

Facing History and Ourselves
Education and the possibilities and challenges for peacebuilding

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WORKING PAPER
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Facing History is an international educational and professional development ngo. Our goal is to develop ethical, active, and informed global citizens. We do this through education, primarily through work with teachers, providing intensive professional development and follow up support. Facing History's intellectual and pedagogic framework is built upon a synthesis of history and ethics. Its core learning principles embrace intellectual rigor, ethical reflection, emotional engagement and civic agency. Its teaching parameters engage the methods of the humanities: enquiry, critical analysis, interpretation, empathetic understanding and judgement. Facing History teachers employ a carefully structured methodology to provoke thinking about complex questions of citizenship and human behavior. They begin with an exploration of the multi-faceted nature of human identity. This is followed by an analysis of questions of membership and belonging, in which students explore the human tendency for creating an 'other.' They develop the ability to think historically, hypothetically and imaginatively about why people in the past acted as they did, the choices available to them and the possibility that other choices might have been taken. The Facing History approach goes on to explore difficult questions of judgement, memory, and legacy, and the necessity for responsible civic participation to prevent injustice and protect democracy in the present and future.

We've developed content on a range of subjects, including on the rise of the Nazis and the Holocaust, Race and Membership in the US, South Africa's transition to democracy, and the

Nanjing Atrocity. All of our content follows this sequence of study, providing adolescents with the opportunity to make connections throughout--to self, society, and other events.

We work with 90,000 educators who reach 3 million students each year. We have 10 offices in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. We also have deep partnerships in Northern Ireland and South Africa and work in a range of countries including China, Mexico, Colombia, Poland, Bosnia and Sweden.

I'd like to draw on our work in some of these places, particularly NI and SA, which are divided societies with identity based conflicts, to explore some of the questions we've been asked to focus on. I will also draw on research I've been conducting with Dr. Sarah Freedman from UC Berkeley. We are engaged in a longitudinal, mixed methods study of adolescents from divided societies with identity based conflicts. Looking at SA, NI and the US, we are trying to understand how these young people develop as ethical civic actors with the capacities to support and nurture their respective democracies. We want to know what factors impede that development and what factors support it.

First, in peacebuilding efforts worldwide, though I believe that we all agree that education should be integrated into the primary work of a country's transition, this seldom happens. The neglect of educational reforms is particularly glaring as education as a sector often plays a critical role within the context of conflict--in perpetuating and reproducing social inequalities and divisions, for example, as well as by acting as a medium for propaganda, myth and misinformation.

Education as a sector is also uniquely positioned to make a substantive contribution to repair, reconstruction and redress of inequalities, divisions, and human rights violations. Education is the only sector that simultaneously reaches multiple generations. Many

peacebuilding measures are temporary and focus on the first generation. With peacebuilding in mind, subsequent generations would be responsible for upholding the new norms and protections put in place during the country's transition, and/or for appropriately acknowledging (and continuing to redress) the past abuses which took place and their effects on individuals, communities and on society as a whole.

The curricular reform which I have seen work well is comprehensive. Curriculum includes both what is taught and how it is taught. A curriculum which includes the content and methods to reflect on the past, to learn about what took place in the country and why and to understand that these events were not inevitable but the product of decisions made by individuals and groups, provides both the adult citizens teaching the curriculum and the students participating in it with the opportunity to grapple with these issues, to better understand their legacies and the transitional justice measures put into place to redress them. The most effective curricula marries the cognitive with the affective, the head and the heart.

