SOME USEFUL RESOURCES AND IDEAS FOR

EDUCATING FOR PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

1. Thinking about "Othering"

    One of the fundamental root causes of violence is our capacity to devalue those we deem different. Unfortunately, this is all too easy and is a tendency rooted in our nature. Invite your students to reflect on two articles from our newsletter/blog: the English Department's Louisa Hadley's "The Language of Othering" and Psychologist Madeleine Côté's "How Categorical Thinking Creates a Biased View of the World". We also recommend a classic PBS documentary: *A Class Divided.* You can find the film discussed on our website in a larger discussion of some of the psychological factors that contribute to violence or click here to screen the film in your class through the Library's Films on Demand subscription.

2. Supporting Dawson's *First People's Initiative*

    Remind students that creating a more peaceful and just world can start right here in Canada. Encourage your students to watch the video of Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Marie Wilson's passionate talk at last semester's Social Science Week. Invite them to leave a comment on our site just below the video. You can also supplement the viewing with two articles from our collection – one by award-winning author and historian James Daschuk and the other by the Humanities Department's Alexandra Law: "Clearing the Plains" and "On Human and Institutional Lifespans".

3. Promoting Empathy for the Suffering of Others

    Personal stories serve as an effective tool to penetrate the barriers we maintain to avoid thinking too much about the men, women and children who suffer from war and other forms of violence. *Inspire Solutions' War Stories* collection offers a poignant reminder of the lasting costs of war. Later this month *Inspire Solutions* will release its latest collection, *Reconciliation Stories*, in which Dawson students and staff offer accounts of their personal experiences with reconciliation. Each in their own way reveals our capacity to build peace, while not ignoring the very human emotions – fear, denial, and pride – that can get in the way. Stay tuned! You will also find other resources on our site which aim to promote empathy, including two interesting videos from an online empathy library and stories from *The Forgiveness Project.*

4. How Can We Find Real Peace After War?

Wars eventually end, but far too often the "peace" established is temporary. Building a stable peace, particularly after long devastating wars, often seems an impossible undertaking. Screen in your classes the award-winning film *Fambul Tok*, which follows a Sierra Leonian human rights activist, who joined forces with an American peace activist, in an effort to bring real peace to his country. The film offers a potentially transformative experience, challenging our basic assumptions about justice and punishment, forgiveness and reconciliation. The film reminds us of the potential impact of a few committed people and highlights the necessary elements that are typically lacking in international and national peacebuilding initiatives.

We recommend that you show the new 52-minute classroom version (*Fambul Tok: Forgiving Savage;* now available at the Dawson library) and end with an account by the above-mentioned peace activist, Libby Hoffmann, as she recounts what happens when the very same film is screened to 60 ex-combatants in Sierra Leone.

5. Reflecting on the Normalization of Violence

Most of us are somewhat ambivalent about violence. We want a more peaceful world, but few of us believe that violence is never needed. However, there is little question that violence is too easily accepted and its effectiveness too rarely challenged. So we need to encourage our students to think critically about the role of violence in our world: why do violent responses often seem so normal? Our website includes many resources that offer tools to reflect on our culture's normalization of violence. Invite your students to:

- Read "War Is Not a Video Game -- Or Is Is?", an article that looks at the blurring lines between virtual war and real war, and includes the reflections of some Dawson students who examined what was missing from their seemingly hyper-realistic war-themed video games.
- Consider our website's examination of some of the common myths about violence. And then scroll down the page for some other interesting resources:
  - watch political scientist Erika Chenoweth describe her surprise when she compared over a century of violent and nonviolent campaigns for social change;
  - read an article by war veteran Paul K. Chappell on the unrealistic depictions of war, violence and trauma in the best-selling novel, *The Hunger Games*
- The *Dawson Centre for Peace Education* also offers some useful resources, including a video of Canadian pacifist James Loney as he reflects on our violent world through the lessons he learned during his 118 days of captivity in Iraq.

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If you are interested in joining the *Inspire Solutions* project, contact Pat Romano at promano@dawsoncollege.qc.ca