

Resolution Against Genocide

As passed by the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association, February 2008

.....

Introduction

Throughout human history and continuing to the present, the issue of genocide or mass violence has been a devastating reality (Staub, 2000). Psychology is in a unique position to both inform our understanding of the causes and solutions to genocide (Munn, 2006; Sternberg, 2003). While governments and the United Nations work to address this life altering and history altering crisis, Non-Governmental Organizations, such as the American Psychological Association, have the skills, knowledge, and expertise to increase awareness and ultimately bring about peace and reconciliation (Howe, 2004). In keeping with its charge, APA's Committee on International Relations in Psychology and Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs call on all psychologists to respond to this global continuing crisis with the unique contribution that can be made by mental health educators, researchers, and counselors.

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association has demonstrated its commitment to the fight for human rights of all people through (1) its resolutions against racism, stereotypes, and male violence against women, (2) the establishment of the Committee on International Relations in Psychology, the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, and the Committee on Women in Psychology and (3) its ongoing support for the efforts of the United Nations to promote and defend human rights (Bryant-Davis, Okorodudu, Holliday, 2004);

WHEREAS the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines the term as: Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 1948);

WHEREAS "unintentional" or indirect acts of destruction such as forced marching and forced starvation are also crimes against humanity;

WHEREAS genocide is the ultimate display of hate, fear, and violence, which are learned attitudes and behaviors; (Staub, 2006; Dutton, Boyanowsky, & Bond, 2005; Sternberg, 2003);

WHEREAS genocide can be an outgrowth of multiple factors including promotion of self advancement at the cost of other's human rights; crisis of resources, compliance with authoritarian leaderships, and prejudice which is unfavorable affective reactions or evaluations of groups and their members (Waller, 2006; Finzsch, 2005);

WHEREAS genocide threatens basic human rights of survival, security, development, and social participation (Lang, 2006; Mork, 2003);

WHEREAS genocide has negative cognitive, behavioral, affective, relational, and spiritual effects on child and adult victims, as well as on perpetrators, historically and contemporarily (Dutton, Boyanowsky, & Bond, 2005; Ursano, Fullerton, & Norwood, 2003; van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996);

WHEREAS genocide is often combined with systematic rape and displacement of victims and severe mental health consequences for survivors of genocide that have been shown to increase anxiety, depression, self-defeating thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse,

suicide, homicide, and a host of health complications in targeted communities (Bolton, 2001; Staub, 1999; Herman, 1997);

WHEREAS genocide has been shown to severely alter the developmental trajectory of children who are exposed to it by negatively impacting academic and social development, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Kaplan, 2006, Dyregrov, Gupta, Gjestad, & Mukanoheli, 2000);

WHEREAS genocide intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status in ways that are unique in creating disenfranchisement and environments of vulnerability; (Gangoli, 2006; Bryant-Davis, 2005; Lindsey, 2002; Moses, 2002; Bhavnani, & Backer, 2000)

WHEREAS genocide has long term intergenerational traumatic effects on whole communities (Kaplan, 2006; Ritchie, Watson, & Friedman, 2005; Briere, 2004; Staub, 2000);

WHEREAS the United Nations has established genocide and systematic rape as crimes against humanity (United Nations, 2004; Osborn, 2001);

WHEREAS genocide negatively affects perpetrators by perpetuating distorted thinking about the self and others, including cognitions that dehumanize those who are targeted (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005; Staub, 2004);

WHEREAS genocide has negative effects on intergroup relations, magnifying distrust, fear, vigilance, suspicion, anxiety, stereotypes, and disconnection (Kressel, 2003; Bolton, 2001);

WHEREAS genocide continues to occur throughout human history (Lal, 2005);

WHEREAS the psychological devastation of genocide has been established in psychological studies of the genocides of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, Africans in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Jewish people in the Holocaust, Armenians in 1915, the Tutsis in Rwanda, Cambodians, Guatemalans, Ukrainians, Chinese in the Nanking Massacre, Muslims in Bosnia, and most currently the Black people of the Darfur region of the Sudan where assaults against the Black Sudanese have resulted in the murder of more than 450,000 persons, the rape of countless women and girls, and the displacement of 2.5 million persons (Bush, 2007; Lippman, 2007; Hinton, 2005; Steinweis, 2005; Austin, 2004; Midlarsky & Midlarsky, 2004; Mueller, 2004; Beristain, Paez, & González, 2000; Elovitz, 1999);

