

WITH EYES TO SEE



PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: LAND

Welcome back to another school year of With Eyes to See! This year three editions of the newsletter will be produced, exploring the universal themes of LAND, WATER, and FOOD from a social justice perspective. We hope these new editions of With Eyes to See will continue to help you infuse social justice concepts into your classrooms. ¡Adelante!

For most of the of the 20th century, like in too many of the other countries of Latin America, Guatemala was run by a series of military dictators. Under these regimes, the economically poor and predominantly indigenous peoples had few rights or opportunities to improve their situations. At the heart of these struggles of the "poor" was a lack of land on which to grow food. Most of the fertile, accessible land was taken from the people for rich businessmen, generals, and companies (like United Fruit, a.k.a Chiquita, a U.S. company which at one time owned 42% of Guatemala's land). This inequality continues today in Guatemala where only 2% of the population owns 70% of all productive farmland. In addition to food, for the predominantly indigenous population of Guatemala, land is also spiritually important: the Mayans call themselves "los hombres de maíz," or "the People of Corn."

Similar issues surrounding land are repeated, unfortunately, throughout the world, and include: the need for land on which to grow food and earn a living; the deep connection of many, especially indigenous peoples, to the earth; the connection between land ownership and political rights; the location of land in relation to potential "natural disasters" (mudslides, hurricanes, floods, fires, etc.). This last issue was thrust into the national spotlight recently as a result of Hurricane Katrina.* Beyond the fact that communities located along the Gulf Coast are often in the path of hurricanes, or that New Orleans is below sea level, it is reported that poverty had a lot to do with the extent to which a person was affected by the storm. The economically poorest people in New Orleans tended to live on the lowest land, and were therefore hit the hardest. And now that the damage is done and rebuilding begins, what will happen to all of the people who did not own their land or home, but who rented? Will they be able to return to their land? What rights, if any, do they have to the land on which they used to live? This tragedy also begs the question of why the majority of New Orleans's most impoverished residents are African American.

The following activities will explore these and other land-related themes, challenging students to look at land in new ways perhaps, and to help them develop a strong understanding of land issues around the world.

* For information and an activity that includes more about Hurricane Katrina and other recent tragedies such as Hurricane Rita, Hurricane Stan (in Mexico and Central America), and the Kashmir earthquake (Pakistan), see pages two and three.

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

November
2005

CONCERN AMERICA

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"The map is not the territory."
anonymous

"In making any law, our chiefs must always consider three things: the effect of their decision on peace; the effect on the natural world; and the effect on seven generations in the future."
Carol Jacobs,
Cayuga Bear Clan Mother

~~Special Appeal for Communities Affected by Hurricane Stan~~

During the past weeks we at Concern America have been monitoring the devastation wrought by Hurricane Stan in Central America and southern Mexico, places where Concern America projects operate. Reports from the region are informing us that thousands of people have died (some villages are so deeply buried in mud that they have been declared cemeteries...the bodies cannot even be recovered), that hundreds of thousands are homeless, that an entire cycle of crops has been lost, and that hunger and disease are prevalent.

Supporting health efforts for those most affected is what Concern America does well during a time of disaster (when it happens where we work). At times like this, access to good and appropriate medicines is usually an unmet need. The goal of this appeal is to raise \$100,000 with which to purchase and distribute medicines and to engage the skills and knowledge of our medical team. In this way, Concern America is able to get good medicines into capable hands at trusted regional clinics (because of our networking efforts over the years). We invite you to join Concern America in reaching out to those in desperate need during this time of suffering.

Thank you for your graciousness and for your compassion.

A-12

What do Maps Say About the World?

In one classroom, like most around this country, there is a world map on the wall. However, in this particular classroom, this map is turned upside down. The teacher says nothing about it and waits until a student points it out, usually within the first couple weeks of school. The simple question by the student of "why is that map upside down?" is a great teachable moment about why most maps position North "up" and South "down" (there is no geographical-based reason). This discussion also leads easily to the history of world maps and why maps look the way they do.

Most world maps of today are based on the 400 year old Mercator Projection. On this map, for example, Africa and Greenland look the same size, despite the fact that Africa is fourteen times larger! Many newer maps exist which try to correct these distortions: the "What's Up? South!" map reverses the poles, challenging the viewer to re-examine the notion that North is "up" and why; the revolutionary Peters Projection maps the world by actual land area, creating many visual surprises; there are many more! Visit www.odt.org for a wide array of choices.

For a good lesson comparing the Mercator and Peters maps, visit www.rethinkingschools.org, and search for the lesson plan "Math, Maps, and Misconceptions," created by Eric Gutstein.

What Would My Seventh Generation Say?

Many peoples throughout the world deeply link their existence to the land, much like the example of the Mayans who call themselves the *Hombres de Maíz*. To talk about the relationship each of our students, or our society in general in this country, have with the earth, present the following statement from the Iroquois Confederacy:

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

What does this mean? What could this have to do with land? Do we agree with this statement? If yes, what should we change in our lives? How many years from now will the seventh generation be born?

A-12

Unnatural Disasters?