Considering the South Africa example, democracy is not an intuitive system. Learning to become democratic is not a behavior or set of skills that one learns just by being in society. There is both procedural knowledge to learn (the new Constitution, for example) and behaviors and dispositions that must be developed and practiced. In a country such as South Africa, the latter might include learning to think critically and independently, asking questions, recognizing the abuses of the past and their varied legacies for different identity groups and engaging in discussion with people from other identity groups. Professional development in this context is not merely "training" teachers so that they can "deliver" new content. Rather, it is ideally a process which is itself a reflection of democratic practice and which provides teachers with the opportunity to learn about and wrestle with the violent past which was perhaps part of their

formative experience. After all, South Africa's teachers grew up under apartheid. They were educated within an authoritarian, vastly unequal system based on identity, and they participated as citizens, in some way, within it.

Rarely do educators and administrators learn about the role that education itself played in their particular conflict or about the role that education and schools as institutions could play in the reconstruction and repair of society. Schools shape and reflect a society's values, for better or for worse, and making explicit their connection to past abuses and present reforms is an opportunity to nurture and further peacebuilding.

Two countries recently emerging from mass violence and currently in transition are BiH and Northern Ireland. While there is much to distinguish between the particular contexts and conflicts of these countries, they have a great deal in common, particularly when we explore them through the lens of education and transition. The way that a country's conflict ends profoundly shapes and informs its transition. Both the conflicts in Northern Ireland and BiH were ended by negotiated settlements, the Dayton Accords (1995) and the Belfast Agreement (1998) respectively. In both cases, educational reforms were largely neglected and key factors at the root of both conflicts, such as interpretations of the past and its legacies, and the connections between political/cultural power and identity, were not only ignored but the agreements themselves legitimated segregation based on an honoring of cultural/linguistic/religious/political identity. The fear of a group's identity being threatened or subsumed by another permeates both agreements and provides a window into some of the challenges that both countries face, particularly within the educational arena. Finally, in both BiH and Northern Ireland, reforms have largely been stopped and started, proposed and then either partially implemented or abandoned. Without a wider, more comprehensive transitional justice framework implemented

in both countries, it is difficult to imagine substantive educational reforms sticking. **Education reforms have the best chance of making a positive difference when they are consistent with a wider set of policies and norms.** Leaving education out of these processes risks undoing them, but focusing on education alone often translates into little change on the macro level and places teachers, administrators and, most importantly, students potentially in harms way as they tackle challenges that the wider society has neglected or abandoned.

Both countries suffer from intensely segregated schools along ethnic/group lines and the failure to fully integrate curricular reforms which address the violent past. NI is much further along in this regard but still struggling, in part, because the country as a whole continues to struggle under a general lack of commitment to a shared future. These are also places where the international community brokered agreements without timetables that were attached to consequences, and where we turned our backs as soon as the primary violence cooled.

In NI---our partnership, Facing Our History, Shaping the Future-- is with an ngo called Corrymeela which does cross-communal reconciliation work. In Northern Ireland the conflict was not brought into the curriculum in a substantive way until 2007. This revision asks teachers to explore the causes and consequences of partition, to help pupils explore who behaved ethically and unethically and to reflect on the legacies of the conflict. Most teachers continue to deal with the troubles in one of three ways: silence, sectarianism or a bland neutrality. The latter leads to moral confusion, pupils unable to make judgments about their past--about what was good or bad, right or wrong.

In our research we've found that young people in NI are, in general, profoundly confused about the past and the present. They don't understand the nature of the conflict, its roots or its

legacies. Sectarianism is all around them and, yet, many of them see it outside of them. This is dangerous.

As Dr. Duncan Morrow has pointed out, we often only see sectarianism where the violence is, in the margins of society, and we don't explore the core structures, attitudes and behaviors that maintain and nurture it. Also, one of the primary ways of explaining the conflict is--it wasn't me, it was them. Indeed, what complicates this history, like so many histories is that the questions who are the victims? and who is responsible? are impossible to answer--both communities are locked in a loop defined by their victimization. Pupils have inherited this worldview and they do not fully understand why.

