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ME AGAINST MY BROTHER: AN EXPLORATION OF GENOCIDE

Grades: 8 and up

Time: Several days to several weeks

Materials: Scenario slips; definitions of genocide; background information about policies & laws about genocide from different countries; excerpts, articles, film clips, etc., depicting personal accounts of genocide around the world; access to PowerPoint for each group of students

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, Political Science, History, and Language Arts

1. Divide students into four groups. Each group will be given a scenario for which they must decide how they would act/react.

Scenarios might include something like:

A. You have heard numerous rumors that your neighboring country has plans to invade your country & kill and enslave the population. TV & radio reports say that the invasion is imminent, that the opposing country has become bloodthirsty, and that they will stop at nothing to take over your country.

B. Your territory has been so healthy & bountiful that the population has soared. Now there aren't enough resources for the people anymore. You must find a way to survive. You've learned that the territory close to yours has a much smaller population and more readily available resources. The people of this territory have shared a small percentage of their resources but aren't willing to give more. They are willing to fight to protect their resources.

C. You live in a land with many different cultures that get along fairly well. However, a new culture of aliens has moved into your land, and they are causing many problems. These aliens have filthy hygiene habits. They often carry communicable diseases. Many of them are known to be criminals. They have caused high unemployment in your land, because they have taken all the best jobs. They eat more than their share of the food. Your government has discovered that they are not as intelligent as the other cultures of your land.

D. A majority religious group (about 3 million) living in another country has asked our country for help. This group says that the minority religious group (about 1.2 million),

which is in power, is being run by an evil leader whose goal is to push everyone not of his religion out of the country, using whatever means are necessary. Already there are reports of killing, torture, rape & other clashes from both sides. There are confirmed reports that large numbers of the majority group are being rounded up and put in holding camps and/or marched to the border and forced to cross over to another country, which has not welcomed these refugees.

2. Have each group decide how they would handle the scenario, and then have them share their scenario and give their solution(s). Groups will then have a chance to give suggestions to the other groups.

Pertinent information: If no one has mentioned the concept of genocide (as an unethical action), the facilitator might read an excerpt or two, or show a film clip to demonstrate an example of genocide. If the concept of genocide has already arisen in discussion, there may be no need to do so.

3. Lead a discussion around the topics that have been put forth. Questions might include:

- What is genocide? (Their own definitions, or ones they've heard.)
- What have you heard about genocide?
- What do you think about genocide? Is it moral/ethical? Is it ever necessary?
- What counts as genocide? (Jewish or Armenian Holocaust, Rwanda, etc.? What about Native Americans? Black men in prisons in U.S? Starving Iraqi people due to the blockade against Saddam Hussein? Famine/AIDs? Easily curable diseases in Africa?)
- What broader impact does genocide have (in addition to the killing of people)? (environment, economy, nonhuman animals, hunger, etc.)

4. Have students read accounts and articles about genocide and view film clips, and then discuss them.

5. Divide students into small groups (around 4 per group). Have each group research a different example of genocide and create a PowerPoint presentation that includes relevant facts, information, the scope of the impact, personal accounts and graphics.

6. Have groups share their presentations with the rest of the class.

Once every group has shared their presentation, have students combine the presentations into a single presentation (there may be some editing so that the end product isn't too long), set it to music, and share it with the larger community. Opportunities for sharing might include putting it on the school website, sharing it with other schools, sharing it with community groups, etc.

7. Empower students with choices. You may wish to discuss the following:

- What has already been done to address genocide? What's working & what's not working?
- What laws are in place to stop genocide? How/how well are they being enforced?
- Which countries are doing the most about genocide? Which are doing the least? Why?

8. Have students brainstorm possible solutions for addressing genocide.

Divide students into small groups (it could be the same, or new groups) and have them develop a project (which could either address a current instance of genocide or how to deal with genocide issues for the future) that seeks to:

- Bring awareness to genocide and issues surrounding it.
- Influence decision makers to take action and better enforce already-existing laws.
- Develop new laws or strategies to reduce instances of genocide.

Groups will act on their project and then report to the entire class on their progress.

Extension: Groups of students may also want to take what they've learned (including the PowerPoint presentation) and give presentations to other schools or community groups to increase awareness about genocide.

Activity by Marsha Rakestraw (HECP Graduate)