

Unstereotyping Thanksgiving

HAPPY
THANKSGIVING



For the last 21 years I have begun our study of Native American culture and history by asking the same question of my first or second graders.

"What do you know about Indians?"

Year after year the children produce a list of what they know about Indians. They usually say that Indians: kill people, use spears, hunt, wear feathers, sit "Indian" style, live in tepees, etc. The next question I ask is,

"Where did you learn all of this about Indians?"

Year after year, the answer is: TV cartoons and movies and books. I'm sure many educators have had this experience. That's where our job starts, to undo stereotypes and lies which have become part of U.S. culture.

I usually start by drawing a big television and telling the children that sometimes what we see on TV is a lie. We spend the next one or two months studying about Native American history

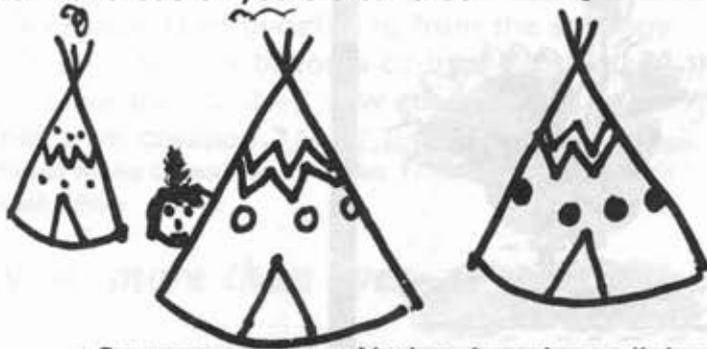
and culture, past and present. As we study we examine our original list to find which of those images on our list are stereotypes.

How has the TV created these stereotypes? TV tends to blend past and present. Cartoons and cowboy and Indian movies place Native people back in time when much of the food was obtained by hunting. So children have this warped image that Native Americans of today go around hunting for food with bows and arrows, while most Native people actually buy their food in stores.

Cartoons and Cowboy and Indian movies portray Native people as "savages." Children need to learn about that long and brutal history when colonists forced Native Americans off their land, killed millions, and forced others onto substandard land on reservations. In fact, the period of the first "Thanksgiving," was a period of genocide against Native people. Most children have never heard that story of the savage genocide.

continued on the next page

One means to develop that understanding is through role plays. We role play a scene where Native people are living peacefully. Colonists come and demand the land for themselves. We role play different situations - Native people sharing land and other resources, Native people being forced off their land and getting killed when they resisted. In a first grade way we discuss how we would feel if we were forced from our houses or land. We talk about what we would do if it happened to us. We role play these options - submission, fighting back, etc., so children can see that these were some of the options that Native people faced. They faced these options during the period of the first "Thanksgiving" and for hundreds of years after that.



Cartoons portray Native Americans living in teepees and wearing feathers. This stereotype presents several distortions. It mixes past history with the current. In past history in many regions, Native Americans did not live in teepees. They lived in longhouses, dome-shaped houses, pueblos, etc. In the present time most Native people live in apartment buildings, one or two family houses, or in shacks in some of the poorer regions. The feather image also places Native people in the past when feathers were used for ceremonial and other special purposes. At no time in history did all Native people walk around with feathers on their heads.

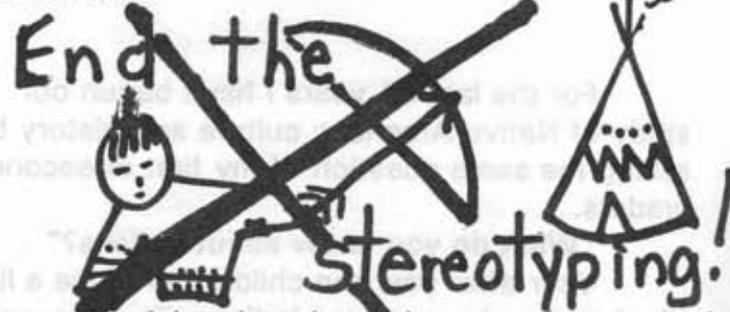
During our few months of study about Native people we use every curriculum area to teach about Native American history and culture. Because Native cultures were and are so many and so diverse, we focus on the Native people from the region where the students live (New York City area). In math we look for geometric shapes, symmetry, and patterns in Native art. In science we learn about friction used in light fires, we grow plants and use bone meal for fertilizer, we learn about evaporation when we make clay pots, and so on. We read legends and recite Native poetry. Then we focus on the present.

