

Compassion Fatigue

by Ellen J. Kennedy, Ph.D, Executive Director

We see pictures of starving people in Ethiopia or Sudan. Social media are flooded with videos of African immigrants' bodies washing up on the shores of European countries. Newspapers print photos of children whose arms and legs have been blown away by bombs in Syria.

Instead of moving us to demand action from our leaders, we look, perhaps feel a twinge of something for a moment— and then we turn away.

Journalists and analysts call this 'compassion fatigue.' We're so saturated with the images and the stories that we become cynical, inured, and unmoved.

When the crisis in Darfur began, there were mass rallies on the Mall in Washington, D.C., a spate of Hollywood-produced movies, organizations with missions to raise awareness and therefore to end the genocide, politicians who spoke eloquently and even got themselves arrested in protests – and now, thirteen years later, there is no action. People shrug and say, "Darfur? I thought that problem was over a long time ago."

For those of us who work in human rights, this is one of our gravest challenges: How do we keep people motivated, inspired, and, most importantly, filled with compassion and the desire to advocate tirelessly for justice?

One way is to become part of a community of like-minded people. We hold an annual Summer Institute for High School and College Students. The major topics and themes change every year to encourage students to return for successive programs, and they do return: at the 2016 Institute half of the students were returnees, two of them, in fact, young people who had been at five of our six Institutes.

The returning students tell us, over and over again, how much it means to them to be with others who care about the same issues that inspire and motivate them.

We encourage people to volunteer at our events to get to know our staff and other attendees, creating those personal connections that can endure. We invite people from all locations to be part of our online social media 'team' and to read and respond to daily posts in an electronic community.

We also urge people to initiate advocacy in their own areas. We can help organize and develop partnerships and promote steps towards local and global action.

If we all stand up instead of standing by, we can create enormous change. Together we have power and we motivate and inspire each other.

We cannot afford to be fatigued. There is too much to do.



*When action meets compassion,
lives change.*

World Without Genocide, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, **educates** to raise awareness about past and current conflicts and **advocates** at local, state, and national levels for policies and legislation to protect innocent people, prevent genocide, prosecute perpetrators, and remember those whose lives have been affected by genocide.

Holocaust Survivor Memoir



Fred Amram, author

Fred Amram, member of the Board of Directors of World Without Genocide, has written a very moving book titled *We're in America Now: A Survivor's Stories*. The memoir is dedicated to his cousin Aaltje, who perished at Auschwitz at age 3 ½ along with her 29-year-old mother.

Fred was born in Hannover, Germany in 1933, the same year that Hitler came to power. The birth was at a Catholic children's home because Jews were banned from the public hospital. He chronicles the ever-narrowing noose around

Jews' lives: being banned from radios, park benches, trolleys, and schools; visits from the Gestapo; and ultimately the deaths of nearly all of his relatives who remained in Europe.

He writes eloquently about the challenges of adapting to a new life in America and efforts to understand US racism that in many ways paralleled the anti-Semitism of Europe.

In the epilogue he raises the issue of inter-generational transfer of trauma, which is investigated in the science of epigenetics, and the transmission of his experience of the Holocaust to his children and grandchildren. We explore this topic in our next documentary, *Genocide and Starvation: Dying of Hunger*. Fred is featured in the film's trailer, to be online this fall; we expect the film to be available in summer 2017.

Fred's book can be purchased through World Without Genocide for \$18 plus mailing. Contact admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org to order a copy. He will read from the book on Wednesday, October 19, 7:00 pm at The Loft Literary Center, 1011 Washington Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

Dying of Hunger

Researchers have discovered that people who experience severe trauma pass that trauma genetically to their children and their children's children. Recent studies have shown that the offspring of parents who were starved during genocides and other mass atrocities exhibit signs of that trauma themselves. We seldom think of this intergenerational impact of genocide.

