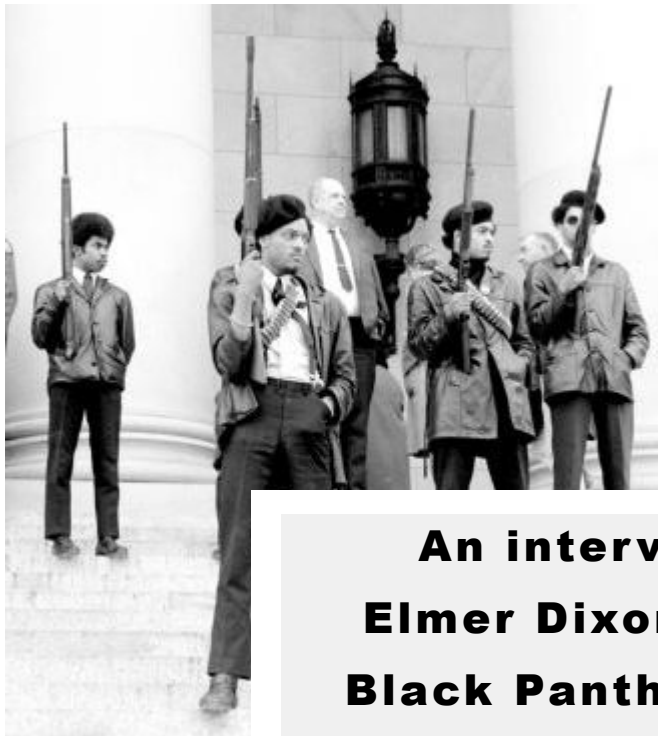
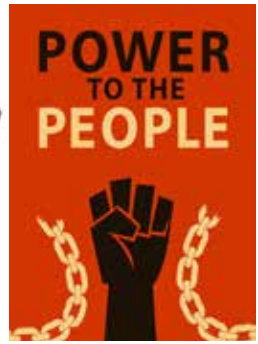
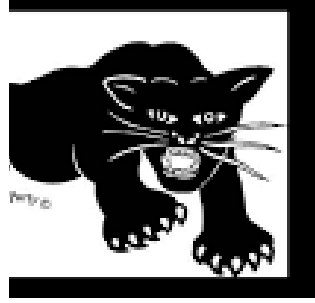


# SIETAR JOURNAL



## Black Panther Party

**An interview with  
Elmer Dixon, a former  
Black Panther militant,  
now an  
Interculturalist**



<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon <i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	3
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22



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# SIETAR Journal

## Editorial

### An atypical interculturalist

During the 1950s, the U.S. was characterized by material affluence and upward mobility. The Eisenhower years were a time of political moderation and conspicuous consumption where the only rebellion was sexual — Elvis Presley scandalizing America by thrusting his hips, James Dean and Marlin Brando melting hearts on-screen.

By the beginning of the '60s, however, the façade of tranquility began to show cracks. African-Americans rose up against segregation and institutionalized discrimination through non-violent protest and passive resistance. Martin Luther King, Jr. symbolized the Civil Rights movement and was, perhaps, the face of the American decade.

Elmer Dixon was growing up in middle-class Seattle, a well-adjusted, sensitive black teenager. He couldn't understand why the American ideals of equality and justice didn't apply to minorities and began to question the American way of life. Finally, anger propelled him join the radical Black Panther Party. His voyage from black revolutionary to diversity counsellor and intercultural trainer makes for a unique and fascinating story. We interview him on page 3.

Comic books are generally thought of as devoid of serious intentions, meant for children and young adolescents. But, if we look closely, some play a significant role in constructing our social and cultural perceptions. *Tintin*, for example



— the adventures of a young reporter and his dog. It was first published over 90 years ago, has been translated into 58 languages and remains wildly popular, three million books still sold every year. Ljiljana Simic examines the intercultural dimension of this Belgian icon, issues like colonialism, ethnocentrism and the construction of European identity. Begins on page 9.

Columnist Dan MacLeod takes a look at how obligatory respect for religious "rights" is usually a source for cultural wrongs. How we speak, how we're allowed to dress, but also the kind of science getting done and the medical care we're given. "Dogma". Page 12.

Again, we're approaching the holiday season and the SIETAR Europa Board wishes you all the best of year-end festivities and a successful start to 2016!

Patrick Schmidt, Editor-in-chief

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon <i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	3
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22



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# Elmer Dixon



## *From revolutionary to interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American*

**T**he American civil rights movement, which began in 1954, strove to end racial segregation and discrimination against blacks through non-violent protest and civil disobedience. Southern whites, including local and state police, answered with guns, clubs and bullwhips. Dozens of innocent people were murdered, thousands were injured, and the U.S. government was ultimately forced send in federal troops to protect the protestors. New laws were passed in the mid-'60s to desegregate schools, ensure voting rights and end discrimination in housing and employment but little actually changed.

In 1966 the Black Panther Party proposed a more militant approach: to demand, not ask, for equal rights. The California-based group instituted community programs, such as community health clinics and free breakfasts for children, while directly confronting police brutality by openly carrying shotguns.