Now as Thanksgiving approaches once again, we see the stereotypes reappearing on TV, in stores, and even in schools. Young children come home from school with cute little teepees and with turkeys symbolizing the first "Thanksgiving." They wear feathered headdresses and shout war hoops. Classes have Thanksgiving feasts and perform skits with brave pilgrims and "savage Indians!" Unfortunately, so many teachers simply reenforce the stereotypes.

Many Native Americans think of "Thanksgiving" as a time of mourning, not a time for joy and thanks-giving. In our classroom on November 24 parents will help us prepare a meal with foods typical of those eaten several hundred years ago. However, we will not celebrate Thanksgiving. Instead, we will celebrate what we have learned from and about Native people. At the meal we will present a skit about our alternative view of "Thanksgiving."

It is easy to understand why teachers perpetuate the stereotypes and myths. The stereotypes and myths are part of the mass culture. It's what we learned in school.

But there is no excuse for this to continue. It is a racist act to knowingly perpetuate stereotypes about a group of people. We must work with our colleagues to undo these stereotypes, to read and to become informed educators.



Social action should be part of every social studies theme. This year my first graders will watch a cartoon about "Indians." We will look for stereotypes. We will brainstorm about what we can do about the cartoon. Perhaps we will write (in our first grade way) to the producer of the cartoon to voice our opinion and call for a change. Perhaps we will make our own book about what we have learned about Native American culture and history - past and present.

Please share your suggestions for undoing racist stereotypes about Native Americans. We will publish them in upcoming issues of this newsletter.



Pension Fund Victory



New York educators, our pension money will now be used to build a new South Africa. Nelson Mandela call on the international community to lift economic sanctions. Shortly after that, on October 21, the Teachers' Retirement System TRS voted unanimously to call for an end to sanctions and for reinvestment in companies "without regard to whether a particular company is doing business in our with the Republic of South Africa." This divestment involved hundreds of millions of our dollars!

The TRS resolution states: "The Retirement Board has determined that the investment of assets of the System in companies doing business in or with South Africa no longer creates the risk of supporting the system of apartheid by such investments."

This quick decision is in contrast to their slow and painful decision to divest fully. That took from 1985 to 1990! Members of Educators Against Racism and Apartheid spoke out at meeting after meeting of the TRS calling for divestment. EARA board member, Joe Edelman was one of those people who spoke out at the TRS meetings, despite harrassment by TRS board members. He is to be congratulated for his effort.

Highest Homicide Rate

South Africa's annual homicide rate is an astounding 53.5 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared to the U.S. rate of 17.2 and the Swedish rate of 1.8

Dagens Nyheter, 8/28/93

For your class

What are causes of homicide in the United States?

What are causes of homicide in Sweden?

What are causes of homicide in South Africa? See the last page for more information about this issue.

Kellogg's Boycott Ends!

EARA has announced an end of its 11 year boycott of Kellogg's cereals. The ANC has called for the lifting of sanctions against SA so that the new government to be elected in April will be able to establish an economic base.

EARA wishes to thank all children (many of whom are now adults) who gave up their favorite cereals for a greater goal. We urge you to continue your support of the anti-apartheid movement.

The Educators' Coalition For a Democratic South Africa

The Educators Coalition had a number of members at the CODISA Walk-a-thon. Over \$10,000 was raised for the ANC by the Walk-a-thon. Congratulations.

Buttons made by Mark Rogovin, were sold by young people from the Educators' Coalition. They raised nearly \$250. Thanks to Holly, Heather, Tricia, Evans, Eric, and David.

