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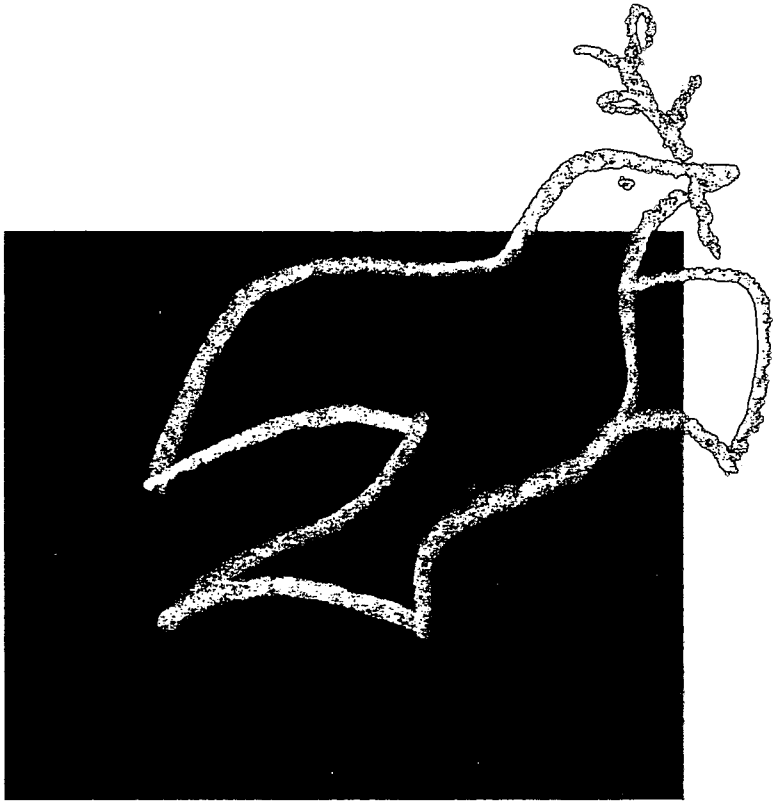
ABSTRACT

This booklet, which is available in English, French, and Spanish, presents articles by eight individuals from around the world which demonstrate how teachers worldwide are finding ways to show children how to respect those who are different from themselves. The teachers' mission is to provide children with the means to overcome centuries-old tensions. After an introduction, the articles are as follows: "Lessons in Dialogue" (Olwin Frost, Northern Ireland); "Lessons in Love" (M. Therese Ranee, A.C., Sri Lanka); "Lessons in Citizenship" (Pascal Diard, France); "Lessons in Resistance" (Zohra T., Algeria); "Lessons in Solidarity" (Teresa Gangemi, Italy); "Lessons in Reconciliation" (Marie-Laetitia Kayirerwa, Burundi); "Lessons in Understanding" (Azijada Borovac, Bosnia and Herzegovina); and "Lessons in Responsibility" (Avi Black, United States). (SM)

The Quiet Peacemakers



A Tribute to Teachers

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A Tribute to Teachers

Introduction

Not for them the press conferences, photo opportunities, international awards nor congratulatory handshakes. Society reserves no form of recognition for the "quiet peacemakers" — those teachers who devote their energy to building or restoring peace through their work in the classroom. Far from the public eye, their peace-building efforts go largely unnoticed.

Whether they come from conflict zones such as Algeria, Burundi, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka or so-called peaceful countries such as France, Italy or the United States, all have a vision of their mission as teachers. This mission is to provide children with the means to overcome centuries-old tensions.

As the eight individuals in this brochure amply demonstrate, all over the world teachers are finding ways of showing children how to respect those who are different from themselves. In situations of armed conflict, ethnic rivalry or in disturbed urban enclaves, they are the ones who instill the values of peace and tolerance in their pupils. And this, of course, is how it should be, since education is the key to building peace in the minds of men, as UNESCO's Constitution affirms. "Tolerance you teach only by being tolerant," declares Azijada Borovac, the Bosnian teacher. It is above all through their example that these teachers influence their pupils.

