



**FACING
HISTORY
AND
OURSELVES**

COPY

September 28, 1984

Lisa Caputo
Deputy Assistant to the President
Press Secretary to the First Lady
First Lady's Press Office
Old Executive Office Building
Room 100
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Lisa:

Terry Schaefer suggested that I contact you about the possibility of a meeting between Mrs. Clinton and Margot Stern Strom to discuss the violence prevention initiative that Mrs. Clinton is about to launch. I understand that Terry called you about Margot's work as Executive Director of the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation.

Last Friday at a fund raiser for Sen. Kennedy, Margot and I heard Mrs. Clinton and I think that both would benefit from talking with each other about this critical issue. With Facing History's National Teacher Training Team, Margot has pioneered a violence prevention program to train teachers to help children develop critical thinking skills and learn about citizenship and individual choice. Margot has an extraordinary wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience with classroom teachers, educators, community leaders and most importantly from students whose voices she refers to as "our true moral philosophers." Annually more than 500,000 students, as well as thousands of teachers, participate in the Facing History program across the nation.

I understand that you all are in the beginning stages of this project but Terry encouraged me to see if Margot might speak with Mrs. Clinton early on during the planning phase. I know that I may be prejudiced but I think Margot's unique perspective, tremendous knowledge and down-to-earth style are a good match to Mrs. Clinton's open and thoughtful manner.

Vickie Kennedy has also spoken with Margot numerous times about the Facing History program. In addition, Sen. Kennedy's staff has been supportive of our work. Margot would be happy to come to Washington and would be flexible in order to accommodate Mrs. Clinton's schedule. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Erica Stern
Director of External Relations





Facing History and Ourselves is a national educational and teacher training organization which provides a powerful, thought-provoking course of study for middle and high school students that both examines a watershed event of the twentieth century--the Holocaust--and directly links issues of individual choice and social justice to the day to day experience of young people, particularly those in urban areas. It is a dynamic, long-term educational approach that provides an ongoing system of services to help improve the overall quality of instruction to a school system, encouraging professional leadership and building a constituency that links the school and the community.

Facing History is doing something vitally important to the future of our country--bringing social justice and citizenship education into the schools, the only place where our nation's diversity is truly represented. Children of all social, economic, and racial backgrounds have the opportunity to explore the issues of peer pressure, scapegoating, and the responsibility of the individual in a democratic society.

The program is having a profound effect on education by preparing teachers to help students learn to think critically and to connect history to the moral choices they face in their own lives. Facing History illuminates themes of racism, antisemitism, and violence, and the difference each individual can make when a stand is taken for what is right.

Begun as a local grassroots organization 18 years ago, Facing History has a national impact on school reform. It is a model for partnership between government and the private sector, as it is now disseminated through the National Diffusion Network and funded by a combination of individual, foundation, and government grants. Founded by two Brookline middle school teachers, Facing History now reaches over 500,000 adolescents each year through the work of program staff in the national headquarters in Boston, regional offices in Chicago, Memphis and New York, and major initiatives in Baltimore, Los Angeles, and many other areas.

Facing History is an archetype of what can be done to jump-start education in urban areas by addressing the questions that kids face every day. Facing History provides timely classroom materials and the staff development opportunities necessary for teachers to address these crucial issues through a rigorous program of study. By working directly with teachers, Facing History's impact is multiplied each year that a trained teacher works with groups of students.

If you would like to receive further information or become involved with the work of Facing History, we encourage you to call or write our national headquarters in Brookline.



Boston Sunday Globe

Fighting hate's hidden curriculum

*Excerpted from an editorial by
Margot Stern Strom, Executive Director*

"Increasingly, the nation's youth are expressing rage through violence. ..We must provide our children with a reason to go to school - a curriculum that matters. We need to re-energize, re-support and re-tool our teachers to reach and to teach the students who need the lessons of tolerance first before they can practice the science, math and history necessary to work and live in this complex world...."



Facing History's Approach to Violence Prevention

Facing History's approach to violence prevention emphasizes the decision making process. The case studies featured in Facing History's resource books show democracies in crisis. Holocaust and Human Behavior, our primary publication, begins with raising questions of identity and decision-making, and then applies these issues to the Nazi era and students' lives today.

These materials enable students to study the complex steps and decisions that contribute to gradual dehumanization. Students investigate the escalation from verbal scapegoating and social isolation of those deemed "different" to episodes of state-sanctioned violence and eventual mass murder. The program helps students analyze the role media images play - then and today - in creating a climate that desensitizes violence and is conducive to hate crimes. As students read about the choices of ordinary people during this history, they realize that individuals are capable of being both bystanders and perpetrators.

Facing History encourages students to look for alternatives to violent behavior. As students develop an appreciation for the importance of choices, they begin to realize that one's actions or inactions can determine the future. All of our publications highlight examples of people who refused to stand idle in the midst of injustice, recognizing the fragility of democracy and the need to act to preserve it.

Our staff has worked closely with teachers in a variety of schools around the country (urban and suburban, private and public) to help students think about the process of becoming empowered without using violence.

Facing History is one of 21 organizations recently selected to be part of the National Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners. the Network is sponsored by the Education Development Center (EDC) with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. As a member of the network, Facing History is eager to share its expertise and resources with other organizations and schools working in related fields.



FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

Violence and Education Fact Sheet

A series of strategic planning ("2000") reports initiated by the RAND foundation describes the challenges that we face as we approach the next century. LA 2000 outlines the shifting demographics of the Los Angeles area- people from more than 100 cultural and ethnic backgrounds will compose the new mosaic in LA. According to this report (whose conclusions are mirrored in similar reports such as Baltimore 2000, New York 2000, etc.), the implications of increased diversity could be: "increased racial isolation; destabilization...; divisive political conflicts; escalating crime and, ultimately, shrinking economic opportunity." To avoid these consequences and to create a positive future, the report concludes that "we must find a way to foster mutual respect, equality, and partnership" (p. 52).

Increasingly, some in our society seem to be turning to violence and intolerance as a response to difference. This violence is spilling over into the lives of adolescents at an alarming rate. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that more than 100,000 students bring guns to school each day and 160,000 students each day do not attend school because of fear of harm or intimidation, while over 2,000 students are physically attacked each hour. The National Education Goals Report, just issued, confirms that substantial numbers of students continue to be victims of violent acts at school. 10% of 10th graders reported bringing a weapon to school at least once in the previous month. 25% of 12th graders report having been threatened with a weapon in the previous year. Most alarmingly, threats and injuries are higher among younger students (8th grade) than among students in upper grades, suggesting that the scale of violence will accelerate. Over one-third of all students report that students at their school belong to fighting gangs (pp. 148-160).

These facts and other studies have raised the public consciousness concerning violence in the lives of our youth. Yet studies show that this violence is neither random, uncontrollable, nor inevitable (APA Commission on Violence and Youth). The State of Virginia's report, Violence in Schools, being presented to Congress by the National Education Association as a model for federal action, suggests the key role that education can play in confronting this issue. According to the report (pp. 30-31), we need to teach students fundamental skills in human relations and citizenship: "The social studies and related curriculum areas need to assist children to apply concepts of civic responsibility in a more direct fashion than presently is done."

While many call for increased school safety through additional metal detectors, etc., we are wary of solutions that do not address the issue of personal responsibility. A recent report from the Center for Disease Control summarized a study that showed that the installation of metal detectors "had no apparent effect on the prevalence of threats and physical fights in any location" (CDC, October 15 Weekly Report, "Violence Related Attitudes and Behaviors of High School Students, New York City, 1992). We agree that any solution must be comprehensive, focusing on the attitudes and behaviors that foster youth violence. The American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth also points towards education solutions in its recently released report, "Violence and Youth." Their research confirms that schools and teachers can educate youth to work and live together, and to resolve conflicts and differences through non-violent means.