Educators' Coalition members are now drafting a short curriculum for all grades about the upcoming election in South Africa. If approved by the NYC Board of Education, it will be distributed to New York City public school teachers. A video about the election will be shown on Board of Education cable TV.

Please save February 11 for Youth Day. Plan activities at your school or youth group to raise money for the ANC/voter education campaign.

If you would like to work on these projects, please call (201) 836-6644.



SAEPEJ

SOUTH AFRICAN EXCHANGE PROGRAM ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

South Africa is a prime example of the unsettling connections that exist between race, gender, poverty, and the environment. Apartheid has had and continues to have a devastating effect on black South Africans as well as the environment. The importation of haz-

ardous wastes, the dumping of mercury in rivers, the strip mining of coal and uranium, the outdated methods of producing synthetic fuels, along with the rampant poverty, lack of sewage facilities and deliberate structuring of the notorious 'homelands' present South Africa with serious environmental concerns. Post-apartheid South Africa will have to confront the inherited toxic and environmental crisis as it strives to transform and rebuild South African society.

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The South African Exchange Program on Environmental Justice (SAEPEJ) focuses on the effects of toxics and the deteriorating environment on the health and daily lives of communities. The program establishes links between community and labour groups in the U.S. and their counterparts in South Africa. This initiative is composed of two elements, the first of which is popular education and information transfer. Given the lack of infor-

mation in the U.S. on the South African environmental crisis and the inadequate information in South Africa on toxic and health issues, SAEPEJ will disseminate information to the anti-apartheid and environmental movements in the U.S. while making

valuable information available to the South African movement through databases and literature. In addition, SAEPEJ will coordinate talks and presentations on the destructiveness of apartheid at concerned U.S. organizations and college campuses.

The second element of the program consists of trainings and people-to-people exchanges. SAEPEJ believes in the power of linking affected communities in South Africa with ones in the U.S. to share information as well as strategies for community organizing and for challenging polluters. SAEPEJ aims to work with South African labour and community groups in order to highlight issues of environmental justice and ecological democracy and bring to the forefront the inextricable link between confronting the environmental crisis and development. SAEPEJ will facilitate exchanges in which community environmentalists, labour representatives and technical support people

will go to South Africa to conduct trainings and workshops. In return, the program will bring South Africans to spend time with U.S. community and regional organizations in order to obtain first-hand knowledge of the environmental crisis here.

Black South Africans have a strong history of resisting apartheid and their struggle provides valuable insights and lessons for the U.S. environmental justice movement. These exchanges provide excellent opportunities for leadership development and for forging new and dynamic links in international solidarity.

To find out more about SAEPEJ and how you can assist or to become a member of FRIENDS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT please contact Heeten Kalan at

SAEPEJ
6 Goodrich Rd. #2
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
Telephone: 617-983-2239
Fax: 617-983-2240
E-mail: hkalan@acs.bu.edu

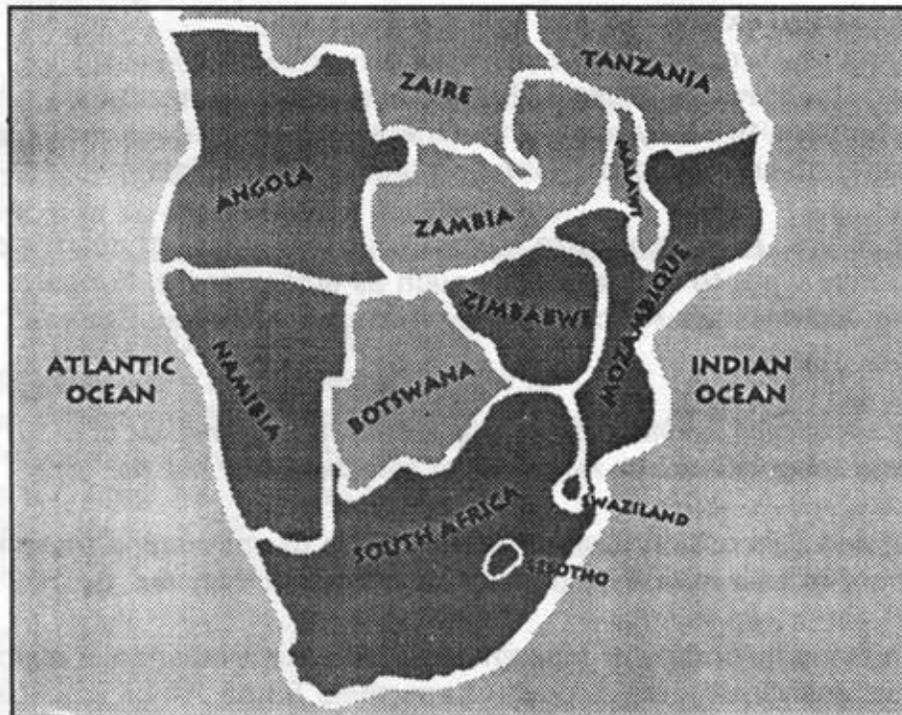
Tax-deductible contributions are welcomed.

