

The Human Face of Poverty: Exploring Causes and Solutions

Lesson 5: Alternatives for a More Just Globalization

Standards Addressed by Lesson: **CIVICS** Standard 3.3 Students understand the domestic and foreign policy influence the United States has on other nations and how the actions of other nations influence politics and society of the United States. (a,d,f) Standard 4.3 Students know how citizens can exercise their rights. (c,d) Standard 4.4 Students know how citizens can participate in civic life. (b,c,d) **READING** Standard 4 Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (b,c,e)

Objectives of Lesson: To introduce students to some of the ways in which people around the world are organizing to respond to the impacts of globalization, and to challenge the students to generate their own creative alternatives.

Instructional Strategies: Brainstorming, small group discussion, debate, role-playing, group decision-making, reading in the subject area.

Preliminary Lesson Preparation: For the second activity, you will need to prepare the posters giving the context and the debate questions.

Vocabulary: Non-violent resistance, direct action, civil disobedience, autonomous communities

Suggested Resources to Obtain: - *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World* (Bill Bigelow and Bill Peterson, Rethinking Schools Ltd., 2002)

Suggested Time: Between 50 and 90 minutes (50 minutes if only Activity 1 is done)

Materials Needed:

- Blank poster paper for Intro Activity, blank paper for “Webs of Life”
- Case Study handouts #1-5
- Handouts of role descriptions for Activity 2: the National Debate (from *Rethinking Globalization*, p. 273-278)
- Name tags

Attachments: A. Case Studies

Lesson Outline

Introduction to Lesson:

This lesson is intended for students who have had at least one class on globalization/free trade. It is intended to provide alternatives to the current model of globalization and encourage students

to think about creative ways of effecting social change. It is a good wrap up session to a globalization unit.

Icebreaker / or Quick Activity to Assess Prior Learning:

Put up several sheets of large poster paper around the room with the following questions, and give students a few minutes to write answers on each sheet:

- ◆ Who generally benefits under the current model of corporate globalization?
- ◆ Who has economic and political power under the current model of globalization?
- ◆ What kinds of people are generally satisfied with the current model of globalization?
- ◆ What kinds of people are generally frustrated by the way globalization is happening?

After they finish answering, have students read the answers out loud in order to review and establish what they have retained from previous classes.

Guiding Discussion Questions:

- ◆ What different kinds of power exist? (Examples: personal, political, economic, social, public opinion, military, mass mobilization, etc.)
- ◆ What happens over a long period of time when one group of people has a great deal of power and they use it to control or dominate the rest of the people? How do the abused people feel? How might they respond? How could this relate to the current global situation?
- ◆ What kinds of power do ordinary people have? How have people used this power to resist the current form of globalization?

Activities

Activity 1:

Social Resistance on Trial

Divide students into groups of approximately 4 students per group. To each group, distribute one brief description of a social resistance movement and/or creative alternative from around the world (Case Study handouts, for example, water privatization in Bolivia for water, fair trade coffee in Chiapas for farmers, etc.). Give the groups 5-10 minutes to read the cases. For about 10-15 minutes, have the groups put their case study “on trial,” debating the pros and cons of a particular example of how people chose to respond to the current model of globalization. Pose these questions to help prompt them through the process.

- ◆ What kind of power did this group of people use?
- ◆ What are the strengths of this example?
- ◆ What are the weaknesses?
- ◆ Who benefits? Who loses?
- ◆ What was the outcome?
- ◆ How might this approach work in other kinds of situations?

The goal is for the students to explore their own ideas and the complexity of the issues, not just to arrive at a given conclusion. To complete the activity, have all the groups present to each other, giving a brief summary of the scenario, and short answers to each of the discussion questions (3-5 min. per group).

Activity 2:

The National Debate

You will be using material from *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World*. This activity has been adapted to fit into a shorter class period. The purpose is to stimulate students to confront the complex realities of globalization issues, and to generate creative alternatives that take various viewpoints into consideration.

