Humanitarian sentiments have motivated a variety of manifestations of pity, from nineteenth-century movements to end slavery to the creation of modern international humanitarian law. While humanitarianism is clearly political, *Humanitarianism and Suffering* addresses the ways in which it is also an ethos embedded in civil society, one that drives secular and religious social and cultural movements, not just legal and political institutions. As an ethos, humanitarianism has a strong narrative and representational dimension that can generate humanitarian constituencies for particular causes. The emotional nature of compassion is closely linked to visual and literary images of suffering and innocence. Essays in this volume analyze the character, form, and voice of private or public narrative themselves and explain how and why some narratives of suffering energize political movements of solidarity, whereas others do not. *Humanitarianism and Suffering* explores when, how, and why humanitarian movements become broadly popular. It shows how public sentiment moves political and social elites to action and, conversely, how national elites appropriate humanitarian ideals for more instrumental ends.

Richard Ashby Wilson is Gladstein Distinguished Chair of Human Rights, Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Human Rights Institute at the University of Connecticut. He is the author or editor of numerous works on human rights, truth commissions, and international criminal tribunals, including *Maya Resurgence in Guatemala*, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, *Low Intensity Democracy, Human Rights, Culture and Context*, *Culture and Rights*, and *Human Rights in Global Perspectives*, and *Human Rights and the “War on Terror.”* He has been a visiting professor at the University of Oslo, Norway; the New School for Social Research; and the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He is a member of the Committee for Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association. In addition, he serves on the editorial boards of *Critique of Anthropology*, the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, the *Journal of Human Rights*, the *Journal of Transitional Justice*, and the *Journal of Social Justice*.

Richard D. Brown is a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of History and Director of the University of Connecticut Humanities Institute. He specializes in the cultural and political history of early America and is the author of *The Hanging of Ephraim Wheeler: A Story of Rape, Incest, and Justice in Early America* with Irene Quenzler Brown; *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650–1870*; *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865;* and *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760–1791*, among other works. Past President of the Society of Historians of the Early American Republic, he has held fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Social Science Research Council, and the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. Currently, he serves on the editorial board of the *New England Quarterly*. 
For Helene and Irene
Humanitarianism and Suffering

The Mobilization of Empathy

Edited by

RICHARD ASHBY WILSON
University of Connecticut

RICHARD D. BROWN
University of Connecticut
## Contents

*Contributors*  
page vii  

*Acknowledgments*  
ix  

*Introduction*  
1  

*Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown*

### PART I: HISTORIES AND CONTEXTS

1 *Mourning, Pity, and the Work of Narrative in the Making of “Humanity”*  
   Thomas W. Laqueur  
   31  

2 *Contemporary Humanitarianism: The Global and the Local*  
   David P. Forsythe  
   58  

3 *Humanitarian Reading*  
   Joseph R. Slaughter  
   88  

4 *Global Media and the Myths of Humanitarian Relief: The Case of the 2004 Tsunami*  
   Rony Brauman  
   108  

5 *Hard Struggles of Doubt: Abolitionists and the Problem of Slave Redemption*  
   Margaret M. R. Kellow  
   118  

6 *“Starving Armenians”: The Politics and Ideology of Humanitarian Aid in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century*  
   Flora A. Keshgegian  
   140
Contents

7 International Bystanders to the Holocaust and Humanitarian Intervention
   Michael R. Marrus
   156

PART II: NARRATIVES AND REDRESS

8 Victims, Relatives, and Citizens in Argentina: Whose Voice Is Legitimate Enough?
   Elizabeth Jelin
   177

9 Children, Suffering, and the Humanitarian Appeal
   Laura Suski
   202

10 The Physicality of Legal Consciousness: Suffering and the Production of Credibility in Refugee Resettlement
   Kristin Bergtora Sandvik
   223

11 “Can You Describe This?” Human Rights Reports and What They Tell Us About the Human Rights Movement
   Ron Dudai
   245

12 Financial Reparations, Blood Money, and Human Rights Witness Testimony: Morocco and Algeria
   Susan Slyomovics
   265

13 Remnants and Remains: Narratives of Suffering in Post-Genocide Rwanda’s Gacaca Courts
   Lars Waldorf
   285

Index
   307
Contributors

Rony Brauman, Associate Professor of Humanitarian Studies, Institut d’Études Politiques (Paris, France); Research Director, Médecins Sans Frontières (France)

Ron Dudai, Visiting Lecturer, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York (UK)

David P. Forsythe, Charles J. Mach Distinguished Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Nebraska (Lincoln)

Elizabeth Jelin, Senior Researcher, CONICET (National Council of Research) and IDES (Institute for Social and Economic Development) (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Margaret M. R. Kellow, Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Western Ontario

Flora A. Keshgegian, independent scholar, Providence, Rhode Island

Thomas W. Laqueur, Helen Fawcett Distinguished Professor, Department of History, University of California, Berkeley

Michael R. Marrus, Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor Emeritus of Holocaust Studies, University of Toronto

Kristin Bergtora Sandvik, SJD candidate, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts
viii Contributors

Joseph R. Slaughter, Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University New York, New York

Susan Slyomovics, Professor of Anthropology and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles

Laura Suski, Ph.D., Instructor, Sociology and Global Studies, Vancouver Island University (previously Malaspina University-College), Nanaimo, BC, Canada

Lars Waldorf, Director and Lecturer, Centre for International Human Rights, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London (UK)
Acknowledgments

This edited volume arises out of a conference on Humanitarian Narratives of Inflicted Suffering, co-organized by the Human Rights Institute and the Humanities Institute of the University of Connecticut, and held on October 13–15, 2006. Funding for the conference came from a five-year grant from the University of Connecticut Provost’s Competition, and we acknowledge the generous support of Provost John Petersen, Interim Provost Fred Maryanski, Provost Peter Nicholls, and Vice-Provost Suman Singha. We thank Dean Ross Mackinnon of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for his generous support of this teaching and research program. In thinking through the issues raised by our discussion of humanitarianism, we benefited greatly from conversations with Eleni Coundouriotis, David Forsythe, Wiktor Osiatynski, Nigel Rapport, and John R. Wallach. Human Rights Institute Administrator Rachel Jackson and Humanities Institute Administrator Jo-Anne Waide provided superb organizational skills during the conference and for the wider program. Copy editors Aaron Paterson, Katharine Hawkins, and Sally Nicholls showed meticulous attention to detail. Finally, thanks to John Berger, Senior Editor at Cambridge University Press, for his support and encouragement.