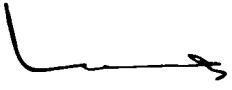
We must therefore help and support them in their mission and train them in how to teach values. We must also provide them with appropriate teaching materials. School textbooks should be carefully studied so that they do not transmit false truths or prejudices which may, in the long-term, work against peace. "How many pages of history books are devoted to wars of this 20th century and how many to its peaceful conquests?" asks

The Quiet Peacemakers

Federico Mayor, UNESCO Director-General in *La Paix, demain (Peace Tomorrow)*. "We know everything or almost of emperors and generals; but what do we know of scholars, writers, artists? We must 'disarm history' both in history books and in teaching in general. It is often a mere account of battles and conflicts."

World Teachers' Day (5 October) was launched by UNESCO in 1993 to promote teachers and draw attention to the drastic decline in their working conditions in many countries. UNESCO and Education International are jointly celebrating its fifth anniversary. In this year of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we call on you to recognize the primordial role teachers play in providing education and in building peace. Teachers shape the future. Let us help them to turn the tables on the logic of war and educate tomorrow's citizens.

Colin N. Power
Assistant Director-General for Education
UNESCO



Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary
Education International

"Our school i... that the rest of th...

The Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland live totally segregated lives, in separate areas, with separate schools and separate churches. Only 2 per cent of pupils attend mixed schools. One of them is Oakwood Integrated Primary School in Belfast.

"Our site is right at the interface of Protestant and Catholic areas so we get a good cross-section of children," explains Olwin Frost, the principal of Oakwood. Like the pupils' parents, Olwin believes that integrated education can remove the distrust between the communities that has fuelled thirty years of sectarian violence and claimed over 3,000 victims. The annual "marching season", when Protestant marching bands attempt to parade through Catholic areas, is still a source of community tension. More positively, in 1998, over 70 per cent of voters approved a historic Peace Agreement and the creation of an all-party Northern Ireland Assembly, developments which augur well for integrated education.

"The youngest children sometimes use pejorative terms like "Taig" (Catholic) or "Prod" (Protestant). But they learn very quickly not to," remarks Olwin. "We try to bring out the children's own ideas of acceptable behaviour." Together, teachers and children develop techniques to deal with conflict, with emphasis on respecting others' feelings. "If they experience violence in word or deed, they say 'Stop. That hurts me', or 'That hurts my feelings'. Then the other child must take responsibility for the incident, explain what happened or apologize if it was deliberate."

The children make their own rules for classroom and playground, Olwin explains. "They discuss and agree on them in their own language — 'Be kind to each other' or 'Work quietly in class time'. So if they transgress, they are breaking their own rules." According to parents, some children apply these rules at home as well, with comments like "you shouldn't use that word, because it hurts my friends' feelings!"

Differences between Catholics and Protestants — indistinguishable to outsiders — are addressed as and when children bring them up. "Take the letter 'H'. One child said to his Catholic teacher: 'Miss, you don't pronounce the letter 'H' properly. You should say *aitch*.' (the way Protestants pronounce it). So she replied, 'You can say it two ways: *aitch* or *haitch*', and he accepted that."

Olwin formerly taught in an all-Protestant school and admits having had to question her own attitudes. "I thought I was a tremendous liberal. But my father was very right-wing and anti-Catholic and, although I hadn't realized it, I had carried

dealing with issues country hasn't thought of yet."

Olwin Frost

Northern Ireland

some of that baggage with me." Nevertheless, she says her happiest moment was at a recent Catholic first communion ceremony — "the only one in Belfast where a Protestant played the keyboard and another, myself, sang the songs. That had never happened in this area before."