Outline on a large sheet of poster paper taped on the wall/board:

- **Time:** Now
- **Where:** The *Oriente*, the rainforest of eastern Ecuador
- **Who:**
 - Huaorani Indians
 - Maxus Oil Company
 - “Colonist”/Workers
 - Evangelical Missionaries
 - Ecuadorian Environmentalists
- **Questions for debate:**
 1. Should the Maxus Oil Co. be allowed to explore for oil, build roads, oil wells and pipelines on Huaorani land in the *Oriente*? Why or why not?
 2. If not, what alternative do you have to develop Ecuador and the *Oriente*?
 3. Should the government and missionaries build schools to “civilize” the Huaorani? Why or why not?

Explain that the entire class has been invited by the president of Ecuador to participate in a national debate about the future of the rainforest and development in Ecuador. At the end of the debate, there will be a vote about the policies. The job of each group is to convince the other groups to agree with them, and collectively to come up with a workable plan for the future of Ecuador that all groups can agree on.

Divide the class into 5 equal groups, and give each group one of the scenarios (from *Rethinking Globalization*, p. 273-278). Every person in the group will be role playing the position explained in the scenario. Give the groups about 5 minutes to read their roles out loud together in their small groups so that each person understands their role. Acting as the President, start off the national debate process by reading the President’s statement out loud to the class.

Then, give the groups 5-7 minutes to talk in their groups. They will need to decide:

- where they stand on the 3 points of debate
- what alternatives they might suggest
- what kinds of resistance they might use if they do not win over the other groups

Once the groups have finished this internal discussion, tell them to choose half of their group members as “traveling negotiators,” member who will move among the various groups and try to build alliances, win them over, and make deals.

- They can travel independently of the other negotiators from their group, but they can only meet with the non-traveling members of the other groups (i.e. negotiators cannot meet with negotiators from other groups).

- Remind them that the other groups probably do not have the information about their position that they received, so their job is to educate and convince the other groups.
- They need to check back regularly with their own group to update themselves, since other negotiators will be coming over and trying to make deals, as well.
- Remember—the ultimate goal is to win the vote, so the more deals you make, the more support you will have for your position in the final vote.
- ***Remind them of the possibility of creative alternatives and resistance!***

Now, give the groups about 15 minutes to negotiate, compromise, and make deals among themselves. After the 15 minutes, officially call the debate to begin. Seat the class in a circle by their groups, and have each group make a nametag to show who they are. Tell each group that they will have 3 minutes to present their position and recommendations, and then there will be 3 minutes for the other groups to ask questions. Proceed this way around the circle. Once every group has presented, give each group a final 30 seconds to state their position and recommendations. After the debate is complete, take an actual vote on the 3 points of debate.

Discussion questions for entire class:

- ◆ What worked in your negotiations? What did not work?
- ◆ How do you think this process compares with real situations happening around the world right now?
- ◆ How did different types of power affect the outcome?
- ◆ What kinds of changes are needed here in North America and in other “developed” countries in order for the Huaorani people (and other peoples in similar positions) to live more secure lives?

Helpful Hints/ Comments from Previous Facilitators: Other case studies that the educator could introduce include:

- ◆ Mexico City airport expansion
- ◆ WTO protests in Seattle, 1999
- ◆ Landless Workers Movement in Brazil
- ◆ Kensington Welfare Rights Union in Philadelphia (www.kwru.org)
- ◆ The Human Bean Company in Denver (www.thehumanbean.com)
- ◆ Gaviotas and renewable resources in Colombia

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Attachment A: Case Studies

Case Study #1: The Zapatistas

The indigenous peoples of Mexico have long been exploited and oppressed, first by the conquistadors and settlers, then by the Mexican government, and now by corporate globalization. In response to their further exploitation, the indigenous peasant farmers of the southern Mexican state of Chiapas have declared “Enough!” These peasant farmers have organized themselves as the *Zapatistas*, after the famed Mexican rebel Emiliano Zapata, demanding dignity and the right to determine what is best for their land and people without interference by government or the neoliberal policies of free trade that drive corporate globalization. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which essentially removes all trade barriers between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, has made vulnerable to corporate interests the land and people of each of these countries. The *Zapatistas* believe the consequences of an agreement that holds no regard for social, economic and environmental justice, would be devastating, particularly for the already impoverished people of Mexico. They declared their resistance to the corporate domination of their lives and culture through an armed uprising beginning on the day NAFTA went into effect, January 1st 1994. 12 days of battle between the *Zapatistas* and the Mexican Army brought international attention to the issue and a ceasefire was demanded by civil society to end the bloodshed.