Reprinted from SAEPEJ

IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN

the racist policies of apartheid, the South African government created 'bantustans' and residential townships. Corporations were given free rein to locate their industrial sites near these areas to access a cheap supply of labor.

In addition to the hazardous working conditions, industrial plants have polluted the air, soil and water, thus poisoning the lives and environment of millions of black South Africans. In addition, apartheid's tentacles have reached out to the frontline states and left its own distinctive bitter legacy.



Wars in both Angola and Mozambique have created millions of refugees who have been forced to pick the earth bare for fuel and shelter.

UNITA AND RENAMO CONTINUE TO FIGHT SCORCHED-EARTH WARS AGAINST THEIR GOVERNMENTS, BRUTALLY KILLING ELEPHANTS AND RHINOS FOR THEIR VALUABLE TUSKS AND HORNS TO FINANCE THEIR VIOLENT CAMPAIGNS OF HORROR.

There are at least three million unexploded landmines in Angola and another two million in Mozambique which promise to pose a threat of immense magnitude to both the people and the environment.

South Africa has a long history of using defoliants such as Agent Orange in its war against the frontline states and the underground armies of the ANC and PAC.

IN FORMER RHODESIA, THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION AND THE SELOUS SCOUTS DEPLOYED CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE SUCH AS ORGANO-PHOSPHATE POISONS, THALLIUM, WARFARIN, 'BACTERIOLOGICAL AGENTS', AND ANTHRAX BACTERIUM WHICH HAS POISONED THE FUTURE OF ZIMBABWE WHERE THE TOXIC LEGACY LINGERS.

Mozambican refugees who fled the devastating war occupy a decrepit building which

was once a paint manufacturing plant outside of Johannesburg. The grounds and sheds are lined with barrels of toxic materials which are often used as fuel and wherein children frequently play.

SOUTH AFRICAN GOLD MINES EXTRACT LARGE QUANTITIES OF URANIUM AS A SECONDARY PRODUCT, THUS EXPOSING NEARBY BLACK COMMUNITIES TO CANCER-CAUSING RADIUM AND RADON WHICH COMMONLY LEAK FROM URANIUM MINE WASTES.

Data on coal mining show that from 1978 to 1983, South African coal workers were about 10 times more likely to die on the job as their counterparts in the United Kingdom.

IN 1987, 85 PERCENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S COMMERCIAL ENERGY WAS DERIVED FROM COAL, RESULTING IN ACCELERATED EXPLOITATION OF COAL SEAMS THROUGH STRIP MINING AND PRODUCING SOME OF THE WORST AIR POLLUTION IN THE WORLD.

In Mmafele, a region of the Lebowa homeland, a health project report documented that 603 out of the 1724 houses in the village, 7 of the 12 schools, and many churches were made from asbestos brick and plaster.

A 1990 HEALTH SURVEY CONDUCTED IN MEREWENT, NATAL (A RESIDENTIAL AREA SURROUNDED BY TWO OIL REFINERIES, AN AIRPORT, A PAPER MILL, TWO INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES, A WASTE WATER TREATMENT WORKS AND THE HIGHLY CONTAMINATED UMLAAS RIVER) HAS SHOWN THAT PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVE AN 80 PERCENT HIGHER CHANCE OF ACQUIRING COUGHS, COLDS AND FLUS THAN A SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SIMILAR GROUP OF CHILDREN LOCATED 16 KILOMETERS AWAY.