Running Oakwood is time-consuming. "It has taken over my life," Olwin admits. "I don't have time to see friends or family. I do feel discouraged at times, but I am buoyed by the commitment of the parents." She is also aware of the value of her work. "We are dealing with issues that the rest of the country hasn't even thought of yet."

In Oakwood, the children make the rules.

Photo: G. Casey

"The heart i
of
M. Therese

On the road from Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, to the north-east of the country lies a region where armed struggle has been raging for fifteen years. War between government armed forces and Tamil freedom fighters as well as frequent clashes between Tamils and Muslims have cut the area off from the rest of the country. Thousands of children have lost their parents in the fighting.

Sister Therese Ranee is the principal of Saint Mary's College in the picturesque town of Trincomalee — a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual community of 10,000 inhabitants. In the aftermath of violent outbreaks, the pupils from the different ethnic groups tend to avoid each other. "These situations require careful handling," says Sister Therese. "After one such outbreak, a few Muslim children wanted to leave the school but I persuaded their parents to let them stay on."

"The tense climate in which the children live sometimes make them moody," says Sister Therese. "To relax the atmosphere, I organize friendly netball tournaments for the community. At first, the Sinhalese and Tamils remain totally apart but by involving the teachers and serving refreshments I bring them together." Muslims, Sinhalese and Tamils now meet on occasions such as sports day or parents' day, and Sister Therese is optimistic about integration. "The Sinhalese used to think that all Tamils were 'terrorists'. Now this feeling is slowly disappearing. There is not as much bitterness as ten or fifteen years ago," she says.

"I believe in the vibration of hearts," declares Sister Therese. "The heart is the seat of love or hatred." She herself tries to achieve inner peace every day before going to school. She is then ready to help people make peace with themselves and others. "The teacher sets the tone of the class and its surroundings and if he or she is peace-loving then the surroundings and people will be peaceful."

Sister Therese had her Tamil students learn Sinhalese to improve interaction between the communities. "Knowing their language, Tamil pupils can converse with Sinhalese children and express their aspirations and longings," she claims. "The more they interact with each other, the more feelings they share and the easier it will be to live as neighbours in the same place."

To further build up broken relationships, Sister Therese encourages her Tamil students to learn the traditional Sinhalese dances, which they perform on Parents' Day in costumes borrowed from a Sinhalese school. "It is an ideal occasion for the parents to appreciate the value of other cultures".

the seat
love or hatred."

Ranee, A.C.

Sri Lanka

In her most daring initiative, Sister Therese takes her pupils for a few days at a time on "exposure programmes" to Sinhalese districts in Colombo. "My colleagues feel I'm taking risks, but I know that the school visits, the dance performances and sports activities transform their minds and the bitterness of the past becomes less or is forgotten."

Sister Therese organizes social events to bring the Tamil and Sinhalese communities closer together.

"It's the furthest I've I have finally become the teacher I

Pascal Diard teaches history in the Henri Barbusse school in St Denis, one of the so-called "difficult suburbs" of Paris. Local landmarks include the twelfth-century basilica where the kings of France are buried, the gleaming stadium built for the 1998 World Cup and, away from the tourist trail, clusters of low-rent tower blocks or *cités* which have come to symbolize urban alienation.

"As a major industrial centre, St Denis was a magnet for immigrant workers from the poorer regions of France, Europe, the Maghreb, Africa, the West Indies and Southeast Asia," explains Pascal. The 600 students at his school reflect this diversity, but the jobs that attracted their grandparents are gone, and the name St Denis now evokes deprivation and exclusion. School-leaving *(baccalauréat)* exam results are the lowest in France, youth unemployment is over 40 per cent and mistrust of authority runs high.