The relationship of the individual to society, the connection of constitutional issues to our daily lives, avenues for working out differences, the origins and dangers of violence and hatred, opportunities for care and compassion; these are essential lessons of democracy that have been untaught in our schools.



Preface

The struggle today is for the nation's "conscience and future—a future that is being determined right now in the bodies and minds and spirits of *every* American child—white, African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, rich, middle class, and poor," writes Marian Wright Edelman, the founder of the Children's Defense Fund. "Many of the battles for this future will not be as dramatic as Gettysburg or Vietnam or Desert Storm, but they will shape our place in the twenty-first century no less." And she warns that even as Communism is collapsing all around the world, "the American Dream is collapsing. . . for millions of children, youths, and families in all racial and income groups. American is pitted against American as economic uncertainty and downturn increase our fears, our business failures, our poverty rates, our racial divisions, and the dangers of political demagoguery."

Day in and day out, the morning newspapers and the evening newscasts document the struggle Marian Edelman describes. And each of us feels the consequences of life in a racially and ethnically divided nation in small ways and large. As David Schoem, a sociology professor, points out:

The effort it takes for us to know so little about one another across racial and ethnic groups is truly remarkable. That we can live so closely together, that our lives can be so intertwined socially, economically, and politically, and that we can spend so many years of study in grade school and even in higher education and yet still manage to be ignorant of one another is clear testimony to the deep-seated roots of this human and national tragedy. What we do learn along the way is to place heavy reliance on stereotypes, gossip, rumor, and fear to shape our lack of knowledge.

The success of that "reliance on stereotypes, gossip, rumor, and fear" can be seen and heard in classrooms across the nation. Students express a universal knowledge of negative words and hostile images of "the other." When asked what they know about "them," the answers too often reveal virulent stereotypes: "Asians are . . .," "Blacks are . . .," "Jews are . . .," "Italians are. . . ." Even very young children have managed to acquire a store of racial and religious epithets. Although we teach our children that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me," they know a different reality. They are well aware that words of hate degrade, dehumanize, and eventually destroy. Indeed, much of the violence that threatens our society has its roots in bigotry and hate.

How did our children acquire the language of bigotry? One answer lies in the lyrics to a song from the musical *South Pacific*: "You've got to be taught to hate and fear. You've got to be taught from year to year. It's got to be drummed into your sweet little ear. You've got to be carefully taught,

you've got to be carefully taught." Our children have indeed been carefully taught and far too many of them have mastered the lesson. If we are to win the struggle for the nation's conscience and future, we must counter lessons of hate with lessons that promote understanding and caring. We must help students examine their thoughts and feelings and then confront not only their own potential for passivity and complicity but also their courage and resilience. And we must teach them to value their rights as citizens and take responsibility for their actions. To do so, they must know not only the triumphs of history but also the failures, the tragedies, and the humiliations.

Why is it necessary to study evil in the past to understand freedom, value difference, and seek justice today? Hannah Arendt, one of the foremost political philosophers of our time, offered one answer to that question. She argued that we can put past evils into the service of a future good only by squarely facing reality. She wrote, "The methods used in the pursuit of historical truth are not the methods of the prosecutor, and the men who stand guard over the facts are not the officers of interest groups—no matter how legitimate their claims—but the reporters, the historians, and finally the poets." The facts, no matter how horrifying must be preserved, not "lest we forget," but so that we may judge.

Joseph Brodsky, a Nobel-Prize-winning poet from what was once Yugoslavia, agrees. In his view, evil is not an aberration that stands apart from ourselves but a mirror—"a reflection of ourselves: of human negative potential." And he maintains that we will never be able to combat evil unless we honestly examine the negative as well as the positive aspects of our nature. History matters for other reasons too. It fosters perspective-taking, critical thinking, and moral decision-making. Our students must learn that the world they live in did not just happen. It is the result of choices made by countless individuals and groups. And even the smallest of those decisions can have enormous consequences for both good and evil. Journalist Bill Moyers proudly notes that every school he attended was a legacy created "brick by brick, dollar by dollar, classroom by classroom, book by book" by people he had never met, many of whom had died long before he was born. In *Before the Mayflower*, Lerone Bennett, Jr., uses a similar metaphor to describe how communities throughout the nation came to be segregated. He likens it to the building of a wall "brick by brick, bill by bill, fear by fear." After World War II, a German professor described a similar process when he confessed:

If the last and worst act of the whole [Nazi] regime had come immediately after the first and smallest, thousands, yes millions, would have been sufficiently shocked. . . . But of course this isn't the way it happens. In between come all the hundreds of little steps, some of them imperceptible, each of them preparing you not to be shocked by the next. Step C is not so much worse than Step B, and, if you did not make a stand at Step B, why should you at Step C? And so on to Step D.

In a Facing History course, students examine each of those small steps. As they do so, they discover that history is not inevitable. They also come to realize that there are no easy answers to the complex problems of racism, antisemitism, hate, and violence, no quick fixes for social injustices, and no simple solutions to moral dilemmas. Meaningful change takes patience and commitment. Still, as one student said of the course, "The more we learn about why and how people behave the way they do, the more likely we are to become involved and find our own solutions." Another writes:

Life used to be so easy. There always seemed to be an answer to everything. Everything fit into place, getting up at seven o'clock, going to school at eight, coming home at four, doing homework at eight, and finally going to bed at eleven. In my tightly scheduled life I left no time to reflect. In these past four months, however, I've been forced to think. It hasn't been easy.

She's right. It is not easy. Facing History began for me in 1976, at a time when I was both teacher and student. I taught history and English to junior high school students in a suburb of Boston in the morning and studied moral development theory at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education in the afternoon. That spring, I attended my first workshop on the Holocaust and discovered a history of which I was totally ignorant. As I listened to the speakers and reflected on the issues they raised, I began to feel a sense of disquiet about my own education and that of my students. As my uneasiness intensified, I came upon a letter that a principal sends to his teachers on the first day of school:

Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.

Children poisoned by educated physicians.

Infants killed by trained nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

So I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

That letter provided the impetus for me to face my own history. My journey began with newly awakened memories of my childhood. I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, at a time when separate never meant equal. I grew up in a city where "colored" water fountains did not spout brightly colored water as a child might expect but stood instead as symbols of the unchallenged dogmas of racism. I grew up in a city where black children could

visit the zoo only on Thursdays and where “their” library housed discarded books from “our” library. I grew up knowing there would always be plenty of empty seats at the front of the bus for young white girls while those with a darker skin color would stand crowded at the back of the bus. I grew up knowing all this, but it was never addressed at school.

Conspicuous by its absence from my formal schooling was any study of the ethical or moral dimensions of history or human behavior. Our teachers didn’t trust my classmates or me with the complexities of history. The dogmas were easier to teach. There were, on occasion, inspirational teachers who encouraged dialogue, risked inquiry, or introduced controversy. But I am hard pressed to remember any discussion of race or any explanation of the water fountains, zoo admission policies, the separate libraries, or the way seats were allocated on the buses. What my teachers neglected or elected not to teach, I ultimately learned at home. My real education was family centered. My parents taught me the meaning of social justice, the importance of political participation, and the value of faith. Those lessons nurtured my development and gave impulse to my life’s work. Later as a teacher, I tried to ensure that my students learned what my own teachers failed to teach—that history is largely the result of human decisions, that prevention is possible, and that education must have a moral component if it is to make a difference.

Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) is based on those beliefs. It is also based on the conviction that education in a democracy must be what Alexis de Tocqueville once called an “apprenticeship in liberty.” That is, it must promote the attitudes, values, and skills needed to live in freedom. In an article entitled “America Skips School,” Benjamin R. Barber, a political science professor, said of that process:

The claim that all men are born free, upon which America was founded, is at best a promising fiction. In real life, as every parent knows, children are born fragile, born needy, born ignorant, born unformed, born weak, born foolish, born dependent—born in chains. We acquire our freedom over time, if at all. Embedded in families, clans, communities, and nations, we must learn to be free. We may be natural consumers and born narcissists, but citizens have to be made.

Our nation’s early leaders understood the connection between freedom and moral education. After all, liberty, equality, and justice are assertions of right and wrong; they raise moral issues that require the ability not only to reason but also to make judgments and then take appropriate action. Only a people that truly values its own freedom will respond to injustice with moral outrage. That is why Harriet Beecher Stowe viewed the mid-nineteenth century, the age in which she lived, as a time when “nations are trembling and convulsed.” When asked if the United States was safe from those convulsions, she replied, “Every nation that carries in its bosom great and unredressed injustice has in it the elements of this last convulsion.” Langston Hughes expressed it more directly when he wondered what hap-

pens to a “dream deferred.” “Does it sag like a heavy load?” he asked. “Or does it explode—like a raisin in the sun?”

Today the danger still lies within the nation. As Barber notes we have been “nominally democratic for so long that we presume it is our natural condition rather than the product of persistent effort and tenacious responsibility. We have decoupled rights from civic responsibilities and severed citizenship from education on the false assumption that citizens just happen.” He describes civic literacy as the “fundamental literacy by which we live in a civil society. It encompasses the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act with deliberation in a pluralistic world, and the empathy to identify sufficiently with others to live with them despite conflicts of interest and differences in character. At the most elementary level, what our children suffer from most, whether they’re hurling racial epithets from fraternity porches or shooting one another down in schoolyards, is the absence of civility.”

Barber and others have defined *civility* as “a work of the imagination, for it is through the imagination that we render others sufficiently like ourselves for them to become subjects of tolerance and respect, if not always affection.” Vaclav Havel has called the building of a civil society the “greatest challenge of our time.” Facing History and Ourselves seeks to meet that challenge by reviving the time-honored idea that history is a branch of moral philosophy with lessons that can serve as guidelines for prudent thinking and moral behavior. With the guidance and support of the Facing History staff and resource speakers, teachers and students explore the roots of religious, racial, and ethnic hatreds and their consequences. And they come to recognize that “the shadowy figures that look out at us from the tarnished mirror of history are—in the final analysis—ourselves.”

Facing History holds up “the tarnished mirror of history” by asking students to analyze events that threatened democracy in one of the most murderous centuries in history—the twentieth century, a century marked by the Nazis’ attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe *solely* because of their ancestry. That history, like every history, is both universal and particular. As Eva Fleischner has noted, “We can attain universality only through particularity: there are no shortcuts. The more we come to know about the Holocaust, how it came about, how it was carried out, etc., the greater the possibility that we will become sensitized to inhumanity and suffering whenever they occur.” She therefore views the history of the events that led to the Holocaust not as *their* history but as *our* history. In her view, it touches us all.

Important connections can be made with the events that led to the genocide of the Armenian people during World War I; the enslavement of Africans; the destruction of Native American nations in the years that followed European colonization of the Americas; and mass murders during World War II in Nanking, China, and the Soviet Union and more recently in Cambodia, Laos, Tibet, and Rwanda. However, the series of events that led to the Holocaust is the focus of this book for a number of reasons.

Perhaps the most important is that it helps students better understand the modern world and ultimately themselves. In no other history are the steps that resulted in totalitarianism and ultimately genocide so carefully documented not only by the victims but also by perpetrators and bystanders. It is a history that clearly shows the deadly consequences of unexamined prejudices, unfaced fears, and unchallenged lies. It shows too the dangers of charismatic leaders who manipulate the young by appealing to prejudice, fear, and ignorance. We do not want yet another generation of young people influenced by propaganda to march blindly in someone else's parade.

It is a history that shattered what historian Ronnie Landau calls in his book *The Nazi Holocaust*, "Europe-centered, liberal dreams of Western reason and culture as forces that necessarily sensitize and humanize us and which promote genuine tolerance of difference. It also destroyed, once and for all, the tottering belief that science and technology were securely harnessed for the good of humanity, as scientists, politicians, bureaucrats and generals found the means progressively to give destructive expression to their decisions and fantasies."

Landau notes that the Holocaust was, "in part, the outcome of problems of identity—the alienation and isolation of the individual in our modern mass societies, which have become so depersonalized and conformist."

Nazism appealed to people's need for a sense of belonging, loyalty and community, a need left dangerously unfulfilled by modern, vast, centralized society. It encouraged a psychological state whereby they could easily be sucked into the entire bureaucratic process. Bureaucracy is a human invention which can subjugate its inventor, undermine human conscience and allow individuals to abdicate personal moral responsibility.

Thus the events that led to the Holocaust raise profound and disturbing questions about the consequences of our actions and our beliefs, of how we as individuals make distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil. Those questions are universal even though the Holocaust is unique. Many of these questions center on the ways we as individuals and as members of groups define what Helen Fein calls our "universe of obligation"—the circle of persons "toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply and whose injuries call for [amends] by the community."

This history also forces us to consider the consequences of what it means to be pushed outside that "universe of obligation." In *The Cunning of History*, Richard Rubenstein describes such individuals as "superfluous." As he puts it, "Political rights are neither God-given, autonomous nor self-validating. The Germans understood that no person has any rights unless they are guaranteed by an organized community with the power to defend such rights." And in the 1930s and 1940s, no organized community was willing to defend the rights of Jews, "Gypsies," and other groups the Nazis regarded as "subhuman."

The racism that permeated Nazi Germany was not an isolated occurrence. As Rubenstein explains, Auschwitz is linked, although not exclusively, to a cultural tradition of slavery “which stretches back to the Middle Passage from the coast of Africa, and beyond, to the enforced servitude in Ancient Greece and Rome. If we ignore this linkage, we ignore the existence of the sleeping virus in the bloodstream of civilization, at the risk of our future.”

The story of those connections is not an easy history to teach or learn. As one Facing History student noted, “This history would be much easier to learn if it weren’t true.” It is a violent and painful history. But it is one that we must confront because it serves as a compelling reminder of the power of ideas, even mistaken ideas, to shape our thoughts, our judgment, and ultimately our behavior. Albert Camus was among those who reflected on the relationship between thought and action. He wrote: “I know that the great tragedies of history often fascinate men with approaching horror. Paralyzed, they cannot make up their minds to do anything but wait. So they wait, and one day the Gorgon devours them. But I should like to convince you that the spell can be broken, that there is only an illusion of impotence, that strength of heart, intelligence, and courage are enough to stop fate and sometimes reverse it.”

Scientist Jacob Bronowski tried to break that spell not long after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan at the end of World War II. The evening he viewed the the ashy, clinical remains of the city of Nagasaki, he experienced what he called a universal moment. He says of that moment, “On an evening like that evening, some time in 1945, each of us in his own way learned that his imagination had been dwarfed. We looked up and saw the power of which we had been proud loom over us like the ruins of Nagasaki.” The experience convinced him that all decisions about disarmament and other issues which weigh the fate of nations “should be made within the forbidding context of Nagasaki: only then could statesmen make realistic judgments of the problems which they handle on our behalf.” But bureaucrats and scientists alike disapproved of the idea. They told him that delegates would be “uncomfortable” in Nagasaki.