In the Mngweni River, which flows into the Valley of the Thousand Hills, Thor Chemicals is responsible for mercury concentrations 1,500 times the level at which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declares materials toxic.

IN SEPTEMBER 1992, THERE WAS SUSPECTED DUMPING OF NUCLEAR AND TOXIC WASTE EXPORTS BY UNKNOWN WESTERN COUNTRIES IN THE SKELETON COAST OF NAMIBIA.

THE INFORMATION ABOVE IS EVIDENCE OF THE COMPELLING NEED AND URGENCY WITH WHICH WE NEED TO WORK WITH SOUTHERN AFRICANS TO ADDRESS THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF APARTHEID.

Reprinted from SAEPEJ

Bringing the issue of environmental racism into your classroom

Teachers of all subject areas can bring these issues raised in the SAEPEJ article into their classroom. Here are a few suggestions:

Science: *"South African gold mines extract large quantities of uranium as a secondary product, thus exposing nearby black communities to cancer-causing radium and radon which commonly lead from uranium mine wastes."*

Study the chemistry of this process. Then discuss why this has been allowed to happen under the apartheid. How can a future government solve this problem?

Science: Read about the Mngweni River on the previous page. What is mercury? What are the effects of mercury poisoning?

Why has this situation been allowed to exist under the apartheid system?

Science: Look at the SAEPEJ article on the previous pages. What other minerals or hazardous chemicals are mentioned? Form groups to study about the minerals and hazardous chemicals. Contact SAEPEJ for more information and resources about environmental racism.

Social Studies: Examine the map of Southern Africa. Form groups to study about the impact of apartheid on each of these countries. You may want to look at issues such as environment, hunger, refugees, deaths from wars, etc. Contact the Africa Fund for resource materials. See the resource page.

Math: *"There are at least three million unexploded landmines in Angola and another two million in Mozambique which promise to pose a threat of immense magnitude to both the people and the environment."*

Write the numbers three million and two million. Use different means to understand these huge numbers. Begin by trying to count to two million by ones. You won't get very far. By 100's or 1000's.

Discuss the dangers to children living in Angola or Mozambique with this tremendous quantity of unexploded landmines. These landmines were a result of apartheid South Africa's policies.

Math: "In Mmafefe, a region of the Lebowa homeland, a health project report documented that 603 out of 1724 houses in the village, 7 of the 12 schools, and many churches were made from asbestos brick and plaster."

What percentage of the houses in Mmafefe are made from asbestos brick or plaster?

What percentage of the schools are made from asbestos brick or plaster?

What are the dangers from asbestos?

What is a homeland? Why did the apartheid regime create homelands?

What is the likelihood that the apartheid government in this homeland would help the people in Mmafefe replace their homes or schools?

Drama: Write a skit which takes place down-river from the Thor Chemical plant on the Mngweni River. (You can read about this in back issues of this newsletter.)

This foreign corporation was allowed in this region. Now there is a huge percentage of the population that is very ill from the pollution of the water.

Action: Get involved. The African National Congress has a program for dealing with environmental issues. The ANC must win a large majority of seats in the new Constituent Assembly can the ANC begin to implement this program. You can help raising funds for the African National Congress voter education campaign. Make checks payable to ANC/Voter Education campaign. Send c/o EARA.

Resources

* Africa Fund *

Important Pamphlets for Activists

Voting In the Shadow of Apartheid, by lawyer Elizabeth Landis. Hot off the press. This pamphlet is about the upcoming elections in South Africa. It answers a lot of questions about the election - the purpose, who can vote, problems. It also has a section about the Namibia elections of 1989.

Southern Africa Perspectives. The Struggle Continues: South African Women and the Vote.

Southern Africa Perspectives. Bitter Inheritance: Overcoming the Legacy of Apartheid.

