10. Historical Legacies

Only the spectators, who constitute the space of history (memory) in which all actions and works of art fall…can pass ultimate judgment on an event or action by the quality of their attention.
HANNAH ARENDT

OVERVIEW

"Anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present," said President Richard von Weizsaecker of West Germany in a speech that marked the fortieth anniversary of World War II. "Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection." Chapter 10 looks at the power of our memories to shape the present. It looks too at why so many are reluctant to confront those memories. The first readings in the chapter explore the legacies of the Holocaust. The chapter then considers the effects of two other painful histories, that of the Armenians and of African Americans. The chapter ends with a discussion of the ways history is taught and memorialized.

The chapter also expands on an idea introduced in Chapter 2. Orlando Patterson noted that slaves were "not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory." He went on to describe their struggle to maintain their identity by preserving their heritage. In every society, a group's right to include its story in a nation's history and preserve its heritage is the power to shape generations to come. To deny that right is cultural genocide. A survivor of Dachau recalls:

> The SS guards took pleasure in telling us that we had no chance of coming out alive, a point they emphasized with particular relish by insisting that after the war the rest of the world would not believe what happened; there would be rumors, speculations, but no clear evidence, and people would conclude that evil on such a scale was just not possible."[1]

That survivor and others like him were determined to not only live but also remember and bear witness. Reverend Vartan Hartunian, who translated his father's memoirs of the Armenian Genocide explained why when he wrote, "Any crime that is forgotten or forgiven is a crime that has been sanctioned and blessed. The surviving victims must proclaim the truth, must insist on due punishment and must do all in their power to prevent the powerful in their advance against corruption."[2]

Journalist Judith Miller agrees. "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." Miller notes that "cultures suppress what they would like to forget in remarkably similar ways, even when the events themselves are strikingly different." One way people suppress "what they would like to forget" is to deny it ever happened. Another is to shift the blame to someone else. People also rationalize. A rationalization is a way of explaining behavior that is self-satisfying and even true as far as it goes but not the sole explanation or even the most important. People also suppress the past by suggesting the event was but one of many similar events. The process is known as relativism or what some call the "yes, but" syndrome. What then fosters memory? For Miller, it is fostered by anything that makes the past more real and less abstract. She believes abstraction "kills [memory] because it encourages distance and often indifference."[3]

READING 1

Survivors and Memory

After taking part in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Alexander Donat was sent to Majdanek, Auschwitz, and later Dachau. He writes, "I felt I was a witness to disaster and charged with the sacred mission of carrying the Ghetto's history through the flames and barbed wire until such time I could hurl it into the face of the world. It seemed to be that this mission would give me the strength to endure everything."[4]

I felt I was a witness to disaster and charged with the sacred mission of carrying the Ghetto's history through the flames and barbed wire until such time I could hurl it into the face of the world.

Many survivors have shared his need to tell the world what happened. Rose Murra traces her obligation to conversations she had with her mother after her father, uncle, and brother were killed. For a time, she and her mother managed to elude the authorities. But each day was a test of survival. And in the end, they, like so many others, were herded onto cattle cars bound for Majdanek. Rose wanted to join the many young people who jumped off the train, but her mother begged her to stay. As the two huddled together, they spoke of what lay ahead.

Rose Murra's family in 1938.

"Ma, listen we gonna go to a camp – I don't know they're gonna kill me. They're gonna kill you? Who gonna get killed first?"

"Listen don't cry over me – if I be killed – because that's the way of life – that's gonna be – don't cry – your little boy got killed – your husband – everybody died already – so what you think – we have to be the chosen ones – we don't have to be the chosen ones – we're gonna die too. So take it nice and easy. Death is not so bad. After death there's nothing to remember no more – so maybe death is the solution of it. I mean suffering – even more – look Ma – we went through typhus and hunger – the cold and the hiding – How much more can you take of this?"

So my mother said – "Okay my child, I was thinking – okay I would die – at least I want you to live. Somebody – somebody from the family should live and survive."

I said, "Listen – a lot of families are killed already – nobody left already from a family."

"In case you live through – don't ever forget to tell the story what your family went through."

I said, "If I come through – which I know I'm not, well, I tell, I tell." So that's what it is!

> When we entered Majdanek – the young went to one side – the old to another side – I was going with my mother – we came closer to the soldier and he told my mother to go to this side – "You mean this side" – my mother said – "I'm still young. I can work."
>
> The soldier said – "If you don't shut up your mother – I'm gonna beat you to death." And that's the last I saw of my mother – she just like disappeared."[5]

Isabella Leitner never forgot her mother's words either. On the train that took the family to Auschwitz, her mother told her children.

> Stay alive, my darlings – all six of you. Out there, when it's all over, a world is waiting for you to give it all I gave you. Despite what you see here – and you are all young and impressionable – believe me, there is humanity out there, there is dignity. I will not share it with you, but it's there. And when this is over, you must add to it, because sometimes it is a little short, a little skimpy. With your lives, you can create other lives and nourish them. You can nourish your children's souls and minds, and teach them that man is capable of infinite glory. You must believe me. I cannot leave you with what you see here. I must leave you with what I see. My body is nearly dead, but my vision is throbbing with life – even here. I want you to live for the very life that is yours. And wherever I'll be, in some mysterious way, my love will overcome my death and will keep you alive. I love you.[6]

I want to tell my mother that I kept her faith, that I lived because she wanted me to, that the strength she imbued me with is not for sale, that the god in man is worth living for, and I will make sure that I hand that down to those who come after me.

Isabella Leitner lived with those words for the rest of her life. In her memoirs, she tells why May is an especially difficult month.

> May is such a "big" month. The first of May has overtones of political celebrations, and that is meaningful to me. In my teens, the first of May meant serenading under your window, a burst of spring, love, music, all sentimentally shouting hosannas in your body, masking the dread of reality.
>
> May 1st is my sister's birthday. There is something special about being born on May 1st, and dear little Rachel is special. There is something special about being born any time in May – May 1st, May 28th. The scent of spring is delicious. It permeates the air. It sings the song of birth, of life. All is drenched in sun. The earth smiles. It is happy you are here.
>
> The world ended in May. I was born in May. I died in May. We started the journey of ugliness on May 29th. We headed for Auschwitz. We arrived on May 31st.
>
> The scent of spring wasn't delicious. The earth didn't smile. It shrieked in pain. The air was filled with the stench of death. Unnatural death. The smoke was thick. The sun couldn't crack through. The scent was the smell of burning flesh. The burning flesh was your mother.
>
> I am condemned to walk the earth for all my days with the stench of burning flesh in my nostrils. My nostrils are damned. May is

damned. May should be abolished. May hurts. There should be only eleven months in a year. May should be set aside for tears. For six million years, to cleanse the earth.

For more than twenty years I have walked zombie-like toward the end of May, deeply depressed, losing jobs, losing lovers, uncomprehending. And then June would come, and there would be new zeal, new life.

Now I am older, and I don't remember all the pain, and June hurts, and so does May. May laughs sometimes, and so does June, and now in May I bend down to smell the flowers, and for moments I don't recall the smell of burning flesh. That is not happiness, only relief, and relief is blessed. Now I want to reinstate the month of May. I want to reincarnate the month, reincarnate the dead. I want to tell my mother that I kept her faith, that I lived because she wanted me to, that the strength she imbued me with is not for sale, that the god in man is worth living for, and I will make sure that I hand that down to those who come after me.

I will tell them to make what is good in all of us their religion, as it was yours, Mother, and then you will always be alive and the housepainter will always be dead. And children someday will plant flowers in Auschwitz, where the sun couldn't crack through the smoke of burning flesh. Mother, I will keep you alive.[7]

CONNECTIONS

What did Rose Murra's mother mean when she told her daughter, "don't forget to tell the story"? Why was it important that it be told?

Does it matter what you remember? What did Isabella Leitner's mother want her children to remember? What was her legacy to them?

How does Isabella Leitner approach the past? How does her past define her present? Her plans for the future?

→Edith P., a survivor, ends her testimony by expressing her sadness at the plight of the Cambodian people. "Why do we do nothing?" she asks. For more of Edith's story, see *Elements of Time,* pages 32-34. A video portrait is available from the Facing History Resource Center.

→The video montage *Future Imperfect* describes the way Holocaust survivors have dealt with their memories in recent decades. The montage is available from the Facing History Resource Center and is described in *Elements of Time,* pages xxxi-xxxii.

READING 2

Preserving Evidence of Evil

Many survivors like Alexander Donat, Rose Murra, and Isabella Leitner bear witness by telling their story. Others try to preserve the physical evidence of the Holocaust. That experience can be enormously painful. Journalist Timothy Ryback explains why:

> In November of 1989, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., received from the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau a shipment of artifacts for inclusion in the new museum's exhibitions tracing the history of the Holocaust. In addition to planks from an Auschwitz barracks, rubble from a crematorium, a pole from an electrified barbed-wire fence, and twenty empty cans of Zyklon B – the cyanide gas used in the extermination process – the shipment contained a large number of personal items, among them hairbrushes, mirrors, razors, toothbrushes, clothes hangers, shoe daubers, clogs, and suitcases. One box contained approximately twenty pounds of human hair.
>
> "When we first received the hair, we regarded it as just another artifact for the museum," Jacek Nowakowski, who was in charge of acquiring objects for the exhibition, says, "but then, when the Content Committee met to discuss the best way to display it, it became clear that the members viewed human hair differently from other objects."
>
> The Content Committee, which consisted of twenty scholars, Holocaust survivors, and museum officials, and which was responsible for deciding on the substance of the museum's exhibitions, devoted two emotional and highly charged meetings to the issue of displaying the hair, which was a jumble of braids, curls, and long strands shorn from women's heads. According to Nowakowski, these discussions were among the most sensitive deliberations of the entire project, which had been under way for more than ten years. "Hair is a highly personal matter," Nowakowski says. "It is not only a part of the human body; it is also a part of the human personality – part of one's identity. How you wear your hair tells a lot about you as a person. Hair is so simple – but it is so fundamental."
>
> Many committee members felt strongly that the hair, which had been discovered in large bales when the Red Army liberated the concentration camp, in January of 1945, should be displayed in the museum. "The basic argument was that we were trying to make a convincing case against any possible Holocaust deniers," Jeshajahu Weinberg, the director of the Museum and the chairman of the Content Committee, explains. "It was not even so much for the present

generation as it was for future generations. The hair was one piece of clear evidence." Other members vehemently opposed the idea of such a display. "The women survivors, in particular, objected to the presence of the hair in the exhibition," Weinberg says, "'For all I know, my mother's hair might be in there,' one of them said. 'I don't want my mother's hair on display.'" Weinberg, who initially had no objection to exhibiting the hair, was moved by the appeal, as was the rest of the committee. Eventually, the museum decided to install a wall-length photographic mural of the nearly two tons of human hair on exhibit at the Auschwitz Museum.

While the question of whether or not to display the hair of Holocaust victims has been settled at the Holocaust Museum, conservators and administrators at the Auschwitz Museum in Oswiecim, Poland, are grappling with a more practical problem: how to preserve the four thousand pounds of human hair on display in their museum.

> There is nothing that speaks louder against the Nazi crimes than this hair. On the transport that I came on, all the women and children were taken from the train and immediately gassed. The hair, along with the combs and suitcases and shoes, is all that remains of them.

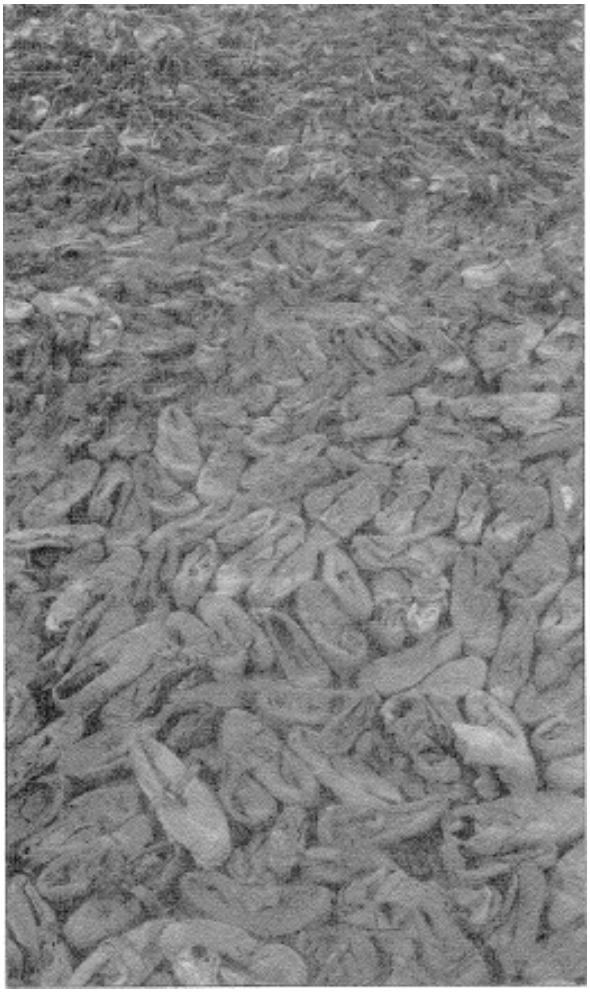
This issue has recently risen to prominence with the initiation of a multi-million-dollar effort to preserve the ruins of the Auschwitz concentration-camp complex. As conservators from around the world confer on how best to save the remaining barracks, the barbed-wire fencing, the watchtowers, the ruins of the gas chambers, and the heaps of hair, they have to take a hard look at what it means to preserve a "relic."