WHEREAS the struggle against genocide requires continued active resistance through science and practice that promotes social justice and human rights globally (McMillion, 2005; Howe, 2004; Foa, Keane, & Friedman, 2004);

WHEREAS passive observation of violent acts (the "bystander effect") has negative consequences on individuals and communities (Lippman, 2007; Fischer, Greitemeyer, Pollozek, & Frey, 2006);

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association opposes all manifestation of hate, prejudice, discrimination, and violence and affirms the basic human rights of all people for survival, equality, dignity, respect, and liberty (Kahn, 1985);

WHEREAS psychological science and practice can inform reconciliation processes (Staub, 2006; Munn, 2006; McMillion, 2005; Suedfeld, 2000);

Therefore be it resolved that the American Psychological Association condemns genocide wherever it occurs across the globe and confirms that all people have the right to survival and safety;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association will recommend:

- (1) That the international community, professional organizations, and individual psychologists work toward the development of policies that work to eradicate and prevent genocide and to ameliorate its impact on individuals and communities.
- (2) The development of research that fosters our understanding of the causes, effects, and solutions to race-based and ethnicity-based hate crimes.
- (3) The implementation of interventions that promote equality, social justice, and reconciliation across cultures.
- (4) The exploration of the gendered experience of genocide including systematic rape.
- (5) The awareness raising of psychologists and psychologists-in-training about the prevalence and impact of genocide through curriculum development, conference presentation, research dissemination, and use of media outlets.
- (6) The promulgation of psychological strategies to promote the recovery of victims, community reconciliation, and human rights for all persons.

References

- Austin, A. (2004). Explanation and Responsibility: Agency and Motive in Lynching and Genocide. *Journal of Black Studies*, 34(5), 719-733.
- Beristain, C., Paez, D., & González, J. (2000). Rituals, social sharing, silence, emotions and collective memory claims in the case of the Guatemalan genocide. *Psicothema*, 12, 117-130.
- Bhavnani, R., & Backer, D. (2000). Localized ethnic conflict and genocide: Accounting for differences in Rwanda and Burundi. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44(3), 283-306.
- Bolton, P. (2001). Local perceptions of the mental health effects of the Rwandan genocide. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 189(4), 243-248.
- Briere, J. (2006). *Principles of Trauma Therapy : A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation and Treatment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Bryant-Davis, T., Okorodudu, C., & Holliday, B. (2004). Combating racism: The role of psychologists and the United Nations. *The psychology of prejudice and discrimination: Racism in America*, Vol. 1 (pp. 223-235). Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Bryant-Davis, T. (2005). *Thriving in the wake of trauma: A multicultural guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Bush, G. (2007). Speech given at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Retrieved on May 8, 2007 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/04/20070418.html>.
- Dutton, D., Boyanowsky, E., & Bond, M. (2005). Extreme mass homicide: From military massacre to genocide. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(4), 437-473.
- Dyregrov, A., Gupta, L., Gjestad, R., & Mukanoheli, E. (2000). Trauma exposure and psychological reactions to genocide among Rwandan children. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Elovitz, P. (1999). War, trauma, genocide, and Kosovo in the news and classroom. *Journal of Psychohistory*, 27(2), 188-199.

