

alienating parent who has a mental disorder that impedes his capacity to comply with court orders and counseling recommendations and can ultimately result in the loss of parental rights. In a few cases of severe PA, the alienating parent has kidnapped the child or children and moved them to jurisdictions that may be more favorable to that parent.

PA can be devastating for the parent who is the target of the alienation. The child's rejection of the target parent can be emotionally overwhelming. Although reunification therapy can be effective in some cases of mild to moderate alienation, the cost of such services is not covered by health insurance nor are the legal costs. Health insurance may cover some of the costs for treatment if the stress on the alienated child meets threshold criteria for a mental disorder. Parental alienation syndrome was proposed for inclusion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5).<sup>3</sup> Though unsuccessful, the effort illuminated gaps in the scientific literature that may inform future research and standardization of classification criteria for PA.

The book contains a thoughtful discussion about PA and allegations of sexual abuse, which must be investigated in a thorough, sensitive manner. An incorrect interpretation of the facts can have disastrous consequences for all parties. The discussion about reunification therapy includes a detailed chart that distinguishes between the roles of reunification therapists and court-appointed reunification monitors. The chart illuminates the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries and of not serving in dual roles. The importance of not exceeding the scope of one's training is also emphasized.

The legal and clinical literature is used to examine the history of PA. There is an argument made for admissibility of PA testimony, based on the *Frye*<sup>4</sup> and *Daubert*<sup>5</sup> standards. A summary of recent case law involving PA in North America suggests that some jurists are using mental health expert testimony to develop additional insight into these cases, and some appellate courts are cognizant of the complexity of these cases. Discussions that serve to educate attorneys and family court judges about litigating and adjudicating PA cases may be used by mental health professionals seeking to conceptualize their roles in these proceedings.

The book contains discussions of international perspectives on family law and PA and a discussion of Brazil's parental alienation law. A CD is included

that contains 500 case law citations from most North American states and provinces, a bibliography of more than 1,000 contributions to the medical and legal literature, key media articles on PA, and 25 sample motions.

This book, which advances efforts to establish consistency in terminology, classification of, and standards for PA, is a valuable resource for clinical and forensic mental health professionals and for legal and social service professionals and their trainees who work with children of divorce and their parents.

#### References

1. Isaacson W: Einstein: His Life and Universe. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2007
2. United Nations: Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: United Nations, 1989
3. American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013
4. *Frye v. United States*, 293 F. 1013 (D.C. Cir. 1923)
5. *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals*, 509 U.S. 579 (1993)

Cheryl D. Wills, MD  
Cleveland, OH

Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.

## **The Act of Killing: Chaos in Postcolonial Indonesia**

Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer. Co-directed by Christine Cynn (and numerous Indonesian partners and collaborators). Produced by Signe Byrge Sørensen. Distributed in the United States by Drafthouse Films. Released in the United States on August 31, 2012. 122 minutes.

*The Act of Killing* is a documentary film based on the massacre of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese and suspected Communists in 1965 and 1966. The action, however, takes place in the present and centers on the men who personally carried out the killings. The men, who are gangsters and paramilitary types, have remained in power.

The historical facts are no secret. A former Dutch colony, Indonesia was oppressed by Japan through World War II. Under the dictatorship of President Sukarno, military and Communist forces balanced precariously. His regime was toppled in the mid-1960s. In October, 1965, an organization with alleged ties to the political left assassinated six army

generals and took over some communication outlets, but ultimately failed in their attempt to put a revolutionary council in power. The Indonesian authorities blamed the attempted *coup d'état* on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).<sup>1</sup> In the following months, the Indonesian army proceeded systematically to eliminate known or suspected members of the PKI. The victims were mostly farmers and villagers. To legitimize the massacre further in the popular imagination, the army recruited “both people who had reason to fear communist power and people who wanted to establish clear anti-communist credentials in troubled times.”<sup>1</sup> With the aid of Western governments that supported military groups professing anticommunist ideologies, half a million to a million people were killed in less than a year.<sup>2</sup> In the process, villages were burned, women and children were raped, and citizens were tortured and terrorized. Compared with other Asian atrocities (for example, those committed by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia) the Indonesian killings received scant attention from the international community.

