



The Lodz Ghetto Photographs of Henryk Ross

A COLLECTION OF HOLOCAUST PHOTOGRAPHS

An Una Hakika Community Ambassador reports a rumour, Sentinel Project

Lesson Plan 4: Contemporary Connections

This lesson will explore the contemporary connections we can make between Ross's visual record and the roles photography, art and social media can play as tools for social justice today. As we learn about the different ways people engage in social justice issues now, we ask students to think about what it means to be a witness. What responsibilities

do we have to take action as both creators and receivers of information about social injustices? How can we act based on the information we receive?

We will use the answers to these questions to explore how action in students' own communities could help spark positive change, and to think about the tools they need to take action. What tools do I need in order to be an active, responsible and effective citizen in my community?

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Using the websites below, explore the ways in which photography, art and social media are used to take action on issues of social injustice and advocate for change. Ask students to record the ways in which each organization is documenting injustice and/or atrocities. What are the tools that each organization uses to bring attention to these issues?

Photographers and Social Justice

PhotoSensitive is a non-profit collective whose projects focus on North American issues, including poverty, hunger, illness, racism, ignorance and injustice. But the

RELATED IMAGES Visit this link to see the photographs for this lesson: www.ago.net/ross-lesson-4

collective also focuses on the antidotes to these problems: the hope found in the face of adversity, the laughter and love that make the difficulties of life tolerable, and the simple pleasures that lighten dark lives. PhotoSensitive's photographers use the camera to tell stories, make social comments and spur viewers to action.

<http://www.photosensitive.com/>

World Press Photo is committed to supporting and advancing high standards in photojournalism and documentary photography worldwide. We believe in the power of visual journalism to inspire and shape us.

<http://www.worldpressphoto.org/>

Artists and Social Justice

Ai WeiWei is a Chinese artist and activist who has been very critical of the Chinese government's policies on democracy and human rights.

<http://aiweiwei.com/>

Brian Jungen is a Canadian artist of Swiss and Dunne-za heritage who has risen to prominence over the last decade by creating artwork that repurposes objects from contemporary culture – including plastic lawn chairs, golf bags and Nike Air Jordans – to reflect Aboriginal symbols and traditions.

<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/brian-jungen/>

Using Social Media – The Sentinel Project

While governments with the power to stop genocide and save lives have stood by and done nothing in the past, civil society – ordinary people and non-governmental organizations – can still make a difference. Since genocide can be prevented by acting before it begins, the Sentinel Project is working to make this pre-emptive action possible through the creation of an early-warning system and cooperation with threatened communities and other anti-genocide organizations.

<https://thesentinelproject.org/>

Read the interview with Chris Tuckwood of the Sentinel Project and identify the challenges and triumphs that he and his organization have experienced. What tools did Tuckwood use to overcome the obstacles he faced and begin to create change?

Creating a Toolbox for Change

Studying difficult histories can be challenging, as students can feel overwhelmed and powerless in the face of injustice. It is important that students are taken safely in and out of these experiences with the knowledge that their choices matter and they have the ability to take action to create change. A great way to start thinking about this process is by creating a **Toolbox for Change**. The types of tools that each of us requires will vary depending on individual needs and the issue at hand. For example, I might put a coin in my toolbox to represent the fact that I need funding to run a successful project. Alternatively, I might put a drawing of a heart in my toolbox to show that I need to empathize with and strive to understand others in order to create meaning-

ful change. The possibility for different types of tools is endless; this will demonstrate that there are many ways to create change.

Ask students to consider all the tools that have been used by the different individuals and organizations. Then ask them to consider an issue they are passionate about and think about what tools they need to create change. Hand out sticky notes to all students and have them each write down one tool for their Toolbox for Change. Students should come up one by one and post their sticky notes on the wall. As they post their notes on the wall, students may briefly describe the tools they selected and why they selected them.

Discussion

All over the world, individuals are documenting issues that their communities are facing. We encounter this documentation in many different places: on Facebook, through Twitter, on Instagram, on TV, in newspapers, in

books, in theatre and in visual art. As witnesses or recipients of this information, what is our responsibility to act, and what can we do once we have this information?

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Interview

Chris Tuckwood, Executive Director of the Sentinel Project

thesentinelproject.org

Written on February 27, 2015

How would you describe the goals or mandate of the Sentinel Project?