Due to the media attention and international support, the Mexican government was forced to hear and negotiate the demands of the *Zapatistas*. In February 1996, the Mexican government signed the San Andres Accords—a document ensuring the rights of indigenous people such the right to land and culture, self-determination, and autonomy—and declared peace with the *Zapatistas*. However, the region which the *Zapatistas* inhabit is highly valued by multinational interests as it is rich in natural resources and designated within the Plan Puebla Panama (PPP) for infrastructure development. The Mexican government, well aware of this region’s potential in boosting Mexico in the global economy, reneged its signature and attempted to put forth a watered-down version of the accords that ignored all the basic tenets of the agreement.

Pledging resistance to corporate globalization and tiring of the Mexican government’s hollow promises, the *Zapatistas* have taken matters into their own hands. To affirm their right to determine their own fate, they have declared autonomous regions within Chiapas. These regions function under their own government—a council of representatives from each of the autonomous municipalities. They run their own schools which emphasize cultural learning of their Mayan heritage and educate their children about their resistance. They have opened clinics for all people of the region to ensure access to healthcare. They also have set up cooperatives that help sustain their communities by bringing farmers and artisans fair prices for their goods. Despite the continued attempts by the Mexican government to undermine their efforts (70% of the Mexican military is stationed in the tiny state of Chiapas), the *Zapatistas* have created an international network of solidarity among the world’s people struggling against the destructive policies of neoliberalism.

Case Study #2: The World Social Forum

The World Social Forum (WSF) began in 2001 as an alternative to the World Economic Forum (WEF), a 30-year-old annual closed-door meeting at which politicians and corporate executives from the world's wealthiest countries discuss the state of the world economy. The statement on the official website of the World Economic Forum is, "The WEF is an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world. The Forum provides a collaborative framework for the world's leaders to address global issues, engaging particularly its corporate members in global citizenship." The main ideas to "improve the state of the world" emerging from these meetings have centered around free trade and corporate globalization, which supposedly increase jobs and eliminate poverty. However, the harsh reality for much of the world's population—loss of jobs, loss of culture and traditional ways of life, and overall loss of self-determination and dignity—has led many to believe that the global elites who take part in the WEF are more concerned about improving the state of their power and profit than improving the state of the world. This belief led to the creation of the World Social Forum, a massive, democratic gathering of international civil society as an alternative to the corporate-centered ideals of the World Economic Forum.

Unified under the slogan "another world is possible," activists, agitators, free-thinkers, philosophers and others from all walks of life, gather to debate the challenges of an increasingly globalized economy and discuss alternatives. Challenging the notion that some rights can be enjoyed in isolation—that the right to life can be separated from the right to food, water, work and medical care or the right to freedom of expression from the right to receive an education—and countering the argument that the rights of certain groups, individuals, or states can be sacrificed in the name of the security, rights or interests of others, the WSF has created a much needed space for true dialogue. Hundreds of seminars and panel discussions are offered on issues ranging from violence against women to corporate responsibility, from international justice to the death penalty, from the fight against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, to the effects of torture and the relationship between security and human rights. There are workshops, plenary sessions, major speeches by luminaries such as Noam Chomsky and Rigoberto Menchú, public rallies aimed at both critiquing the ills of the corporate-led global economy and outlining alternative policies and structures, as well as debates, discussions, marches, demonstrations, actions, campaigning and awareness-raising activities—all focused on creating a more just and sustainable world.

Some feel the WSF is too directed toward reforming the current system in urging the WEF and governments to bring local and regional NGOs into their discussions on economic and political reform, and arguing that the legal accountability of companies in relation to human rights should be strengthened, in particular through the development of international law. Believing that reform will never be enough, others seek to replace the system altogether and have thus started other conferences in addition to the WSF to discuss and debate the challenges of creating something entirely new. Despite the differences in opinion on how to create a world free of a profit-based globalized economy, all share the common ideals of people over profit, protection and respect for the environment, and social and economic justice.