Occasionally, frustration explodes in violent outbreaks between youth gangs and police. This violence spills over into the school in the form of insults, brawls or vandalism. Pascal offers students an alternative: the culture of debate. "I try to prove that they are capable of reflection and that their opinions are as valid as mine." He initiates his students by degrees. "First they choose a theme, find documents and prepare their arguments. Then they learn to defend their own point of view while respecting the other person's." Pascal films the discussions, which are conducted "like debates on television". He also opens up the classroom to guest speakers. "When we studied Rwanda, a Radio France journalist came in. When we did Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we invited campaigners both for and against nuclear testing."

The most satisfying project of Pascal's career presented itself almost by chance. When his class of 14- to 17- year-olds were studying a book on the concentration camps, borrowed from the local library, they found the pages covered with racist, neo-nazi slogans, swastikas and extravagant praise for Hitler.

Pascal asked: "What do you think? Should people have the right to write such things?" Some students were shocked, but others argued that racists have the right to express opinions too. So they studied various anti-racism laws and discovered that such acts were illegal. One boy was so indignant, he exclaimed "If I ever find the guy who did that, I'll beat him up!"

The project developed into a campaign. The class wrote to the local librarian, the mayor, the French Ministers of the Interior, Justice, Education and Culture as well as human-rights and anti-racist organizations.

ever taken a class.
have always wanted to be."

Pascal Diard

France

They expressed their disgust at the racist slogans and requested support in pursuing the culprit(s), getting the book withdrawn from circulation, and informing the local population that such acts would not be tolerated.

Their action brought unhoped-for results, which were covered in the local press. The mayor wrote to congratulate the students on their vigilance and civic spirit. The offending copy was withdrawn from circulation.

This involvement with the wider society galvanized the students. "It was a real cultural revolution," remarks Pascal. "They realized that they could make a difference. It changed their ideas about themselves. They became more tolerant, showed more respect for each other. The other teachers were amazed."

The experience also transformed Pascal, who for the first time in his career gave an entire class a straight A. "It's the furthest I've ever taken a class." he admits. "I have finally become the teacher I have always wanted to be."

As their anti-racism project took off, Pascal saw his pupils move from the margins of society to active citizenship