Our mission is to assist communities threatened by mass atrocities around the world. There are two important pillars to this mission. First, we emphasize working on the ground, cooperating with the people in harm's way. Second, we use innovative technology to achieve our mission whenever possible.

What inspired you to do start the Sentinel Project?

I was sixteen years old when I first learned about the Rwandan genocide from a documentary on television. Something about it really resonated with me and I decided to devote my life to stopping things like that from happening again. Of course, I didn't know how to achieve that when I first started out but I started educating myself a lot about genocide. When I got to university I had an opportunity to become a student leader in the movement to stop the genocide in Darfur. We were very successful on our own campus but I wanted to have a more direct way of helping people in danger on the other side of the world. That's where the idea of predicting and preventing atrocities using the modern tools available to us started and grew into the Sentinel Project.

In the work that you do what resources or tools have you found to be the most helpful?

Definitely people - and I'm not just saying that because it sounds like a good thing to say. If I go back to the two

pillars of our mission that I mentioned earlier, they are both really important but that community cooperation on the ground with people whose lives are threatened really makes our mission happen. There are lots of cool things we use, like drones, satellite imagery, and networks of people gathering information with mobile phones, but those technologies are tools and at the end of the day if there's nobody to use them then we're not going to succeed. Technology enables us to do most things more effectively but at the end of the day, it's people who save lives, whether they're our volunteers here in Toronto, our staff on the ground, or community members working with us to prevent atrocities.

What obstacles and challenges have you faced? Think of one you were able to overcome and describe how you succeeded in overcoming it.

The biggest obstacle we've faced in our history so far has definitely been related to finding funding for our work. The fact is that people make things happen but money helps them do that in a big way. We really struggled with this early on since we started the organization from nothing and had basically no money. Ultimately, solving that problem came down to a few different things - persistence, catching people's attention with our important work, and taking some risks. If we had quit early on then we wouldn't be where we are now doing this important work. At the same time, if a few of us hadn't been willing to take the leap and invested our own personal money to fund some of our first fieldwork in Kenya then we would never have caught the attention of funders to do really impactful work in the field. It all came down those three things - persistence, an important cause, and taking a risk.

Describe the process or steps you went through to develop a particular project and see it through to a successful conclusion.

The fieldwork I just mentioned is the best example since Kenya (where I'm traveling to as I write this) is home to

our flagship Una Hakika project right now. A couple of years ago there were a series of interethnic massacres in a part of Kenya called the Tana Delta, where violence like this is common. It got a little bit of attention in the international media but we wanted to see behind the headlines and learn about how and why it happened. That's when a couple of us booked flights to Kenya, rented a car, and drove out the conflict zone to talk to people and learn from them. We didn't go in with any solutions in mind and really just wanted to better understand the problem and then see what we could do. Ultimately, this inspired the idea for Una Hakika, which is a mobile phone-based information service that monitors and counters the spread of incendiary rumours that contribute to the atmosphere of fear, distrust, and hatred in the Tana Delta. Now when people there hear a rumour that another ethnic group is planning to attack them they have a reliable source of information to investigate it for them rather than reacting right away. They can ask "Una hakika?" - "Are you sure?" in Swahili - and come to us. The project is at an early stage but has been really successful so far and we have big plans for it throughout Kenya and even in other countries. That process we followed in the Tana Delta has served us well - recognizing a crisis and going to first gather information with open minds rather than having preconceived notions and bringing in outside solutions that might not first the problem. Now we do the same thing everywhere we operate - it's an essential part of that community cooperation that we emphasize.

What do you think would be a good first step for someone in high school who wants to make a difference?

When you're young it can seem daunting to be faced with a big problem that you want to solve, especially if it's one with global importance. However, the fact is that those problems seem daunting at any age so it's never too early to start doing something - lots of impressive things are achieved by people both young and old. And doing something also doesn't mean you have to run out and start an organization right away - though if you want to do that then go for it because ambition goes a long way. The first step though, no matter what, should be self-education about whatever issue it is that you care about. Starting with self-education about genocide when I was high school meant that by the time I got to university and then out into the so-called "real world" I already had a lot of expertise on the topic and was confident and comfortable taking a leadership role and talking about it with anyone. Self-education also reinforces the fact that learning does not begin and end with the classroom. Gaining knowledge is within your own power and if self-education is the first step in making the difference you want then it's going to help you figure out all the steps after that.