Confronting the history of racism and antisemitism at home and abroad is profoundly uncomfortable. But by denying our students access to this history, we fail to honor their potential to confront, to cope, and to make a difference today and in their futures. As one student wrote, “Maybe in the future, this great chance of learning this history could affect how I reason, act, and maybe eventually what I might become, or do.” Or as another pointed out, “Once a person has been subjected to the materials of the course, they can never again feel the same way about their own humanity or that of others.”

Introduction

Facing History and Ourselves is devoted to teaching about the dangers of indifference and the values of civility by helping schools confront the complexities of history in ways that promote critical and creative thinking about the challenges we face and the opportunities we have for positive change. Facing History is unique in that it is not a program of one-week seminars that are all-too-easily forgotten, a packaged curriculum, or a prescribed set of lessons. Rather, it offers dynamic, long-term intervention. It is designed to have a lasting effect on the life of a school.

THE FACING HISTORY APPROACH

With the help of the Facing History staff and resource speakers, teachers who participate in the program learn to use the tools of the humanities—inquiry, analysis, and interpretation—to supplement or enrich existing courses. At workshops and follow-up sessions, those teachers are offered materials that engage and challenge their students' most advanced thinking and promote individual reflection and group discussion.

Adolescence is a time when many young people struggle with issues of independence, trust, freedom, and responsibility. It is also a time when life centers around peer groups and mutual relationships. The readings and films recommended by Facing History support and challenge students in their efforts to define their own identity and their relationship to society as a whole. Thus many of those materials promote an understanding of differing perspectives, competing truths, and the need to comprehend not only one's own motives but also those of others. By offering a framework for examining issues students regard as important, Facing History helps them find meaning in their education and empowers them to make positive changes in their lives.

Adolescence is a time of major developmental transitions. Students need to think about their thinking in order to become aware of their moral development. As a student explained, "One thing this course has done, it has made more aware—not only of what happened in the past but also of what is happening today, now, in the world and in me." Facing History seeks to foster cognitive growth and historical understanding through a content and methodology that induces conflict and continually complicates students' simple answers to complex questions. The readings and activities included in the Resource Book, the recommended videos, and the guest speakers encourage students to view the world from more than one perspective, to place themselves in someone else's shoes, and to express their ideas freely. They are stimulated to think about the choices they have as individuals within a society and the consequences of those decisions.

At a time when many are urging that students learn to think critically without paying much attention to what those students are to think about, *Facing History* stresses compelling content. This is not a program that is mired in relativism. *Facing History* has a strong bias. It is committed to content that furthers democratic values and beliefs. It is also committed to prevention. We believe that unexamined prejudices, myths, and misinformation are threatening the nation and its future. The violence in our streets is but one sign of the danger. We therefore must teach our students to look, listen, read, and think critically. And they must be constantly challenged to complicate their thinking by not accepting simple solutions to complex questions. Many of the readings and films used in *Facing History* courses were deliberately selected with that aim in mind. Some focus on the choices open to various individuals. Others draw attention to aspects of society or human behavior that affect the kinds of decisions groups and even nations make. Each reading helps students realize that "life is almost always more complicated than we think. Behind the gleaming ranks of those who seem totalitarian robots stand men and women, various and diverse, complex and complicated, some brave, some cowardly, some brainwashed, some violently idiosyncratic, and all of them very human."

As students engage in thinking about thinking, they develop a vocabulary of decision-making and justice as aids to their reasoning. And as they grapple with the range of choices individuals actually had in the decades before the Nazis took power, many find it harder and harder to defend simple explanations of why democracy failed in Germany. They also begin to see critical connections between past and present. And they begin to wonder. As a *Facing History* student from South Africa wrote in her journal, "We learnt lessons that cannot be found in any textbook. The discussions and stories held me spellbound. Now my mind is like a probing satellite and I can ask more than 'who, how many and where.' I can ask 'why and how could.'" In time she may also begin to raise questions of "should and would."

The fundamental concerns of *Facing History* and *Ourselves* figure prominently in the works of Hannah Arendt. She has traced her own impulse to think about thinking to the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi official in charge of the deportation and extermination of Jews. She expected the trial to reveal that he acted out of ideological conviction, evil motives, or stupidity. Instead she concluded that he never gave much thought to what he did. Indeed, he was protected from thinking by routines, clichés, and the constant pressure to conform. Arendt therefore wondered, "Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining. . . be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even condition them against it?"

In the end, Arendt decided that even though the activity of thinking breaks down preconceived ideas, thinking in and of itself does not lead to action. In her view, informed judgment is the bridge between thought and action. Thus, she did not consider judgment the mechanical process of

applying a rule or law to a particular case but rather an art that can be carried out only within the realm of choice.

The writings of Jacob Bronowski have also influenced Facing History's approach to the process of thinking, judging, and ultimately taking action. "There is no way of exchanging information that does not demand an act of judgment," he wrote. "All knowledge, all information between human beings can only be exchanged within a play of tolerance. And that is true whether the exchange is in science, or in literature, or in religion, or in politics, or even in any form of thought that aspires to dogma." For Bronowski, the ability to tolerate divergent views is what distinguishes humans from all other creatures.

The Facing History program incorporates both Arendt's ideas and Bronowski's by offering students a variety of perspectives and helping them sift through differing, and at times conflicting, points of view before asking them to make wise judgments. It is, writes one high school teacher, a program that "honors duality; process and product, head and heart, history and ethics."

The importance of pushing students to form judgments was brought to light by the research Betty Bardige conducted for the thesis she wrote under the direction of Professor Carol Gilligan. Bardige discovered that unless students are encouraged to make moral judgments, they are likely to become paralyzed by their own thinking and therefore unable to respond to injustice. She maintains that it is essential that students examine the consequences of actions as well as analyze the causes.

Facing History and Ourselves does both. It helps teachers move their students from thought to judgment and ultimately to participation. Through that process, students and their teachers build a community of thinkers. As Hannah Arendt once observed, the activity of thinking is a solitary endeavor—a dialogue with oneself in order to formulate moral principles. Judgment, however, requires dialogue with others. Arendt stressed the importance of that discourse.

The world is not humane because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse. However much we are affected by the things of the world, however deeply they may stir and stimulate us, they become human for us only when we can discuss them with our fellows. . . . We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.

In a Facing History classroom, teachers and students chronicle their learning in journals. They use their journals to reflect on who they are and to re-examine their goals, values, and beliefs. Only then do they come together to share insights and responses to complex questions. That sharing requires trust and mutual respect. Building that kind of classroom community is hard work and requires a new relationship between students and

teacher. Many teachers make contracts with their students to underscore the importance of that new relationship. One teacher wrote:

I told the students that the curriculum touches on a great many things that could hurt us all if we were not sensitive to one another's feelings. I stated that I was uncomfortable teaching the unit unless we could maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect. The contract included that each person could express his or her feelings without being put down by others.

The materials provided in this Resource Book are designed to stimulate and inform that interaction by reinforcing the idea that learning is a collaborative endeavor that benefits every participant. It guides both the teacher and the student. Thus Facing History seeks to:

- develop an educational model that helps students move from thought to judgment to participation as they confront the moral questions inherent in a study of violence, racism, antisemitism, and bigotry;
- reveal the universal connections of history through a rigorous examination of a particular history;
- further a commitment to adolescents as the moral philosophers of our society and help them build a "civil society" through an understanding that turning neighbor against neighbor leads to violence.

