

Editor's Notebook

It is instructive to compare the world 50 years ago with the world today. This issue's Teaching with Documents column, which looks back on the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, offers some profound insights into the Cold War period at its height. The primary sources presented by Stacey Bredhoff and Lee Ann Potter include part of President Kennedy's announcement to the nation that the Soviet Union was building missile sites in Cuba, as well as a photograph of these sites. Their article and teaching suggestions introduce students to the period when the world lived in constant fear of a possible nuclear confrontation between the superpowers.

Our Looking at the Law column reviews the rulings of the last Supreme Court term, which Catherine Hawke describes as "jammed with interesting twists and turns." (229) In addition to the historic decision on health care legislation, the Court issued important rulings on immigration, the First Amendment, and the rights of criminal suspects and defendants. The article concludes with a review of key cases that the Supreme Court will decide in the 2012–13 term.

Looking toward the presidential election, Allan J. Lichtman uses his prediction system, "The Keys to the White House," to forecast that President Obama will win the popular vote. The variables in his prediction system are of special interest this year because they reflect the range of social studies disciplines, and reject the popular conception that the state of the economy is usually the principal determinant of the outcome of a presidential election.

C. Frederick Risinger views the upcoming election as one that will shape the future of democracy in the United States. He recommends a selection of six websites with links to lesson plans and activities that will be particularly useful to teachers as Election Day approaches.

James M.M. Hartwick and Brett L.M. Levy review the implications of the fact that "spending on the 2012 presidential contest is projected to exceed \$2 billion, breaking all previous records for election spending." (237) They focus on a recent proposal for a constitutional amendment that would limit election expenditures, and suggest a framework for class discussions of this amendment and the problem of the influence of big money on U.S. elections.

Most articles in this issue are part of a special section on human rights, whose guest editor is Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker. Her introductory article emphasizes the moral responsibility of teachers to educate students about global issues, including human rights. She recommends two pedagogical methods—infusing and postholing—that teachers with a crowded curriculum can use to ensure that their classes cover these issues.

Hilary Landorf emphasizes the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and identifies the "three accumulating 'generations' of human rights" (248) that have followed the Declaration; (1) civil and political rights; (2) social, economic, and cultural rights; and (3) solidarity rights. She suggests some useful teaching strategies for introducing students to the importance of the Declaration.

Christopher W. Harrison examines the issues raised by capital punishment, noting that the U.S. remains the sole Western nation

not to have abolished the death penalty. He highlights the risk of the execution of innocent people, and suggests ways of discussing capital punishment in class.

One of the major violations of human rights in World War II was the conscription by the Japanese army of "comfort women" from other Asian countries. Hyunduk Kim describes the ordeal of these women and suggests activities that can lead students to a deeper understanding of the problems of the abuse of women in patriarchal societies, violence against poor uneducated women, and discrimination against women of different ethnicity.

One human rights issue that can captivate students is the practice of recruiting child soldiers that has arisen in many conflict-ridden parts of the world. Kenneth T. Carano and Robert W. Bailey outline the harsh realities of this international problem and suggest strategies for students to explore the issue in depth.

Rina Bousalis emphasizes the oppression of Iranian women since the country's revolution of 1979, yet also points to ways in which women have refused to submit to discrimination. A possible silver lining on the horizon is that the number of Iranian women graduating from college now exceeds the number of men, and their rapid acquisition of education may lead to an improvement in their condition.

The political developments of recent years have held out hope of progress in the struggle for human rights in Myanmar. Natalie Keefer describes the nonviolent protests against the military regime led by Buddhist monks and the democratic activist Aung San Suu Kyi, who was recently elected to parliament. Keefer suggests activities that will familiarize students with the important issues at stake in the country.

In 2009, President Obama signed an executive order mandating the closure of Guantánamo Bay prison by 2010. As Jason L. O'Brien and Kyle T. Barbieri point out, however, closing the facility has proved impossible because of the opposition of U.S. public opinion and Congress to moving suspects to the continental United States. The authors discuss the problems of human rights violations at Guantánamo, noting that the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the detainees on the four occasions on which it has reviewed their cases.

Caroline C. Sheffield and Bárbara C. Cruz recommend literature for young people that can enhance the teaching of human rights, emphasizing that stories about individuals who have waged successful struggles against human rights violations can inspire students. They recommend a set of useful books, and suggest teaching strategies.

The special section concludes with an annotated list of web resources that are useful for investigating international human rights issues. The list has been compiled by Merry M. Merryfield, Germain Badang, Christina Bragg, Aleksandr Kvasov, Nathan Taylor, Anne Waliaula, and Misato Yamaguchi.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org.