Case Study #3: *El Centro Humanitario Para Trabajadores* (Humanitarian Center for Workers)

In the world of economic globalization, capital, goods, and businesses freely and routinely move across borders. People, on the other hand, are a different story. Some, generally people of industrialized countries or elites of non-industrialized countries, are free to travel wherever they desire with little restriction. Passports and work visas are easy things to come by for people employed in professional positions by companies that make up the globalized economy. For people who do not possess power and privilege, generally those who are impoverished and marginalized, the reality is quite the opposite. Despite the fact that freedom of movement is a guaranteed right within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many are denied this freedom either because necessary travel documents are unavailable due to discriminatory immigration policies or because such documents are incredibly difficult and expensive to obtain. This is another phenomenon that accompanies economic globalization compounding the difficulties marginalized and impoverished people face in a free market system. As trade barriers are lifted between countries, local economies, especially those based on agriculture, are flooded with multinational products. Often, local producers and workers cannot compete with the lower prices these products offer and are pushed out of business, forcing them to seek work elsewhere.

This situation is the reality for a large number of Mexicans whose country has entered the global economy. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, essentially removing trade barriers between Canada, the U.S, and Mexico. As primarily U.S. products flood Mexican markets, thousands of people become displaced from their land and livelihoods. Many end up making the difficult, expensive and often dangerous journey to the United States seeking work. Although immigration from Mexico to the U.S. has been taking place for a number of years, economic globalization has increased the pressure to emigrate.

Many who actually succeed in getting across the border, legally or illegally, face the challenge of trying to survive in a foreign culture often accompanied by harsh discrimination and severe exploitation. A local organization based in Denver, *El Centro Humanitario Para Los Trabajadores*, seeks to aid Latin American immigrants facing these challenges. *El Centro*, Denver's first immigrant day laborer organization, opened June 2002 to defend immigrant workers' basic rights. *El Centro* offers workers' leadership skills and provides immigrant day laborers with a safe gathering place to seek fair employment. Until now, workers have waited on busy street corners for work, literally raced each other to climb aboard stopping trucks, which can be a dangerous and degrading experience. *El Centro* seeks to give a voice to immigrant populations who are often subject to exploitation and dangerous working conditions and are afraid to speak for themselves. It also empowers workers through diverse educational programs, including English classes and employment training, and aids in facilitating and regulating the arrangements between employers and day laborers. *El Centro* is an organization whose resistance lies in their day-to-day work of easing the drastic consequences for those who must emigrate due to economic globalization.

Case Study #4: Cochabamaba

Not long ago, water and sewerage services were considered to be the exclusive domain of governments, in both the developed and developing worlds. Nowadays, in an increasingly globalized economy where “free trade” is the name of the game, this is no longer the case. Governed by the free trade agenda, under the policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and supported by international lending/development institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), private companies have made inroads into nearly every sector in every region of the world. If current trends hold up, more and more utilities will be owned and operated by the private sector in the future.

Before April 2000, few people outside of Bolivia had ever heard of Cochabamba, a city of 600,000, tucked away in an Andean valley 8,000 feet high. Four months into the new century that changed. Cochabamba became the front line in the growing international battle over the rules of economic globalization, and the scene of a violent confrontation between the government and its citizens. The clash was over a basic element needed for human survival—water. According to the United Nations water is a basic human right. Yet, more than a billion people still go without a regular, safe water supply. It is one thing to recognize a right, but quite another to apply it to poor communities who cannot afford to pay the bills. Overall, only 58% of Bolivia’s population is connected to the water supply and 43% to sewers, some of the lowest levels in South America. The high infant mortality rate of 75 per 1,000 is largely attributable to bacteria in polluted water supplies. In the city of Cochabamba, there exist a large number of shantytowns not fitted with water pipelines. Inhabitants must rely on trucks to bring in their water supply, an expensive process in which the poorest of the poor end up paying the most for water. This is a system that can not endure an increase in water prices.

