

Social Justice Perspectives

From the Social Justice Perspectives Editor

Gloria T. Alter

A Call to Education and Action

Raising awareness of LGBTQ issues in global perspective is a worthy goal. J. B. Mayo does it well, immersing himself in the lives of those he studies. In this column, he shares a case study of LGBTQ Hmong, members of Shades of Yellow (SOY), the only Hmong LGBTQ organization in existence, based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Given that the largest population of Hmong, apart from those in Asia, is found in the United States, it is important for social educators to recognize this group in the curriculum. And given that we do not typically include the LGBTQ population in the social studies curriculum, it is doubly important that we address the history and diverse lives of these Hmong people.

Mayo explores the intersection between LGBTQ issues and Hmong identities, educating and inspiring us to learn more. Further, we are challenged to show compassion for those whose lives may be extremely difficult, not only at school but also at home, at work, and in the community. For social studies educators in particular, the message is clear— building inclusive curriculum and accepting classrooms must be a priority!

Historic decisions are being made about many LGBTQ issues around the world today. As the United States Supreme Court deliberates over the issue of gay marriage, some commentators are saying that the trend data on public opinion in this matter is going in only one direction, in favor of gay marriage. Globally, France may become the 12th country to allow gay marriage (most of the first 11 countries who approved gay marriage did so within the past decade).

Many leaders have expressed concerns for the safety and protection of the human rights of gay populations around the world. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed the U. N. Human Rights Council just last year (2012) in a powerful message of solidarity.

The high commissioner's report documents disturbing abuses in all regions with a pattern of violence and discrimination directed at people just because they are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender. There is a widespread bias at jobs, schools, and hospitals. And appalling violent attacks, including sexual assault. People have been imprisoned, tortured, even killed. This is a monumental tragedy for those affected and a stain on our collective conscience. And it is also a violation of international law.

To those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, let me say, you

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are not alone. Your struggle for an end to violence and discrimination is a shared struggle. Any attack on you is an attack on the universal values the United Nations and I have sworn to defend and uphold.

I stand with you and I call upon all countries and people to stand with you, too. A historic shift is underway. . . .

The Secretary-General then said that we must end discrimination and the criminalization of LGBT relationships, and educate the public.

I count on this council and all people of conscience to make this happen. The time has come.

This message was an impressive step toward the recognition of LGBTQ rights worldwide. How can social educators of conscience respond to this call?

Reference

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. (2012, March). *Message to the UN Human Rights Council: On violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity*. Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.org/blog/entry/un-head-support-lgbt-equality?utm_source=Convio&utm_medium=email&utm_term=News-link-4&utm_campaign=HRCnews-March-2012>

Editor's Note

A great source for further study about the Hmong is the Hmong Bookstore <<http://www.hmongabc.com/>> However, it does not appear to provide information about LGTBQ issues.

About the Social Justice Editor

Dr Gloria Alter is Visiting Associate Professor at DePaul University Chicago. Her research interests include elementary social studies curriculum design and reform, textbook analysis, social studies and social justice, and social studies in local and global perspective. She teaches courses in elementary social studies methods.

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