Ever since Auschwitz was liberated, these remnants of human beings have stood as one of the most chilling symbols of the Holocaust. The Nazis did not just murder millions of men, women, and children but literally "harvested" their remains to drive Germany's industrial machine. In the early nineteen-forties, a brisk trade emerged between German death camps, such as Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka, and German felt and textile manufacturers who used the versatile fibre in the production of thread, rope, cloth, carpets, mattress stuffing, lining stiffeners for uniforms, socks for submarine crews, and felt insulators for the boots of railroad workers...

In May 1945, just days after the German capitulation, Polish officials dispatched ten pounds of human hair found at Auschwitz to the Institute of Forensic Medicine at Cracow. Following a series of chemical tests, Jan Robel, the head of the institute, confirmed, in his final report, "the presence of traces of cyanide, particularly the poisonous compound bearing the name Zyklon." Such findings served as evidence in trials against Nazi war criminals, including Rudolf Hoess, the commandant at Auschwitz, who was sentenced to death on April 2, 1947, and was hanged fourteen days later beside the former crematorium of the *Stammlager,* the main Auschwitz camp.

Since then, the human hair has continued to bear witness: on the second floor of Block IV, a former Auschwitz barrack, it lies in heaps inside a row of large display cases... Witold Smrek, the Auschwitz

> Museum's chief conservator, and other museum officials are currently deliberating on the fate of this display. "Some people are telling us that the exhibition is offensive, that it is in poor taste to have human hair on display like this, Smrek told me recently."[8]



A mound of shoes bears witness at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Among those people is Adam Zak, the rector of the Jesuit College in Cracow. "Hair is part of a victim's body and, as such, it should be accorded the dignity due to it," he claims. "People say that you need the hair as evidence of the Nazi atrocities, but with the film footage and the shoes and the brushes, there is enough other evidence to prove that the Holocaust took place."

Ernest Michel, a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, disagrees. "There is nothing that speaks louder against the Nazi crimes than this hair. On the transport that I came on, all the women and children were taken from the train and immediately gassed. The hair, along with the combs and suitcases and shoes, is all that remains of them. No matter how painful it may be to look at, it is all part of the story that I believe has to be told."

Smrek's main concern, however, is not whether to display the hair but how to preserve it. Years of storage in a room that has no temperature or humidity control has faded the hair and left it brittle. Some of it has already turned to dust. Smrek has sought advice from museums all over the world on the best way to preserve the remaining hair but so far has no answer. He says, "No one else has ever had this problem before."[9]

CONNECTIONS

What is the purpose of a museum? Is it to preserve the relics of the past? Foster memory? Bear witness?

Why do exhibits that feature the hair of the victims arouse such debate? How important is hair to one's identity? To one's personality? How does hair differ from the mounds of suitcases on display in Holocaust museums? The piles of shoes and other personal items?

Ernest Michel, a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, argues, "No matter how painful it may be to look at, it is all part of the story that I believe has to be told." Should a "bad" or painful history be remembered? Studied?

READING 3

Amnesia

Many survivors feel they have a duty to remember the Holocaust. Many bystanders and perpetrators, on the other hand, have chosen, consciously or unconsciously, to forget. Psychologist Daniel Goleman views such experiences not as isolated events but as the result of a lacuna or blind spot. He explains by focusing on the experiences of one of his students:

> Bini Reichel, born in 1946 in Germany, describes how, in the postwar years, "amnesia became a contagious national disease, affecting even postwar children. In this new world... there was no room for curious children and adolescents. We postponed our questions and finally abandoned them altogether." In her history books, the Nazi years were covered in ten to fifteen pages of careful condemnation...
>
> In an attempt to break through this group amnesia, Reichel recently sought out and questioned some of the generation who had fought in the war. One question she asked of a former Nazi was why he had never discussed those years with his own children. His reply: "It was beyond discussion. Besides, they didn't ask."
>
> Questions that can't – or won't – be asked are a sure sign of a lacuna [an empty space or gap]. The creation of blind spots is a key of repressive regimes, allowing them to obliterate information that threatens their official line.[10]

Questions that can't – or won't – be asked are a sure sign of a lacuna [an empty space or gap].

CONNECTIONS

How did the survivors quoted in the previous readings recall the Holocaust? How did the German quoted in this reading recall it? In what respects are their memories similar? What differences are most striking? How do you account for those differences?

In what sense is the kind of "group amnesia" described in this reading contagious? What does Goleman suggest as a cause of that amnesia? As a possible cure? Do you agree?

What questions do you find it difficult to ask? Are they a sign of a blind spot or lacuna?

The Germans are not the only people reluctant to face their past. The French have also found it difficult to do so. In 1983, Klaus Barbie, the chief of the Gestapo in occupied Lyons and the man responsible for the murders of 4,342 members of the French resistance and 7,591 French Jews, was tried for crimes against humanity. Many people in France feared that his trial would open old wounds. As Barbie himself reminded the court, the war was long over. "I have forgotten," he said. "If they have not forgotten, it is their business. I have forgotten." Should he or they be allowed to forget? What happens to a history that is not confronted?

Barbie was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. Yet many of the arguments he raised have persisted, partly because they offer people a way of avoiding responsibility for the past. In *One by One by One*, Judith Miller quotes Simone Veil, a Holocaust survivor and the former president of the European Parliament, as saying that Barbie and his lawyer tried "to show that every war-related death – the Nazi genocide, Hiroshima, Algeria, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the like – is the same. If everyone is guilty, then no one is guilty." Miller argues that the relativism and rationalization inherent in that tactic is "the most common, insidious, and hence problematic forms of the suppression of memory." Why?

READING 4

Family Legacies

Every event touches not only those who witnessed it but also their children and their children's children. Our identity is shaped, at least in part, by our family history. Indeed, our most treasured history is learned at home, the place where our most powerful memories reside. Nancy Sommers writes of her family and the legacy of the Holocaust:

> The photographs spoke to me what my parents couldn't find the words to say about love and loss, about memory and desire. No single image told me the whole story, for a story is more than a snapshot, more than one moment in time. And yet these moments in time are what form the stuff of history.

> The sepia-toned photograph sits on a shelf in my study inviting me to find my face in the line-up of family members gathered for my grandparents' engagement. Here are the eight brothers and sisters of my grandfather's family, my grandmother's three sisters and my great-grandparents. They are gathered in the garden of my grandmother's home in Regensburg, Germany. It is autumn, 1920, and the photograph captures something of the safety, serenity, and joy these families knew in that place, in that time. All but one are dead now; yet I remain attached to the world through them, to their Germanic names I love, to my Grandmother's name, Irma, my middle name, to their laughter and their resilience, to my grandmother's lyrical, dreamy gaze and to my grandfather's exuberant confidence...
>
> [That photograph and a few others] were the secret sustenance of my childhood. What had once been a large, capacious family living

close together in neighboring Bavarian towns now was either decimated or exiled to whatever safe havens they could find in Argentina, Israel, England, or New York. In Indiana, where my parents landed, we no longer had a garden, woods or mountains to hike. No family rituals to observe. Mine was a somber childhood, filled with silences about a history I felt I possessed and yet had never lived. In fact, for a long time I knew very little about what was called "the past" except the one story my mother repeatedly told about Albert Selz, her best friend's father, who in 1937 was shot in the head by the Nazis when he answered his front door. As if trying to justify the three locks on our front door in Terre Haute, my father always said that he would not answer if the Nazis came, as his father had done on Kristallnacht when they forcibly took my grandfather from their home and transported him to Buchenwald. Trying to absorb such enormous losses, my parents would attempt to convince themselves that maybe if they didn't talk about the past too much, it would go away. The photographs spoke to me what my parents couldn't find the words to say about love and loss, about memory and desire. No single image told me the whole story, for a story is more than a snapshot, more than one moment in time. And yet these moments in time are what form the stuff of history.[11]

How could I trust my parents who, balancing me on their knees, sang *"Deutschland, Deutschland, uber Alles"* with me? Who would have me call after a man in the street, a man I didn't even know, "Jew! Jew!"

Just as the Holocaust shaped Nancy Sommer's identity, it also shaped the identity of a man who grew up in West Germany just after World War II:

We were ashamed of our country. We were told what happened – the marching – the books – the Sieg Heils and the beatings, the loud brutal and vulgar crowds – the people we loved being driven out – Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Brecht – their books, paintings and music scores burned. Other people we had never heard of – those nameless millions who so silently went to the camps where their voices were gassed forever silent. This was no country to be proud of. We were also pained, lonesome kids amid adults who could not, must not, ever be trusted. How could I trust my parents who, balancing me on their knees, sang *"Deutschland, Deutschland, uber Alles"* with me? Who would have me call after a man in the street, a man I didn't even know, "Jew! Jew!" Who with my father – once a high-ranking officer – would tell me they'd never heard of any camps. And who, when I asked him about the 6 million Jews that had been put to death, insisted that it was 4.5 million – the figure I had quoted, he said, had been made up by the notoriously deceitful Jewish media – 4.5 while my heart was counting – one and one and one...[12]

Not every child wants to confront the past. In "I Dream in Good English Too," Donia Blumenfeld Clenman, a survivor of the Holocaust who now lives in Canada, writes of her children's reluctance to acknowledge her experiences.

Sometimes
I am a stranger to my family
for I bring Europe's ghosts
into the well-lit living room
of Canadian internationalism
and mobile,
passionately objective youth.
My scars are nicely healed,
and my concerns properly intellectual,
yellow with the stamp of legality
of naturalization papers
twenty years old.
Yet somehow,
the smoke of the past
darkens Heinz's clear consomme
and, though only a witness,
I spread fear
by my very presence,
a living fossil
at a table worshipping the "Now."
They love me deeply
and tenderly,
yet would exorcise a part of me,
dreading an eruption of memory
no matter how oblique
to force them
into captive partnership.
This is my past
not theirs,
their hostile glances shout.
We are all descendents of Adam.
Why bring Abraham
into happy Canadian homes?
I was no child on arrival
and yet, so well assimilated,
even my verses are native,
and I dream in good English too.
So I put on the ointment of reason
and tape heartbreak with Band-aids
and they are relieved,
and reassured,
to get back
their normal Canadian mother.[13]

CONNECTIONS

What does Nancy Sommers mean when she writes, "Mine was a somber childhood, filled with silences about a history I felt I possessed and yet had never lived"? What is she saying about the way she is linked to her family's history? About the power of the past to shape the present and the future?

Why do you think Sommers' parents tried to "convince themselves that maybe if they didn't talk about the past too much, it would go away"? Would Isabella Leitner agree?

For what reasons does the German man feel ashamed of his parents and his country? How did they betray his trust? Once you have betrayed someone's trust, can it ever be rebuilt?

Make an identity chart for Donia Clenman. Make a similar chart for her family. How are the charts similar? What difference seems most striking? How does that difference account for Clenman's view of her children: "They love me deeply and tenderly, yet would exorcise a part of me, dreading an eruption of memory no matter how oblique to force them into captive partnership"? What is the "captive partnership" her children fear? Why does she find it so difficult to be a "normal Canadian mother"?

In what respects are all three families described in this reading similar? What differences seem most striking? How do you account for them?

READING 5

Germans Confront the Past

As memories of World War II fade, individuals struggle to make meaning of their past. Just as no two individuals recall the past in the same way, no two people find the same meaning in that history. Victoria Barnett, the author of *For the Soul of the People*, contrasts the memories of the Jews and Protestants in Germany:

> For many conscientious Germans, the Holocaust became a symbol of political injustice and evil. For Jews, it was not just a symbol but a reality that lived on in the broken lives of the survivors and the new awareness, in every Jew, of what was possible... To many Jews, the emphasis by some Germans on the Holocaust as a symbol of political evil in general seemed to diminish the full horror of what they had experienced. "Never again," said the Jews, and they meant one thing only. "Never again," said many Germans, and they meant different things: never again dictatorship, never again war. They meant taking clear political positions that symbolically represented anti-Nazism.