As the poorest country in South America, Bolivia is heavily dependent on foreign investment, usually from the major development agencies such as the World Bank. Throughout the 1990s, donor governments put pressure on the development agencies to do a lot more to support privatization, believing it to be the route to attracting foreign investment. So in 1999, the Bolivian government gave a concession to a private company for a 40 year management of the Cochabamba water supply. The company, Aguas del Tunari, part-owned by the U.S. company Bechtel, was guaranteed a 15% annual profit from the deal. Within a few months, water rates were increased dramatically. The company said the majority of the cost was intended to fall on to the wealthiest users but local inhabitants and activist groups had other views, saying that families had to pay up to a quarter of their income for water.

Finding themselves in a situation where they were literally forced to choose between food and water, the people of Bolivia took to the streets in resistance, becoming known as the "water warriors". Three days of mass demonstrations brought in security services by the government and after the conflict escalated, martial law was eventually imposed on the city. However, things got more out of control and a local television station captured images of soldiers firing live rounds into a crowd. A 17 year old boy was killed by a gunshot to the face. The conflict made headline news around the world, bringing attention to the issue of privatization of public utilities and the effects on the impoverished peoples of the world. In an attempt to end the crisis, the government annulled the contract with Aguas del Tunari. The state controlled public utility,

Semapa, laid hundreds of meters of new pipelines into some of the poorer areas of the city and said attempts have been made to involve the community more in the decision making process. However, the struggle is far from over as thousands of Cochabamba's residents continue to rely on the tankers for their daily access to clean water. In November 2001, in the name of free trade and supported by WTO policies, Bechtel decided to add to the suffering it had already caused by filing a legal demand for \$25 million against the Bolivian people—compensation for its lost opportunity to make future profits.

Case Study #5: Argentina

Throughout the early and mid-nineties, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the G-7 countries, all praised Argentina's liberalization program as an economic model for the Third World. President Carlos Menem and Economic Minister Domingo Cavallo promised the Argentine people that they would soon become part of the "First World." Though most Latin American countries have applied neoliberal policies, none did so as thoroughly and rapidly as Argentina. Moreover, no Latin American country was as industrially advanced or had as diversified an economy. Argentina had the highest standard of living in the region, the most qualified and skilled labor force, and the political leadership most determined to follow the precepts of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the G-7. Argentina was a test case for the efficacy or failures of a free market system under optimal conditions: a willing government, a well-developed infrastructure, a skilled labor force, long-term links to world markets, and a significant middle class with Euro-American patterns of culture and consumption. Today, Argentina is in total disintegration. Not only is the economy in its fifth year of recession/depression, but its banking system has collapsed, the unemployment rate has skyrocketed, and over half the population lives below the poverty line.

Argentine president Fernando de la Rúa's government was following the standard prescription the IMF gives to economies facing financial troubles: slash the deficit, deflate the economy and hope that investor confidence returns. In fact, these policies made the situation worse. On December 19-20, 2001, thousands of angry, impoverished protesters took their resistance to the streets. The uprising, which finally forced President De la Rúa to resign and exit the presidential palace via helicopter, was the culmination of a series of mass road blockages by the unemployed *piqueteros*, pot-banging neighborhood marches and assemblies, provincial mobilizations and attacks on governors, mayors and federal officials. While each of the particular mass actions had its own specific social base, forms of direct action and priority demands, they all converged in rejecting repayment of the massive \$140 billion foreign debt, implementation of IMF austerity programs, and the confiscation of savings. Important contingents of public sector trade unionists, *piqueteros*, Marxist activists and tens of thousands of independent radicalized middle class people declared a unified resistance to the further destruction of their country through corporate globalization.

The mass unemployed workers' movement has been instrumental in the Argentine people's movement to reclaim their economy. Their main tactics have been to barricade major highways, blocking the transportation of goods, services, and labor to and from industries, banks and other sectors. Their demands invariably include state-financed jobs, food, housing for the homeless, and back pay for service workers. Women have taken the lead in organizing the barricades and the logistical support systems (roadside soup kitchens), which have evolved into systematic, organized activities coordinated among thousands of unemployed. There have been numerous examples, such as in the town of General Mosconi, where the unemployed and the workers have taken the running of all public affairs into their own hands.

Though Argentina's economic situation continues to look bleak, the uprising and solidarity that ensued has led to new and creative forms of direct popular representation and new

tactics of struggle. In light of the complete and total collapse of the Argentine neoliberal model, several alternative models of development have emerged.