The film provides viewers with only a preface to these historical events, commonly known as The Indonesian killings of 1965–1966. It does not follow the usual formula of crafting a historical narrative, replete with interviews of survivors. Rather, the disturbing but effective format of the film lies in its use of serial interviews with the perpetrators of the killings and in asking them to reenact scenes of the killings. Filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer let them script the film based on a bizarre meld of reminiscence and gangster-movie theatricality. Thus, we see mass killers playing themselves and struggling to reconcile their acts.

The two main protagonists are Anwar Congo, an executioner, and Herman Koto, a gangster and paramilitary leader. The killers, as the documentary introduces them, recruit children, men, and women, who are instructed to cry and scream, as the killers reenact the attack on the villages. Between takes, these “actors,” some of whom witnessed the original carnage or lost relatives during the slaughter, laugh. We are left speculating as to whether their enjoyment is in response to Herman Koto’s delightful theatrics, such as when he assumes the role of a victim to demonstrate what he expects from them, or the simple naivety of being captured on camera. Still, the focus remains squarely on the killers and those who play the killers, not on those who play the victims. Her-

man Koto, seen sometimes in drag, boasts of raping girls, saying how it must have been hell for them, but that it was heaven for him. Anwar Congo proudly shows his skills by recreating his strangling technique. He is gracious enough to credit some of the Hollywood movies from which he learned useful interrogation tricks and the best torture techniques. As if to augment the already surreal depiction, interspersed are dissociated and dislocated musical segments of beautiful women, in colorful traditional gowns, dancing against paradisiac backdrops, reminding us that this is a region known in the West more for its beautiful resorts than for past atrocities.

The documentary includes a scene that references psychiatrists. Anwar Congo tells a co-perpetrator that his sleep is disturbed by the memories and nightmares of those he killed. His unempathic confidant tells him, “You feel haunted because your mind is weak.” He reassures Congo that these ghosts are weaker than they, “but if we feel guilty, it can destroy our insanity defense.” This former paramilitary’s advice is not all prose and mysticism, though; he recommends that Congo see a doctor. Congo bristles, saying it would equate him with those who are crazy. But his pal, who is beyond this stigma, reassures him: “No! Psychiatrists are not for crazy people.” They are “nerve experts” who can give “nerve vitamins” that can help resolve nightmares. Among the final scenes, we see Anwar Congo revisiting the space where he strangled many citizens (to minimize blood spillage), dry heaving as he appears to reject his sins.

While *The Act of Killing* does not concern itself with the devastating psychological impact of these killings on survivors, it does inspire one to investigate further. Robert Lemelson,<sup>3</sup> a cultural anthropologist specializing in transcultural psychiatry, conducted research in Bali and Java. He interviewed an “older man who had a complex relationship with a variety of spirit beings.” He disclosed “in hushed and fearful tones” that in 1965 he witnessed his family and other villagers being killed by paramilitary forces. This man, like other surviving victims and witnesses, were silenced by gag orders enforced by “surveillance, arrest, imprisonment and execution.” Lemelson’s research on the survivors resulted in his documentary *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy*.<sup>4</sup> The film follows members of four families, documenting their ongoing processing of the atrocities. In one sequence, a psychiatrist interviews a Javanese boy who had been

bullied and called “the commies’ kid,” but was barely cognizant of the reference.

*The Act of Killing* is a testament to the selective memory (or selective amnesia) with which atrocities are remembered and recorded in history. It implies that the world’s purported ignorance or indifference to the events unfolding in Indonesia between 1965 and 1966 was tantamount to collusion by inaction. The perpetrators have not been prosecuted and remain entrenched in positions of authority, allowing them to continue to persecute those who challenge their authority or raise questions about their past actions.