> Observing the postwar discrimination that Turks and other guest workers suffered in West Germany, for example, some Germans drew the parallel that the "Turks are the Jews of today." The recognition of racism and discrimination in postwar Germany was important and necessary. The problem was that viewing the Jewish experience under Nazism in this symbolic fashion removed it from the larger context of the Holocaust and changed many Germans' perceptions of the Holocaust itself. It evaded the historical fact that anti-Semitism has existed in all kinds of political and economic systems – in other words, that it is not merely a political problem but has its roots in the dynamics of prejudice...[14]

"Never again," said the Jews, and they meant one thing only. "Never again," said many Germans, and they meant different things: never again dictatorship, never again war. They meant taking clear political positions that symbolically represented anti-Nazism.

The difference in perspective Barnett describes could clearly be seen in the way individuals responded to an incident that occured in 1985, forty years after the war ended. Chancellor Helmut Kohl invited United States President Ronald Reagan to West Germany to mark the anniversary of the victory in Europe, V-E Day. As part of the event, there was to be a special ceremony in a military cemetery at Bitburg. When the plans were made public in the spring of 1985, Americans discovered that among those buried in the cemetery were 49 Waffen SS soldiers. (The Waffen SS was an elite military unit that had been involved in many atrocities during the war.) Veterans' groups, various religious organizations, and Holocaust survivors all urged the president to cancel the trip. But Reagan refused to do so. Still, stunned by the criticism, the president added a visit to a concentration camp to his itinerary. Journalist Marvin Kalb paid a visit to Bitburg the next day.

> I visited the cemetery the morning after President Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl placed wreaths of reconciliation in front of its chapel. For years, the cemetery had been largely ignored; now, it was an instant shrine, a focus of political debate. Small flower pots marked many flat graves, forty-nine of them honoring Waffen SS troops. By the end of my visit, many hundreds of Germans and occasional Americans from the nearby Air Force base paused before the wreaths. Some took pictures. Mothers hushed children. A religious air seemed to saturate the scene.
>
> But look and listen; all around there were the sights and sounds of the new Germany – and the old. Six feet to the left of the president's wreath stood an equally impressive one. Across its banner: "To the Waffen SS who fell at Leningrad." No more than a foot to the right of the Chancellor's was another wreath: "For the fallen comrades of the Waffen SS."
>
> These two wreaths had been placed in the chapel, out of sight, hours before the president arrived. They were restored to their original places of honor only hours after he left. In the ensuing tranquility, the Waffen SS could again be honored in the springtime sun.

A middle-aged visitor from Nuremberg said the Waffen SS were simply soldiers – young conscripts doing their duty. "Let them rest in peace. For us, a dead soldier is a dead soldier, not a hero."

A native of Bitburg, who looked to be in his twenties, expressed a view I was to hear with disturbing regularity. "We Germans and Americans have been cooperating very well" – and he lowered his voice – "until the Jews began to make trouble."

Another Bitburger zeroed in on Elie Wiesel [who had publicly objected to the visit]. "Imagine the nerve of a Jew lecturing President Reagan. I saw him on television, making trouble the way they all do."

An old woman complained that Mr. Reagan had spent only eight minutes at the cemetery. "You know why the visit had to be cut back? Because of the Jews." She stalked away to join a group of friends nodding in agreement.

A man with a cane stopped and said: "If they don't like it here, the Jews, let them go away. We were better off without them in Germany." There are only 28,000 left, he was reminded. "Too many," he replied.

As I entered the cemetery, I noticed a sign: "Please do not disturb the peace and rest of the dead." Too late.

The people of Bitburg are pleased that Mr. Reagan came to visit, that he didn't yield to pressure. But it's clear they resent their new notoriety – and equally clear whom they consider responsible for the unwelcome change: the Jews and the media. The Jews are seen as a group separate from Germans and Americans – an indigestible lump, a foreign body. The media are seen as intrusive and irresponsible and, somehow, controlled by the Jews.

So it went. A few days later, a Munich newspaper editor explained that anti-Semitism is an "anthropological phenomenon" in Germany. The controversy seems only to have uncorked the venom once again. There is a sad irony. Bitburgers consider themselves remarkably enlightened. In 1933, when Hitler won a critical election, this conservative Catholic town voted overwhelmingly against him.

Is Bitburg an aberration? It is impossible to judge and dangerous to generalize. But a number of leading West German politicians and professors – several close to Kohl – think anti-Semitism was on the rise even before Bitburg. "The Jews were getting too impertinent," one politician said, citing, among other things, their opposition to West German tank sales to Saudi Arabia. "We've listened to them much too long. It's enough."

The pursuit of reconciliation by way of Bitburg has been a failure. What should have been obvious from the beginning is that reconciliation is a long process – not a single photo opportunity, an event, a moment frozen in time. Bitburg, exposing clumsiness and poor political judgment in Bonn and Washington, in the process lifted the scab of dark corners of recent German history. There is a time to know when to leave well enough alone. As I entered the cemetery, I noticed a sign: "Please do not disturb the peace and rest of the dead." Too late.[15]

CONNECTIONS

How does Barnett summarize German Protestant perceptions of the Holocaust? Jewish perceptions? What is the key difference the two perceptions? Why does Barnett view those differences as significant? What is she suggesting about the importance of confronting the past? About the dangers of refusing to do so?

In Reading 3, Daniel Goleman writes that the creation of a lacuna, or gap in memory, is important to repressive regimes. What does Barnett suggest about its uses in democratic societies? What does she consider the lacuna in modern-day Germany? How does Kalb's account support her view?

What is an *anthropological phenomenon?* Why did the Munich newspaper editor call antisemitism an "anthropological phenomenon"? Was he right to do so?

Kalb called his article, "'New' SS Wreaths, Old Anti-Semitism." What idea is he trying to express in the title? Do you agree?

→In 1981, Anja Elisabeth Rosmus, a young German student from the town of Passau, entered a contest sponsored by the president of West Germany. She chose to write about something she had learned in school – the way the people of her town had resisted the Nazis. She approached her topic with every confidence that the history she had learned was correct. Yet her efforts to document that history were repeatedly blocked. The local librarian refused to give her access to town records. So did city officials. Rosmus seemed to stir up old memories and old hatreds as she tried to uncover the truth. In the end, she discovered the people of Passau had not resisted the Nazis at all. Indeed many had enthusiastically supported Hitler.

An interview with Rosmus that originally aired on *60 Minutes* is available from the Facing History Resource Center. Also available is the film *The Nasty Girl,* a fictionalized version of her story. The producer of the film, noting that "old habits die hard" told an interviewer, "People blame one or two guilty individuals or a guilty group for everything that transpired. Then they distance themselves from that person or group, cutting them off and isolating them as the source of the problem."[16] What evidence can you find in Kalb's account of that process? What evidence can you find in other readings? In your own confrontations with the past?

READING 6

Accepting Responsibility

Many individuals feel an obligation to confront their past. Nations also feel obliged to face their history. Richard von Weizsaecker, the president of West Germany, attempted to do so on the fortieth anniversary of V-E Day. He said in part:

Remembering means recalling an occurrence honestly and undistortedly so that it becomes a part of our very beings. This places high demands on our truthfulness.

> May 8 is a day of remembrance. Remembering means recalling an occurrence honestly and undistortedly so that it becomes a part of our very beings. This places high demands on our truthfulness.
>
> Today we mourn all the dead of the war and the tyranny. In particular we commemorate the six million Jews who were murdered in German concentration camps. We commemorate all nations who suffered in the war, especially the countless citizens of the Soviet Union and Poland who lost their lives. As Germans, we mourn our own compatriots who perished as soldiers, during air raids at home, in captivity or during expulsion. We commemorate the Sinti and Romany Gypsies, the homosexuals and the mentally ill who were killed, as well as the people who had to die for their religious or political beliefs. We commemorate the hostages who were executed. We recall the victims of the resistance movements in all the countries occupied by us. As Germans, we pay homage to the victims of the German resistance – among the public, the military, the churches, the workers and trade unions, and the Communists. We commemorate those who did not actively resist but preferred to die instead of violating their consciences.
>
> Alongside the endless army of the dead, mountains of human suffering arise – grief over the dead, suffering from injury or crippling or barbarous compulsory sterilization, suffering during the air raids, during flight and expulsion, suffering because of rape and pillage, forced labor, injustice and torture, hunger and hardship, suffering because of fear of arrest and death, grief at the loss of everything which one had wrongly believed in and worked for. Today we sorrowfully recall all this human suffering...
>
> At the root of the tyranny was Hitler's immeasurable hatred against our Jewish compatriots. Hitler had never concealed this hatred from the public, but made the entire nation a tool of it. Only a day before his death, on April 30, 1945, he concluded his so-called will with the words: "Above all, I call upon the leaders of the nation and their followers to observe painstakingly the race laws and to oppose ruthlessly the poisoners of all nations: international Jewry." Hardly any country has in its history always remained free from blame for war or violence. The genocide of the Jews is, however, unparalleled in history.

The perpetration of this crime was in the hands of a few people. It was concealed from the eyes of the public, but every German was able to experience what his Jewish compatriots had to suffer, ranging from plain apathy and hidden intolerance to outright hatred. Who could remain unsuspecting after the burning of the synagogues, the plundering, the stigmatization with the Star of David, the deprivation of rights, the ceaseless violation of human dignity? Whoever opened his eyes and ears and sought information could not fail to notice that Jews were being deported. The nature and scope of the destruction may have exceeded human imagination, but in reality there was, apart from the crime itself, the attempt by too many people, including those of my generation, who were young and were not involved in planning the events and carrying them out, not to take note of what was happening. There were many ways of not burdening one's conscience, of shunning responsibility, looking away, keeping mum. When the unspeakable truth of the holocaust then became known at the end of the war, all too many of us claimed that they had not known anything about it or even suspected anything.

There is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire nation. Guilt is, like innocence, not collective, but personal.

There is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire nation. Guilt is, like innocence, not collective, but personal. There is discovered or concealed individual guilt. There is guilt which people acknowledge or deny. Everyone who directly experienced that era should today quietly ask himself about his involvement then.

The vast majority of today's population were either children then or had not been born. They cannot profess a guilt of their own for crimes that they did not commit. No discerning person can expect them to wear a penitential robe simply because they are Germans. But their forefathers have left them a grave legacy. All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it. The young and old generations must and can help each other to understand why it is vital to keep alive the memories. It is not a case of coming to terms with the past. That is not possible. It cannot be subsequently modified or made not to have happened. Anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.[17]

Anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.

CONNECTIONS

What did Weizsaecker mean when he said that "anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present"? Do you agree?

According to Weizsaecker, what are the consequences of "not burdening one's conscience, of shunning responsibility, looking away, keeping mum"? Give examples from your own experience or your reading that supports his view. Give examples that call his view into question.

Is Weizsaecker right to believe that guilt, like innocence, is personal rather than collective? Can a whole nation be guilty?

In August of 1993, fifty years after World War II left more than twenty million people dead in Asia, Japan finally took responsibility for the brutal policies that brought on the suffering. "I myself believe it was a war of aggression, a war that was wrong," said Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in a deceptively simple statement. Individuals often find it hard to apologize. Why is it a difficult thing to do? Why do nations find it even harder to admit that they were wrong?

Russia has also found it difficult to admit it was wrong. For years, it refused to acknowledge that in September of 1941, at Babi Yar – a ravine outside Kiev, in the Ukraine – the Nazis gunned down over thirty-three thousand Jews. On the twentieth anniversary of the murders, Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko wrote:

> No monument stands over Babi Yar
> The steep precipice is the only gravestone
> I am afraid.

Only after Jews and non-Jews spontaneously remembered the victims on the 25th anniversary of the event did the Communists place a small granite stone at the site to honor "victims of Fascism." In 1976, they unveiled a more heroic monument and set aside the area as a memorial. The plaque noted that "100,000 victims of Fascism" died at Babi Yar but failed to mention that many were Jews. Then in 1991, on the 50th anniversary of Babi Yar, the last president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, told a crowd:

> Among tens of millions of dead, there were almost six million Jews – representatives of a great nation, dispersed by fate across the planet. Babi Yar is testimony that both on our soil and everywhere in Europe, Jews were always among the Nazis' first victims.
>
> The Nazis speculated on the vilest feelings – envy, nationalist intolerance and hatred. Antisemitism was their main tool of poisoning people's consciousness with chauvinism and racism.

After acknowledging that Stalin used antisemitism to strengthen his own power, Gorbachev noted that the ceremony at Babi Yar "brings hope that we, our renewing society, are able to draw lessons from tragedies and mistakes of the past." Why do you think Gorbachev chose Babi Yar to condemn antisemitism? How was his speech similar to Weizsaecker's? What differences seem most striking?

READING 7

Education and Memory

President Richard von Weizsaecker said of himself and other Germans, "All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it." Yet many young Germans know little or nothing about their country's history. Jane Kramer wrote of one group of teenagers:

All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it.