Educators learn the Facing History approach by experiencing it in workshops, retreats, and institutes, where they encounter scholars who challenge their thinking not only about ethics and history but also about the process of teaching. As one administrator has noted that "the material is so powerful and so significant that it calls to question why we teach and how we teach. It calls for mastery of teaching skills, learning how to pose the significant questions and how to complicate the thinking of those who would be content with simple solutions."

The Facing History staff helps educators acquire those skills as they explore the opportunities new approaches can provide to challenge students and stimulate their thinking. Later teachers meet individually with a Facing History program associate to design a Facing History course that meets their students' needs and the needs of their particular school.

Teachers who participate in Facing History programs have access not only to the program staff and resource speakers but also to the Facing History Resource Center, a lending library of relevant videos and films, books, slides, tape recordings, posters, and articles on a broad range of topics. They also receive newsletters, invitations to Facing History conferences, and an opportunity to join a community of teachers in their region who meet regularly to continue learning. In addition, Facing History offers adult education programs and community-wide events that help link the work of Facing History to the larger community.

For nearly two decades, Facing History and Ourselves has been documenting the effectiveness of these efforts. Reports of those evaluations, which are available from the Facing History Resource Center, show that the program is achieving its goals. Students are indeed capable of handling a rigorous course that demands their best thinking. And they are able to make connections between the past and their own lives. And although each student seems to feel the impact in a slightly different way, few participants are able to avoid comparisons with issues close to home; any discussion of prejudice, discrimination, or violence almost invariably draws parallels to similar problems in the students' own schools and neighborhoods. Henry Zabierek, the director of social studies in Brookline at the time Facing History was founded summarized the program in this way:

This curriculum is about more than the Holocaust. It's about the reading and the writing and the arithmetic of genocide, but it's also about such R's as rethinking, reflecting, and reasoning. It's about prejudice, discrimination and scapegoating; but it's also about human dignity, morality, law, and citizenship. It's about avoiding and forgetting, but it's also about civic courage and justice. In an age of "back to basics" this curriculum declares that there is one thing more basic, more sacred, than any of the three R's; namely, the sanctity of human life.

In all probability, Facing History will not end prejudice, discrimination, scapegoating, or even fights on the playground. Nevertheless, program evaluations demonstrate that students and teachers in a Facing History program have heightened awareness of the causes and consequences of those issues. In some cases, the impact has been subtle, with students observing that they have begun to think differently about stereotypes and racial slurs. As one student explained, "This unit showed me that as a young black man my race is not the only race that has suffered. . . . We are all simply human beings. . . . This course made me look inside myself. I for one know that I have felt prejudice toward someone of some other group. These things are all a part of being a human being, but cooperation, peace and love are ingredients also." Achieving that degree of awareness is a meaningful objective for many students.

In other instances, participants in the program have shown more dramatic changes. A young Chicagoan who found the courage to leave his gang said of the program, "Facing History showed me that there are people, teachers and other students concerned about teenagers' well-being in this world of violence. Facing History showed me that yes, people do know we have problems growing up in today's society and no, we are not turning our backs on it."

In another community, a school recently reported the way its students responded when teachers discovered that someone had written "KKK" and "Nigger go home" on the washroom walls. When those students were confronted with what had happened, the room was silent for a moment

and then a white student turned to a black classmate and said, "Valita, I'm sorry that's written on the walls; it's no different than what we've been studying. This is how it begins. I'm going to go and take it off, and anyone who wants to join me, can." One by one, students rose and followed her to the washroom where they erased the graffiti.

Parents have also observed measurable differences. One parent wrote, "In no other course was [my daughter] exposed to real dilemmas as complex and challenging. In no other course has she been inspired to use the whole of her spiritual, moral, and intellectual resources to solve a problem. In no other course has she been so sure that the task mattered seriously for her development as a responsible person."

Just as many students find that the program has altered their perceptions and compelled them to think more about their behaviors, many teachers find that it has changed not only the way they teach but also the way they think. Ron Gwiazda, the assistant to the headmaster of Boston Latin School, described that process when he spoke of the impact the program had on one of his students.

Bedelia is an excellent student, runs 400 meters in under 60 seconds, has a radiant smile, and is one of the most sweet and gentle human beings I know. We like each other very much, but when Bedelia thinks through the complex issues of race and violence and writes in her journal "we," I realize that I'm not part of that "we." And I don't have simple answers to the conflicting emotions that she feels, nor to this invisible but present distance that arises in that "we."

What I can offer Bedelia, because of Facing History and Ourselves, is ways of thinking about complex issues and ways of coming to know herself and me better, which is essentially the core of Facing History and Ourselves. What Facing History and Ourselves does so well is to avoid substituting one set of simple solutions, one polemic, one propaganda, for another. Instead it aims to teach teachers to teach young people to think critically and independently, to know the past as fact and to confront its implications in ways that make us all seek to change the future for the better. If there are no simple answers to the hatred and violence from the past or in the present, there are the countering forces of intellectual honesty, integrity, justice, and empathy.

A C L O S E R L O O K A T T H E R E S O U R C E B O O K

This new edition of the Facing History Resource Book, is similar to the previous one in many respects. Like the earlier edition, it is not a textbook—a series of discreet lessons with goals and objectives. Rather, it provides students and teachers with a meaningful but flexible structure for examining complex events and ideas. It also fosters original and thoughtful responses by encouraging students to reflect on difficult questions and issues. The new edition, like the earlier one, helps students make connections between historical events and their own lives. And it too can be used not only in social studies classes but also in combination with English, art, and science classes.

There are differences between the two editions. The “Using” section that followed readings in the earlier edition are now known as “Connections.” Films and key quotations no longer appear as readings. Films are now referenced in Connections along with suggestions for their use in the classroom. Key quotations appear as sidebars. And the new book, unlike the earlier one, contains a detailed table of contents, an index of audio-visual resources, and an index.

The readings in the new edition are somewhat longer and provide more context. Many were selected to help students better understand the links between the past and their own lives today. The new edition also contains more social history and reflects the insights of current scholarship, particularly scholarship on issues related to violence and racism. Two important chapters in the earlier edition have been deleted and their content added to other chapters. As a result, anti-Judaism and antisemitism are discussed within the context of particular eras rather than in an isolated chapter. The same is true of the Armenian Genocide. It too has been placed within a chronological framework.

The new edition is cross-referenced to two other Facing History publications: *Elements of Time* and *Choosing to Participate*. *Elements of Time* is a companion manual to the Facing History videotape collection of Holocaust testimonies—the result of a five-year collaborative project between Facing History and the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale University made possible through the vision and support of Eli Evans and the Charles H. Revson Foundation. The book includes transcriptions of the videos along with essays and readings from some of the many scholars and resource speakers who have addressed Facing History conferences. *Choosing to Participate* is an outgrowth of the last chapter of the Resource Book. It addresses students’ questions about how they can make a difference by introducing them to traditions of care and models for participation in American democracy. The book provides a history of the voluntary sector and traces the way individuals and groups have used the First Amendment to the Constitution as avenues of outrage and advocacy.

AN OVERVIEW

The first two chapters in the Resource Book use literature to introduce the key concepts developed in Facing History. Those ideas are then applied to real individuals and real events in history. The opening chapters engage students in thinking about behavior and introduce them to the principles of decision-making. They also help students build a vocabulary of morality. In Chapter 1, for example, students explore the connections between individuals and the society in which they live. And they discover why Martha Minow argues that “when we identify one thing as like the others, we are not merely classifying the world; we are investing particular classifications with consequences and positioning ourselves in relation to those meanings. When we identify one thing as unlike the others, we are dividing the world; we use our language to exclude, to distinguish—to discriminate.”