“Neither Truth nor Justice,” an article in *The Economist*,<sup>5</sup> reflects on the recent conviction and sentencing of two leaders of the Khmer Rouge for crimes committed from 1975 to 1979. The trial, which included an abundance of testimony and written evidence, lacked any admission of guilt by these men. The article states that many of those who were never brought to justice are now dead or demented; therefore, any relief that the current judicial process offers surviving victims is too little and too late. The article asks, “What’s the point of trying?” addressing a concern that trials for war crimes in Asia are frequently “staged” and “colored by politics.” One can also question which of the four purposes of imprisonment (retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation), if any, are met when the perpetrators come to justice years, or even decades, after committing their crimes. Yet, *The Economist* points out, “That nowhere in Asia yet seems to have achieved a form of justice that both imposes retribution and fosters reconciliation is no reason to stop looking for one.”<sup>5</sup>

Similar to our psychotherapeutic interventions for traumatized individuals, the healing of any society necessitates that we continue to uncover and at least acknowledge the brutality in state-inflicted violence, such as that which occurred in Indonesia. Future generations have a right to plural narratives of the past, not just the official and sanitized version of events propagated by state and media outlets, regardless of whether they choose to care. Sadly, the *New York Times*, reporting on the response in Indonesia to *The Act of Killing*, found that, “Despite the international press, the reaction in Indonesia has been muted. . . . Even the country’s independent Na-

tional Commission on Human Rights has been unable to make much headway in its attempts at accountability.”<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Indonesia has little in the way of psychiatric resources or mental health infrastructure. The widespread approach to mental illness and intellectual disability within many families has been to chain or cage the affected person, a practice known as *pasung*. This practice has recently been exposed in another documentary film, *Breaking the Chains*, by Australian academic Erminia Collucci.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the saddest part of the Indonesian atrocity is that it is still not recognized and “schoolchildren are still taught that the Communists brought the violence upon themselves by plotting to take over the country.”<sup>6</sup> History is written by the victors.

## References

1. Cribb R, Ford M: The killings of 1965–66: even now, Indonesians find it difficult to face the traumatic events of the past. *Inside Indonesia*. Originally published in Edition 99, January-March 2010. Reprinted in Edition 117, July-September 2014. Available at <http://www.insideindonesia.org/feature-editions/the-killings-of-1965-66/>. Accessed September 29, 2014
2. Robinson G: The post-coup massacre in Bali, in *Making Indonesia: Essays in Honor of George McT. Kahin*. Edited by Lev DS, McVey R. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) Publications, 1996, pp 118–43
3. Lemelson R: Refusing to Look Away: The Act of Killing and the Indonesian genocide of 1965. *Anthropology Now*. August 2, 2013. Available at <http://anthronow.com/online-articles/refusing-to-look-away-the-act-of-killing-and-the-indonesian-genocide-of-1965/>. Accessed September 29, 2014
4. Lemelson R: 40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy. Documentary film, 2009. See [www.elementalproductions.org](http://www.elementalproductions.org) for purchase options and related documentaries by Mr. Lemelson
5. Banyan [anonymous blogger]: Neither truth nor justice: efforts to confront Asian atrocities founder on the rocks of political expediency. *The Economist*, August 9, 2014. Available at <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21611106-efforts-confront-asian-atrocities-founder-rocks-political-expediency-neither-truth-nor/>. Accessed December 29, 2014
6. Cochrane J: ‘Act of Killing’ film fails to stir Indonesia. *New York Times*. March 1, 2014. Available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/asia/act-of-killing-film-fails-to-stir-indonesia.html?\\_r=0/](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/asia/act-of-killing-film-fails-to-stir-indonesia.html?_r=0/). Accessed September 29, 2014
7. *Breaking the Chains*. Erminia Colucci, Director. Documentary film, 2014. Viewed online by special permission of the filmmaker on September 23, 2014. Preview available at <http://movie-ment.org/breakingthechains/>

Solange Margery Bertoglia, MD  
 Kenneth J. Weiss, MD  
 Anish R. Dube, MD, MPH  
 Philadelphia, PA

Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.