> The [skinheads] say "Heil Hitler!" but they know nothing about Hitler, or the war, beyond the fact that Hitler exterminated people who were "different," which is what they would like to do themselves. They do not even know about the "ethnic cleansing" going on a few hundred miles away in Bosnia now. They do not read newspapers. They read killer comic books and listen to Oi music, which is a kind of heavy-metal rock about the pleasures of genocide. Some of them think that Oi comes from the British skins, the Paki (for "Pakistani") bashers, whom they admire as the first skins; they think that it means "original idea." Some of them think that it comes from "joy." And some of them think that it comes from the "oi" in "Doitschland." They go to Oi concerts. They do not know that other people think of Oi as a Yiddish word. They do not know Jews or anything about Jews, but Jews are certainly on their hit list, along with Turks, refugees, and asylum seekers, anybody "foreign." They try to attack Jews when they can find them. The last time skins in Germany attacked a Jew – they killed him – it turned out the Jew may have been a Christian. They said later that he "looked" Jewish.[18]

Bodo Franzmann, a German publisher, has responded to the failure of German schools to teach about the Nazi era by producing a comic book that graphically describes key events in World War II, including the Holocaust. The book clearly indicates that the German public knew what Hitler stood for when he took office in 1933. It also shows how Hitler's "euthanasia" program was carried out. Eight pages are devoted to the Holocaust itself. And the author notes that while Germans "registered that Jews were disappearing, nobody asked where they were going and nobody wanted to know."

Before one community piloted the materials, high school students were questioned about their views of Germany's Nazi past. About 25 percent thought future generations would give Hitler a "fairer judgment." The same percentage believed that a man such as Hitler was needed to improve Germany's standing in the world. According to Hermann Nink, a teacher in Worms, "The most common misconception the youngsters had was that only one man, Hitler, was guilty for everything that happened. The comic

helped them understand how and why he came to power and how many people helped him commit the terrible crimes."[19]

After students had read the comic, many more realized that Germans cannot escape blame for voting for the Nazis. "What impressed the young readers was learning the details of how Hitler came to power – realizing he was not born a Nazi but how he became one," said Nink. "This is the most important lesson they could learn – to realize how it is happening to people today."[20]

CONNECTIONS

Weizsaecker says that we must accept the past because we are affected by its consequences and liable for it. How does this reading support his belief? How does it challenge his views?

In France, Serge Klarsfeld spent twenty years trying to persuade officials to revise the nation's history textbooks. As a result of his efforts, students in France no longer learn that the Germans rounded up French and foreign Jews and then deported them. They are now confronted with the truth: it was not the Germans but the French who deported the Jews. Klarsfeld believes that the battle for more complete and truthful accounts in textbooks is important. Would German educators agree? Do you agree?

Can textbooks have blind spots? To find out, check the way two or three different books treat one or more of the following topics: Native American histories, the Atlantic slave trade, the "winning" of the West, the placement of Japanese Americans in internment camps during World War II, the Vietnam War. What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking?

How is education linked to memory? Does that education have to take place in school? Where else do students learn about the past?

READING 8

Denial and the Holocaust

The sense of urgency many survivors feel about telling their story is inspired in part by teenagers like those described in the previous reading. It is also fueled by those who deny that there was a Holocaust. Saul Friedlander, an historian born in Czechoslovakia, explains:

> At the end of the war, Nazism was the damned part of Western civilization, the symbol of evil. Everything the Nazis had done was condemned, whatever they touched defiled; a seemingly indelible stain darkened the German past, while preceding centuries were scrutinized for the origins of this monstrous development. A sizable portion of the European elites, who two or three years before the German defeat had made no secret of their sympathy for the new order, were struck dumb and suffered total amnesia. Evidence of adherence, of enthusiasms shared, the written and oral record of four years of coexistence with it, and indeed of collaboration, often vanished. From one day to the next, the past was swept away, and it remained gone for the next twenty-five years.
>
> By the end of the Sixties, however, the Nazi image in the West had begun to change. Not radically or across the board, but here and there, and on the right as well as the left, perceptibly and revealingly enough to allow one to speak of the existence of a new kind of discourse.[21]

Among the leaders of that "new kind of discourse" are the so-called "revisionists" – individuals who insist that there was no Holocaust. Yet most reputable scholars ignored their writings and speeches until 1979. That year, Willis Carto, the treasurer of an antisemitic political group called the Liberty Lobby, founded the Institute for Historical Review. Based in California, the institute published a journal, organized conferences, and acted as a clearinghouse for the "revisionists." On the surface, the group seemed respectable. The word *revisionist* is a familiar one to scholars. They use it to refer to those who question accepted theories. The writers' university ties and many publications added to their respectability.

Then in 1979, the Institute for Historical Review offered $50,000 to anyone who could prove that Jews had been murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Holocaust survivors were stunned. One survivor, Mel Mermelstein, decided to fight back. Mermelstein had been a prisoner in Auschwitz and several members of his family were gassed there. He did not rely, however, just on his own experiences. He also provided pages of documentation, including eyewitness testimony. When the Institute for Historical Review refused to accept his proof, he filed suit against them. At a preliminary hearing on October 19, 1981, the Los Angeles Superior Court ruled that Mermelstein did not have to prove that the Nazis gassed Jews at Auschwitz. He had to prove only that he had not been compensated as promised and suffered emotional stress as a result. In July 1985, two weeks before the trial was to begin, the Institute settled out of court. It paid Mermelstein $90,000 ($50,000 for the reward and $40,000 for emotional damages) and formally apologized to him and to the court.

Despite the apology, the following year the group charged Mermelstein with libel for statements he made about the incident. When Mermelstein fought back, the charges were withdrawn. Nevertheless, he countersued, charging that the original suit was filed solely to harass him. He also

charged that the Institute and its affiliates had ties to the Nazi party. Eight years later, the case was still in the courts.

The Institute and a number of other "revisionist" groups base many of their arguments on the claim that it was technically impossible for large numbers of people to be gassed at Auschwitz-Birkenau or Majdanek. In France, Serge Klarsfeld, the son of a survivor of the Holocaust, and his wife Beate, the daughter of a German soldier, asked Jean-Claude Pressac to critique reports that purported to substantiate those claims. Pressac, the author of a widely respected article on the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau, described revisionist reports as "based on misinformation, which leads to false reasoning and misinterpretation of data."

Pressac's views are of interest not only because his own report is considered definitive but also because he himself once had "revisionist" leanings. In the process of collecting background information for a novel, Pressac went to Auschwitz to gather information about Nazi extermination techniques. Surprised at the lack of physical and documentary evidence, he spent the next eight years studying and analyzing the minute technical details of the Auschwitz crematoriums. His extensive review of blueprints, work orders, and inventories exposed inconsistencies between the stated purpose of the "showering" or "fumigation" chambers and their actual design. For example, when Pressac studied the plans for a chamber in Crematorium II at Birenau, he found the inventory of the room listed over twenty showerheads but not a single water pipe. And in the written instructions to the workers who built the chamber, Pressac discovered references to *"gasdichte Tueren"* (gas-tight doors), a *"Vergasungskeller"* (gassing chamber), gas-detection devices, and four chutes for introducing Zyklon B into the chamber.

The Holocaust is no longer written in sand. Now it is written in concrete.

Pressac's second book, *The Auschwitz Crematoria: The Machinery of Mass Slaughter,* provides additional evidence from recently opened K.G.B. archives in Russia. In a telephone interview, Pressac told journalist Timothy Ryback, "In my first book, I worked with twenty documents from the archives of the Auschwitz Museum. The Moscow archives provided me with another sixty documents. This has allowed me to create a complete chronology of the extermination process at Auschwitz and a complete history of the instruments of destruction – when they were built, what their capacity was, when they broke down or malfunctioned. The Holocaust is no longer written in sand. Now it is written in concrete.[22]

CONNECTIONS

If it takes so much effort to refute the claims of revisionists fifty years after the end of World War II, how much harder will it be after another fifty years pass?

Pressac's first book was published in 1989. Ryback says of it, "Through his research, Pressac has provided incontrovertible evidence, based on objec-

tive technical detail, that the Germans developed and implemented an industrial-style process for the killing of human beings." Yet the "revisionists" have continued to claim the Holocaust never happened. Chapter 2, Reading 8 described a study made by the German Anthropological Society in the late 1800s. It established that were no "racial differences" between Jewish and "Aryan" children. Historian George Mosse was quoted as saying of the study:

> This survey should have ended controversies about the existence of pure Aryans and Jews. However, it seems to have had surprisingly little impact. The idea of race had been infused with myths, stereotypes, and subjectivities long ago, and a scientific survey could change little.

How do responses to both studies support the view that what people believe is true is more important than the truth itself? What do they suggest about the power of a lie? What other parallels do you see between the two studies? What differences seem most striking?

Discrediting "revisionists" and their claims is one way to refute denials of the Holocaust. Serge Klarsfeld maintains that four other strategies are needed as well: accurate, well-researched histories; eyewitness accounts to enrich those histories; trials of war criminals along with efforts to educate people about the Holocaust; and films that document the reality of the Holocaust. Which strategy do you consider most effective?

The two lengthy but gripping documentaries Klarsfeld recommends are *Hotel Terminus* and *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Both are the work of French filmmaker Marcel Ophuls. Each raises questions not only of complicity and resistance in France during World War II but also about history and memory. In a third film, *The Memory of Justice*, Ophuls considers the Nuremberg trials and then compares World War II with the wars for independence in Algeria and Vietnam. What film would you select as the best to counter a denial of the Holocaust? What books or documents would you recommend to accomplish the same purpose?

In 1979, the United States government established the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) in the Department of Justice to hunt Nazis. These men and women were able to enter the nation only by illegally concealing facts about past. If the OSI can prove they were Nazis, their citizenship can be revoked and they can be deported. How important is it to track down Nazi war criminals? What are the short-term consequences of not doing so? The long-term consequences?

→Mermelstein used his own money to fight the Institute for Historical Review in court. Why do you think he chose to do so? What does is his story suggest about how one person can make a difference? A video entitled *Never Forget* is available from the Facing History Resource Center. Also available are records of Mermelstein's first court case.

READING 9

The First Amendment and Denial

The revisionists are not interested in truth, writes a judge in France, but in "the destruction of the dead's only 'grave' that is, our memory, and the erosion of all awareness of the crime itself."[23] In her book, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory,* Deborah Lipstadt provides detailed evidence in support of that view. She shows that denial activities usually spring from antisemitism rather than a concern for the truth. But Lipstadt did not write her book just to counter "revisionists." She had another reason as well. Columnist George Will explained it when he related an incident that took place at an interview Lipstadt gave to publicize the book.

Holocaust deniers play upon contemporary society's tendency toward historical amnesia, and its muzzy notion of "tolerance" that cannot distinguish between an open mind and an empty mind.

> Holocaust deniers play upon contemporary society's tendency toward historical amnesia, and its fuzzy notion of "tolerance" that cannot distinguish between an open mind and an empty mind. Thus a young reporter for a respected magazine interviewing Lipstadt (without reading her book) asked this question: "What proof do you include in your book that the Holocaust happened?" That reporter passed through college unmarked by information about even the largest events of the century, but acquired the conventional skepticism of the empty-headed: When in doubt, doubt.[24]

The attitude Will describes can also be seen in the way college newspapers responded to ads placed by a group known as the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust. Two professors at Rutgers University in New Jersey, historian David Oshinsky and political scientist Michael Curtis commented on those responses:

> College newspapers are facing a dilemma that pits free speech against historical deception. A group calling itself the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust has sent an advertisement to at least a dozen leading campus dailies. The ad contends that the Holocaust never occurred.
>
> Newspapers at Harvard, Yale, Brown, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Southern California have refused to run it. Those at Northwestern, Cornell, Duke, and the University of Michigan have published it amid protests from students, faculty and members of their own editorial boards. At Rutgers, the ad was printed free of charge on Dec. 3 as a "guest commentary," surrounded by rebuttals.
>
> The ad attempts to prey on students' ignorance about the Holocaust. It insists, without evidence, that there were no mass killings

of Jews and no "execution gas chambers in any camp in Europe that was under German control." It claims the so-called execution chambers were "fumigation chambers," used "to delouse clothing... and prevent disease." It is "from this life-saving procedure," the ad says, "that the myth of extermination gas chambers emerged."

The slickly done ad does not use the violent language common to the literature of racist and nativist groups. It wraps itself in concepts of free speech and open inquiry, arguing that all points of view deserve to be heard. Timed to exploit the controversy about political correctness, the ad says "elitist" and "Zionist" groups have stifled to debate on the Holocaust in order "to drum up world sympathy" for Jewish causes and Israel.

The ad was written by Bradley R. Smith, a political soulmate of the California-based Institute for Historical Review, the principal promoter of "Holocaust revisionism." …Bradley Smith's committee apparently believes that its theories will be tolerated by some on First Amendment grounds and accepted by others out of ignorance or worse. The Duke student newspaper naively repeated the committee's description of itself as a group of revisionist scholars. Duke's history department was appalled and responded with a statement that distinguished between those who revise history and those who deny it.