Here is an example of a group of students in an integrated school--which is primarily Protestant-- talking about the conflict. (keep in mind that Catholic/Protestant is shorthand for talking about the two primary communities. This is a complex political/cultural conflict. Importantly, however, schools and the education system in general do not break down the conflict in terms of Loyalist/Unionist, Nationalist/Republican. Rather, they use the religious signifiers and that is what the pupils are referring to below)

So what about the Protestant/Catholic stuff? Because one of the...I mean this is an integrated school so integrated schools are there to, I suppose, provide an environment that brings people together.

R There actually isn't many Catholics here, I don't know anyone at this school who's actually a Catholic at all.

...I think the whole, like, Protestant/Catholic thing is...it's a label that people just want to have. Maybe they'll not actually follow or know what a Protestant actually does or what a Catholic is, it's just a label that they want to have so that they can be in a group, or something like that.

R Yeah, kind of like a gang,

Then again, sometimes it's pushed on you.

Like an all-Catholic sort of big gang or Protestants are in a big gang.

But really there's no difference between them, apart from they say, "I'm Catholic" and the other group says, "I'm Protestant," that's it.

The thing is, though, right, Protestant and Catholic, both religions are Christianity religions so---

Yeah, what is the difference?

I don't understand really.

Just the way they pray. Like, Protestants, they don't.... Catholics use, like, beads, like we don't

Rosary beads

It's just like they're a little bit more extravagant

If you ask most Protestants, like, if they were going to hit or beat up a Catholic and you asked them why, the response would be, "Because he's a Catholic" and you'll go, "But why?" and they won't have a clue

...facilitator so it's not necessarily a religious thing in the sense that? It's political as well

I didn't say so

It's just a label that's been around for a long, long, long time really. It's really lost all its meaning, there's no point in it anymore.

I don't think it will ever change, though.

...You could try but they won't

Educators themselves are struggling with talking about the past and making sense of it with and for their students. They anticipate upsetting people [possibly parents and their pupils themselves] which sometimes precludes discussion from happening. They also avoid ethical judgments or providing young people with the tools to make them. They want to be sensitive and worry about offending their pupils so when it comes to bringing the most difficult questions home, they balk. Below, a reflection among three educators in a working group for our study.

KP It's like my history class, like trying to tell them what a unionist is.... These are the ones that would be drawing a wee union jack on their folders and that would be a symbol of unionism but what does that mean.

EW Also now that you are teaching the troubles to people who don't remember them and you might as well be teaching the cold war to them. It's like teaching them about a foreign country really.

HC: We have two units of study and we do Nazi Germany... They're all very happy with, they're the bad guys [laughter], they're the victims. Move to the troubles in Northern Ireland, we're okay with on the other side terrorist groups, bad people that kill people. The problem is, and the sensitive area is, I think, police and army, because we... Even though it's an integrated school, we are mainly

Protestant/Unionist and ...in general we have a lot of army families, a lot of police families, we support them, they don't do anything wrong. And I think the difficulty is then them appreciating that other people would have an issue with the behaviour of the police and the army. And I just think it's very sensitive and from a teacher point of view the easy way out is to go with, and this happened and this happened, write it up, so, you know...I think they do need to think more about it and appreciate other people's points of view. But the police/army role, I think, is very, very sensitive in our school and potentially you'd have a lot of upset people ... because there is that real protective... They're our police, they're our army, you know. But I do think it needs to be challenged that, well, that's not everyone's view and why do you think that?

It's the adults that have protected Northern Ireland's children from the past, first by keeping it pointedly out of schools as a way of keeping them--the children, the adults, the schools--safe--and later by a host of other reasons, including the recent increase in violence. Other reasons include the challenges of teaching one's own, painful past, a lack of confidence, a lack of resources, a lack of efficacy and some fear--of failure, of offending pupils and their family members, of simply not getting something so important right. Teaching the violent past especially when it's in your living memory is enormously hard. Try mixing this with Northern Irish reticence and the silence already cloaking the troubles.

Let me underline, the teachers quoted are good teachers---in a very tough situation with few positive models for this work.