Chapter 1 also begins an exploration of many of the central questions developed in the program:

How is our identity formed?

How do our attitudes and beliefs influence our thinking? How does our thinking affect our actions?

How can we keep our individuality and still be a part of a group?

How does our tendency to see us as unique but them as members affect our behavior as well as our attitudes?

Chapter 2 then outlines the ways various nations, including the United States, have defined their identity. And it helps students understand the significance of those definitions. After all, those who define a nation’s identity determine who is a part of its “universe of obligation.” Early in the chapter, the focus is on the United States and the way three sets of ideas shaped those definitions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: *democracy*, *race*, and *nationalism*. All three concepts have had tremendous appeal to people all over the world. And all three, when carried to an extreme, have been abused. False ideas about “race” have on occasion turned nationalism into ethnocentrism and chauvinism. At the same time, some democrats have confused equality with conformity. Others have viewed differences as proof that “they” are less human than “we” are.

The next few chapters focus primarily on the decisions that resulted in the Holocaust and relate those decisions to issues important to students’ lives today—particularly to issues of racism, antisemitism, violence, conformity, and power. Chapter 3, which marks the beginning of the case study, examines the choices people in Europe and the United States made after World War I. The chapter highlights German efforts to build a lasting democracy after the humiliation of defeat and explores the values, myths, and fears that threatened those efforts. Chapters 4 through 8 examine *how* the Nazis turned Germany into a totalitarian state by turning neighbor against neighbor in order to break the moral backbone of a citizenry and

why the German people allowed them to do so. Students also consider the way individuals and nations defined their “universe of obligation” in the 1930s and 1940s and the consequences of those definitions. It is in these chapters that students begin to wonder, “What might I have done?” And it is in these chapters that students see connections to their own world and come to understand why Cynthia Ozick warns that “when a whole population takes on the status of bystander, the victims are without allies; the criminals, unchecked, are strengthened; and only then do we need to speak of heroes. When a field is filled from end to end with sheep, a stag stands out. When a continent is filled from end to end with the compliant, we learn what heroism is.”

As they read these chapters, some teachers and students emphasize the acts of courage that rekindle hope in humanity. But, to study only heroes and speak solely of human dignity is to distort and distract from the painful reality of this history. Thinking about the victims and perpetrators of mass murder requires a new “vocabulary of annihilation.” The “choiceless choices” of this history of human behavior in extremity do not reflect options between right and wrong but between one form of abnormal response and other.

In the last three chapters, students move from thought to judgment, and then to action. As students think about judgment in moral and legal terms, they consider such questions as:

What is the difference between crimes against humanity and killings sanctioned by war?

What is the purpose of a trial? Is it to punish evil-doing or set a precedent for the future?

Are individuals responsible for their crimes if they have obeyed the laws of their nation? Or are there higher laws?

How does one determine punishment? Is everyone equally guilty? Or do some bear more responsibility than others? Can an entire nation be guilty?

Chapters 10 and 11 consider issues related to prevention by returning to themes developed in the first two chapters in the book. Chapter 10 explores how we remember the past and considers the ways those memories shape the present. It also focuses on the ways individuals and nations avoid, revise, deny, or rewrite their history. In the words of journalist Judith Miller, “Knowing and remembering the evil in history and in each of us might not prevent a recurrence of genocide. But ignorance of history or the suppression of memory removes the surest defense we have, however inadequate, against such gigantic cruelty and indifference to it.” What then fosters memory? For Miller, it is anything that makes the past more real and encourages empathy and caring. As part of this chapter, students examine the way we memorialize the past through monuments, museums, and schooling.

Chapter 11 further develops the idea of prevention by considering what it takes to be a good citizen. The chapter is organized around the idea that “people become brave by doing brave acts. People become compassionate by doing compassionate acts. People become good citizens by engaging in acts of good citizenship.” Many of the individuals highlighted in Chapter 11 help us understand what it takes to keep democracy alive. The chapter also promotes participation through acts of community service.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Each chapter in the Resource Book has a similar structure. Each begins with an overview that outlines key concepts and themes. The readings that follow allow students to explore those concepts and themes in greater depth. Many are primary sources that capture the ideas, assumptions, and observations of those living through a particular age in history. As Jacob Bronowski once wrote, those sources help us “draw conclusions from what we see to what we do not see” and “recognize ourselves in the past, on the steps to the present.” Teachers are encouraged to select the ones that match their objectives and the needs and interests of their students. Readings that develop important concepts are identified in the sidebars and should not be omitted.

At the end of each reading, students encounter a number of activities, quotations, and questions grouped under the heading, “Connections.” These are designed to build curiosity, develop habits of inquiry, promote critical thinking, encourage research, and foster an understanding of the relationship between various ideas and concepts. Many ask students to make inferences or think about attitudes and consequences. Others provide practice in expressing ideas orally, visually, or in writing.

Some activities are set off with a special symbol ➤. These activities refer to videos, books, and other materials available from the Facing History Resource Center. These materials can be used in place of a reading or along with it. A number of these materials present ideas critical to the program and suggestions for using them are provided.

The activities provided in the Connections are only a starting point for helping students confront the past and themselves. Teachers should always select the activities that relate the history most directly to the lives of their particular students and add new questions and activities as appropriate.

Acknowledgements

Learning is always a collaborative process, one that blurs the line separating student from teacher. It is also a process that has no ending. Preparing this resource book has truly been a learning experience—one that mirrors the ways we have tried to develop Facing History as a team of colleagues who collaborate in the very best sense of the word.

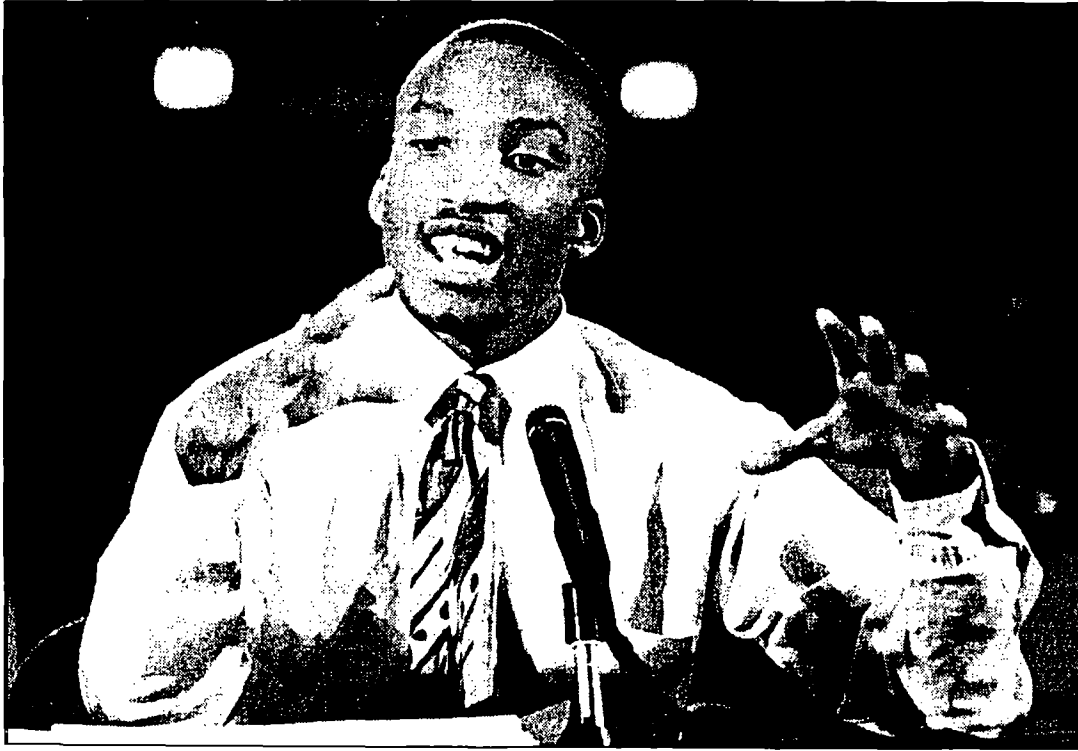
I would like to thank everyone who has taken part in that process, particularly the many teachers, students, and scholars who informed our progress. We heard their voices and felt their influence as we researched, wrote, edited, revised, and wrote yet again. We are profoundly grateful to each of them. It was especially gratifying for us to discover that some of our former students have become teachers who are now transmitting the lessons of Facing History to yet another generation.

