

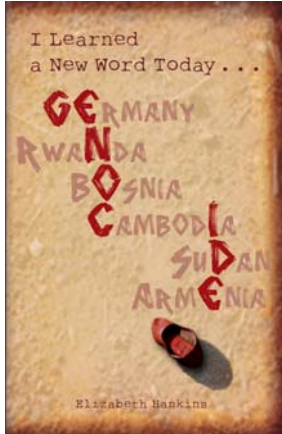


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Synopsis: Javier Mendoza has learned a new word and he doesn't like it. But as his fifth grade class explores the shocking history of countries ranging from Armenia to Sudan, Javier realizes that the past – and even the present – is telling him a story that he can't ignore. Then he overhears a conversation that triggers a mysterious chain of events at his school. Now Javier is faced with the reality that no one is immune from the consequences of genocide. And perhaps everyone has a responsibility to help end it – even Javier himself.

Endorsement: "*I Learned a New Word Today ... Genocide* is an example of the powerful way to educate our youth to become changemakers. The historical references to 20th century genocides, and the complex web of politics that surround the issue, are presented in a way that will help children understand that they too can play a role in the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities."

Sam Bell, Executive Director, Genocide Intervention Network www.genocideintervention.net

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- Morning Drive Radio Tour®
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I Learned A New Word Today ... GENOCIDE

Elizabeth Hankins

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Through the course of history, genocide has claimed millions of lives, wiped out entire villages, and destroyed cultures. One human rights activist – and a mother – has decided to do something about it. Meet Elizabeth Hankins, the author of a provocative new novel geared towards readers as young as 10 years old, *I Learned a New Word Today...Genocide*. Her hope is to educate and empower our nation's youth so that we can help defeat the ugly cycle of genocide.

Elizabeth, who was voted Volunteer of the Year by Aid Sudan, shares insight on the following:

- Why children, as early as fifth-grade, need to learn about genocide.
- How to teach them about the world's worst atrocities in an age-appropriate way.
- Showing our youth what they can do to prevent or stop genocide – or help its victims.
- Why educating American children about global events is important.
- How children, once informed, could educate their parents on genocide.
- What we need to know about the past century's most horrific genocides, including The Holocaust, Darfur, and others.
- Why the debate over teaching genocide to elementary school students should not be seen as any more controversial than teaching sex education or evolution in the classroom.

“What’s important to remember when discussing genocide with children is to keep the discussion age-appropriate. We don’t have to go into detail about the brutality specifics or to discuss something like rape,” says Elizabeth. “But they’ll understand people were killed, and hurt, that a whole group of people were targeted, and that genocide is not limited to one country or time period, and that they can and should help battle genocide.”

Throughout the book, children learn about:

- The Genocide Convention and the United Nations.
- New words such as impunity, extermination, witness, and justice.
- The causes of genocide.
- How each of us can do something to help and that we must take action.
- How each of us should see each other as human before we classify by race, religion, nationality or tribe.
- Why revenge is wrong and forgiveness is a key factor for healing.
- The genocide in America that nearly wiped out the Indians (Native Americans).

Perhaps one of the more challenging passages in *I Learned A New Word Today ... Genocide*, is when the question is raised about why doesn't God intervene when it comes to genocide. Another passage questions why world leaders or the U.N. haven't done enough to prevent



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or stop genocide. The book also debates the very issue of whether genocide should be taught in schools at such a young age.

Over the past century, millions of lives have been lost to genocide and tens of millions more have been displaced as a result. Elizabeth's book teaches readers about a half-dozen genocides from the past 100 years, including: Darfur and southern Sudan; Rwanda; The Holocaust; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cambodia; and Armenia.

Some of the take-away points sprinkled throughout the book can cause one to really ponder. A sample of the statements includes:

- “And when you make a whole history of somebody or some group go away, it is very hard to remember what you are not supposed to forget.”
- “Forgiveness just means that the person who was hurt decides that he or she will not hold hate and anger and a plan to get even in their heart.”
- “Do the thing that you can do.”
- “Real peace is more like having understandings between people and countries – and these understandings lead to safe communities where people are treated fairly no matter what they believe or what color their skin is or what language they speak.”
- “If genocide, an act of genocide or war crimes happen when a vast amalgam of minds and bodies are intent on destroying a race, religion, ethnicity or nationality, then anti-genocide must simply be the opposite,” says Elizabeth. “It can and must entail an immense coalescing of our time's greatest hearts and minds and wills – all directed at accomplishing whatever it takes to protect the innocent and maintain a just peace that includes stolid adherence to basic human rights.”

Certainly writing about genocide is not an easy task. Elizabeth remarks: “It was challenging to deconstruct the complicated architecture/anatomy of genocide – and then to create something that children could understand and care about. This *was* the most difficult thing – at a technical sort of level. But personally, what was most rending was studying in-depth the worst of man's inhumanity to man – the pictures, the articles, the books. Genocide wasn't new to me because of my work in southern Sudan. But the spectrum of genocidal acts and mass atrocities I researched and wrote about for this book was, at times, leveling. The dark creativity, the ghastly ways in which people were systematically destroyed is haunting – it stays with you. But what's even more arresting is pondering the defenselessness of the victims as they heard gas chambers slam to a close, as they marched to their deaths or killed their neighbors or watched their infants being slain before their own protracted sufferings and deaths got underway. What were their last thoughts? Was there a point where pain was so great and powerful, the administration of further torture couldn't register? Realizing these realities is a lot like holding your breath too long under water or looking at an eclipse. Except in this case, it's mind-smothering and soul-burning/blinding. All of us – we're human. So how is it we do these things to other humans?”



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Elizabeth Hankins

Biography

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Elizabeth Hankins is a human rights advocate and the author of a new book, *I Learned A New Word Today ... Genocide*.

She works closely with a number of humanitarian aid groups, including Aid Sudan, Living Water International, and ServLife International, where she's a member of the board of directors.

Her human rights advocacy work has been recognized by the United States Holocaust Museum and she was recently named 2008 Volunteer of the Year by Aid Sudan, honoring her advocacy and fundraising efforts. She is driven by the belief that every person can do something to help in the fight against human injustice, oppression, and extreme poverty.

Elizabeth participated in and/or hosted advocacy efforts through Save Darfur, Amnesty International USA, Genocide Intervention Network, and the ONE Campaign. She also writes literature and play scripts for schools and churches, helping to communicate the plight of some of the world's worst situations – poverty, disease, war, and genocide.

She has spoken at several universities and churches on the subject of genocide intervention and prevention, as well as the ongoing plight of Sudan. In 2007, she traveled to northern Uganda and southern Sudan. Seeing oil-rich southern Sudan devoid of even the most basic infrastructure (minimal access to clean drinking water, no health care and education systems, no basic roads), Elizabeth returned to the U.S. and began researching initiatives aimed at helping stem the flow of conflict resources.

Her prior book, *The Calling* (Toronto, The Key Publishing) also addresses genocide via a novel aimed at highlighting the decades-long plight in southern Sudan. Using themes of trust and betrayal, love and loss, faith and heresy and the many faces of war, human suffering and redemption, *The Calling* follows the evolution of a personal mission over the course of a lifetime.

Elizabeth, a native of New Orleans, worked in the energy industry for five years, part of which was spent as a corporate journalist and speech-writer. She switched gears in the early 90s and headed up a young family ministry at a local megachurch. Several years later she began consulting and writing for churches and other religious non-profits undergoing change.

She graduated from Houston Baptist University with a Bachelor of Science degree in English and psychology.

Elizabeth resides with her husband and children in Houston, Texas.