



Lesson Plan: Addressing Sexual Violence in War

OVERVIEW:

This lesson plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the film *Lumo*, which takes an intimate look at the healing process of a victim of rape, a crime of political terror that is increasingly common in areas of conflict such as the central African country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the Congo). This lesson uses an excerpt of the film to put a human face on the high numbers of women who are victims of rape in areas of military conflict like the Congo. Students will learn more about this worldwide problem and write letters to government leaders suggesting how the U.S. could show greater leadership in addressing sexual violence in war. The film is in Swahili, French and English with English subtitles.

Note: The content of this documentary includes discussion of a brutal war, disturbing verbal descriptions of violent rape, and examples of the physical and emotional destruction of such attacks. There are also images of dead bodies seen from a distance. It is strongly recommended that the film be reviewed for content before use in a classroom setting.

P.O.V. documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from the initial broadcast. In addition, P.O.V. offers a lending library of DVD's and VHS tapes that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE!

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Watch a video clip that describes the conflict in the Congo and introduces Lumo, a victim of sexual violence.
- Discuss statistics of sexual violence from several past and present conflicts in the world.
- Read and talk about an interview with an activist working to help women like Lumo.
- Write letters to government leaders suggesting ways the United States could show greater leadership in addressing the issue of sexual violence in war.

GRADE LEVELS: This lesson is best used with mature students in grades 9-12.

SUBJECTS: Current Events, World History, Civics, Geography, English, Health

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Political maps of Africa and Europe
- Method (varies by school) of showing the class online video clips
- Computers with Internet access

ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION: One 50-minute class period

SUGGESTED CLIPS:

Clip 1: War Overview and Account of Lumo's Attack (length: 3:40)

The clip begins at the start of the film. The clip ends at 6:15 after the line, "...counselors who were in search of raped women."

[Include link when ready]

BACKGROUND:

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has a population of 56 million people composed of more than 200 ethnic groups. An estimated 65% of the population can read and write in French, the official language.

The rich mineral deposits, competing tribal groups, a brutal colonial legacy from Belgium, and vast stretches of forest have always made the nation ripe for foreign intervention and political chaos. Especially in eastern Congo, where uncertain borders are remote from the capital of Kinshasa, the country has served as haven and battleground for Congolese insurgents and armed groups spilling over from wars in neighboring countries. The end of the Rwandan genocide sent thousands of Hutu militiamen, the *Interhamwe*, responsible for the mass murder of Tutsis and moderate Hutus, fleeing to the Congolese forests, where they were pursued by the new Tutsi-dominated Rwandan army.

Their struggle became entangled with a long-running insurgency against the crumbling Mobutu regime and cross-border tensions with other nations, helping to fuel the First and Second Congo Wars. The latter, lasting from 1998 to 2003, involved nine African nations and some 20 armed groups, and led to the death of nearly 4 million people, earning it the epithet of "Africa's First World War." As in some other African conflicts, child soldiers, drugs, superstition, and a virulent terrorizing of women characterized the fighting.

The death toll continues to rise at nearly 1,200 people each day, with no end to the conflict in sight. In addition, the United Nations estimates that an average of 40 women are raped every day in some parts of the Congo, with tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of women having been victims of sexual violence since 1998.

ACTIVITY:

1. Show students where the Democratic Republic of the Congo is located on a political map of Africa. Explain that tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of women and girls in this war-torn country have suffered crimes of extreme sexual violence.
2. Use the video clip, War Overview and Account of Lumo's Attack, to introduce Lumo. Tell the class that she was raped so violently that she suffers from fistula, which is characterized by severe tissue damage. Explain that fistula causes Lumo to lose control her bodily functions and may not be able to bear children. Her fiancée and family, except for her mother, rejected her as a result. In the video, she tells her story from a hospital where she has gone to heal.
3. Allow students to react to Lumo's experience. Tell students that Lumo had to stay at that hospital for nearly two years and underwent five surgeries to repair the physical damage to her body that happened when she was raped. After her final operation, which seemed to repair the fistula, she returned to her village but her safety continues to be at risk.

4. Explain that Lumo is one of many women who has suffered from sexual violence used as a weapon of war. Then, share with the class some of these statistics (source: United Nations Stop Rape Now brochure

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/wps/StopRapeNow_Brochure.pdf. Be sure to point out the locations on a map of each place listed:

- An average of 40 women are raped every day in South Kivu in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- It is estimated that between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990's.
- It is estimated that between 50,000 and 64,000 internally displaced women in Sierra Leone have experienced sexual violence at the hands of armed combatants.
- It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the genocide in Rwanda.

