

GlobalTribe Educational Curriculum

South Africa Lesson: Truth and Reconciliation

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www.pbs.org/globaltribe

GlobalTribe is a PBS series that combines the spirit of travel with a meaningful exploration of the global issues that affect us all. On our journeys to remote corners of the world, we seek to understand in human terms the universal struggles of our planet: from healing racial wounds to saving the environment to improving the lives of the poorest among us. Our quest is also to find solutions and to meet the unsung heroes in every country who offer us hope and a path to a better tomorrow.

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Introduction / Pre-viewing

1. Before viewing GlobalTribe:
 - Ask students to describe apartheid. What was it? When and where did it occur?
 - Who is Nelson Mandela? Why is he important?
 - Other than apartheid and Nelson Mandela, what other associations do students have with South Africa?

Truth and Reconciliation

Objective: Students will better understand the purpose of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission by debating whether a similar proceeding would be useful in the United States for resolving issues evolving from slavery.

Time: Lesson can be adapted to between 3 and 7 in-class hours.

Grade level: 9-12

1. Copy the main body of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act for the students (the chapters are not necessary) (<http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/legal/act9534.htm>). This is the legal document that outlines the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Based on this document and what they saw in GlobalTribe, ask the students to explain the purpose of the commission? What were the benefits and drawbacks of the procedure it went through?
2. Ask the students if they know of any similar tribunals to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Use some of the links in the resource center to inform them of the Nuremberg Trials, the legal proceedings against German Nazis at the end of World War II which created a model for future generations. More recently, the UN-created International Court of Justice has undertaken war crime tribunals relating to events in Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda. You might ask the students to research some of the issues at stake in these cases.
3. These were all wars, however, whereas what happened in South Africa was ongoing abuse by the people in power against others, based mainly on race and ethnicity. Tell the students that it's been suggested by some African American leaders that similar hearings should occur in our country in order to openly discuss the roots of American racism.

Working in two groups, have students formulate a case for and against having such a proceeding in the US regarding slavery. Encourage them to refer again to South Africa's Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act and to consider the benefits and drawbacks of such a proceeding. They might consider similarities and differences between the situation in the US and South Africa. After providing students with a class period or more to prepare, hold a debate between the two groups.

Assessment

After the debate, the students should reflect in writing about what they learned via the debate. Perhaps they were assigned to a side of the debate that didn't reflect their true views; did they come to have empathy for both sides of the argument? Their responses should reflect a deeper understanding of the complexities that face a nation after a period of violence and great injustice.

Extending

1. If possible, find a member of your community who has lived in South Africa, Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Nazi Germany. Ask them to talk with your class about their experiences.
2. Have students read specific cases from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proceedings and write plays based on their stories. These cases can be very violent and all are emotionally distressing so you may want to choose the cases yourself and also discuss some of the emotional ramifications of reading them; but also talk about the need to understand history, even when it is difficult.

Resources

Truth and Reconciliation Commission home page
<http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/>

Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers
<http://www.pbs.org/pov/tvraceinitiative/facingthetruth/>

Global Policy Forum's International Justice page
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/wldcourt/>

International Court of Justice
<http://www.icj-cij.org/>

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's War Crimes page
<http://www.ushmm.org/topics/article.php?ModuleId=10005140>

The Nuremberg Legacy: Pinochet and Beyond: A Talk at The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
<http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/index.utp?content=events/pinochet/pinochet.php>

Standards

Understands the historical perspective
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=3&StandardID=2>)

Understands the causes of the Civil War
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=5&StandardID=13>)

Understands long-term changes and recurring patterns in world history
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=6&StandardID=46>)

Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=7&StandardID=8>)