- Finzsch, N. (2005). 'It is scarcely possible to conceive that human beings could be so hideous and loathsome': Discourses of genocide in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America and Australia. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39(2), 97-115.
- Fischer, P., Greitemeyer, T., Pollozek, F., & Frey, D. (2006). The unresponsive bystander: Are bystanders more responsive in dangerous emergencies? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(2), 267-278.
- Foa, E., Keane, T., & Friedman, M. (2004). *Effective Treatments for PTSD: Practice Guidelines from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Gangoli, G. (2006). Engendering genocide: Gender, conflict and violence. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 29(5), 534-538.
- Herman, J. (1997). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York, NY: BASIC BOOKS.
- Hinton, A. (2005). *Why did they kill? Cambodia in the shadow of genocide*. University of California Press.
- Howe, T. (2004). Lessons Learned From Political Violence and Genocide in Teaching a Psychology of Peace: An Interview With Linda Woolf. *Teaching of Psychology*, 31(2), 149-149.
- Kahn, A. (1985). *Victims of crime and violence: Final report of the APA Task Force on the Victims of Crime and Violence*. American Psychological Association.
- Kaplan, S. (2006). Children in genocide: Extreme traumatization and the 'affect propeller.' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 87(3), 725-746.
- Kressel, N. (2003). Mass hate: The global rise of genocide and terror. Revised and updated. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 191(2), 134-134.
- Lal, V. (2005). The concentration camp and development: The pasts and future of genocide. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39(2), 220-243.
- Lang, J. (2006). Genocide in the Shadow of Democracy. The Psycho-Politics of Modern Mass Murder. *Psyke & Logos*, 27(1), 72-88.
- Lindsey, R. (2002). From atrocity to data: Historiographies of rape in Former Yugoslavia and the gendering of genocide. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36(4), 59-78.
- Lippman, M. (2007). Darfur: the politics of genocide denial syndrome. *Journal of Genocide Research* 9 (2); 193-213. McMillion, M. (2005). An Intervention That Offers Hope to Post-Genocide Societies. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 24(3), 338-340.
- Midlarsky, E., & Midlarsky, M. (2004). Echoes of Genocide: Trauma and Ethnic Identity Among European Immigrants. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 28(2), 38-53.
- Mork, G. (2003). Fundamentals of Genocide Scholarship. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 9(2), 175-176.
- Moses, A. (2002). Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the 'racial century': Genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36(4), 7-36.

Mueller, A. (2004). Affirming Denial through Preemptive Apologia: The Case of The Armenian Genocide Resolution. *Western Journal of Communication*, 68(1), 24-44.

Munn, S. (2006). Dialogue Toward Agenocide: Encountering the Other in the Context of Genocide. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 46(3), 281-302.

Osborn, A. (2001). Mass rape ruled a war crime. *The Guardian International* February 23, 2001. Retrieved on May 8, 2007 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,441855,00.html>.

Ritchie, E., Watson, P., & Friedman, M. (2005). *Interventions Following Mass Violence and Disasters: Strategies for Mental Health Practice*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Sternberg, R. (2003). A duplex theory of hate: Development and application to terrorism, massacres, and genocide. *Review of General Psychology*, 7(3), 299-328.

Staub, E. (2006). Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory. *Political Psychology*, 27(6), 867-894.

Staub, E., Pearlman, L., Gubin, A., & Hagengimana, A. (2005). Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiving and the Prevention of Violence After Genocide or Mass Killing: An Intervention And its Experimental Evaluation in Rwanda. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 24(3), 297-334.

Staub, E. (2004). Understanding and responding to group violence: Genocide, mass killing, and terrorism. *Understanding terrorism: Psychosocial roots, consequences, and interventions* (pp. 151-168). American Psychological Association.

Staub, E. (2000). Genocide and mass killing: Origins, prevention, healing and reconciliation. *Political Psychology*, 21(2), 367-382.

Staub, E. (1999). The origins and prevention of genocide, mass killing, and other collective violence. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 5(4), 303-336.

Steinweis, A. (2005). The Auschwitz Analogy: Holocaust Memory and American Debates over Intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 19; 276-289.

Suedfeld, P. (2000). Reverberations of the Holocaust fifty years later: Psychology's contributions to understanding persecution and genocide. *Canadian Psychology*, 41(1), 1-9.

United Nations (2004). *Basic Facts About the United Nations*. United Nations.

United Nations (1948). *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Retrieved on May 8, 2007 from <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>.

Ursano, R., Fullerton, C., & Norwood, A. (2003). *Terrorism and Disaster: Individual and Community Mental Health Interventions*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Van der Kolk, B., McFarlane, A., & Weisaeth, L. (1996). *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Waller, J. (2006). *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing. The psychology of resolving global conflicts: From war to peace (Vol. 1): Nature vs. nurture* (pp. 89-107). Praeger Security International. Ψ