Aftermaths Home

Breaking the Silence: Aftermaths, Memory, Silence, and Reconciliation

Introduction

"Forgiving is not forgetting; its actually remembering--remembering and not using your right to hit back. Its a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you dont want to repeat what happened." -Desmond Tutu on reconciliation

The effects of conflict or genocide on a nation are as varied as the methods of violence that people can use against one another. Each atrocity or long-termed period of armed conflict brings new forms of suffering and memory to those forced to live through it. The ongoing process of culture and the lived histories of the victims are disrupted by these often long-term psychological, physical, and structural consequences.

Within the past century, our societies have made conscious efforts to help those suffering in the aftermaths of conflict and attempted to restore their culture and social well-being. International organizations today strive to "redress and prevent the most severe violations of human rights by confronting legacies of mass abuse." (ICTJ) The purpose of this site is to analyze and interpret memory, suffering, and silence with a cultural lens as well as study our attempts to fill the gaps left behind by conflict.

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Click below for further information on each topic:

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Discussion Questions

Transitional
1. Finnestrom advocates a combination of "culturally informed practices of reconciliation," "international retributive justice," and "political efforts at peacemaking." Is this realistic?

Restorative Justice
1. "Discourses on reconciliation alone are not capable of bringing peace to social settings suffering from long-term armed conflicts or extreme political oppression." Finnestrom on Uganda (pg 232) Is this true of other conflicts that we have studied? Why or why not?
2. Elders in Rwanda have seen the repetition of history - would an institutional form of restorative justice be able to break this cycle of ethnic violence?

Memory
1. In what way, if any, do these Pentecostal videos function as a type of memorial?
2. Memorials are built as a way to remember the past. Does Sierra Leone gain anything by not directly remembering and representing the past but rather thinking towards the future and reconciling their current situation?

Memorials
1. "How do memorials in the U.S. function differently or similarly to those in other parts of the world?"

Sources

Kaldor, Mary. Old Wars, Cold Wars, New Wars, and the War on Terror. London School of Economics. Lecture.

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United Nations Rule of Law
Definition of Transitional Justice from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
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