These pamphlets are 35 cents. Over 20, 20 cents. Minimum order \$1.00.

The Africa Fund
198 Broadway
New York, NY 10038
(212) 962-1210

Power In Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States, by Bill Bigelow and Norm Diamond. Monthly Review Press. \$15.

Rediscovering America/Redescubriendo América. Edited by Gioconda Belli, Arnoldo Ramos. Literature from Latin America and the Caribbean. Ages 10-adult. \$5.

Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children. 1989. by L. Derman-Sparks. \$10.

Colonialism in the Americas: A Critical Look. 1991. By Susan Gage. \$12. History of peoples of the Americas and the legacy of colonialism.

Rethinking Schools. Progressive journal. \$12.50.

Send to NECA, 1118 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 429-0137

Important Pamphlet on Reinvestment in South Africa

Corporate Responsibility from the
Ground Up:

The South African Council Of Churches
"Code of Business Conduct"
by Donna Katzin

For all activists working to get cities, states, the Federal government, colleges, and religious institutions to reinvest in South Africa, this pamphlet is a must! Responsible reinvestment is essential. For copies:

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
475 Riverside Drive
Room 566
New York, NY 10115

Join Educators Against Racism and Apartheid

EARA is dedicated to Education and action to end racism in the United States and apartheid in South Africa.

___ I want to join EARA. Contribution is \$10.

___ I want to make a contribution of \$ ___ to help expand the outreach of EARA.

Board of Directors: Carole Storch-Dladla, Arthur Colen, Paula Rogovin Bower, Claudia Zaslavsky, Joyce Duncan, Rebekah Richie-Pagan, Joseph Edelman

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____

School or organization _____

Please make checks payable to EARA. Send to EARA. 164-04 Goethals Ave. Jamaica, NY 11432. Thank you.

De sta bili za tion ! !

"The early months of 1990 held out great promise for the dismantling of Apartheid; the Nationalist govt, under intense pressure from the majority population of SA and from the economic crisis stemming from international isolation, seemed to respond to the demands for free political activity as a precursor to negotiating a political settlement. However, before long, a two-pronged strategy began to make its appearance - that of destabilising the now-unbanned liberation movement while simultaneously negotiating with it.

Three years on, we are still in the grip of destabilisation. It may well be that the original authors of destabilisation, namely, the Nationalist Government, are no longer as enthusiastic about the prospects of benefitting from the strategy (since it has now become counter-productive) but nevertheless they now seem unable to control their own creation." from *Three Years of Destabilisation. Human Rights Commission. PO Box 32723. Braamfontein 2017 South Africa*

THREE YEARS OF DESTABILISATION

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

	YEAR 1*	YEAR 2*	YEAR 3*	TOTAL	
NATIONAL STATISTICS					
Incident Count	2186	3534	4178	9898	274/month
Death Count	3190	3039	3098	9327	259/month
Injury Count	8855	5033	5085	18973	471/month
Major Massacres	34	15	12	61	1,7/month
Political Arrests	8211	8725	9137	26073	724/month
REGIONAL DEATH STATISTICS					
Natal	1004	1004	1645	3653	38,2%; 101/m
PWV	1982	1686	1088	4756	51,0%; 132/m
Other Regions	204	347	365	916	9,8%; 25/m
SOURCES OF DEATHS					
General Incidents	2903	2806	2871	8580	92,0%; 239/m
Security Forces	238	114	168	518	5,6%; 14/m
Hit Squads	28	96	49	173	1,8%; 5/m
Right Wing	21	23	10	54	0,6%; 1,5/m
SOME VICTIMS					
Train Commuters	67	227	107	401	11/month
Bus & Taxi Commuters		119	84		
Women		189	253		
Children		106	58		
Security Force Members		68	200		
White Civilians			34		

* YEAR 1 - July 1990 to June 1991
 * YEAR 2 - July 1991 to June 1992
 * YEAR 3 - July 1992 to June 1993

Now, more than ever, support the democratic forces in South Africa!

***Educators Against Racism and Apartheid
 164-04 Goethals Avenue
 Jamaica, NY 11432***