If one group advertises that the Holocaust never happened, another can buy space to insist that American blacks were never enslaved.

Most college editors seem aware of the committee's intentions. Their decision to print its ad is based on principle: an aversion to censorship or a belief that hate material should be aired and publicly refuted. Surely their right to publish such ads should not be questioned. They alone must decide what good purpose, if any, is served by printing ads that are intentionally hurtful and obviously false.

The ads should be rejected. If one group advertises that the Holocaust never happened, another can buy space to insist that American blacks were never enslaved. The stakes are high because college newspapers may soon be flooded with ads that present discredited assertions as if they were part of normal historical debate. If the Holocaust is not a fact, then nothing is a fact, and truth itself will be diminished.[25]

CONNECTIONS

Why does George Will call the saying "When in doubt, doubt" the "conventional skepticism of the empty-headed"? Do you agree?

Lucy Dawidowicz, the author of *The War Against the Jews* was asked to appear on a radio program with a French "revisionist" who calls the gas chamber and genocide "one and the same lie." When she refused to do so, she was asked if she was against discussing "controversial" issues on the radio. What does the question imply? How is it like the one directed at Lipstadt? Did Dawidowicz do the right thing?

Why do you think the advertisers called their group the *"Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust"?* What does the name imply? Why might it have special appeal to educated people?

Bradley Smith's committee believes that its theories will be tolerated by some people on First Amendment grounds and "accepted by others out of ignorance or worse." Research the First Amendment to the Constitution. How does it apply to this case? Do people have the right to tell lies? To teach lies? To promote hate?

"If you have a hundred books in the world today that are all devoted to teaching that the Holocaust did not happen, imagine the seeds that can fall on unsuspecting minds," Bill Moyers said in an interview. "Unless we keep hammering home the irrefutable and indisputable facts of the human experience, history as it was experienced by people, we are going to find ourselves increasingly unable to draw distinctions between what was and what we think was."[26] How does this reading support Moyers' point of view? Why do you think Moyers views education as the solution? Do you agree?

In critiquing a crusade against hate speech, Henry Louis Gates Jr., an African American scholar, insists, "Beliefs that go untested and unchallenged cannot prosper." What does he mean by that statement? Should there be limits on free speech?

Judith Miller writes, "Only a tiny group of malevolent cranks contends that the Holocaust did not take place, but the more subtle forms of revisionism are evident in battles over how history should be taught, in jokes, in literature, and in the popular culture, in television and films."[27] How do the examples of revisionism in this reading support her opinion? Call it into question? Look for other examples in newspapers, television, and films.

→Canada has a law that makes hate a crime. In 1982, James Keegstra, a high-school history teacher, was charged with violating that law after a student told his mother what he learned in history class. According to the boy, Keegstra taught students that "the Jews received this idea for communism. He said the person who told them how to use communism to control the world was a man named Baal." When asked who Baal was, Keegstra replied, "The devil, Satan." Students were also taught that the French Revolution and the American Civil War were "international Jewish conspiracies." In a class on World War II, Keegstra referred to Jews as "treacherous," "subversive," "sadistic," "money-loving," "child-killers," and "gutter-rats."

When the boy's mother, Susan Maddox, complained to school officials, they ignored her at first. So did her neighbors. Later they began to harrass her. After all, Keegstra was a well-liked teacher with considerable support in the community. But Maddox would not be silenced. After a long battle to "set kids straight," she managed to get Keegstra suspended. Why do

you think Susan Maddox chose to take a stand even though her position was not a popular one? *Evil at Clearwater,* a television docudrama of the case, is available from the Facing History Resource Center, as is an investigative report on the Keegstra case entitled *Lessons In Hate*. It provides an excellent summary of the case and includes an interview with Keegstra.

READING 10

A Living Past

In 1939, as Hitler planned the murder of the Jews, he asked, "Who after all speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" What happens to a history that has not been judged or even acknowledged? Are the survivors left isolated and alone? Laura Agkulian offers some insights into the ways an unacknowledged history shaped the lives of members of her own family. She discovered that history on a visit to an aunt.

In 1939, as Hitler planned the murder of the Jews, he asked, "Who after all speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" What happens to a history that has not been judged or even acknowledged?

"Make yourself at home, honey. You wanna take a shower?"

Auntie Parouz's suggestion made me vaguely uneasy. Would she think me uncouth if I didn't wash up? I had traveled only an hour by plane and another hour by limo – hardly enough to work up a sweat. I decided to risk falling a notch in her esteem. "No, thanks, Auntie – maybe later."

I didn't intend to converse much with Auntie the weekend I stayed at her house. But when the man I had flown to Massachusetts to interview could not see me until late afternoon, extra time suddenly materialized. I sat on a couch beside Auntie, and she told me a remarkable story.

The ironies of Auntie's life began 76 years ago. As she celebrated her ninth birthday, hundreds of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders were rounded up and executed by Turkish soldiers. Life for Armenians in Turkey was shattered. Parouz and more than one million other Armenians were driven from the land their ancestors had tended for centuries. Hundreds of thousands perished. Parouz's birthday had become her people's day of mourning.

It was early summer, 1915. Parouz and the other Armenians from her village of Yenikhan were given 24 hours to pack. They could take only what they could carry on their backs. Parouz's family packed bread and water. Her mother concealed as much jewelry and money as she could on herself and Parouz; they then buried the rest in their yard.

The Turkish gendarmes never explained what was happening. "Dey said, 'You gonna come back.'" Parouz's voice is so soft and husky it almost seems a whisper. "Dat was foolish – dat we believed it."

The soldiers prodded the marchers up and down mountains, past unfamiliar villages. At each stopping point, more Armenians were forced into the ragtag procession. Few Armenian men marched, the soldiers having, early on, shot them or thrown them into gorges.

If the Armenians didn't walk fast, soldiers on horseback would whip them. Parouz saw one of them slit a woman's face from ear to ear. The woman had to press one hand down on the top of her head and the other under her chin to hold her face together.

The marchers were robbed at every turn. One soldier ripped a gold earring from Parouz's ear; her left earlobe still hangs in two pieces. It was commonly thought that Armenians swallowed their valuables for safekeeping. Parouz remembers how a Turkish soldier looking for gold had sliced open a pregnant woman, scooped out the baby, and tossed it aside.

For eight months, Parouz and her mother endured this nightmarish journey to nowhere. Parouz's bare feet had such deep cracks that her mother tore fabric from Parouz's raggedy dress, cleaned out the pebbles imbedded in her heels, and stuffed the cracks with cloth.

Everywhere they would trip over dead Armenians. The dehydrated, malnourished corpses were swollen like balloons. Parouz noticed puddles where the bodily fluids were draining.

They screamed as Parouz's little brother was carried off by a horseman. They wept as pretty Armenian girls were raped and kidnapped. Her fair skin, blue-gray eyes, and auburn tresses made Parouz herself a likely victim, so her mother shaved her head and eyebrows and smeared her with dirt. Despite these precautions, a soldier grabbed her and was about to ride off when a young girl threw sand in his eyes. Blinded, he dropped Parouz. The rescuer grew up to be my grandmother.

One would expect Parouz to be bitter. Yet she is love incarnate. Sobbing quietly, she thanks God – for her mother's companionship on the march. For the good-hearted Arab woman who hid her for three years. For happy childhood memories, like picking daffodils near Yenikhan. She doesn't condemn Turks as a group: many of them were undoubtedly decent, she says; the government was awful.

While telling her story, she apologizes to her daughter Alice and me: "I'm sorry, I'm making you cry." She forgives my gruesome questions ("What do you remember about the corpses, Auntie?"); our brief visit has so pleased her that she exclaims, between sobs, "I'm enjoyin' every minute!"

Parouz is slipping toward eternal sleep; terminal illness rages within her. Perhaps my most vivid memory is how she still suffers over water. No matter where our conversation meandered, it returned, like a parched traveler, to fountains and flowing rivers. Armenians, filthy and dying of thirst, weren't permitted to touch water. Children died

diving into wells. People licked grass. They lapped up mud. For five gold coins her mother bought a cup of water from a Turkish villager; her family gathered around to sip it.

A few years ago, hospitalized after a stroke, Parouz couldn't have liquids. She became so desperate that one night she begged the nurse to empty the flowers from a vase so she could drink the water. Ironically, since the stroke, her eyes no longer water – she literally has no more tears to shed.

She can't bear to see water wasted. "If anything drips," Alice says, "she'll about go crazy." Only after leaving did it dawn on me why she kept urging, "Take a shower, make yourself comfortable." Her most precious possession is running water – enough to lavish on someone else. Forgive me, Auntie Parouz, I didn't know you had offered me the ultimate luxury.[28]

CONNECTIONS

Why is Laura Agkulian's aunt unable to forget the past? How is the Agkulian's reaction to her aunt's story similar to that of Donia Clenman's family (Reading 4)? What differences seem most striking?

A personal account is not a history. Yet historians regard personal accounts as invaluable. What is the difference between memory and history? What can you learn from a personal account that you cannot learn from a history book?

→The Facing History Resource Center has a packet of materials on the Armenian Genocide, including the memoirs of survivors, news accounts of the genocide, and three videos that provide a general introduction to the Armenian Genocide: *Not Everyone is Here* (the way post-genocide generations have dealt with the legacy of genocide); *The Armenian Genocide* (an overview of the genocidal policies of the Young Turks); and *Return to Ararat* (the experiences of a survivor who returns to historic Armenia). The Resource Center also has class sets of the memoir *Road from Home* by David Kherdian and a video interview with the author.

READING 11

Truth: The Last Victim of Genocide

Vigen Guroian, an expert on the Armenian Genocide, recounts the following story to illustrate the dangers of a history that is unacknowledged and unjudged.

> In May 1983, Richard Cohen wrote an article in the Washington Post entitled "Killing Truth." Cohen in a previous piece had made a passing reference to the Armenian Genocide. He had done so "thinking," as he said, "that it was a given – that no one could possibly dispute that it had happened." In "Killing Truth" Cohen returns to the subject of the Armenian Genocide after a meeting at the Turkish embassy arranged by the Turkish Ambassador Sukru Elekdag. Though he does not say so, Cohen leaves no doubt that he was invited to the embassy because of this mention of the Armenian Genocide in his column. He writes:
>
> "I found myself sitting at one end of an enormous table in the embassy of Turkey. At the other end was the ambassador himself and what he was telling me was that the crime I had always thought had happened, simply had not...
>
> "What the world persisted in calling a genocide was actually a civil war – one with atrocities on both sides and one in which the central government in Constantinople lost control of its own troops and could not protect the Armenians. There never was a policy to exterminate the Armenians."
>
> Cohen admits that his confidence was shaken. He was left wondering whether that which he thought for so long was simply a matter of historical record had veracity. For during their conversation the ambassador had dismissed adroitly the sources to which Cohen referred as proof of the genocide, claiming they were distortions "based on hearsay" and allied propaganda of the time. "I read some more about Armenia and talked to some more people," writes Cohen, "but the fact is the ambassador dented my confidence." Cohen found himself in a position not uncommon to so many others whose lives in one way or another have been touched by the Armenian Genocide and its denial. He did not have the time or the requisite linguistic skills to read further. He found himself a part of the problem. "And so year by year, person by person," Cohen reflects, "the genocide blurs, doubt corrodes it, and the easy word, 'alleged' creeps in to mock the Armenian anguish."
>
> Cohen in this article proves to be a conscientious human being who has also learned the destructive power of a lie. He is unwilling to rest at

And so year by year, person by person, the genocide blurs, doubt corrodes it, and the easy word, "alleged" creeps in to mock the Armenian anguish.

ease with a process which threatens to dispose of all clarity about the first genocide of this century. Letting bygones be bygones will not do, he insists, at least not in the case of the Armenian Genocide or the Holocaust or the Cambodian massacres. For the denial of such occurrences is not simply an attempt to rewrite the past. It is, as he so rightly observes, a deliberate effort "to control the present and shape the future." …Cohen ends his article with the disturbing thought that perhaps "the last victim of any genocide is truth."[29]

The last victim of any genocide is truth.

CONNECTIONS

The Turkish ambassador told Cohen that "what the world persisted in calling a genocide was actually a civil war – one with atrocities on both sides." Is he denying the genocide, explaining it, or rationalizing it? What are the consequences of each course of action? What effect does he assume his statement will have on Cohen?

What did Cohen mean when he wrote that "and so year by year, person by person, the genocide blurs, doubt corrodes it, and the easy word, 'alleged' creeps in to mock the Armenian anguish?" Why does he call *alleged* an "easy word"? What is the "destructive power of a lie?" What does it destroy? How does it affect the teller? The victim? Generations to come? Why did it shake Cohen's confidence?

