

The Genocide Contagion

How We Commit and Confront Holocaust and Genocide

by Israel W. Charny

a book for learning about ourselves **B E F O R E!**

SPIRITUALITY AND PRACTICE BOOK AWARD 2016 (USA)

A thought-provoking tome on the human capacity to commit genocide... According to Charny, we are all capable of participating in genocide even though a capacity for good dwells within us as well. Throughout the book, Charny examines a multifactor model for understanding the human capacity to commit genocide... the "Foundations of Evil" ... Other serious subjects explored in *The Genocide Contagion* include attributing demonic powers to enemies, small-mindedness (a reduced sense of responsibility), orgiastic experience in a collective, and the folly of nihilism. Genocide is not a "thing of the past.. this eye-opening book is so important. -**Spirituality and Practice Book Award 2016, Review by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat**

"This is a book that can open peoples' eyes. It also helps people in their daily lives – in their marriage and bringing up their children. It is about much more than genocide. The hope is that once people understand more of the basics of how evil takes place, their knowledge can help make a better world."—**Review by a 90 year old child survivor of the Holocaust and a 'graduate' of the Warsaw Ghetto**

A well researched, well documented work coalescing divergent perspectives – a task that most genocide writers are unable to do. He also offers the reader personal and professional and research data to support his tenet which most of us are still reluctant to hear – how given the proper conditions, we all can become genocidalists. .As a seasoned clinician and as someone who has spent much of his career trying to understand genocide, I.W. Charny continues to shed light on the oldest and darkest parts of human existence.-**Steven Baum, author of *The Psychology of Genocide* and Editor, *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism***

Delivered in lively, accessible, and approachable format, *The Genocide Contagion* is suitable for a broad array of audiences and learners. Charny neither minces words nor overloads (or overlords) with agony. His work is neither human rights stenography nor human rights pornography. Charny emphasizes the capacity of the human spirit to harm and to recover, to injure and to atone: and, all the while, he maintains a cool faith in the power of pedagogy, prevention, and perseverance in draining the contagiousness of genocide and ultimately eradicating this blight upon humanity. - ***Genocide Studies and Prevention, An International Journal: Mark A. Drumbl, Washington and Lee University School of Law***

There is much to be admired in Charny's exposition [including] his ability to avoid sweeping generalizations and grand narratives...his call to 'move from identifying types of people to examining contexts and conditions' ...ability to avoid slipping into dogma...breaking down stereotypes of perpetrators of genocide as immoral monsters[...]who to our great surprise for the most part appear to be everyday people....He interestingly identifies the paradox of victim groups being portrayed by perpetrators as both "possessing great powers' yet at the same time'inferior.' Charny also delivers a sobering dose of humanism...

-Holocaust Studies, A Journal of Culture and History (Routledge): Tom Haward, Lecturer in Holocaust and History Education, Centre for Holocaust Education, University College, London

Reviews of *The Genocide Contagion* as a Text

This book is truly a *cri de coeur* – your concern that *all* life is sacred is a testimony to who and what you are. I do like the additions of the various quoted sources throughout and the exercises at the end, and I incorporate these when I teach my genocide course. **-Steven Jacobs, University of Alabama**

I've found the book to be incredibly useful in the two courses I teach on genocide and mass violence, especially when it comes to getting students to step into the shoes of the perpetrators and understand their motivations (however uncomfortable that may be).

As an instructor who has always stressed the importance of teaching history through role-playing, I think the immersion exercises offer an effective means of instilling students with a potent mix of empathy and revulsion, which in turn allows them to grasp why genocide occurs and how it can be prevented while simultaneously reacting to atrocities as any right-thinking person should. In that vein, the "minds-on" approach also makes it much easier to have them analyze these phenomena from a clear-headed perspective as opposed to getting bogged down in the tragic enormity of the events in question and resorting to empty explanatory clichés (i.e. "man's inhumanity to man").

In my estimation, *The Genocide Contagion* is particularly valuable because the learning exercises and independent studies provide an engaging counterpoint to victim narratives (important though these obviously are too), and students have repeatedly said as much in their teaching evaluations. **-Bradley J. Nichols, Ph.D., Department of History, Virginia Tech**

Endorsements of *The Genocide Contagion* (Book Jacket)

“Dr. Israel W. Charny, one of the pioneers of the field of genocide studies and an eminent psychologist, has produced yet another work that is insightful and thought-provoking. As this new book attests, Charny is a scholar with a sharp mind and a compassionate heart. The unique combination of true incidents, fictional scenarios, and exercises encourages readers to explore who they really are and to delve deeply into what they really think, believe, and feel about a host of critical and controversial issues germane to crimes against humanity and genocide. The learning exercises make the book a powerful read. If you are familiar with Charny’s work then you will rejoice at this new publication; if you aren’t, then welcome to a new intellectual and moving venture.”—**Samuel Totten, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; author of *Genocide by Attrition: Nuba Mountains, Sudan***

“While this book is at first glance an introductory text on genocide, it is at the same time much more than that. Israel Charny is one of the pioneers of genocide studies and a doyen in the field. Here he has asked (and answered) key questions regarding the psychological dynamics of those who commit genocide and those who collaborate with the murderers. But he goes further and looks carefully at those who say no when called upon to participate in the killing process. Charny seeks to look deep into the heart of heartlessness, with a view to identifying the evil that men and women do. This is a fascinating journey for which Professor Charny is to be commended.”
—**Paul R. Bartrop, Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University**

“In this thought-provoking and eclectic volume, Charny engages in an innovative conversation with his readers. Drawing on his own well-known work and that of several classic genocide studies scholars, he asks us to confront fundamental and difficult questions about ourselves: Could I be a bystander to genocide? Could I be a perpetrator?”—**Maureen S. Hiebert, University of Calgary**

Amazon Customer Review ★★★★★

It is a fascinating study that led me to me better understand the psychological mechanisms and processes that can lead to total evil. To the considerable scientific and political evidence the author presents, he also brings his extensive knowledge and experience as a clinical psychologist and family therapist. The result is fascinating. The book is well-written and kept me riveted from beginning to end. I particularly appreciated how the author is personally present in the book as a human being and not as someone who is above the human condition. **Highly recommended. -Z. Kemelman, MSW**