Before moving to South Africa, a more successful case in many ways, I want to offer a reflection by one young person who has stood out in terms of his capacity to understand the past and its legacies and to reflect on the role of identity within it. We've been following these young people for four years and this is the first, most substantive articulation and analysis of the implications of sectarianism.

[00:35:54.12] : Sort of like you know what I was saying about the friend group in school we talk about you know things that are happening. There's a couple of guys they do politics so they're more into it and we talk about different things that have happened and there's sort of a mixture of people there about and I think sort of saying . . talking more so I'm a Protestant so this is my view of something and I'm a Catholic so this is my view of something... This is sort of what needs to be done ...whenever people have bigoted views and it's realizing that

[00:36:38.06] : Do you see yourself in that division or are you outside of it? If that makes sense.

[00:36:54.17] : Um . . I think to an extent everyone ... would like to view themselves as outside of it all but I think the sort of reality is the majority of people are in it in some way ... It's not sort of just black and white it's there's more of a transition where there is probably the most people that don't really want to be associated with it but they still are . . even if they don't want to be.

[00:41:58.24] : I think sort of on the national level I think there's still too much segregation in schools they're still . . they're not really called it but Protestant schools and Catholic schools . . the Catholic schools are still known as Catholic schools but Protestant ones are sort of just a school but it's 99% Protestant or whatever and then there's the ones that are integrated and I think it sort of needs to be there's just a school where it doesn't matter what you are who you are . . I think it needs to be just one school system

South Africa faces many extraordinary challenges, and I do not want to downplay any of them. However, there are several ways when it comes to the issue of facing the violent past and identity based divisions that South Africa stands out. Importantly, unlike BiH and NI, South Africa's transition was characterized by an inclusive, national vision, one which put the violent past and a shared future at the center. **The South African TRC was not an aberration but consistent with the goals of the Constitution, the vision articulated by leaders and the institutions and policies being put in place. Likewise, the education reforms, particularly those in history education, were in keeping with this vision. Therefore, what teachers were**

asked to do was not exceptional--they were not asked to tackle issues that were ignored in all the other sectors or to raise difficult moments that no one else was able to talk about. And, in South Africa, unlike BiH and NI, there has been broad agreement on who were the victims of apartheid and who was responsible? There might be discussions at times about how everyone was victimized by apartheid, but, at the end of the day, who the primary victims were is not in dispute.

In our research, SA young people across identity groups show a high degree of historical awareness and civic efficacy. Their discussions are replete with references to the past to make sense of the present. They use words like democracy, human rights, and apartheid in their conversation. They know where they've been, where they are, and they have hope for where they are going.

Still, the schools remain profoundly segregated. It's the former white schools that are becoming increasingly diverse. The townships schools remain mostly black, poor, violent. There are also coloured schools in the Western Cape that remain fairly homogeneous. In South Africa, our project, Facing the Past, works with teachers, preservice teachers and learners.

Two quotes from SA to give you a flavor of some of the work happening there. First is a quote from an exemplary teacher who self identifies as coloured.

“And then also just a whole thing of a culture that is extremely compliant with outside rules and so--whereas I come from an environment where you challenge things that you don't agree with--you challenge openly--you don't keep quiet. And ...that's why there is a legacy of Apartheid that we underestimate, just how huge it is and debilitating for white people. And I know it is difficult for us to think of white people in South Africa as being victims, but when you understand um just the degree at schools similar to this one where they were taught to accept--they were the biggest--you went to church and the minister told you that this is what was right, you went to school and the teachers told you that's how life is--you went to Scouts and the Scoutmaster told you that's how it is. Whereas in my world growing up and maybe it is true of others as well, where it was never a harmonious

message like that. You know my church may have said it. My parents may have, But my teachers would have been saying something different. My youth leader would be saying something different because he is at UCT or UWC or wherever. So we never grew up with this single message. There were always messages that were in competition with each other and you had to sift through and decide for yourself. And it's not quite the same you know. They are not used to that process of actually uh thinking."