What does the expression "let bygones be bygones" mean? Should bygones always be bygones?

Cohen concludes by saying that "the last victim of any genocide is truth." Judith Miller says that "denial, the least sophisticated form of suppression is the easiest to combat." How do accounts like Reading 10 support her view? What happens when the last witness is gone?

READING 12

The Politics of Denial

Many believe that "history submits to politics." That is, they maintain that politicians and some historians promote new interpretations of history for reasons that have little to do with the event itself and everything to do with their nation's economic, political or social concerns. The history of the Armenian Genocide is a good example. When the Allies divided up the old Ottoman Empire after World War I, Turkey was in the midst a civil war. When the war ended in 1923, the nation had a new leader, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who took the name Kemal Ataturk. He set out to

build a modern Islamic state. From the start, that state was deeply affected by world politics. The Allies were now united only in their opposition to the new Soviet Union. They saw Turkey, which bordered Russia, as a barrier against communism. So when Kemal Ataturk, an anti-communist nationalist, insisted that there was no Armenian Genocide, no world leader challenged his statement. He did not deny that Armenians suffered during the war. But, he insisted, others had suffered as well.

For the millions of Armenians around the globe..., the wounds... remain open, they have not been closed, and the hurt's not been able to heal, because the world has not faced up to the truth of the suffering of the Armenian people in this period from 1915 to 1923.

In time, Kemal Ataturk's view of the massacres became the one most people accepted. Some historians now argued that the Armenians, as a non-Muslim minority with co-religionists in Russia, were rightly seen as a threat to the survival of the Ottoman Empire. Others debated the number of deaths. They claimed that the original estimates of a million to 1.5 million were too high. No more than six hundred thousand died and those deaths were the result of civil war rather than genocide.

A debate in the United States Senate in February, 1990, revealed how successful the Turks have been in their efforts to attach the word *alleged* to the Armenian Genocide. As the seventy-fifth anniversary of the massacres approached, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas sponsored a resolution designating April 24 as a "National Day of Man's Inhumanity to Man." Fifteen years earlier, a similar resolution passed without debate. This time, however, the measure prompted considerable controversy. In his newscast, TV journalist Roger Mudd tried to help Americans understand why:

> No one seems to doubt that a staggering number of Christian Armenians died at the hands of the Moslem Turks between 1915 and 1922. But how they died, claims the modern Turkish Government, was not genocide, it was starvation and resettlement and guerrilla warfare, and to call that genocide would be not only insulting but would also undermine U.S./Turkish relations...
>
> The Armenian resolution comes from Senator Dole, who makes no secret of his debt to an Armenian orthopedic surgeon, Hampar Kalikian of Chicago, who helped nurse him back to health mentally and physically from his terrible World War II wounds. Three of Kalikian's sisters died in the Armenian killings – genocide.
>
> *Sen. Dole (Feb. 21, 1990):* Action on this resolution will not open old wounds. For the millions of Armenians around the globe including nearly one million in this country, the wounds have been opened for almost seventy-five years, and they're open, remain open, they have not been closed, and the hurt's not been able to heal, because the world has not faced up to the truth of the suffering of the Armenian people in this period from 1915 to 1923.
>
> *Mr. Mudd:* At one point last fall, Dole had sixty other sponsors on his resolution, but that number has now dropped to forty-nine because of, says Dole, the lobbying clout of the Turkish Government and its refusal to compromise.

Sen. Dole: Can a million and a half people disappear and say, oh, well, we don't want, certainly don't want to harm our relations with the Turks? We're talking about the Ottomans, and keep in mind, they were on the side of the Germans. They weren't helping us in 1915 to 1923. And as I said yesterday, there is no effort, no attempt in any way to implicate the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Mudd: Lined up with Dole are six of the Senate's eight Jewish senators, men like Carl Levin of Michigan [a Democrat], who find little difference between genocide and holocaust.

Sen. Levin: Mr. President, Hitler asked when he was planning the final solution of the Jews, "Who remembers the Armenians?" Let us prove Hitler wrong again and by adoption of this resolution remember the Armenian genocide.

Mr. Mudd: Also in favor of the resolution is Republican Pete Wilson now running for Governor of California, which is where roughly twenty-five per cent of Armenian-Americans live.

If I thought this resolution could wipe out the tears, the suffering and tragedy of the Armenian people, then my perspective on it would be different. But I'm afraid that we're going to inflame a situation now that does not need inflaming.

Sen. Wilson: It was the genocide, and there can be no lesser word for what occurred, the slaughter of a million and a half people, innocent men, women and children. It is language that simply calls upon us to observe with a day of remembrance that tragedy. And the only offense that it gives would be to those actually responsible for that genocide, those long dead, I might say.

Mr. Mudd: Leading the opposition is Robert Byrd of West Virginia, the Senate's senior Democrat, who has since his first days in the Congress been one of Turkey's reliables.

Sen. Byrd: Mr. President, we're not here to determine what is right and what is wrong. This is for the courts to do. And we have created an instrument under the Genocide Convention to determine what is right and what is wrong. Is this Senate going to set itself up as the instrument whereby genocide is to be determined and where the crime of genocide is to be determined where the nation or group that commits the crime is to be labeled, is to be accused of a crime called genocide?

Mr. Mudd: Add to Byrd's opposition that of Sam Nunn, the influential chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Sen. Dunn: If I thought this resolution could wipe out the tears, the suffering and tragedy of the Armenian people, then my perspective on it would be different. But I'm afraid that we're going to inflame a situation now that does not need inflaming. And I think we're going to cause additional problems if this resolution passes. Mr. President, the Turkish government has made it clear that passage of the resolution before us will cause serious damage to the partnership between the United States and Turkey that we've worked so hard to build...

Mr. Mudd: Late this afternoon as the Senate approached a second vote to cut off debate, Byrd and Dole squared off with one another.

Sen. Dole: We're saying that we can't talk about this genocide; it might embarrass somebody. We can only talk about genocides from here on that don't embarrass anybody. You find me somewhere where they've killed a million people or five hundred thousand or a hundred thousand and if they don't embarrass anybody and don't threaten any American company's profit margin and don't require a few hours studying the facts, then we'll bring it up and pass it.

Sen. Byrd: We may be doing the Armenian people a great disservice. Who knows? We may be helping to enflame passions right on this floor, where too much has already been said, and too many have branded Turkey as a criminal.

Mr. Mudd: On the vote to close down the filibuster, Dole lost further ground this afternoon, falling twelve votes short of the needed two-thirds. Dole must now decide whether to give up his Armenian crusade or start offering the genocide resolution as an amendment to other legislation.[30]

CONNECTIONS

The overview to this chapter identifies four ways people suppress the truth. Find examples of all four in this reading. Judith Miller views rationalization and relativization as "the most common, insidious, and hence problematic forms of the suppression of memory." How do the examples you identified support her point of view?

How important is it that this Armenian history be called a *genocide?* How important is it that the Holocaust be called a *genocide?* Do the names we give events matter?

Summarize the arguments on both sides in the Senate debate. Are the two sides debating the same question or is each basing its position on a different issue?

Why is Hitler quoted in the debate? What do his remarks suggest about the importance of remembering the past?

What does Senator Nunn mean when he says, "If I thought this resolution could wipe out the tears, the suffering and tragedy of the Armenian people, then my perspective on it would be different. But I'm afraid that we're going to inflame a situation now that does not need inflaming." Do you agree?

Richard Hovannisian, a professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles, describes the successes the Turks had in their efforts to rewrite history during the Cold War.

> Illustrative of this success was an affair relating to plans by MGM Studios to film a motion picture based on Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, a saga of some 4,000 Armenian villagers near the Mediterranean Sea who in 1915 resisted the deportation decrees and endured great hardship with legendary courage until they were miraculously rescued by Allied naval vessels. News that a script for the film was being prepared elicited formal protests from the Turkish government, intercession by the Department of State, and pressure on MGM and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. These channels were ultimately sufficient to force MGM to shelve the project, and all subsequent efforts to revive it were met by a repetition of protest, intercession, pressure, and cancellation.[31]

Why would a foreign government want to stop an American movie about an event that took place long ago? Why would the State Department help the Turks do so? What do your answers suggest about the politics of history? Could it happen today?

→A video of the program described in this reading is available from the Facing History Resource Center, as are copies of articles and documents prepared by the Armenian Assembly to refute Senator Byrd and his supporters. Also available is a video tape of a talk by Richard Hovannisian. It is summarized in *Elements of Time* pages 350-352.

READING 13

What About My History?

The Germans and the Turks are not the only people to have difficulty facing the truth about their past. Americans have had similar problems in confronting their history. In 1941, Richard Wright, a noted novelist wrote:

> We black folk, our history, and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experiences of what America is. If we black folk perish, America will perish. If America has forgotten her past, then let her look into the mirror of our consciousness and she will see the *living* past living in the present, for our memories go back, through our black folk of today, through the recollections of our black parents, and through the tales of slavery told by our black grandparents, to the time when none of us, black or white, lived in this fertile land. The differences between black folk and white folk are blood or color, and the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us. The common road of hope which we all traveled has brought us into a stronger kinship than any words, laws, or legal claims.

Fifty years later, John B. Diamond, a college student, wrote:

> Black history week in elementary school was what I like to call a "feel-good" affair. It was a time for all of the white teachers and students to show that they were concerned about "Black" issues and to express their pride in how far we had come as a nation from those horrible days of slavery. It seemed that the only Black leaders we talked about were those who had helped to free Blacks from slavery. For Europeans, history went far beyond this country; for Blacks, however, it seemed to reach only to slavery. No one mentioned the fact that Africans had built the pyramids or had cultures long before the Europeans had moved out of caves. No one mentioned that the Greeks had stolen Egyptian philosophy or that the foundations of science all come from Black Africa. I guess this was just too controversial.
>
> We learned about the slave trade coming from the western coast of Africa. One point that my teachers made sure to emphasize was that Africans interned other Africans and sold them to the white man. This statement served to remove blame from whites and place it on the Africans. It was their way of saying that the blame for slavery doesn't rest only on the white man's shoulders. It wasn't the white man's fault for murdering… Black people and oppressing them: it was their own African brothers who had caused them to face this plight. My teachers denied me an enormous part of my history prior to slavery; they placed much of the blame for slavery on the Black man; and they downplayed my people's contributions to the building of this country.[32]

I think people can hear the truth. I think in fact we long for it. We long for the truth in all of its contradictions, because there is no simple truth either. [We know] that truth means sacrifice, but it also means the enriching of one's inner life, and I think the American want that, and they know that very often they don't get it.

CONNECTIONS

What is Richard Wright saying about the nation and the importance of confronting its history? About the links between black Americans and white?

In the overview to this chapter, Judith Miller listed four ways individuals and groups suppress or deny memory. The African Americans quoted in this reading believe their history has been suppressed or denied. How do they think it has been suppressed or denied? For what reasons?

In a televised interview with Bill Moyers, poet Rita Dove said, "I think people can hear the truth. I think in fact we long for it. We long for the truth in all of its contradictions, because there is no simple truth either and [we know] that truth means sacrifice, but it also means the enriching of one's inner life, and I think the American want that, and they know that very often they don't get it." What does Dove mean when she speaks of "truth in all of its contradictions"? To what history do you think she is referring? How does she think the American people will respond to truth about their history – that is, the negative as well as the positive aspects of that history?

Robert F. Drinan, a Jesuit priest who served on the Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in the 1960s, recently reviewed two books that describe the "humiliations, the alienation and the suffering that every black person in America must endure." In his view, the "race question" will never subside or be resolved until the nation as a whole learns about and then reacts to that pain. What evidence can you find in this chapter in support of Drinan's argument? What evidence can you find that calls it into question? How do you think Richard Wright, John Diamond, or Rita Dove would respond to Drinan's statement? What do you think?

Celebrating "Black History Week" and including African American heroes in United States history textbooks are some ways of making United States history more inclusive. Many think that even though books are important, they are not as critical as the attitudes and values of the teacher. Based on your own experiences, what advice would you give a teacher who wants to teach a history course that includes everyone's experiences?

Langston Hughes once asked "What happens to a dream deferred?" He wondered, "Does it sag like a heavy load? Or does it explode – like a raisin in the sun?" How do you think Wright would answer the question? Diamond? Rita Dove? How would you respond?

READING 14

Acknowledging the Past

Many African Americans today are demanding that their history be acknowledged and that amends be made for past injustices. Only then, they argue, can the nation move forward. In 1990, Julius Lester wrote:

> The summer of 1986 saw the observance of the one-hundredth birthday of the Statue of Liberty. It was a time of national celebration. Newspapers and television carried stories and interviews with immigrants recounting their coming to America, their thoughts and emotions on first seeing the statue. How painful it was to read and listen to such stories; how maddening to listen to immigrants express with deep sincerity and in tears how much they loved America, how America had given them opportunities they would not have had otherwise...

