JIMMY AND ROSALYNN CARTER SCHOOL FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
George Mason University

Truth, Justice, Peace, and Mercy

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Overview: Students will learn about practices in reconciliation. By taking on the identities of truth, justice, mercy, and peace, students will think critically about the role that each component plays in reconciliation and rebuilding after conflict.

Learning Outcomes:

- Respond to and develop compelling questions, use valid information sources, and connect acquired knowledge to civic participation.
- Understand the foundations of political thought and government systems and how different groups, organizations, and nations cause conflict, attempt to resolve conflict, and seek to establish order, security, and peace.
- Move between concrete, narrative, and chronological learning and thematic, abstract, or conceptual learning.

Information for Instructor:

This exercise is drawn from John Paul Lederach's description of a framework for reconciliation he witnessed in Nicaragua. He wrote about it in *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997. pp. 27-31.

Instructions:

Divide the participants randomly into four groups (most effectively done simply by counting off.) Each group is then assigned one of four identities: Truth, Justice, Peace, and Mercy. For 10-15 minutes each group meets to discuss the meaning of their identity and selects a spokesperson to speak for that group and speak as the identity of that group (i.e., speak to the assembled participants as if he or she is truth or justice or peace or mercy). When all the participants are reconvened together the four spokespersons are seated in front of the group and the facilitator asks each a series of questions. There are two questions that are asked of each spokesperson:

1) Of the other three "persons", whom do you fear the most during conflict?
   Follow up with why or why not.
   (Thus, there would be four questions like the following: "Truth, whom do you fear the most during conflict – peace, justice or mercy?")

2) Of the other three "persons" who is the most important?
   Follow up with why or why not.
   (Thus, there would be four questions like the following: "Peace, of the other three who is most important during conflict – truth, justice or mercy?")

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Other related questions could include:
Truth:

- Do you cause conflict?
- Does truth leave us exposed?
- Is honesty important?
- Are you obsessed with the law?

Justice:

- Is equality important to you?
- Are you always right?
- Can you have justice without peace?
- Should one have equal opportunity and is it realistic?

Peace:

- Do you seek harmony?
- Is it always import to show respect to everyone?
- Do you favor the underdog?
- Can you have peace without justice?
- Are you for the benefit of only certain people?

Mercy:

- Is it important to you to forgive, forget and move on?
- Do you cover things up?
- Why is it so difficult for many people to like you?

You can expand the questions into as many areas as possible. And it is also very important and successful when you have the remaining participants ask questions of each of the spokespersons.

Applications: This activity is a way for students to reflect on how societies can move forward after conflict, violence, or injustice. This can be applied to units in history, literature, leadership, sociology, geography, economics, psychology, and government.

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