The habits of thinking and learning and self-awareness that this teacher is trying to instill actually do show up in his students. In the following exchange, boys from this school's focus group try to make sense of grouping and friendship in school which leads to a discussion regarding what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to joking. Their conversation turns, however, when they begin to challenge one another. This is when the relatively recent history of apartheid is introduced as a reality that has shaped their lives and the lives and decisions of the people around them.

...Learner: ...In that story we read about the bear, in the first paragraph there was something really important....it says there: 'our sense of belonging' and in a lot of ways belonging is one of the most key aspects of human existence if you look at how societies grow up and evolve. And the thing about belonging is that if you are forced into belong because of your group, like in South Africa, blacks were forced to belong to a group of blacks, they were forced to unify and become as one, even if they weren't friends. Whites weren't really, so you'll find that whites will be less hospitable to each other than blacks. Look at how strong the black community is in Xhosa culture. ...But the thing is something like that doesn't go away, that instilled sense of trust and dependence upon your community to survive, not just live, but to survive.... and no matter how much we are equal we will never be able to indulge ourselves into their community because that's what they were forced to be.

Learner: Because of what happened in the past.

Learner: Because of what happened in the past. And so, you have to consider that, you can't just say, there's democracy now, .

These young men demonstrate some capacities to question their perspective and the experiences of others with the intersections of history and identity in mind. But what will it take

to maintain those questioning voices? That effort to think about the implications of apartheid and how it shaped peoples lives? Especially as they enter university and the work force? We've already seen when it comes to analyzing a critical incident such as the Marikana miners' strike that these young men were more likely to explore the incident from the perspective of the owners of the mines and to not identify at all with the dramatic issues of poverty and violence and authoritarianism that were also part of what happened. This is in contrast with the black learners in the township school we've been following who talked about the miners in familial terms-- sons, fathers and worried aloud about how you live on the salary they were making--about what is just.

Over the four years of our research, some of the most thoughtful, compassionate reflective thinking has come from the young people in a primarily colored school in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. Some are middle class, some are poor but not living in shacks. In our most recent interview with a young woman there about Marikana, here is what she said after reading a brief article as a prompt for discussion:

[00:20:59.19] Learner: I feel that sometimes democracy and all these ideas are . . . greater in theory than in practice . . . in the beginning after the revolution and after you've rid of your old oppressive regime, you have a utopia for . . . I don't know in South Africa it might have lasted a few years where everything is perfect because after such a long time of oppression anything like freedom related seems amazing and then people have the expectation that things will continue for the unforeseeable future . . . And you

have this idea that it's going to be continuing for the future and you don't feel any incentive to . . . to put in any hard work because the entire world after the revolution is a lot of hard work and effort ... – then once you've achieved that its kind of "well I've got it I don't need to do anything" and um then you become somewhat nonchalant, and I think a lot of South Africans have that attitude that until it's someone in my family who was killed in a massacre or until this affects my wages, I'm not bothered.”

... we have our generations who survived apartheid and are still living and within that generation I like to say that they've been split into two groups. You have those that were for the apartheid regime and still haven't come out of that and and come to terms with the new democracy . . . we also have very racist people in our country and as much as people like to think that there isn't. there is. ... then you've got those people who worked for apartheid and who they're loving living in this democracy because they know what its been like to be oppressed. And then we've got our generation . . . my generation - who was born two years into democracy but we've never felt that racism that our parents have felt, we've never felt that oppression, so we don't know how to be grateful for what we have, and we are basically taking our freedom for granted... it's one thing to learn about it in school through textbooks, because words on a page become anything words on a page can be anything but when

I did my community service just speaking to those people and listening to these stories I felt that . . you know this is actually real, it clicked with me that this really happened, it's not just something they're making me study for no reason.

