

Brown, Amy Benson, and Karen M. Poremski. *Roads To Reconciliation: Conflict and Dialogue In The Twenty-First Century*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005.

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Brown, Amy Benson, and Karen M. Poremski. *Roads To Reconciliation: Conflict and Dialogue In The Twenty-First Century*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005.

Roads to Reconciliation represents an attempt to broaden the scope of thought on conflict resolution and reconciliation studies, familiarizing us with the many dynamics that steer human conflict and peace-making efforts. Its objective is to demonstrate that, apart from the commonly referred to reasons such as power and economics, there exist other factors — religious, biological, and psychological — that often give cause to igniting conflicts among people(s). An understanding of these different factors is therefore necessary in order for sustainable reconciliation to occur. Made up of a collection of pieces by various authors, the book explores conflicts ranging from international affairs to the intrapersonal. The common themes of dialogue, self-reflection, and openness to change persist throughout the collection as necessary stages to achieving sustainable peace.

The book is divided into four main sections, reflective of what are identified at the outset as the primary perspectives of analysis necessary to understanding reconciliation processes. The first would appropriately fall under the umbrella of cultural/religious-based factors and focuses on the impact of our belief systems, particularly with regards to murder and our sense of justice, on influencing our approach to dealing with and reacting to offences. The second section explores seeds of conflict on a more personal level, demonstrating how anger and frustrations can both build in people inner psychological emotions that trigger an impulse for revenge, and at the same time guide them toward the path of resolution. The third section examines race and class-based divides using American history as its basis. Its authors illustrate how our discriminatory tendencies have often impeded peace by intensifying divisions. And the final section of the book in my view should be considered the concluding section. It ends by illustrating how America's college campuses would serve as ideal mediums for fostering dialogue, self-reflection, and learning, proposing that they should be utilized by people and governments for resolving disputes.

Roads to Reconciliation certainly enriches current discourse on reconciliation studies. While other analyses have focussed their efforts mainly on group-oriented frameworks for sustaining peace, the authors of this volume introduce us to new angles of understanding by exposing us to different points of view stemming from outside fields of study. What definitely adds to the fullness of this collection is that it is made up of a wide array of contributors, from both the academic and non-academic communities, who reflect a diverse group of cultures. The contributions are thus made more intriguing because they encompass viewpoints that are in part a product of their authors' backgrounds.

As a predominantly intrapersonal analysis, it is made richer by its ventures into the inner souls of those individuals tormented by loss, injustice, and undue

malice. It is on this uniquely deep level that the book deserves its greatest credit, for more so than most other publications we learn the extent to which conflicts often result as mere repercussions of human tempers colliding. In this respect the volume opens us to a new idiosyncratic dimension of thought that deserves greater recognition as a noteworthy element in reconciliation studies.

Something deserves to be said as well about the idea we are left with in the final section. As mentioned previously, building on some of the underlying themes of the book the closing authors end with a proposal for the utilization of our colleges and universities as mediums for facilitating dialogue among disputing groups — a necessary first step on the road to reconciliation. As it is argued, our campuses have traditionally existed as the seedbed of higher intellectual discourse and new innovative solutions. Couple this with the diverse social and cultural make-up of their faculties and student bodies and we discover a potentially ideal facility for the substantive dialogue and spirit of tolerant openness necessary for group conflict resolution to occur. This idea is one that has not yet been meaningfully explored and thus the book makes a compelling case in favour of further examination in this area.

However, limitations exist here that cannot be dismissed without mention. Considering that themes, such as dialogue, accountability, and self-reflection persist throughout the book, one would assume that with this would follow the expectation that it would conclude by tying these relevant elements together as part of a suggested systematic approach to tackling impediments to reconciliation processes — the book's primary objective. Instead, what we get is an ending left precarious. Several ideas are thrown out but no concluding piece exists to properly assess their relevance to the overall analysis.

And this leads into what I consider to be the main weakness of the book: while the preface implies a collection meant to chronicle human conflict that occurs both among groups and between individuals, this publication does not give adequate attention to large group disputes, concentrating rather on the various dimensions of mainly person-to-person disputes. Though I implied earlier that this is a refreshing change, any effort to demonstrate the differences or commonalities in dynamics between these two levels of conflict could have been made more solidly were the book to have offered an even comparison.

Even with these limitations however, *Roads to Reconciliation* should nevertheless be viewed as an illuminating addition to the existing literature available on peace and conflict studies, for it demonstrates that the traditional lens through which human conflicts are normally examined does not allow us to appropriately grasp the many facets of personal reconciliation. In this sense the book convincingly broadens the boundaries of focus and should be given due credit for attempting to introduce new and different disciplinary viewpoints into mainstream thinking on this subject. I would recommend this book to specialists and the general reader alike for it serves as a valuable text for learning about conflict

resolution and human relations. To specialists in particular, hopefully it will encourage further discussion on the potential role these multiple spheres of thought may be able to play in better understanding the dynamics of reconciliation processes.

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Lauria-Santiago, Aldo, and Leigh Binford, eds. *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society, and Community in El Salvador*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

In recent years the field of conflict studies has widened considerably as new analytical approaches have increasingly linked conflict with development, and related war and peace to broader historical, cultural, and economic processes. These contributions remind us that any analysis of violent conflict and post-war transitions needs to be grounded in an examination of particular social relations and historical legacies. Drawing from a variety of historical, anthropological, and sociological perspectives, this volume provides a much-needed interdisciplinary dialogue that sheds new light on the fine-grained complexities of the Salvadoran experience before, during, and after the 12-year civil war that wracked the small Central American country during the 1980s.

While the generalized nature of much previous writing on El Salvador has primarily addressed macro-structural issues and political violence, this book's most salient theme is its attention to how familiar large-scale, state-centered processes have been assembled out of locally-based, small-scale interactions and diverse actors. In particular, the book attempts to take apart overly schematic and simplistic assumptions that viewed coffee cultivation as a homogenizing force controlled by a small oligarchic elite, and strives to take the agency and autonomy of peasants more seriously as geographically and socially varied actors consciously manoeuvring in accordance with particular needs and interests.

The book is organized into three sections that follow a loose chronology. The first section, with chapters by Aldo Lauria-Santiago, Victor Hugo Acuna Ortega, Erik Ching, Kati Griffith and Leslie Gates, and Carlos Benjamin Lara Martinez, reconsiders prewar El Salvadoran history in a broad effort to clarify the linkages between local-level and national-level processes. This section provides a historical backdrop that attempts to connect the specific experiences of seemingly marginal people and communities with the formation of the national