5. Tell students that these numbers demonstrate that acts of sexual violence are not random offenses committed by individual soldiers. It is often used as a military tactic to humiliate and demoralize individuals, to tear apart families, and to devastate communities. The perpetrators of these crimes largely go unpunished and the victims are left powerless.

6. Next, break the class into small groups to read and discuss the interview with Pamela Shifman from UNICEF. You can access the interview at www.pbs.org/pov/lumo

7. Finally, ask students write letters to President Bush and/or members of Congress. In their letters, request that students include what they have learned about sexual violence as a weapon of war and suggestions they might have for how the U.S. could show greater leadership in addressing these issues.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

Students can be assessed on:

- Their participation in class and group discussions.
- How well their letters explain the issues of sexual violence in war and advocate for U.S. action.

EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS

- Watch the film, *Lumo* in its entirety, noting the content flags described in the Lesson Overview. Compare what students see in the film about gender roles and sexual violence to attitudes about women and rape in the United States. What are some similarities and differences? Have students conduct additional research and write essays that compare these attitudes and infer what accounts for them.
- Watch and discuss other P.O.V. films relating to women, war, Africa, and healing, including *Discovering Dominga*, *Rain in a Dry Land* or *Sierra Leone's Refugee All-Stars*.
- Find out more about HEAL Africa and other organizations that work to alleviate problems of sexual violence around the world. What physical, social, and emotional needs do these organizations address? What means do they use to

provide aid? How can students get involved with such organizations and make a difference?

- Organize a V-Day event. V-Day is a worldwide campaign to end violence against women. In 2008, V-Day will focus on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For more information, visit www.vday.org.
- Tap literature to explore and analyze themes from the Congo's history that are still prevalent today. Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness," Mark Twain's, "King Leopold's Soliloquy," Adam Hochschild's, "King Leopold's Ghost," and Vachel Lindsay's poem, "The Congo" each address the wide-scale corruption and abuses carried out in the Congo under the leadership of Belgium's King Leopold II. (Note: You can examine the full text of these books at Google Book Search (<http://books.google.com>.) Ask students how they think the corruption in the Congo's past might have contributed to the country's problems today. Assign students two of the four texts to read and to write an essay that compares and contrasts the themes in each.
- Investigate the roots of human rights violations in the Congo to those of Nazi Germany, Cambodia, Darfur, Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda or another area of conflict. Create timelines that include the precedents, circumstances, and policies that may have contributed to the violent actions taken in each location. Identify what factors may have set the stage for human rights violations and brainstorm how such problems can be avoided in the future.
- Study the United Nations and its work in the Congo. Review the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>. The website for the PBS program, *Kofi Annan: Center of the Storm* features a Human Rights lesson plan <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/un/classroom/lesson2.html> that analyzes this document and has students write a radio news report about its signing. Students could then apply the principles of the Declaration to the situation in the Congo. Next, research the current peacekeeping and humanitarian work of the U.N. in the Congo. A good place to start is the website for the United Nations Mission in the Congo <http://www.monuc.org>. Identify what obstacles these efforts face and brainstorm what can be done to help achieve greater success.
- Explore the collection of video public service announcements: <http://youthforhumanrights.org/watchads/index.html> at Youthforhumanrights.org. Each PSA addresses one of the 30 human rights outlined in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. Analyze the effectiveness of each PSA and then have students work in teams to create ones of their own.
- Invite a representative from your community's local rape crisis center to come to your class and describe the impact of rape on its victims. Have the representative also describe what resources are available locally to victims of rapes.

RESOURCES:

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/drc>

The website of Human Rights Watch, an international organization dedicated to defending human rights across the globe, includes dozens of reports about the Congo and related conflicts, including this 2002 report entitled "The War Within the War." For direct testimony from rape survivors, see <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/06/congo-testim0620.htm>.

Stop Rape Now

<http://www.stoprapenow.org>

This site focuses on the U.N.'s actions against sexual violence in conflict. It features a brochure explaining the issue, more information on the crisis in the Congo, and survivor accounts.

STANDARDS:

These standards are drawn from "Content Knowledge," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Health

Standard 2: Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health.

Language Arts

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

World History

Standard 44: Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world.

- Level IV, Benchmark 12: Understands gender roles across the globe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in broadcast journalism, secondary education, and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource website (now PBS Teachers), and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

BACKGROUND SOURCES:

DR Congo: Key Facts

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/guides/456900/456977/html/nn3page1.stm>

Stop Rape Now Brochure

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/wps/StopRapeNow_Brochure.pdf

Violence Against Women "Beyond Rape" in Congo – U.N.

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L30471668.htm>