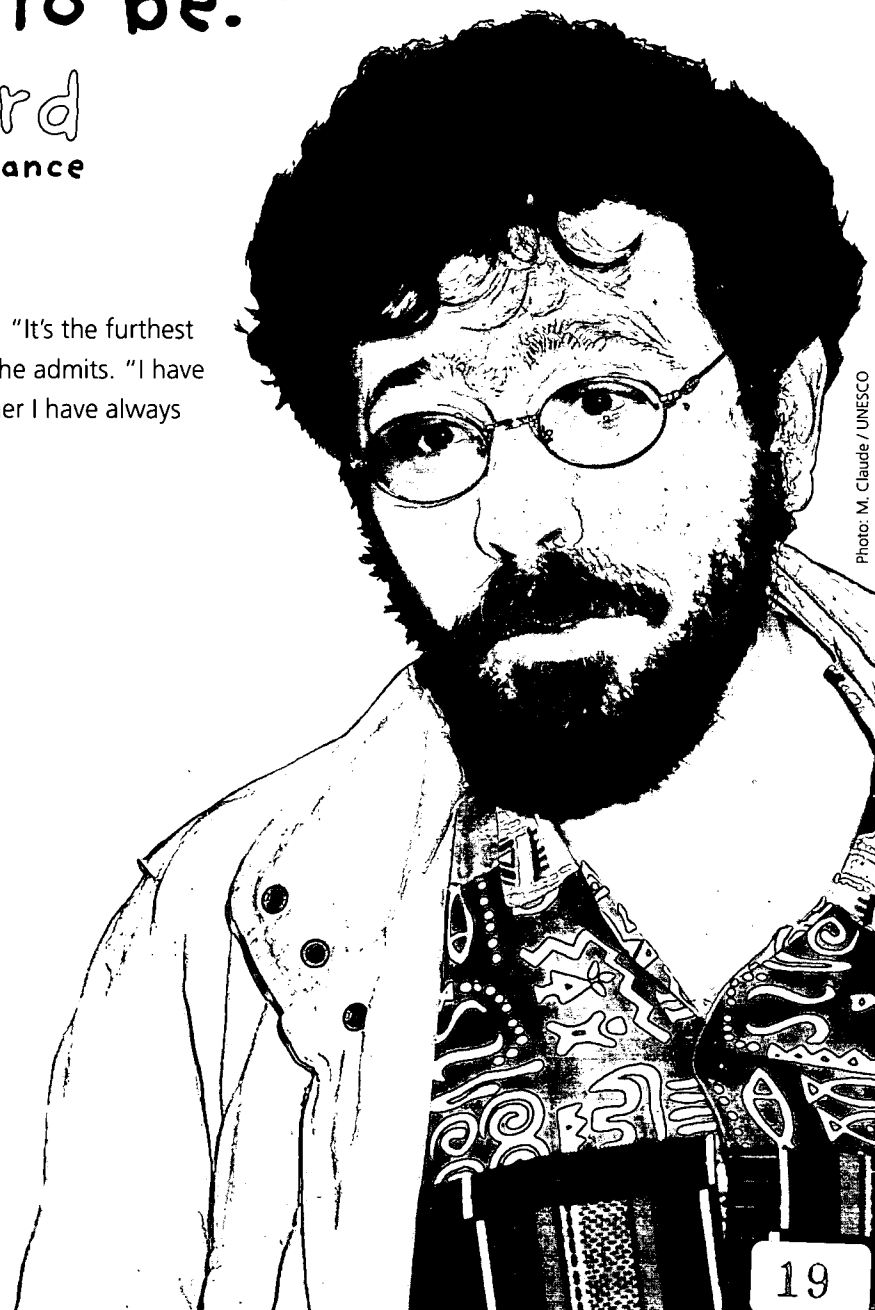


Photo: M. Claude / UNESCO

"I'll stay with my even

Algeria plunged into an unprecedented nightmare in 1992, following the cancellation of the second round of its first-ever democratic general elections, of which the first had been won by the radical Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party. A wave of assassinations began which targeted all social groups: the élite, the police, journalists, teachers and ordinary citizens. Massive terrorist attacks and car bombs were used to terrorize Algerians in the name of religion, although Islam has never called for barbaric acts.

The isolated and defenceless inhabitants of Rais, Bentalha, Sidi Hamed and many other villages were subjected to massacres which left thousands dead, including children. In 1997, eleven women teachers and sixteen pupils were murdered in Aïn Adden. Villagers now live in terror of going about their everyday activities, as the extremists issued orders against going to work or school, on pain of death.

For teachers in Algeria today, holding class is in itself an act of peace. It maintains a "normal" routine for children and provides them with the education that is their right. In a bullet-scarred school in the heart of the region known as "the triangle of death" is one such teacher, Zohra T.

Zohra has narrowly escaped death several times, notably during the massacre at Bentalha, where she lives. "That night," she remembers, "I thought my hour had come, but it hadn't. I will never forget the cries of my neighbours as they were tortured with knives or the screams of the children who were rounded up and burned alive." Thankfully, the neighbour's house where she and her family took refuge was spared. She was profoundly touched when her pupils risked the journey the next day to see if she had survived.

pupils
if it costs me my life."

Zohra T.

Algeria

As teachers are on a hit-list, Zohra's journey to and from school is especially hazardous. She has been physically attacked twice. Despite a poster campaign warning teachers to stop working, she continues to do her job in a setting that resembles a battlefield. The school has been shot at and home-made bombs have caused fires. "God gave me life, and he will take it away again," she says resignedly. "So why be afraid?" She is encouraged by the fact that her pupils continue to attend, just as they in turn are encouraged by her presence. "My pupils need me and I must admit I get my courage from them. We need each other. There is a sort of complicity between us."

In Zohra's class, brothers and sisters of terrorists sit side by side with survivors of massacres.