> I could not watch the televised Fourth-of-July festivities for very long and when I saw photographs of fireworks exploding around the illuminated Statue of Liberty, I was dismayed that the nation could so celebrate itself and not know that its celebration was a rebuke and an insult to that 10 percent of its population which had its beginnings in the killing arrogance of white people who thought they had divine sanction to steal other human beings by force, to enslave them, use them for their own aggrandizement and profit, and sell them or kill them when they refused to be so used.
>
> America had a birthday party, but I could not attend; and America did not notice my absence, which means it did not care that I was not present.[33]

After noting that the President of the United States marked the occasion with a speech, Lester writes:

> I would have liked the president to apologize to black Americans on behalf of all the immigrants and their descendants, of whom he is one, for the fact that that beacon of liberty has not shone her torch on blacks, and that, as painful as it is to acknowledge, immigrants owe some of their success to the fact that one of the rungs on their climb up the ladder of success was the backs of black people. I wanted the president to make it clear that he was speaking in the generality, that he was speaking not about individual immigrants – some of whom, certainly, did all they could within the contexts of their lives to alleviate racism and prejudice – but rather, about the forces in American life that allow racism to flourish like vegetation in a rain forest. I would've liked it very much if the president had gone on to reveal that he felt black suffering and had made it part of him, for we are not bound together as human beings because we all succeed. We do not, and that is an unchangeable part of how things are. What binds us together as human being is that we all suffer, and the suffering that has brought immigrants to America as a refuge from suffering should have made them feel empathy for the suffering of blacks and generous toward them. What is so painful, what is almost unforgivable, is how ready immigrants and their descendants have been to add to black suffering.
>
> I should have been especially moved if the president had also acknowledged the original inhabitants of his land and their brutal displacement and degradation, which have been enshrined in American history as the "winning of the West." What this nation of immigrants did to native Americans cannot be undone, but there must be a public acknowledgment of what was done and a public asking of forgiveness for the fact that this nation created itself by destroying the people who were already here.
>
> If the president could've made such a speech, it would've meant that America had, at long last, matured into a nation that accepted

America has a large and frightening shadow that it refuses to look at and refuses to claim as its own. Until America claims that shadow as its own, we will continue to be a nation of children forever claiming that we have done nothing wrong and that all the wrongs that have been done – well, they just kind of happened and we don't know how. Black people know that the wrongs didn't just happen.

> responsibility for all of its history rather than seizing on a portion and glorifying it as the whole. America has a large and frightening shadow that it refuses to look at and refuses to claim as its own. Until America claims that shadow as its own, we will continue to be a nation of children forever claiming that we have done nothing wrong and that all the wrongs that have been done – well, they just kind of happened and we don't know how. Black people know that the wrongs didn't just happen.[34]

CONNECTIONS

Compare Lester's remarks about the way Americans regard their past with Barnett's remarks about the way Germans view theirs. What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking?

Compare the speech Lester wishes an American president would make with the one the president of West Germany actually made (Reading 6). What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking?

What does Lester mean when he describes the United States as "a nation of children forever claiming that we have done nothing wrong and that all the wrongs that have been done – well, they just kind of happened and we don't know how"? What would "a nation of adults" be like? What principles would it embody?

In 1923, a mob of white citizens went on a rampage after failing to find a black man accused of assaulting a white woman. Over the course of a week, eight people were killed and nearly every building in the African-American town of Rosewood, Florida, was burned to the ground. In 1994, the Florida state legislature passed a bill that would pay $150,000 to each survivor of the riot and his or her family. A state senator who supported reparations told reporters, "Rosewood has become a symbol of the countless secret deaths and atrocities that took place throughout this era. It is time for us to make Florida fair to all its citizens." How do you think Lester would regard the state's action? How do think Ida B. Wells would have viewed it? (Chapter 2, Reading 10) To what extent is the bill a legacy of her work?

Opponents of the action by the Florida state legislature feared it would set a precedent for other victims of racial violence. Are their fears justified? How important is it for a nation to acknowledge its mistakes? Apologize for wrongdoing? Make amends? How important is it for an individual to acknowledge mistakes? Apologize? Make amends?

READING 15

Black and White Americans Confront the Past

Is the denial of African American history by many white Americans the result of a lacuna or blind spot? Or is it a part of the legacy of racism? The way historians have interpreted the years after the Civil War suggests there are no simple answers.

Historians agree on the basic facts. After the Civil War, the nation passed three Constitutional amendments that abolished slavery and gave former slaves all of the rights and privileges of citizenship, including the right to vote and hold political office. Most of the newly formed state governments in the South were unwilling to enforce those laws. Therefore Congress sent federal troops to the South to do the job. While those troops were present, African American men were able to take advantage of their rights as citizens. After those troops were withdrawn in 1877, one state after another passed laws that limited or denied African Americans their constitutional rights. And historians agree that the federal government did not challenge those state laws. Indeed many in government applauded them. The disagreement lies in what Reconstruction – the years between 1867 and 1877 – was really like.

Never before [Reconstruction] – never since – had there been so much hope. A black mother knew that her boy could become governor. The evidence of things seen, the evidence of things heard fired millions of hearts.

Lerone Bennett, Jr., an African American historian, says of Reconstruction, "Never before had the sun shone so bright." He goes on to list the progress the South made during those years – including the establishment of public schools, the expansion of voting rights, and judicial reforms that resulted in more democratic court systems. He also names the African Americans who helped shape these and other laws. Among them were Congressmen and members of state legislatures. And Bennett identifies blacks who helped run states, cities, and colleges in the South. Then noting that "these things were happening on the higher levels," he asks, "What of the masses? How was it with them?"

> They were struggling, as they had always struggled, with the stubborn and recalcitrant earth. But now there was hope. Never before – never since – had there been so much hope. A black mother knew that her boy could become governor. The evidence of things seen, the evidence of things heard fired millions of hearts. Black mothers walked ten, fifteen and twenty miles to put their children in school. They sacrificed and stinted. They bowed down and worshipped the miraculous ABCs from whom so many blessings flowed. The sky or at the very least the mountaintop was the limit. Had not Blanche Bruce [a United States senator from Mississippi] been suggested as a possible vice-presidential candidate? Was it not clear that a black boy could go as far as nerve, energy, and ability would carry him? Black mothers,

bending over washtubs, could hope. Black boys, in cotton fields, could dream. The millennium hadn't come, of course, but there were some who believed it was around the next turning.

A man in this age, went to mail a letter, and the postmaster was black. A man committed a crime, and, in some counties, was arrested by a black policeman, prosecuted by a black solicitor, weighed by a black and white jury and sentenced by a black judge.[35]

W. E. B. Du Bois, a noted African American writer and thinker, offered a more somber summary of those years. "The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery." For a long time, many white historians painted a very different picture of Reconstruction. Eric Foner, a white American historian, describes that view and its consequences in *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*.

To the bulk of the white South, [Reconstruction] had ...been a time of "savage tyranny" that "accomplished not one useful result, and left behind it, not one pleasant recollection."

By the turn of the century, as soldiers from the North and South joined to take up the "white man's burden" in the Spanish-American War, Reconstruction was widely viewed as little more than a regrettable detour on the road to reunion. To the bulk of the white South, it had...been a time of "savage tyranny" that "accomplished not one useful result, and left behind it, not one pleasant recollection." Black suffrage, wrote [one historian], was now seen by "all thoughtful men" as "the greatest political crime ever perpetrated by any people." In more sober language, many Northerners...concurred in these judgments. "Years of thinking and observation" had convinced [the former commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau] "that the restoration of their lands to the planters provided for [a] future better for the negroes."...

This rewriting of Reconstruction's history was accorded scholarly legitimacy – to its everlasting shame – by the nation's fraternity of professional historians. Early in the twentieth century, a group of young Southern scholars gathered at Columbia University to study the Reconstruction era under the guidance of Professors John W. Burgess and William A. Dunning. Blacks [according to Burgess and Dunning], were "children" utterly incapable of appreciating the freedom that had been thrust upon them. The North did "a monstrous thing" in granting them suffrage, for "a black skin means membership in a race of men which has never of itself succeeded in subjecting passion to reason, has never, therefore, created any civilization of any kind." No political order could survive in the South unless founded on the principle of racial inequality. The students' works on individual Southern states echoed these sentiments. Reconstruction, concluded the study of North Carolina, was an attempt by "selfish politicians backed by the federal government...to Africanize the State and deprive the people through misrule and oppression of most that life held dear." The views of the Dunning School shaped historical writing for generations, and

achieved wide popularity through D. W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* (which glorified the Ku Klux Klan and had its premiere at the White House during Woodrow Wilson's Presidency)...

Few interpretations of history have had such far-reaching consequences as this image of Reconstruction. As Francis B. Simkins, a South Carolina-born historian, noted during the 1930s, "the alleged horrors of Reconstruction" did much to freeze the mind of the white South in unalterable opposition to outside pressures for social change and to any thought of breaching Democratic ascendancy, eliminating segregation, or restoring suffrage to disenfranchised blacks. They also justified Northern indifference to [laws that contradicted] the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Apart from a few white dissenters like Simkins, it was left to black writers to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy. In the early years of this century, none did so more tirelessly than former Mississippi Congressman John R. Lynch, then living in Chicago, who published a series of devastating critiques of the racial biases and historical errors [in popular accounts of Reconstruction]. "I do not hesitate to assert," he wrote, "that the Southern Reconstruction Governments were the best governments those States ever had." In 1917, Lynch voiced the hope that "a fair, just, and impartial historian will, some day, write a history covering the Reconstruction period, [giving] the actual facts of what took place."

Only in the family traditions and collective folk memories of the black community did a different version of Reconstruction survive. Growing up in the 1920s, Pauli Murray was "never allowed to forget" that she walked in "proud shoes" because her grandfather, Robert G. Fitzgerald, had "fought for freedom" in the Union Army and then enlisted as a teacher in the "second war" against the powerlessness and ignorance inherited from slavery. When the Works Progress Administration sent agents into [the South] during the [1930s] to interview former slaves, they found Reconstruction remembered for its disappointments and betrayals, but also as a time of hope, possibility, and accomplishment. Bitterness still lingered over the federal government's failure to distribute land or protect blacks' civil and political rights. "The Yankees helped free us, but they let us be put back in slavery again." Yet coupled with this disillusionment were proud, vivid recollections of a time when "the colored used to hold office." Some pulled from their shelves dusty scrapbooks of clippings from Reconstruction newspapers; others could still recount the names of local black leaders... Younger blacks spoke of being taught by their parents "about the old times, mostly about the Reconstruction, and the Ku Klux." "I know folks think the books tell the truth, but they shore don't," [said] one eighty-eight-year old former slave...[36]

Many young African Americans in other parts of the nation did not know this history until they joined the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Vincent Harding traces his own interest in African American history to the women and men he met in small towns and large cities throughout the South. In the introduction to *There Is a River; The Black Struggle for Freedom in America,* he says of them:

> It was they – in their lives, in their quiet courage, in their songs and their silences – who first told us that there was a significant history behind what we called "The Movement," a long time of surging toward freedom. It was they who called to see a movement older and deeper than any one life, any one generation. It is with them that I must keep faith, for it was among them, in the 1960s, that the informal, largely unconscious research for this work began. Their churches and homes, the marching lines, the confrontations with sheriffs and deputies in front of the county courthouses, the cars on the treacherous backcountry roads, the jails and cemeteries – there were my first archives, my first living sources for the story of our river.[37]

CONNECTIONS

How did African Americans remember Reconstruction? How did many white Americans recall it? Why does Foner believe that "few interpretations of history have had such far-reaching consequences as this image of Reconstruction"? Do you agree?

Foner writes, "Only in the family traditions and collective folk memories of the black community did a different version of Reconstruction survive." What does it mean to have your history denied? To what extent were the issues of identity African Americans faced at the turn of the century like those of the Bear in *the bear that wasn't* (Chapter 1, Reading l)?

How does a nation's history reflect who is "in" and who is "out"? How might a history written by those who are "out" differ from one written by the "in" group? Bill Moyers believes that "if the state can banish the history of inconvenient facts,...we are at the mercy of the official view of reality: or as Big Brother in *1984* explains, the state will 'squeeze you empty and fill you with ourselves.'" Therefore he argues "We have got to have the ugly facts in order to protect us from the official view of reality. Otherwise, we are squeezed empty and filled with what other people want us to think and feel and experience."[38] Is it the government that protects people from ugly facts? Or is it their own reluctance to confront those painful facts?

Daniel Goleman believes that "questions that can't – or won't – be asked are a sure sign of a lacuna." What questions did white historians at the turn of the century fail to ask about Reconstruction? How important was their failure to do so?

Reread Bennett's assessment of Reconstruction. Whom does he leave out? Is his omission evidence of another lacuna in American history?

