



WAR is Only Half the Story

Stories from the Aftermath Project

Lesson Plans

A Story Only Partially Told

Rodrigo ABD

2009 Aftermath Project grant winner

“Wars and their effects last long after the weapons are put to rest and signatures are stamped on peace accords.” —Rodrigo Abd

Viewing the Aftermath Photographs

We hope you find the following general viewing structure helpful as you introduce these photographs in the classroom. As you follow this three-part template (describe, analyze, interpret), take notice of the specific questions provided for each image. These are intended as a guide to spark further conversations as you explore the Aftermath Project.

Describe

Begin by simply *describing* what you see in the photograph. What is occurring? What details stand out to you? What objects are in the photograph? Describing details is an important first step in helping students build critical viewing skills.

Analyze

As a second step, begin to *analyze* the photographer’s choices. For example, why are some areas lit up while others are in shadow? Why do you think the photograph is framed the way it is? What feelings does this photograph provoke? What do you think was occurring around the camera as this image was captured? You might find the captions composed by the photographer to be a useful resource as you analyze the images.

Interpret

As a final step, *interpret* the photograph. What larger story is the photographer trying to tell? What might the photographer hope to communicate about the subject? How does this photograph convey the consequences and opportunities that surface in the aftermath of violence in this community or nation?

Introducing “A Story Only Partially Told”

The five images selected from Rodrigo Abd’s visual essay express how individuals, communities, and the larger nation of Guatemala continue to confront the legacy and aftermath of genocide in their country. As you view these images, keep in mind that they collectively tell a larger story—and remind us that much of that story is left untold.

Exhume the Body

- In this image, we are witnessing the exhumation of a grave—one of the first steps in the reburial process. What details of color and composition in this photograph stand out to you?
- Photographer Rodrigo Abd notes that “there is still a void to be filled in terms of how these communities were affected by violence and what effect the exhumations [have] had on the daily life of the villagers.” How do you think such a process would affect daily life throughout the nation? How might the resulting challenges be addressed?



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- Why do you think the photographer explains that the exhumations were “visited by family members of victims of violence from around the world, including relatives of victims of the September 11 attacks in the United States”? Why might those visits have mattered? What impact might those visits have had? On whom?
- By looking at the photographs, have we become witnesses to the exhumation? If so, what responsibilities, if any, come with that witnessing?

Skeleton

- Once they uncover the burial sites, forensic anthropologists discover graves such as this littered with the fragments of an individual life. What questions come to mind as you view this image? What details stand out to you?
- The skull is surrounded by color from scraps of clothing. What do you make of the juxtaposition of these bright colors with the remains of a skull? How does it impact the way you understand the image?

Relatives

- What do you notice about the way the picture is framed? Why do you think the photographer did not include the faces of the relatives?
- Study the picture closely. What clues does it contain about the identities of the relatives?
- Notice the bright colors in the photograph. Among the flowers are black-and-white images of victims of the violence. Together, what story do these elements tell?
- What role do rituals such as prayer, the creation of collective altars for lost loved ones, and the holding of community gatherings play in the aftermath of violence and genocide?

Victim’s Picture

- The large image of a skull shown in this photograph was taken by forensic anthropologists. For what possible reasons do you think it was placed in this field? Who are the individuals studying the image, and what brought them to this site?
- What thoughts, feelings, and questions does this photograph generate?
- What larger stories can be discerned from the photograph about this community’s response in the aftermath of genocide?

Coffin

- Photographer Rodrigo Abd says that “relief can be found in the simple acts of closing the cycle of mourning, giving a proper burial, and honoring those who were wronged.” What is your response to his statement?
- As you view this photograph, take note of the hat and its relationship to the rest of the image. It is not placed on the head of a living person; rather, it is held alongside the coffin. What might this communicate about the untold story of genocide in Guatemala and its aftermath?