We are planning our third documentary with public television, to be called ***Genocide and Starvation: Dying of Hunger***. This film will explore starvation used intentionally to exterminate Jews, American Indians, Armenians, Cambodians, and North Koreans. These genocides will be examined in light of global food policy, the inter-generational impact of starvation, and strategies for preventing the use of starvation as a genocide tool.

For more information about this project, about epigenetics, or to assist in sponsorship of the film, go to <http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/resources/>



Forward Global Women

Minnesota Senator Sandy Pappas, Vice-Chair of the Board of World Without Genocide, and Director Ellen Kennedy spent a week in Nicosia, Cyprus in July at the 5th annual convening of Forward Global Women, a non-profit, international NGO co-founded by Sen. Pappas with colleagues from Israel and Jordan. The mission is to train women in the MENA (Middle East/North Africa) region in leadership and peace-building. The convening included women politicians, academics, and activists from nine countries: Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Cyprus, the Netherlands, and the US. Highlights included a personal look at the plight of Syrian refugees, an update on a research project about security, and a preview of the March for Hope, a march to the Dead Sea on October 19 by Israeli and Palestinian women to demand peace.

FGW is organizing solidarity events and coordinating social media for the March for Hope; watch for information about events in Minneapolis and St. Paul. For more information, contact Sandy at sandy.pappas@forwardglobalwomen.org, visit ForwardGlobalWomen.org or like the organization on Facebook.

Food and Positive Peace in Guam

By Christie Nicoson

Rotary Peace Fellow, Class XIV, Uppsala University
Former Program and Operations Director, World Without Genocide

Food is enshrined as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet nearly one in nine people, 795 million worldwide, can't get enough to eat.

Hunger can be used as a weapon, denying people this most basic right, stripping them of human dignity and spurring mass conflict. There is a term for these situations: *food insecurity*. The opposite, *food security*, exists when people can meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Food has been at the center of many conflicts and genocides. Dakota Indians in the United States, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, Jews in ghettos during the Holocaust – all were deliberately starved. Today, people are starving in Syria and Iraq because of policies of the Syrian government.

What if food could be used for peace?

We think of peace as the absence of violence. But peace could be the *presence* of something. "Positive peace," exists when individuals and groups achieve justice, fairness, and overall well-being. I wondered how food might play a role in positive peace. My question brought me to the island of Guam.

Guam, a U.S. island territory in the North Pacific, had an economy based on subsistence agriculture. People had abundant food and sustainable livelihoods. However, after World War II, processed foods were imported and their use became the norm. I found myself on a lush island where stores sell bananas imported from South America rather than grown down the street, where local meat is absent in stores and restaurants, and even fish comes from other countries. As a result, the number of farms has decreased from 2,500 to 200, generations are dependent on food subsidy programs, and obesity and diabetes have skyrocketed.

Guam is not at war, yet positive peace is a challenge with people struggling for access to nutritious food.

On Guam, people are meeting this challenge by returning to local food. Farmers are using natural methods to protect the environment so that Guam can produce food well into the future. Leaders encourage people to eat local food to boost the economy and build self-reliant communities. Markets and restaurants promote local food to reverse obesity and diabetes. These local initiatives do more than produce food; they change what food is available, reshape who has access to local food, and shift people's diets and lifestyles. They sow seeds of positive peace on Guam.

Food can nourish our bodies. It can build stronger, healthier societies through a focus on what we grow in our fields and what we eat at our dinner tables.

Christie spent this past summer in Guam as part of her Rotary Peace Fellowship, a program that sponsors 50 master's students annually to study peace and conflict at internationally- renowned universities. Learn more at www.rotary.org/myrotary.



Christie and President of the Rotary Club of Tumon Bay, at a talk about Christie's research on Food Security for Positive Peace in Guam.

Summer Photos



Dr. Ellen J. Kennedy, Executive Director, with Herero Leaders in Windhoek, Namibia.



Vicki Wright, DFL, Colleen Feige, League of Women Voters, and Keith Downey, GOP, at a political panel for the Summer Institute.