→The Facing History Resource Center has a number of videos that deal with the years after Reconstruction. One of the most powerful is *Assault at West Point*, the story of the first African American cadet to enter the military academy. The interview with Maya Angelou included on a video entitled *Facing Evil with Bill Moyers* also offers insights into this period in history and its legacies.

READING 16

Memorials and Monuments

One way a people remembers the past is by building monuments that honor its heroes or commemorate its tragedies. In creating any memorial, the individuals involved must answer a variety of questions. Some deal with the purpose of the memorial; others focus on its audience; and still others consider who will be remembered and why.

One way a people remembers the past is by building monuments that honor its heroes or commemorate its tragedies.

In 1884, the Municipal Council of Calais, France, addressed those very questions, when the group decided to erect a monument to a tragic event in the town's history. In 1346, the English had laid siege to Calais. After eleven months of hunger and suffering, six burghers – prominent citizens of the town – decided to end the blockade by offering themselves as hostages. Jean Froissart, a French writer, created a poem commemorating the event. It tells of how the six leading citizens of Calais marched out of town with "bare heads and feet, with ropes round their necks, and the keys of the town and castle in their hands." All six were killed, but their sacrifice saved the city and its people.

The poem caught the imagination not only of the Municipal Council but also of a famous sculptor, August Rodin. Hired to create a memorial, Rodin researched the story carefully and then decided to depict the six burghers at the very moment they surrendered themselves to King Edward III of England. A historian says of the six statues the artist created:

> Dressed in garments which fall in heavy folds and add a physical burden to their gestures and uncertain bearing, they seem in transition between life and death, between sleeping and waking... Powerless to alter the inevitable consequence of their decision, united only by their common resolve, each participant enacts his own drama, irresolute, deeply self-absorbed, and infinitely sad.[39]

Members of the town's monument committee were disappointed. They expected a more heroic view – one that featured the most famous of the burghers. They also visualized a memorial that would prompt passers-by to look up in awe. Instead Rodin placed his statues at eye-level. Each resembled an ordinary man caught in a tragic dilemma.

The artist and the committee battled over the work for months. When the finished product was finally unveiled in June of 1895, the compromises each side made were clearly visible. Rodin had succeeded in overcoming the Committee's objections to the way the figures looked. But he was unable to persuade them to place the monument in front of the Town Hall so that it could be integrated into daily life in the community. Instead, the committee located the memorial on the edge of a public garden and surrounded it with an iron grill. Only in 1925 were the statues moved to Town Hall Square.

In creating any memorial, the individuals involved must answer a variety of questions. Some deal with the purpose of the memorial; others focus on its audience; and still others consider who will be remembered and why.

CONNECTIONS

In designing a memorial, architects and other artists must consider: What is the purpose of the memorial? What is its audience – that is, who will visit it and why? Who will be remembered and for what reasons? How did Rodin answer those questions?

How did the townspeople want the burghers remembered? How did Rodin want it remembered? Why does the truth make some people feel uncomfortable? What is the significance of that discomfort?

Is a hero someone who stands "above" ordinary people? Or is he or she an ordinary person who does an extraordinary deed? Add to the working definition of the word *hero* you started in Chapter 8.

Facing History students show the monuments they created.

READING 17

In Commemoration

Nearly one hundred years after Rodin designed his memorial, the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, invited Maya Ying Lin to design a memorial to commemorate another great sacrifice. The center wanted to honor the men and women who lost their lives in the struggle for civil rights. Morris S. Dees, the co-founder and executive director of the Center, selected her for the job because of her work on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Unlike the Vietnam Memorial which covers a specific period of time that's over, I wanted the Civil Rights Memorial to deal not only with the past but with the future – with how far we still have to go in a continuing struggle.

In creating a design, Maya Lin, like Rodin, studied the history of the event she was asked to commemorate. In doing so, she was particularly moved by a quotation Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used in a number of speeches. Paraphrasing the Book of Amos, he often said, "We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." She told an interviewer:

> The minute I hit that quote I knew that the whole piece had to be about water. I learned that King had used the phrase not only in his famous "I have a dream" speech at the Washington civil rights march in 1963 but at the start of the bus boycott in Montgomery eight years earlier, so it had been a rallying cry for the entire movement. Suddenly the whole form took shape and half an hour later I was in a restaurant in Montgomery with the people from the Center, sketching it on a paper napkin. I realized that I wanted to create a time line: a chronological listing of the movement's major events and its individual deaths, which together would show how people's lives influenced history and how their deaths made things better.[40]

The interviewer described the completed monument:

> The memorial has two components, both of black Canadian granite. The first part is a nine-foot-high wall, on the face of which are carved the words:
>
> ...until justice rolls down like waters
> and righteousness like a mighty stream.
> --Martin Luther King, Jr.
>
> Water spills down the wall at waterfall speed. Although the passage from the Prophet Amos as paraphrased by King actually begins with "We will not be satisfied," Maya Lin told me that she started where she did because the word "until" catches the second purpose of the monument. "Unlike the Vietnam Memorial which covers a specific period of time that's over," she said, "I wanted the

> Civil Rights Memorial to deal not only with the past but with the future – with how far we still have to go in a continuing struggle."
>
> The second part of the memorial, resting on an asymmetrical pedestal nearby, is a circular tabletop, almost 12 feet in diameter. Around its perimeter, incised in the stone, somewhat in the manner of a sundial, are 53 brief entries, chronologically arranged. Twenty-one of them report landmark events in the movement... The other entries describe 40 individual deaths... Extra space after King's [assassination] shows that this is where the story ends on the memorial. It also therefore shows where the story begins – on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision – and that's where most visitors start their visit, walking slowly around the table and touching the names beneath the water, which arises from a hole in the tabletop and flows over it evenly. The table is only 31 inches high, deliberately accessible to children.
>
> "The water is as slow as I could get it," Maya Lin told me. "It remains very still until you touch it. Your hand causes ripples, which transform and alter the piece, just as reading the words completes the piece. The sound of the water is also very calming. Sound is important to me as an architect."[41]

The monument was even more powerful than the young architect expected. She told the reporter, "At the dedication ceremony, I was surprised and moved when people started to cry. Emmett Till's mother was touching his name beneath the water and crying, and I realized her tears were becoming part of the memorial."[42] Till is one of the Americans the monument honors.

CONNECTIONS

Like Rodin, Maya Lin considered such questions as: What is the purpose of the memorial? Who is its audience – that is, who will visit it and why? Who will be remembered and for what reasons? How did she answer those questions? How were her responses similar to Rodin's? What differences seem most striking?

The memorial Maya Lin created is a memorial to courage and the fight for justice. People also build monuments to injustice. Journalist Dwight Young asks:

> What should a monument to injustice look like? Should it be tall, threatening, and sharp-edged, gleaming black and blood-red? Or should it be smaller, more slithery, a poisonous menace half-hidden among rocks and shadowy vines?
>
> Or might it take the form of an isolated valley dotted with scrubby bushes where clouds of wind-borne grit sometimes blot out the rugged mountains looming on all sides?
>
> That's how Manzanar looks.[43]

Manzanar, which lies west of Death Valley in California, was the first of ten facilities the United States built to house Japanese Americans during World War II. (See Connections, Chapter 9, Reading 11.) Manzanar was recently designated a National Historic Site. Therefore a team of architects has been considering the following questions:

- How do you encourage visitors to stare into the ugly face of hate and prejudice?
- Can you show the dark side of history in a way that neither sugarcoats it nor makes people turn away unmoved and unengaged?
- Is it possible to make people think about the unthinkable?

Research the way those questions were answered at Auschwitz in Poland. Research the way the questions were answered by those who created the memorial to the horrors of the Middle Passage and the Atlantic slave trade at Goree, an island off the coast of West Africa. Research, too, the ways Native Americans and other groups have chosen to commemorate their experiences with injustice. What similarities do you find among the way these groups have answered the questions? What differences seem most striking? How would you answer these questions?

→Many students build a monument as a culminating activity or as part of a class project. In a complete unit on monuments, available from the Facing History Resource Center, Barbara Traietti Hearne describes ways students can make monuments to ideas, persons, and events. This activity allows students to clarify their thoughts and feelings as they manipulate wire, clay, and plaster. The monuments students have created in the past take many forms and use a variety of symbols. A packet of additional materials on monuments – how to build them, observe them, and interpret them – is also available from the Facing History Resource Center. Included with the packet are several videos, one of which features an interview with Maya Lin.

READING 18

Education and the Future

Maya Lin also designed the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. After seeing it, an anonymous veteran wrote the following poem.

> I didn't want a monument
> not even one as sober as that
> vast black wall of broken lives
> I didn't want a postage stamp.
> I didn't want a road beside the Delaware
> River with a sign proclaiming:
> Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.
> What I wanted was a simple recognition
> of the limits of our power as a nation
> to inflict our will on others
> What I wanted was an understanding
> that the world is neither black-and-white nor ours.
> What I wanted was an end to monuments.

What I wanted was an understanding that the world is neither black-and-white nor ours. What I wanted was an end to monuments.

Many believe that the best way to achieve that goal is through education. By studying the terrible events of twentieth-century genocide, we are vividly reminded of the power of the individual to make decisions that affect not only oneself and one's neighbors but also the survival of the entire world. After seeing the destruction the atomic bomb wrought on Nagasaki, Japan, at the end of World War II, Jacob Bronowski experienced "a moment that dwarfed his imagination." He called it a "universal moment." Amid the terrible ashes of the city, he wrote 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."[44]

Bronowski was never able to convince his colleagues in government and the United Nations of the merits of his idea. They told him that "delegates would be uncomfortable" there. Confronting the history of genocide is always uncomfortable but it is important work. By denying people access to that history, we fail to honor their potential to confront, to cope, and to make a difference today and in the future. A school principal expressed that idea more eloquently in a letter he sent out on the first day of the school year.

> 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 humane.

CONNECTIONS

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 humane.

It has been said that the last battles fought in every war are over memory – over the way that war will be remembered. How has World War II been remembered in the United States? In other countries involved in the conflict? How have those memories changed over time? What prompts changes in the way a war is remembered?

The Vietnam War was one of the most controversial wars in American history. Americans today are still divided over how the war ought to be remembered. You may wish to research the controversy over Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial to find out more about that struggle over memory. You may also want to find out how memories of the Vietnam War affect the way Americans respond to crises in the world today.

How does the way an event is labeled affect the way it is recalled? In 1949, communist-controlled North Korea invaded South Korea. At the request of the United States, the United Nations sent troops to assist the South Koreans. Many Americans referred to the war that followed as a "conflict" or "military action." Why do you think they chose not to call it a war? How important are labels to the way people view an event? To the way the event is remembered?

What would you include in a curriculum that addresses concerns expressed in this reading and in this course as a whole? What readings would you insist students read? What films would you require them to see? What speakers would you invite? What would you omit? Add? How would you begin the course? How would you end it?

In designing a curriculum, decisions have to be made. Whose history should be included? Whose might be left out? If everyone's history is included, what may be lost? How do you discover universal lessons from a particular history without trivializing that history?

The title of this course is "Facing History and Ourselves." What does that title mean to you? How has it been reflected in this course? In the way you have come to perceive the past? In the way you approach the future?

NOTES

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[3] Judith Miller, *One by One, by One: Facing the Holocaust* (Simon & Schuster, 1990), 287.
[4] Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom*, 183.
[5] Based on an interview with Rose Murra by Margot Stern Strom.
[6] Excerpt from *Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz* by Isabella Leitner, edited and with an Epilogue by Irving A. Leitner (Thomas Y. Crowell, Publishers) Copyright 1978 by Isabella Leitner and Irving A. Leitner. Reprinted by permission.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Timothy W. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," *The New Yorker*, 15 Sept., 1993, 68-69.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Daniel Goleman, Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception (Simon & Schuster), 228.
[11] Nancy Sommers, "Being Personal and Being Academic," Harvard University, 1994.
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[13] Donia Blumenfeld Clenman, "I Dream in Good English Too," *Poems by Donia Blumenfeld Clenman* (Flowerfield and Littleman, 1988).
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[23] Ibid., 70.
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[25] David Oshinsky and Michael Curtis, *New York Times*, 11 December, 1991. Copyright 1991 The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.
[26] Margot Stern Strom, "An Interview with Bill Moyers," *Facing History and Ourselves News*, Fall, 1986.
[27] Judith Miller, *One by One, by One*, 11-12.
[28] Laura Agkulian,"Fountains and Flowing Rivers, Before the Mourning," *International Herald Tribune*, 24, April, 1991.
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[33] Julius Lester, *Falling Pieces of the Broken Sky*, 150.
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[36] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (Harper & Row, 1988), 608-611.
[37] Vincent Harding, *There Is a River*, (Harcourt Brace, 1981), xiv.
[38] Margot Stern Strom, "An interview with Bill Moyers."
[39] Abraham Lerner, Introduction to *Auguste Rodin: The Burghers of Calais* (Museum Press, Inc., 1976).

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