Zohra needed all her courage when one of her pupils, Mouloud, was stabbed to death. "When his classmates heard the news, they were uncontrollable," she recalls. "We all cried for two days."

With her colleagues, she made a point of cancelling classes so they could all attend the funeral. "There was a very real fear of reprisals at such a large gathering," she remembers, "but we wanted to express our support and our anger."

Almost every child in Zohra's class has a horror story to tell. One lost his parents in a massacre; another is waiting for news of his father, who was kidnapped; yet another is temporarily housed with relations. Many have suffered injuries. She listens to each one, offering consolation and encouragement. Other pupils are brothers and sisters of known terrorists, but Zohra treats these children the same as all the others when giving class.

"Peace is an ideal for me," she explains. "Just giving my lessons as though everything were normal is my way of achieving it. There is a plot to bring Algeria to its knees by terrorizing the population. The children understand that they must meet this challenge, which is why they continue to brave danger and come to class."

"I am convinced
can dismantle stereotypes and

Teresa Gangemi, a Sicilian, teaches Italian, history and geography at Terragni School in Olgiate, close to the Italian-Swiss frontier in northern Italy. Despite its affluence, Olgiate offers young people little cultural stimulation and Teresa worries about the influence of xenophobic break-away movements. Eager to gain autonomy from their poorer counterparts in the south, they are creating a climate of racism and intolerance likely to have long-term effects on young people.

Teresa combats the idea that Europeans are culturally and technologically superior.

"hat giving children more information eliminate prejudice."

Teresa Gangemi

Italy

"Teenagers today face increasing difficulties in constructing their identity," Teresa claims. "They tend to adopt relatively inflexible attitudes." To counteract this tendency, Teresa has set herself a mission: to expand her students' horizons and initiate them into a different, more generous way of seeing global issues.

The break-up of former Yugoslavia created a war front a very short distance away, which presented an opening for a peace-education approach. To make her students more aware of what was happening there, Teresa initiated contact with a school in Sarajevo, with which her students are now in constant contact.

In geography class," she adds, "we pay less attention to rivers and lakes than to environment, water resources, demography, migrations, refugees and economics based on justice." While researching global issues, her students sometimes reverse the roles: "They are the ones who supply me with news and documentation from the media, books and the Internet."

Teresa never lectures her 15- and 16-year-old students about racism and intolerance, but she constantly stresses the concept of diversity and the relative nature of points of view. One way she does this is by setting a multicultural reading list: "I recommend authors from all over the world in order to listen — through their stories — to the voices of those who are different from us."

Both inside and outside the classroom, Teresa's students have responded to her encouragement to interact with the wider world. With the help of solidarity associations, some students learned to practice fair trade. They sold ecologically-sound crafts from developing countries at prices that ensured a fair wage for the people who made them.

Last year, they carried out a project on child labour. They raised funds at cake sales to put former working children back to school and launched a campaign to boycott products made using child labour. One student joked: "I never imagined that going shopping could bring about a revolution!"

"You can't
Either you have it in your hear
Marie-Laetitia

In Burundi, the fifteenth poorest country in the world, 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. Recent unrest, the scarcity of food imports and high food prices have further set its economy back.

Burundi shares similar ethnic and cultural characteristics with Rwanda, where ethnic violence killed 2 million people in 1994. Tension between Tutsis and Hutus in Burundi flared up in 1993, killing thousands and temporarily displacing almost a million people. Schools were requisitioned for refugees or burnt down and children abandoned the classrooms. Now that a fragile peace is gradually gaining ground, families are returning home and children are going back to school.

Today, 43-year-old Marie-Laetitia Kayirerwa brings up her five children alone (her husband of a different ethnic group left her during the war). After the killings, she adopted her youngest child, a 6-week-old girl whose parents had been massacred.