So what are we doing and what is working in NI and SA?

--long term pd and intensive follow up support; both the what teachers teach and how

--providing resources that sometimes offer some distance from their history, offering them the opportunity to practice teaching a difficult history where the stakes--for them--are not so high

--but this means that they must make connections, not leave it to the pupils themselves--and this is where that curricular risk lies--that teachers will not do this

--providing resources that allow teachers and pupils to practice making ethical judgments about the past

--making connections to recent events and their relationships to the past and its legacies, particularly vis a vis identity based conflicts

--making identity issues a part of the discussion, not just when violence breaks out or there is conflict

--working with administrators including history inspectors and curriculum advisors to get buy in that this is about big scale cultural change--not one teacher, one subject, one classroom.....

--working with the wider the community, including parents and community members

--learning and teaching the skills of listening, not just telling

--being explicit about the patterns --for example the silence in NI or the effort to be neutral--and addressing them

--whole school work, including meaningful social action projects that includes border crossing

--policy changes--but accompanied by mechanisms for actual implementation

---staying with it, working across generations

--addressing the core structures, institutions, behaviors, legacies and attitudes

--providing models of positive participation and stories which ignite the moral imagination

--placing this work in a wider context of peacebuilding--that it is tied to economic, social, political, environmental sectors. In SA, the kids in the black townships might have greater civic efficacy and historical awareness than their peers in NI and the US--but their life chances are painful to look at and must be addressed, the poverty, violence, sickness and general lack of opportunity that they face threatens their lives and their democracy in profound ways. And these things, for so many young people in the US, threaten ours.

--in a segregated education environment, we must find creative ways for young people to better know and understand each others lives, to not just understand the facts of the histories they experienced but the way those histories and their legacies relate specifically to identity group differences.

--cannot address the past and identity based conflicts as adults wish it was taught to them at the time----what does it look like in 2014 when its the history and its legacies

--students should not be asked to behave or act in a way that we adults are unable or unwilling to behave or act. Particularly in divided societies, emerging from mass violence, asking kids to be the future that we want, to take risks we won't take is not only profoundly unjust but also an unstable foundation for long term peace and stability.

Some thoughts on international education

In NI, SA and the US, privileged young people could often speak about international travel and experiences and civic action with greater commitment, knowledge and reflection than they could talk about their own communities and the poorer people or people from other groups there. Teachers in both the US and SA worried aloud that their students cared more about young people in Ghana than the city in which they lived. I would never want to suggest that young people should be prevented from intl travel and learning--but something is not working when this is happening, when ending a genocide in Darfur or tracking Joseph Kony and the LRA or building a house in Ghana--all necessary things! all things I want kids to know about---has no connection to home where identity conflicts play out. I do worry about those amazing NI kids I met who love the Model UN but have no knowledge or understanding of their own situation or desire to change it.

When we participated in an exchange funded by the State Dept, it involved students from a primarily black urban school and mostly white suburban school from Boston and rural and urban and ethnically mixed students from Rwanda. While the kids from the US were blown away by their experiences in Rwanda and the relationships they developed with the Rwandan students and sometimes deeply challenged and delighted by their cultural differences and similarities, they also were facing these things within their “American” group. This was reinforced when the Rwandan students came to the US and the exchange went between the schools and communities. The Rwandan kids were mindful that their American peers seemed to live in different worlds.

I also want to note the power of international education for teachers. It’s been my experience in the international seminar we’ve offered that teachers begin to see their particular history in a wider context, events they thought were unique to their country or their people can

be seen as part of global history. They also find partners in their work, educators who can become mentors and allies and offer models for their practice. A danger of conflict and post-violence settings is that the conflict becomes everything---it is the only history and the only event that truly matters--even, oddly, when there is silence surround it--international education provides teachers--and students with the opportunity to develop as global citizens. I just want to make sure that they bring this learning home....

DRAFT