Institute participant Maija Olson with FBI Outreach Specialist and Vice President of the FBI Citizens Academy Board of Directors after a session on internet safety.



Institute students preparing for a simulation on the Syria peace negotiations.



Dr. Ellen J. Kennedy with the U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus, Kathleen Doherty. Dr. Kennedy was a U.S. delegate at the Forward Global Women convening in Nicosia, Cyprus.



Left to right: Dr. Ellen J. Kennedy, with Germanic-American Institute Executive Director Jeana Anderson and Board Chair Nancy Zinter at the White Rose Exhibit opening.

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Exploring the Peace Gap

By James Petermeier

Rotary Peace Fellow, Class XIV, Uppsala University
Former Associate, World Without Genocide

The war in Syria has gone on for more than five years. Nearly 5 million Syrians have fled from violence, starvation, and disease to seek safety and security outside of their homeland.

For months, international negotiators have met with representatives of the Syrian government and opposition leaders to try to resolve the conflict.

War affects ordinary people, yet they are almost never at the negotiating table and their views on how to reach sustainable peace are never heard.



A faded expression of support on the Templehof Airfield refugee camp.

This absence is a vital “peace gap.” I am working with Artis International to understand why conflicts occur and what must happen in the post-conflict process – from the perspective of the displaced.

I’m interviewing Syrian refugees in Germany and Sweden, countries that have accepted more Syrians than any other European countries. Since the outbreak of violence in 2011 through May 2016, Germany has had 354,038 asylum applications, Sweden 110,579.

These two countries have historically welcomed asylum-seekers fleeing from persecution. The Syrians have been welcomed in both Germany and Sweden– but they have also faced opposition and occasional violence from right-wing nationalist and hate groups.

In Germany, refugees have been resettled in housing facilities across the country. Tempelhof Airfield, once a Nazi-era airport, was repurposed to house thousands of refugees within its hangars.

Every person I’ve interviewed has witnessed firsthand the horrors of the Syrian revolution and has been displaced. They now find themselves in a country where they are both accepted and ostracized. If peace could return to their country, all respondents said that they would definitely return to Syria. Almost without exception, all refugees around the world want to be in one place – home.

Holocaust Kindertransport Survivor Testimony Online

Mr. Benno Black was born in Breslau, Germany in 1926. When Hitler came to power in 1933, his family tried to emigrate to the US, where they had relatives. They weren’t successful. In 1938, England voted to allow 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children into the country. Benno’s mother signed him up, and a year later he left Germany for safety in England on what were called ‘kindertransports.’ He was 13, alone, and he hoped to be reunited with his family in a short time. But his story is like that of so many other ‘kindertransport’ children – he never saw his parents again.

He spoke at this year’s Summer Institute for High School and College Students and is pictured with the students. His story is available on our website at <http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/resources/educational-resources>



Summer Institute for High School and College Students 2016 with Mr. Benno Black.



Mr. Benno Black, center, with staff from the City of St. Paul, on the right. Left: Dr. Ellen Kennedy, and Jessi Kingston, Director, St. Paul Department of Human Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity. April 29, 2016 was declared ‘Benno Black Day’ in St. Paul.



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875 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105

FALL 2016 PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday,
September

28

Women and Genocide: Ending Impunity for Sexual Violence
Mitchell Hamline School of Law, Kelley Board Room, 7:00-9:00 pm

Tuesday,
November

1

From the Herero to the Holocaust

Ellen J. Kennedy, Ph.D.
Mitchell Hamline School of Law, Conservatory, 7:00-9:00 pm

Tuesday,
December

6

Confronting Evil: Fundamentals of Mass Atrocity Prevention
Scott Strauss, Ph.D.

Mitchell Hamline School of Law, Kelley Board Room, 7:00-9:00 pm

Open to the public. No reservations necessary.

\$15 general public. \$10 students and seniors. Free to Mitchell Hamline students.

CLE credits available (pending). 2 'clock hours' for educators.