I should also like to express my deep affection for the staff of Facing History. As we worked on the Resource Book, individually and as a group, they shared their knowledge and expertise and demonstrated their caring and commitment in ways that have come to mark their approach to every endeavor whether it is direct service to educators, interaction with students in a classroom or study group, docent training for an exhibit, or preparation for conference or benefit. I would like to particularly acknowledge the contributions of our editor, Phyllis Goldstein who pulled the resource book together and wrote with me the final draft. I so enjoyed the process of working with her, exchanging ideas and then watching those ideas take shape in the book itself. We value her collaboration, her patience, and her friendship. A very special thank you goes to Steve Cohen whose research launched the first revision of this book and to Mary Johnson, Alan Stoskopf, and Marc Skvirsky who guided the book through the revision process by providing drafts, ideas, resources, critiques, and support. The book would not have been possible without them. We also recognize the contributions of Tracy O'Brien who handled everything from research to permissions with enthusiasm and creativity and of Cathy McCarney who typed much of the original manuscript. And special mention must also go to Joe Wiellette whose friendship and devotion to Facing History, its mission, and publications has quietly sustained us all.

I would also like to acknowledge the support we received from the many scholars who worked with us at institutes, conferences, seminars, and workshops. We are especially appreciative of the contributions made by Philip Johnson and Benjamin Ferencz who drafted early chapters that

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Tribune photo by Ernie Cox Jr.

Chicagoan Sherrod Harris talks about life in a gang: "I was more afraid of the gang than anyone else. ... I thought the gang had power and therefore I had power."

No easy answers on crime, youth group told

By Linda M. Harrington
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—The questioners at Tuesday's hearing on children and violence were not the usual assortment of stodgy politicians spouting the usual political rhetoric. Many were pony-tailed and freckle-faced. Some were so small their heads could barely be seen over the lectern; others used phone books as boosters.

The children, ages 8 to 13, turned the tables on politicians and experts as they searched for answers to why young people face mounting violence at home, in school and on the streets. They were taking part in a three-day hearing at the National Education Association held by Children's Express, a non-profit youth development program.

Less cantankerous than most congressional panelists, some timidly asked, "Why do kids join gangs?" and "When did we lose our streets?" Others boldly asked, "What's the answer?"

"Violence in our country is not an act of God," said Sen. Paul

Simon (D-Ill.), who addressed the group about television violence. "It is a ... flawed policy."

Chicagoan Sherrod Harris, 18, provided the children with firsthand accounts of gang violence and detailed how a school program changed his life.

After living with his grandmother in central Mississippi for a number of years, Harris said, he moved back to Chicago's West Side in 1989. One day, as he was leaving Kelvyn Park High School, he was blindsided by a blow on the left side of his head. Angered by the staggering jolt, he began to fight and ended up in a street brawl.

Harris soon found himself running with a violent gang.

"I was more afraid of the gang than anyone else," Harris said. "I thought the gang had power and therefore I had power."

But he had promised his grandmother he wouldn't join a gang and would keep his grades up. After a year he left the gang.

His way out was "Facing History," a part of the high school

curriculum that focuses on the decision-making process in violence prevention and encourages students to look for alternative solutions to violent behavior based on historical events.

The overall theme expressed by witnesses and panelists was to focus on the plight of children afflicted by violence.

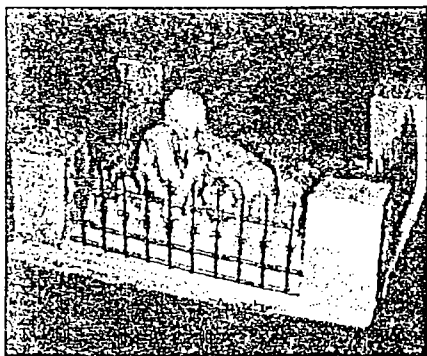
Twenty-year-old Domico Curry, also a former gang member, now is a peer counselor and founder of All Brothers Allowed, an anti-drug and anti-gang organization in Seattle. Curry urged the group not to ignore the children who may seem beyond hope.

"A kid at Disneyland is a kid. A kid packing a gun is the enemy," Curry said. But "the kid with the gun is still a kid; he's just headed down the wrong path."

Curry, father of a newborn son, said his short-term goal is to be the youngest member of the Seattle school board. But he has a difficult time envisioning his life in the long term: "There's a lot of times I don't know if I'll make it home the next day."

Teaching children a way of life without hate

By Joseph P. Kahn
GLOBE STAFF



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / JANET KNOTT

"Fenced Soldier," by a student at the Runkle School in Brookline, is part of an exhibit at the Mall at Chestnut Hill.

Ourselves, a nationally recognized educational program based in Brookline; but because an opportunity was lost for a more important process to happen.

And what was important at that moment, Strom argues, was for schoolchildren to examine the tragedy unfolding around them, from the battlegrounds of their immediate neighborhoods to American society in general. The opportunity to face history, in other words, as it was literally being written before their eyes: in smoke and tears, busted glass and broken promises.

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GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / JANET KNOTT

Margot Stern Strom, executive director of Facing History And Ourselves, based in Brookline.

Facing History aims to teach children a way of life without hate

■ STROM

Continued from Page 85

"School is often more of a safe haven for kids than their neighborhoods are," notes Strom during a recent (and rare) break in her busy schedule. "Maybe shutting down schools that first day was the only reasonable option. I don't know."

She lowers her voice, letting slip a trace of her native Tennessee drawl. "Still," she says, "if I lived out there I would at least have wanted to be part of the decision process."

Strom is, if nothing else, a crusader with credentials. And perspective.

Fifteen years ago, the former Runkle School social studies teacher co-founded an organization dedicated to teaching teachers and students new ways of thinking about societal evils like racism and anti-Semitism. Not *what* to think about them, says Strom, since moral evolution is perform a personal journey. But a better way of understanding how a horror like the Holocaust can occur with the assistance, active or passive, of otherwise well-meaning citizens: doctors, lawyers, poets, policemen.

The approach was altogether novel for a generation conditioned to think of Nazi atrocities as ancient history.

By studying the raw material of prejudice — Ku Klux Klan recruiting films and pro-Hitler propaganda, for example — students learn about the root causes of genocide, not simply the results. By examining the lives of unsung heroes, they better appreciate how individuals can make a positive difference for society as a whole.

And that's what Facing History is really all about, Strom says. A dose of preventive medicine for a nation that goes into shock whenever the virus of hatred activates itself, causing a full-blown attack on the body politic.

