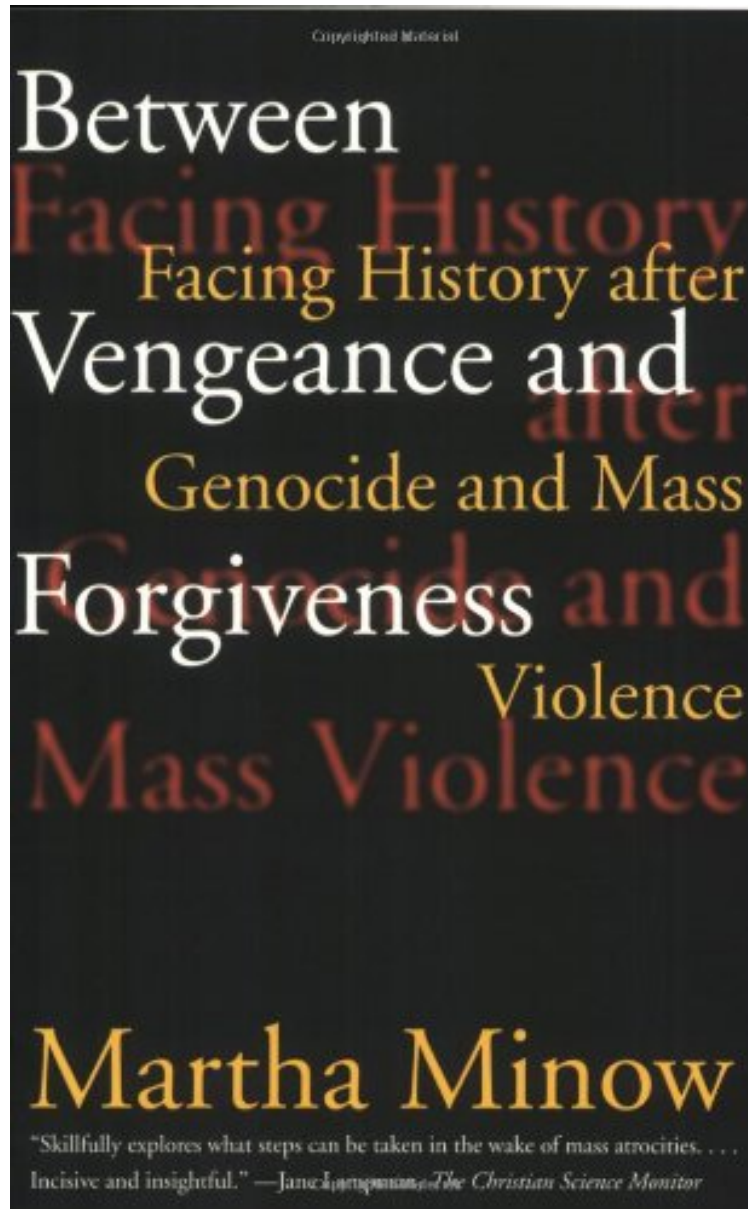


Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence

Martha Minow

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The rise of collective violence and genocide is the twentieth century's most terrible legacy. Martha Minow, a Harvard law professor and one of our most brilliant and humane legal minds, offers a landmark book on our attempts to heal after such large-scale tragedy. Writing with informed, searching prose of the extraordinary drama of the truth commissions in Argentina, East Germany, and most notably South Africa; war-crime prosecutions in Nuremberg and Bosnia; and reparations in America, Minow looks at the strategies and results of these riveting national experiments in justice and healing.

.com Although mass atrocities are not unique to the 20th century, organized response to such violence has taken new forms, some of which offer hope of some small redress to the victims of war and genocide. In the groundbreaking and timely *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Harvard Law School professor Martha Minow explores the benefits and drawbacks of a variety of forms of settlement. For those who have recoiled in horror and outrage at collective violence in Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia, and elsewhere, this book--with chapters titled "Trials," "Truth Commissions," "Reparations," and "Facing History"--is a primer on how the world, and individuals, might respond to such acts once the shock subsides. Minow resists the idea that compensatory measures such as war-crimes tribunals and financial payback can ever bring true closure for those who have suffered. "Legal responses," she writes, "are inevitably frail and insufficient." Nevertheless, Minow advocates addressing these atrocities in a formal way: "The victimized deserve the acknowledgment of their humanity," she asserts, "and the reaffirmation of the utter wrongness of its violation." -- Maria Dolan
From Kirkus sA leading legal scholar's judicious examination of our varied reactions to mass violence and their relative potential for healing people and nations. From the Holocaust to apartheid South Africa and Rwanda, 20th-century collective violence has challenged societies to deal with the aftermath. And Minow (*Law/Harvard; Not Only for Myself*, 1997) makes her own significant contribution to this effort by sketching out a "lexicon of potential responses to collective violence." Through a series of chapters highlighting specific forms of responses in their historical contexts, she formalizes a vocabulary for assessing the ways in which society is able or unable to deal with irreversible loss (and the emotional damage caused by large-scale violence). First she contemplates the possibility of bridging reactions of vengeance and forgiveness, raising one of her central arguments: the healing power of therapy for victims, bystanders, and even offenders. In further chapters, she discusses the history of war-crimes prosecution, focusing on the complex legacies of the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials following WWII, and reparations, drawing on the case of the US government and former Japanese-American internees. Minow's chapter on truth commissions proves to be the most engaging, given its timeliness amid the ongoing debates about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Citing the importance of direct personal narratives, she argues that when society prioritizes healing and the restoration of human dignity, a truth commission may serve better than a prosecution actually does. Her final chapter assesses the value of public monuments, educational programs, and amnesty. Some readers will feel frustrated by Minow's admitted "resistance to tidiness" in drawing conclusions and by her rationalized tightrope walk between the extremes of idealism and cynicism. But this is a mostly enlightening exploration of a thorny subject. (For another look at these questions, see Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness*, p. 1442.) -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. Skillfully explores what steps can be taken in the wake of mass atrocities. . . . Incisive and insightful. --Jane Lampman, *The Christian Science Monitor*"Compassionate and well-reasoned . . . Minow makes a convincing case for the restorative power of speaking about trauma." --Alexandra Starr, *Washington Monthly* "A deeply humane and empathetic argument." --Alice Kessler-Harris, *The Women's of Books*"Offers a remarkable analysis of a troublesome legacy." --Donald W. Shriver Jr., *The Christian Century*"In taking a closer look at the social and historical roots of genocide and mass violence, Minow recognizes that justice is a process, not an end. *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* is complicated, ambiguous, and deeply unsatisfying-exactly as it ought to be." --Nicholas Confessore, *The American Prospect*