Final Project Materials

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(1) What did you learn?

I have learned that political violence occurs in many different ways and under many different circumstances. I have learned that one of the first steps in completing political violence is by dehumanizing others. We create an “Us v. Them” mentality in order to create groups of people. We think of ourselves as heroes and others as enemies and even as inhuman. By believing they are less than humans, it makes it easier to harm others. We no longer see them as equals and we do not see our actions as being unethical.

(2) Why is this learning important to a study of political violence?

This is important because it explains part of the psychological behaviors of perpetrators. It helps explain how certain groups have been able to commit awful acts of political violence. By recognizing when groups start to dehumanize others, we can indicate that political violence has a high potential of being committed. By recognizing the indicators of political violence, we can interfere and help stop the violence before it even begins.

(3) How did you share your learning publicly?

I shared by learning by publishing a Letter to the Editor to the Wyoming Tribune Eagle. I will submit the document I sent them and then show a hard copy of it if necessary.
Realities of War

**Disclaimer – This Letter to the Editor was written by a student for a Political Violence class at the University of Wyoming and in no ways reflects the opinions of attitudes of the University of Wyoming.**

One event that has been recorded throughout all of history is war. War dates back to 2700 B.C.E. and continues to this day. There are many ways we have learned to protect ourselves instead of facing the realities about war. The main thing we do is dehumanize our enemies. We name call and use slurs against our enemies in order to create an Us v. Them mentality. Instead of thinking of them as human beings, we see them as the ‘others’; something that we do not wish to be. By separating ourselves from ‘them’ we create the mentality that we are not doing wrong and we are not killing humans. We create this mentality to protect ourselves though. If we start viewing things from the enemy’s point of view, we lose clarity on what we are supposed to be doing in war. When thinking about it, our ‘enemies’ are freedom fighters in their country. They are standing up for what they believe in, just as we are on our side. They have families that are waiting for them to come home as well as we are. They are willing to stand up for their beliefs, but would rather kill their enemy (us) and go home to their families as well. When we start thinking of the realities of war and the impact that killing the enemy has on their family, our judgement begins to become cloudy. We no longer think of doing what is right and honorable for our country, instead we begin to have empathy for those we are supposed to be in battle against. War history has conditioned us to build walls up in our own minds to block out the realities of war. It has caused us to automatically create an Us v. Them and dehumanize the ‘others.’ It seems that war would be a lot more difficult to complete if we all face and realize the realities of it.

Haley Atkins