"My husband is an immunologist, so I'm familiar with the language," Strom points out. "We spend millions to develop a drug to treat the symptoms of a disease. We wait for something acute to happen, and then we respond. Doesn't it make sense to try to avoid the disease in the first place? I think so."

Lt. William Johnston, commander of the Boston Police Department's Community Disorders Unit, concurs. Outraged by the Rodney King verdict, himself, Johnston believes that kids need to learn about the param-



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / JANET WOOT

Part of the exhibit coordinated by Facing History And Ourselves at the Mall at Chestnut Hill.

eters of prejudice long before it becomes an ingrained part of their adult lives.

"The one thing haters have in common is cowardice," says Johnston, bluntly, "whether they hide behind a sheet, a dark alley, a policeman's badge or a politician's office. Facing History gives the potential hater a reason not to hate."

Johnston was introduced to the program three years ago. Since then, he has gone into dozens of schools to preach the message of preventive medicine. Last week in LA, he laments, the message was ignored. With tragic results.

"Any community that believes they're immune from that kind of trouble is insane," Johnston says. "The lesson we should all learn is that when people feel they can't turn to the courts or the cops, they take to the streets."

Given last week's painful civics lesson, this week's 15th anniversary celebration for Facing History could hardly arrive at a more opportune moment. It will be marked by several events, including a special exhibit at the Mall at Chestnut Hill and an all-day Human Rights and Justice Conference today at Northeastern University.

Enconced in the upper floors of a Brookline school building scheduled for massive renovation, Facing History is, ironically, also losing its headquarters at the end of this month. Having expanded from a two-person operation into a multi-service, nonprofit foundation with a \$1.5 million annual operating budget, FHAO has opened three regional offices, yet continues to search for an

alternative home base here.

Meanwhile, an estimated 500,000 students have already been exposed to the course, including students at the Fenway Middle College High School, a Boston public school in Charlestown.

"Facing History is really a grounding place, a way of thinking about our whole curriculum," says Linda Nathan, the school's assistant director, who has been using the program for the past nine years. "It's a lesson in depth versus breadth. And as kids discover, there is a lot of power in knowing something well."

"The significance lies in the title," says Rev. Robert Bullock of Sharon, an FHAO board member. "The idea of facing history by using the Holocaust as an example of the most graphic evil imaginable, to teach young minds about the limits and excesses of human behavior."

"One of the great moral centers of Facing History," Bullock adds, "is not to take evil lightly but to face it without illusions. It's not about blaming or posturing. It's about understanding and learning."

Strom's organization knows something about blaming and posturing in political circles. In the mid-1980s, it came under attack from right-wingers critical of its alleged ideological bent. Despite high marks from the Department of Education's Recognition Division, federal funding that was earmarked to help FHAO expand into sponsor-risky regions disappeared abruptly in 1986. One key factor in the decision: A DOE reviewer had criticized Facing History for failing to include Nazi

and Klan points of view.

Although a high-ranking DOE official later said he was "embarrassed" by the comments, Facing History was suddenly faced with its own firestorm of controversy. A second DOE review branded the program as "leftist" and "offensive to fundamentalists," while archconservative Phyllis Schlafly complained that the curriculum had "adverse, negative and offensive psychological effects" on students.

Strom was summoned to Congressional hearings in 1988, where she responded to her critics with a characteristic mixture of passion, aplomb and wit.

"They were nervous because in a course like this, dogma gets exposed," she explains, noting that FHAO continues to receive around \$60,000 annually in federal aid. "However, I never viewed anyone as a personal enemy. I even enjoyed debating Phyllis Schlafly. In fact, I think Phyllis is the best advocate for the First Amendment I've ever known."

Strom laughs instinctively at the thought of praising Schlafly for any reason. In more somber tones she

adds, "To call Phyllis evil is to dismiss her needlessly. She wants what we all want. A good life for her family and the freedom to speak her mind."

Democratic state chairman Steven Grossman, another FHAO booster and board member, says that attitude represents the quintessential Margot Stern Strom: tough but open-minded; more generous with her detractors than they perhaps deserve; and a teacher first and foremost, meaning (a) a good learner, (b) a good listener and (c) a consensus builder.

"When potential donors find out Margot went head-to-head with Phyllis," Grossman says, "it only enhances her reputation. Margot has also never lost her humility. She can see a challenge through with a sense of humor and intensity of commitment that would have brought most people to their knees."

Plus, Grossman adds, Strom is extremely adept at sharing credit with those around her, especially her staff.

So much so, in fact, that focusing a conversation on Strom's personal life is largely an exercise in futility.

There is one story she tells, however, which says much about her mission.

In 1968, Strom returned to her hometown of Memphis to visit her parents, who owned and operated a furniture store in a racially mixed neighborhood. The day she and her sister arrived was also the day Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, touching off a spate of LA-type rioting.

The family furniture store was broken into and trashed. Tanks rumbled down the streets outside her home. Yet the worst moment happened when the two sisters asked an old friend and trusted neighbor to come over and sit with them.

The man turned up carrying a shotgun, Strom recalls, and asked for a bourbon-and-branch-water. Sipping his drink, he said, "As soon as that nigger is out of town" — meaning the slain civil rights leader — "we'll be OK."

"We immediately asked him to leave," says Strom. "We were both in shock. I'll never forget that moment."

In such moments, it seems, are great ideas born.

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BRIEFINGS

Summer 1994

Volume XVIII, Issue 2

Facing History Launches Learn-A-Thon

Facing History's first annual Learn-A-Thon brought 150 adults back to school to talk about racism, antisemitism and social change. Many participants never had the opportunity to talk about these issues when they were adolescents.

"I think I would have known myself better if I had been able to tackle these issues when I was in high school," said Learn-A-Thon participant Erin Lovely. "I want to take advantage of the opportunity to grapple with them today. Facing History's Young Leadership Network has become my classroom." Ms. Lovely served as Chair of Outreach and In-kind Donations for the event.

The Learn-A-Thon took place May 22, 1994 at the Boston Latin School, the site of a growing



Dion Oglesby (left) and Jeffrey Bussgang attend a workshop at the Learn-A-Thon.

Facing History program. Young Leadership Network (YLN), which created and planned the event, enables young adults in their 20s and 30s to form partnerships across community lines, continue the dialogue about critical Facing History themes and support

Facing History's work in classrooms.

As they delved into the complexities of social justice issues, members of YLN raised more than \$20,000 in sponsorship pledges for the Facing History program. The funding, which includes a \$2,500 grant from the Gillette Company, will allow an additional 750 Boston adolescents to experience the Facing History program during the next school year.

Judy Cashman, a former Facing History student, said "As a ninth-grade student, Facing History helped me to identify prejudices of my own and work to overcome them." Ms. Cashman, who served as Co-Chair of Fundraising for the Learn-A-Thon, explained, "I got involved with Young Leadership Network because I want to help bring the program to more adolescents and let young adults in Boston know how they might

Learn-A-Thon — continued on page 14

1994 Annual Dinner: Record Breaker Once Again



Ira and Martha Jackson (1994 Dinner Chairs) with Margot Stern Strom and Susan and Richard Smith.



"This year's 10th Annual Dinner has again surpassed all expectations as we greet 1200 of you who have come

together to express your concern about racism and antisemitism and your commitment to bringing Facing History to young people. You have enabled us to exceed our financial goal for this Dinner." With these words, Dinner Co-chair and Board member Ira Jackson addressed the packed ballroom of the Westin Hotel in Boston on

Dinner — continued on page 8