread-baking brick oven for a women's market in the South Sudanese village of Ariang, which was attacked in 1987 by North Sudan Murahaleen militiamen as part of a broader rampage that killed about 2.5 million people before a peace agreement was signed in 2005.

"These women are the parents of kids who were taken into slavery, or killed, all because the Arab government wanted to take over the land and oil," says Davis. "They called it a civil war, and it wasn't labeled genocide until the same thing happened in Darfur." In Darfur, Arab militias known as Janjaweed have killed 400,000 and displaced more than 2.5 million.

clashing religious beliefs or ethnic backgrounds that left them wary of one another.

Green's program tries to pull down those psychological walls from day one—by asking students, for instance, to write down a culture or people that makes them afraid. With all 60 students in the room last spring, Green pulled the papers from a hat and read them. Several of the Muslims in the group wrote that they feared Jews.

"It made me feel sort of scared," says Davis, 49, who's working on a graduate certificate through CONTACT using an online program that connects her with students in Rwanda, Afghanistan, the United States, and the Sudan. "Here were these people in a peace program—who already cared about peacemaking—and they were afraid of Jewish people. I felt really like a minority—marginalized. I think most of them had not met a Jewish person; they'd just heard what they were supposed to believe about Jews growing up."

Davis stood up and told the group she was Jewish, and offered to later discuss her beliefs with anyone who cared to listen.

"The interesting thing that happened is that I became very friendly—very bonded—with people in a few days who were Muslim," said Davis, who plans to travel to Rwanda this January to meet her online colleagues. "There was this young Muslim girl from Algeria who wouldn't stop holding my hand. She was so sad and sorry for how she had felt about Jews. It was emotional for both of us."



Cynthia Davis with "Lost Boy" Gabriel Bol Deng who founded Hope for Ariang, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing South Sudanese with inclusive access to education, opportunities, and resources, with a special focus on women and girls.



Healing Rwanda

Farther west, at Nebraska's Wesleyan University, Gerise Herndon uses similar exercises as part of her work directing the school's gender studies program.

Herndon spent much of her 2009–2010 sabbatical year in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, researching women's groups, visiting genocide memorials, and talking to genocide survivors about their rapes and resulting HIV infections.

"I felt compelled to bear witness to what I saw when I was there," says Herndon, who helped develop a gender studies curriculum for the nation's first gender studies department within the Centre for Gender, Culture, and Development at the Kigali Institute of Education. "I felt almost deputized to teach these things to students, especially here in the Midwest where students probably aren't aware of

Herndon also brought to campus the documentary ICYZERE:hope, which chronicles a reconciliation workshop in Rwanda that brought together 10 survivors and 10 perpetrators of the 1994 genocide. Filmmaker Patrick Mureithi, a Kenya native, gave a lecture and answered audience questions.

"In this region of the country, students when they first arrive do not necessarily have a sense of global citizenship," Herndon said. "After these speeches and classes, they're sometimes angry that they were not taught about these genocides before. And then they're angry that the U.S. government did not intervene on behalf of human beings, and they want to find something constructive they can do."

That urge to do something constructive has led some of Herndon's students to teach English to grade school students in a nearby resettlement community for refugees from Iraq, Sudan, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where conflict between the three main ethnic groups, the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, led to 200,000 Serbian massacres of Muslims from 1992–1995.

Students have also participated in food and clothing drives for the refugees, helped them fill out government forms, and instructed parents about U.S. laws on child rearing and domestic violence. Other students have worked political channels to advocate for more U.S. funding for nations with histories of genocide. One group of students created a short film that surveyed campus students about their awareness of genocide.

"When they realize that right here we have immigrants from wars involving genocide—from Iraq and Sudan and the former Yugoslavia—they see how difficult these people's lives are," Herndon said.

Chloe Petit, a 20-year-old Belgium native who studies acting at Nebraska Wesleyan and has been Herndon's student instructor, was "surprised and sad" after first hearing the campus speeches of genocide victims. Afterwards, she went to live with relatives in Kigali in the summer of 2011 and traveled the country.

"I learned before leaving the United States that the Rwandan people generally don't talk about the genocide and don't show their emotions about the genocide and its impact on them," Petit said. "But every time I saw someone with the cutting tool they use to farm—but that was also used to kill during the genocide—I felt threatened."

Using Theater for Change

When the Buffalo State (SUNY) Theater Department first staged its creative take on the *Diary of Anne Frank*—weaving into the story the horrors of



Buffalo State College/ Anne Frank Project students with children from a village in the Muhanga District of Rwanda. Muhanga is the official "Sister City" of Buffalo, New York. Students donated a cow to a family in need in January 2012.

how international policy can affect human beings, or that in the case of Rwanda, the U.S. knew what was going on, but refused to do anything because it had no economic interests in Rwanda."

Back in Nebraska, Herndon started a course in spring 2011 called "Rwanda Through Film and Literature," which introduces students to the country's history, and which may lead to a visit to Rwanda next summer. She has hosted on-campus speeches by Emmanuel Habimana, orphaned by Rwanda's genocide at 9 years old and later enslaved by the Hutu militia until Ugandan army troops liberated him.

Other speakers have included Carl Wilkens, the only U.S. citizen to remain in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, and the University of Missouri's Rangira Bea Gallimore, who describes how Rwandan rape victims had to overcome the challenge of talking about their attacks—in large part because the Kinyarwanda language has no word for "rape."

Unidentified boys from the UN Millenium village for returnees to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide.

Envisioning a World Without Genocide

“WE OFTEN SAY GENOCIDES HAPPEN for a lot of complicated reasons but they also happen for a very simple one—we let them happen,” says Ellen Kennedy, founder of World Without Genocide, a nonprofit organization at William Mitchell College of Law that establishes chapters at high schools, colleges, and universities.