Marie-Laetitia teaches in the Stella Matutina Primary school in Bujumbura, which was spared the destruction meted out to others. Today, it is attended by more than 1,000 children – Tutsis, Hutus and Twas as well as Rwandan nationals – and a teaching staff of forty.

"You can't teach peace," says Marie-Laetitia. "Either you have it in your heart or you don't. Teachers must not attach importance to ethnic origin. They must make the children feel at ease with each other and prove to them that they are all alike."

Marie-Laetitia passionately believes in the basic goodness of children. She worries nevertheless that her pupils will gradually become "contaminated" by their parents' prejudices. Her fear is partly borne out by a recent incident: "One day when I arrived in class my pupils had written the teachers' names on the blackboard along with the ethnic groups they belonged to. It was obvious they were waiting to see how I would react. I simply asked them to wipe off the board and continued class as if nothing had happened. They never brought up the question again."

Despite such incidents, Marie-Laetitia believes that her pupils do not grasp the full extent of community tension, which she claims is an adult preoccupation. She recounts an incident in the school playground which convinced her of this: a boy got a black eye while playing football with his comrades. His father turned up in school demanding to know which child had hit his son. When he discovered that the culprit was from a different ethnic origin, he exclaimed: "I might have known it was one of them!" But the other children rallied

teach peace.
or you don't."

Tayirerwa

Burundi

to his defence and insisted that no offence was intended. "The children had the last word," says Marie-Laetitia.

Marie-Laetitia claims to have no recipe for peace teaching. She believes it is enough to set an example. "By educating children for peace we are setting the foundations of a better society," she declares. "You can't fool children: they read everything on your face and judge from the relations you have with colleagues and neighbours."

Marie-Laetitia fears that her pupils will become 'contaminated' by their parents' prejudices.

"Tolerance you only by

The ugly term of "ethnic cleansing" first appeared in 1992 in former Yugoslavia when, in an attempt to create two national states, Serbia and Croatia, extreme nationalists among the Bosnian Serbs carried out a policy of mass murder and destruction against non-Serbs. Later, Bosnian Croat extremists attempted to "cleanse" their territories by similar means. The resulting death toll has been estimated at 250,000.

Like many others, 45-year-old Azijada Borovac lost family members — her husband's parents — as well as her home in the devastated district near Sarajevo airport. Although teachers were not paid during the war, she continued to teach at Osman Nakas School, which was a permanent target as the building was occupied by the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The children were deeply affected, both during and immediately after the war. "Some refused to speak, others had behavioural problems. It was not easy to get through to them, to get them to talk about their fears." Azijada was concerned and decided to take action. "I couldn't handle it on my own," she admits. She attended a seminar with local doctors about dealing with traumatized children, and consulted parents so they could work together. "I also asked the school psychologist to talk to both parents and children," she adds. "We all had the same goal: to prevent war and destruction from harming the development of the child's personality." Nevertheless, Azijada feels that most teachers are unequipped. "We need serious training for work with traumatized children," she claims.

For a while, the pupils expressed resentment against returnees. "The children who stayed behind imagine that those who left had an easy life, with sweets and chocolate, nice clothes and electricity. Perhaps some of them did, but other Bosnian refugees lived in closed camps," Azijada points out.

All schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina are theoretically multiethnic. But a father recently objected to his daughter sitting beside a boy from a mixed, Serb-Croat, marriage. Other parents objected when she taught the Cyrillic alphabet, used only by Serbs. "I had to persuade them that many good books were written in Cyrillic." Nevertheless, Azijada stresses that such incidents are rare. "We celebrate all the holidays in my classroom: Easter, Christmas (both Catholic and Orthodox), the Muslim feast of Bajram, and many others. Children bring in coloured eggs at Easter and baklava pastries for Bajram. It makes them closer and more tolerant towards each other."

...each ...being tolerant."

