

The challenges of poverty, war, and the search for democracy loom large in many parts of the world. In this issue of *Social Education*, a trio of articles examines some dimensions of these problems with a view to helping teachers bring them to the classroom.

Last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank, is an economist who challenged the orthodox presumptions of bankers that no loan should ever be given to people who do not possess collateral or a solid credit history. Yunus believed that desperately poor people often possess the motivation, know-how, and initiative to improve their circumstances if offered even tiny amounts of capital. His bank, based on lending small amounts to the poor, now has more than 6 million clients, and has brought hope to impoverished women in Bangladesh. Its activities and the philosophy of its founder are described by Michelle Yvonne Szpara, Iftikhar Ahmad, and Patricia Velde Pederson, who point out that the award marks "the first time the Nobel Committee directly linked peace with the struggle against poverty." (10)

The conflict and ethnic cleansing in Darfur challenge the conscience of the world; but, as James G. Brown points out, not all methods of presenting the tragedy are sound or advisable. Brown criticizes the use of computer-based simulations, such as the award-winning "Darfur is Dying" website, and urges more respectful ways of teaching about this and similar catastrophes. Like many experts on genocide education, he urges the use of first-person accounts and documentaries rather than simulations as a way of spreading awareness of the disaster.

After decades of dictatorship, the Democratic Republic of the Congo held a landmark election in 2006, which resulted in Joseph Kabila becoming president of the country. In a special feature,

the staff of *Social Education* review the results of this important election and provide some background on the country and the conflicts that have torn it in the past. The feature underlines the importance of the country's eastern resources as a focus of the conflicts, which are sometimes inaccurately presented as primarily ethnic or tribal.

The Great Depression was a historical watershed because of its devastating economic and social consequences. Robert L. Stevens and Jared A. Fogel highlight a method of teaching about it through the music it generated that may engage students more than the conventional presentation of economic events and statistics. In particular, they cite blues music of the era as a way of opening the door to studying the way in which the Depression "hit African Americans especially hard." (15) They describe the often fiery lives of singers of the era, and show how their songs reflected the misery of the times.

This issue's "Looking at the Law" column examines one of the most basic constitutional rights—the Fourth Amendment's protections against unreasonable searches and seizures. Much hinges on the definition of "unreasonable," and instances of search and seizure in schools have presented the Supreme Court with some of its most complex cases. Kari Staros and Charles F. Williams present the legal background and implications of these cases, while James H. Landman's teaching suggestions will help teachers stimulate lively classroom discussions of the topic.

In his regular internet column, C. Frederick Risinger highlights websites of special value for teachers. This issue's recommendations include sites supporting congressional simulations and the teaching of U.S. and world history, as well as a useful set of resources for classes studying terrorism. For less serious moments, he also lists a couple of sites that specialize in trivia and historical games.

John J. DeRose presents a lesson designed to develop students' historical thinking by having them review contrasting international perspectives of historical events. He describes how he presented his class with accounts of the Vietnam War from both U.S. and Vietnamese textbooks, and asked students to compare the accounts and evaluate whatever biases they found in either. The ensuing class discussion improved the ability of students to review different perspectives on history, and evaluate their accuracy on the basis of the available evidence.

Diane Luke and Ann Winkler present an imaginative three-session lesson plan focusing on the historical effects of the scourge of Yellow Fever on U.S. cities. They encourage students to visualize the incidence and effects of an epidemic, and show how the use of the school computer lab can enhance the value of the activity. Their article will also appear in the upcoming NCSS bulletin, *Digital Age: Technology-Based K-12 Lesson Plans for Social Studies*.

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Slips of the Pen

UNHCR wishes to clarify that its name is United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees not the United Nations High Commission on Refugees as stated on page 406, in the article *Musings on Meaning, Meatloaf, and Moe: Reflections on "The State of Social Studies"* (*Social Education*, November/December 2006).

CROSSING BORDERS

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK *from page 6*

As a teacher at the Ramallah Friends High School in the West Bank, Doug Hart realized that he needed to find a way to get his students more interested in developing their English writing skills. His solution has been for them to set up a Palestinian youth magazine on the World Wide Web in which they write about their lives, interests and opinions. After inaugurating an international peer review process in which native speakers of English edited the students' work, he found that his students showed rapid improvement in their writing skills and their capacity for self-expression.

As is customary in the January-February issue of *Social Education*, the opening feature is the address of the NCSS president at the NCSS annual meeting that recently took place. Peggy Altoff, this year's president, emphasizes the need for social studies educators to build up professional relationships, among ourselves and with others in the educational community, in order to affirm the importance of social studies and have it recognized as a core content area in the framework of No Child Left Behind. 🇵🇸

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue.

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