Kennedy says that because ordinary citizens don't exert pressure on our representatives, they do nothing. “We are not calling or in their offices and asking them to take a stance on Syria, or Guatemala, or Congo,” she explains.

World Without Genocide provides advocacy, education opportunities, and has a 1-800-GENOCIDE hotline that connects people to their representatives in Congress to urge support for anti-genocide legislation.

“Knowledge is not power; knowledge plus action equals power,” Kennedy says. “We have the power as ordinary citizens to truly make a difference and to envision and create a world without genocide.”

—Elaina Loveland

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Actors from Buffalo State College's Anne Frank Project and Rwanda theater company, Mashirika, in rehearsal as they collaborate to create their original play, "When the Walls Come Down—Truth!" at the ISHYO Performing Arts Center in Kigali, Rwanda, in January 2012. (and opposite page)

the Rwandan massacres—the department's leaders had no idea the sentiment the play would unleash.

The department cast two "Annes"—one Jewish, hiding from the Nazis, the other Tutsi, hiding from Hutu extremists—both of whom spoke Frank's words. The production follows the two Annes through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood and chronicles events that tempt each to buy into hatred of ethnic or political groups. The play so touched audiences that the department decided to take its Anne Frank Project outside of New York. Today department Professor Drew Kahn and his students, along with Wilkens—the American who stayed behind in Rwanda—conduct playwriting workshops at colleges, universities, and high schools around the world.



Anne Frank Project Director/Buffalo State College Professor Drew Kahn delivers the welcome address at the Anne Frank Project's annual conference at Buffalo State College in Buffalo, New York.

The challenges that confront many high schoolers—bullying, hate crimes, social tensions, cultural conflict, and stereotyping—can be addressed with the very tools required to research, rehearse, and produce a play, Kahn says: collaboration, listening, diplomacy,

clarifying, articulating, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

"The same elements that make genocide possible are the elements that make conflict and bullying possible," Kahn said. "If we can use the Anne Frank Project to identify the systematic nature in any conflict, and then provide tools and vocabulary to avoid those conflicts, then perhaps, as one of my students said, we will realize that bullying is just a form of genocide."

The Buffalo State Theater Department, which gets funding from grants and from the fees schools outside western New York pay for the project's workshops, offers a program that helps students produce the play *I'm Not Leaving*, based on the book by Wilkens, depicting his 100 harrowing days in Rwanda during the genocide there. Schools that participate in the Anne Frank Project residency program perform their productions at the annual conference of the Anne Frank Project, which happens every September on the Buffalo campus. Kahn's students wrote original poetry and songs to illustrate the connections between the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust during WWII, as well as massacres in Bosnia, Turkey, Russia, and Cambodia.

The Anne Frank Project also tries to illustrate the societal dynamics, personality types, and events that can lead to genocide by convincing people that their lives would be better without a certain group of people, by creating "scapegoats" for societal ills and by dehumanizing the targets of hatred and mass violence.

"There are issues—recipes that go into these conflicts—that are eerily close in just about every genocide," Kahn says. "There are essential ingredients to all genocides—they're systemic, not spontaneous, and they're very well planned. They are expansive, so they need a government regime, a leader to sponsor the effort. And they need good people to do nothing. In fact, the most dangerous character in any genocide is not the perpetrator, but the bystander."

Kahn brought his first group of students to Rwanda last January [2012]. The nine theater and film undergraduates—three of whom had never been on a plane—spent two and a half weeks in Kigali. They lived in a house in the nation's capital and visited genocide memorials, theater companies and universities. They performed Buffalo's version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* at orphanages and refugee camps. They interviewed survivors from both sides of the conflict and collaborated with a professional Rwandan theater group called the Mashariki to perform American-style and Rwandan-style plays.

"They were astounded, they were horrified, they were petrified in many cases," Kahn said of his students. "They were moved. They were hungry for more information. They were immediately given a huge dose of perspective. We'd all talk for hours around the dinner table. Watching my students develop this level of emotional maturity was incredibly rewarding, and it was transforming for them. Most in their lifetimes don't see what they saw in that two and half weeks."

The students also presented a cow to a village woman, offering her what Kahn described as "a huge change of life for the woman and her family." "Getting a cow in parts of Rwanda is like suddenly moving

from a cardboard box to a Mercedes Benz,” Kahn said. “The woman fell to her knees and was crying.”

“We are introducing a Western audience to Rwanda and those audiences are filled with assumptions—that all of Africa is filled with poor villages, that they all live in huts and don’t have Westernized things such as electricity, or that they’re all starving, fighting, and killing one another. There’s plenty of that happening in Africa, but also in the U.S. On the outskirts of the big cities, you find these children and families who have very little, but they are exceedingly happy. This idea that poverty and unhappiness go hand-in-hand is

a fallacy. You can imagine U.S. college students learn a great deal from that. They learn that what they thought was ‘poor’ really isn’t ‘poor’ at all.”

Being a “Global Citizen” Means Having Knowledge About Genocide

“Higher education institutions have a responsibility in teaching the history of the Holocaust and other genocides,” says Baer.

The goal of preparing students to be global citizens can’t ignore the atrocities that happen all too frequently.

“We live in an interconnected global world,” explains Baer. “Nowadays we often know very soon about events happening on the other end of the planet. It is difficult to claim today we did not know. To be a global citizen means taking seriously the challenge of this awareness. It implies the duty of understanding and of taking responsibility. This is of course not an easy thing and it is our mission, as educators, to bring this understanding closer to our students.” **IE**

DANA WILKIE is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C. Her last article for *IE* was “Promoting Peace Through Partnerships” in the January/February 2012 issue.



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