Azijada Borovac

Bosnia and Herzegovina

These days, Azijada spends less time healing the scars of war and more on everyday issues such as teasing and bullying. She takes the same patient approach to these. "One of my pupils, Medina, has speech problems and the other children tease her. I discuss this with the whole class, explain her problem and ask for their support, but also take Medina aside and explain why they are teasing her. Then I take the ringleader, explain that the girl is not happy, and ask him to put himself in her position." Her goal is always to help them find a solution. "Children are tolerant and accept everything that is positive and presented as such," she remarks: "Tolerance you teach only by being tolerant."

Azijada wanted to prevent war and destruction from harming the development of the child's personality.

"My advice is: create forums the school from the community

Racist remarks are not tolerated in Avi's classroom.

The Mission District in the heart of San Francisco — one of the world's most cosmopolitan and forward-looking cities — represents the best and worst of contemporary urban America. It is populated by people from every corner of the world. Surrounded by natural beauty, it pulsates with activity and opportunity. It also suffers from crime, street gangs, drug abuse, racial strife, dysfunctional families, homelessness and poverty.

Avi Black teaches 10- to 13-year-olds at Horace Mann Middle School in the Mission. "My students are a reflection of their society," Avi explains. "Some were born addicted to crack, others are victims of domestic violence."

At Horace Mann, students define the rules on the basis of mutual respect. There are several, however, that Avi insists upon. "I always challenge expressions of hostility, especially personal insults based on race or other stereotyping," he says. "Students like these rules because they are the same for everyone and are predictable. Predictability helps kids feel secure."

Avi will never forget the student who requested permission to submit her homework late because her father had been shot dead the night before. "Her world had been shattered, but she came to school the next day because of an intense need for something she could count on."

"...to deal with conflict; don't divorce ...don't ignore what's going on."

Avi Black

United States

Avi thinks that awareness of diversity is critical to resolving conflicts and promoting peace. He asks students to guess the meaning of the letters L, C, AA, K, J, V, F, OW and ONW (the official school district ethnic categories). Once they have identified the groups, they then describe themselves as Latinos, Chinese, African-Americans, Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Other Whites and Other Non-Whites. This leads to a discussion on how such labels can encourage negative stereotypes. Once the "business of labels" is out of the way, Avi and his students identify characteristics that they all share before finally celebrating the differences.

Colleagues, parents and community members help Avi in his task of making Horace Mann a safe place. Each year, the school holds an Awareness Month where assemblies, guest speakers and publications address issues of diversity, conflict, peace and violence. A Conflict Manager's Programme provides young people with a place to take their disputes and resolve them peacefully helped by student volunteers trained in mediation skills. "It's a systemic effort," Avi explains. "One teacher doing it alone would not be enough." He believes that the shooting incidents in other U.S. schools in early 1998 could not occur in Horace Mann. "Such incidents stem from a sense of alienation from the community which our kids don't have because of our efforts to establish a community within the school." His advice to others is: "Create forums to deal with conflict; don't divorce the school from the community and don't ignore what's going on."

"The realities of the outside world haven't changed," declares Avi. "But we're handling them in here." Proof that his approach brings results comes time and time again. Avi's former students often get involved in community activities. "Sometimes I see them speaking to a large audience or to community leaders or even appearing on television," he says. Perhaps that sense of social responsibility is something they have learned in Avi Black's classroom.

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Who are The Quiet Peacemakers? They are the unsung teachers who build peace in the hearts of their pupils. Their role as teachers goes far beyond giving lessons. In situations of armed conflict or ethnic rivalry, they are the ones who provide continuity, cohesion and normality. In deprived urban areas or smug middle-class enclaves, they show their pupils other ways of seeing the world. Whether through dialogue, special projects or — most of all — personal example, they promote the universal values of peace and tolerance. Far from the negotiating tables where truces are brokered are the classrooms where attitudes are formed in young minds.

This brochure presents eight such classrooms and the remarkable individuals who teach in them.

T. Murtagh - EI Mexico

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