6-12

"Natural disasters" is the term most often used to describe events such as tornados, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, draught, mud slides, etc that cause severe damage. While nature often operates outside of our control or influence, too often its affects are exacerbated by human influence: deforested hills lead to mudslides during heavy rains; development on wetlands decreases the earth's ability to absorb water from storms; houses are not built to withstand local realities, e.g. earthquakes, due to economic poverty and/or neglect; and many other examples.

The disheartening number of "natural disasters" that have occurred over the past year have bruised our collective hearts from around the world. As we study these events with out students, we should go beyond talking only about the number of dead and what is a hurricane, for example. The ongoing debate over Hurricane Katrina gives a glimpse of all of the components of the storm that need to be explored to truly understand what happened. Try looking at various natural disasters, researching all of the various factors that made them so devastating (both natural and human created). What can we do to lessen the destruction of another Katrina, or Rita, or Stan, or earthquake in Pakistan, or Tsunami in Asia, etc.?

A good guide for teaching about Katrina put out by the New York Collective of Radical Educators is *Unnatural Disaster: A Critical Guide for Addressing the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the Classroom*, found at www.nycore.org.

Another way to channel what the students find is to write an appeal to world leaders that can be modeled after the Children's Appeal to World Leaders, written for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992. For a copy of this Appeal and a related classroom lesson, visit www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/peace/frame3_1.htm.

"Maka le wakan -- the land is sacred. These words are at the core of our being. The land is our mother, the rivers our blood. Take away our land and we die. That is, the Indian in us dies. We'd become just sun-tanned white men, the jetsam and floatsam of your great melting pot." Mary Brave Bird

What is Your Ecological Footprint?

2-12

How much land space does each of us need to support our lifestyles? Two community planners at the University of British Columbia developed an index to answer this question. By considering one's food intake, use of natural resources, and recycling habits, the size of one's "ecological footprint" is estimated in acres. The "fair earthshare" amount is 5.5 acres per person, meaning that everyone in the world should require only that amount of land (or get that amount) to maintain a healthy planet, while the average student footprint in this country is approximately 10 acres. Have each student visit www.myfootprint.org and fill out the online form (5 minutes) to calculate the size of their own footprint. They can change numbers in various fields (e.g. eat less beef, or recycle more, or use public transportation) to see how the space they need changes. The exercise is a tangible way to look at each of our lives and how our consumption compares to each other, and to the world. In the United States, the average footprint per person is 24 acres, the world average is 5.44, and in India it is 2. What is yours? (exercise adapted from *With Eyes to See*, February 2003, *Earth Charter III*)

Who Discovered You?

4-12

The "discovery" of the America's by Christopher Columbus is celebrated every October; many people conversely celebrate Indigenous People's Day to recognize the peoples that were affected by Columbus' actions. In 1973, Native American activist Fortunate Eagle (Adam Nordwall) traveled to Italy in full Chippewa regalia and planted a spear in the ground when he arrived proclaiming Italy as belonging to Native Americans by the same Right of Discovery used by Columbus in Hispaniola. To use one of the many "news" stories entitled about this event, do a web search using the title "Indians Claim Italy by 'Right of Discovery'."

RECOMMENDED

RESOURCES

The following is a list of books that explore the general theme of LAND.

1. Two books on maps:

- **Seeing Through Maps: The Power Of Images to Shape Our World View** by Ward L. Kaiser and Denis Wood challenges the popular world-views by questioning the specific messages communicated through maps.

- **Children Map the World** by Anderson, Atwal, and Wood, is a collection of 100 maps designed by children throughout the world which express their hopes and fears for the planet.

2. **Seed Folks** by Paul Fleischman is a wonderful book about a vacant lot turned garden in a diverse neighborhood in Cleveland. *Seed Folks* brings the diverse voices of 13 different people together to tell the story of a garden that transforms their neighborhood.

3. **Giving Thanks** by Jonathon Manchess and Gregory Manchess tells the story of a son who tells what his father learned from his Native American friends about giving thanks to living things.

4. **This Land is Your Land** is a beautiful book for talking about Woody Guthrie's classic song by the same name, illustrated by Kathy Jakobsen.

CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Colombia, Guinea, and Mozambique.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in California which include:

- * The St. Nicholas Project
- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * School and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Feel free to contact the Education Coordinator at Concern America for more information on any of these projects.

"My own recipe for world peace is a little bit of land for everyone."
Gladys Taber

"As I went walking, I saw a sign there,
And on the sign it said
"No Trespassing,"
But on the other side it didn't say nothing;
That side was made for you and me."
Woody Guthrie
This Land is Your Land

We hope you join us for Concern America's Next WALK OUT OF POVERTY, April 8, 2006! Call Rose Mary at Concern America to get information, walk packets, posters, flyers, and/or to schedule a presentation for your group. The Walk provides education for the participants and a sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world, while raising money for Concern America's development work in Latin America and Africa.

Setting the Table, Craft Sales, Adopt-a-Volunteer: Looking for a good service project? Have students who need to fulfill service hours? Concern America offers various ways to get involved in the world and the work of the organization. **Setting the Table** provides a meaningful theme for hosting a dinner to remember people from around the world; sell fairly traded **crafts** from El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Bangladesh; **Adopt-a-Volunteer** enables you to support a Concern America volunteer and learn through her/his work with communities in Latin America or Africa.