Elmer Dixon — a well-adjusted, middle-class teenager — helped launch the Seattle chapter of the Black Panthers. His voyage from black revolutionary to intercultural trainer makes for an extraordinary interview.

### ***What were some of the childhood experiences that led you to become a Black Panther?***

When you have experiences growing up, you don't know

where they're leading but, looking back, you see how they influenced your life. I probably wasn't conscious of what was going on in the '50s because of my age. Also, I lived in a neighborhood that was about as diverse as it could get, with kids that were Latino, Asian, black, white, rich, poor. My life was as normal as anyone else's and I had friends from all persuasions. In fact, my two closest friends were white.

But at some point I became very aware of what was going on because my family would watch the evening news together after supper. You couldn't go a day without seeing the Freedom Marches in the South, the savage assault on peaceful demonstrators at the Pettus Bridge in Alabama, the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church where four young girls were killed. There was also what was told to me of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago accused of flirting with a white woman in Mississippi in 1955. He was beaten, his eyes were gouged out, then he was shot in the head and his body thrown in the river. The men who did it were acquitted of all charges.

All those things I remembered, as well many discussions with my parents. But through all of that, my parents respected people for who they were, not because of skin color. As a result, they had black friends, white friends, Jewish friends.

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon <i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	3
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Elmer Dixon

— *continued*



*Elmer Dixon grew up in a middle-class suburb of Seattle, a city in the northwestern part of the USA.*

***From what you're telling me, you were a well-adjusted boy but, exposed to the daily injustices done to blacks, you became a radical leader. Is that what happened?***

My generation was one step beyond the Civil Rights movement, which focused on the Jim Crow laws in the southern states. And living in Seattle, we didn't experience a lot of the overt racism in big cities like New York or Chicago.

My transformation came when I was 16. Stokely Carmichael, head of the *Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee*, came to my high school to speak. I remember very vividly him saying that one of the problems challenging black people was the fact that they didn't love themselves. You were conditioned to think that everything black was bad.

Shortly afterward, I tried to form a Black Student Union at school and the principal refused. We called for a boycott of classes. The administrators didn't think anybody was going to boycott apart from a handful of blacks, who were seen as agitators. What they failed to recognize was that most of the students — black, white, Latino, Asian — had known us since grade school. No one went to class. The school had to concede and we created the first Black Student Union on the West coast.

When the Black Panther Party emerged, it became a lightening rod. The *Civil Rights Act* had been passed but people

were still being murdered. Conditions in black communities were getting worse. Young people were fed up.

When we started the Seattle chapter, we wanted to give our lives to the struggle. We knew we were going to be attacked. I never thought I'd live beyond the age of 25. I was, in fact, head of security and provided protection to key members and I had to have security myself because my life was in danger.

A lot of people failed to recognize it but the reason we openly carried arms was not to attack the United States but because we were attacked by forces within the United States: racists, racist cops, racist institutions that denied us health care, decent housing and education. We were going to demand those things and defend ourselves in the process.

***Your story touches on the notion of destiny — it seems your becoming an insurgent was less a rational decision than an unconscious, emotional reaction, letting your desire for justice take you wherever it took you, even if it meant getting killed.***

Well, to me it was a rational decision. You might say I was predestined to take this radical path. Black power became a dominant force. The number one song at that time was James Brown's "*Say It Loud — I'm Black and I'm Proud*".

If you look back, you see all the films and cartoon images that

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon <i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	3
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Elmer Dixon

— continued

*Black Panther Party Members on the steps of the Capitol Building, Olympia, Washington, February 1969. Elmer Dixon is standing in the middle up front.*



made fun of blacks. So it was natural for us to be proud we had black skin and hair that was different, nappy in its natural form.

***I've read that the Black Panthers did some good things, such as launch health clinics and the children's breakfast program...***

We had over 30 programs here in Seattle. We provided 2000 kids with a hot breakfast every day. We started a free medical clinic which is still running today, a free food program, free clothes program, a free summer youth school. We did a lot of things that most people are unaware of, unless they were the recipients.

***What led to your downfall?***

The thing that destroyed us was the FBI's counter-intelligence program, planting informants within the group. In fact, one of my bodyguards was a paid informant who contributed to a trumped-up charge that I stole a leather jacket. I was sentenced to six years in prison but got out after serving 14 months. I was fortunate; some party members spent years, even decades, in prison. One member, Alfred Woodfox, just got out of prison last week, after spending 42 years in solitary confinement for a crime he didn't commit.

When the Black Panthers fell, I and others took over the programs and ran them under the auspices of Sydney Miller Community Services. We rebuilt the clinic and today it's a

family medical center. I ran the community center for six years. I also worked for a company called *Amway* which taught me the power of believing, visualizing one's dreams and how to think positively about things.

Then I went to work for the Seattle Parks Department. When I was hired, the director took one look at me and said, "I remember when you came into my office with shotguns." As a way of getting back at me, he gave me two jobs — training manager and the Equal Employment Opportunity officer. I was in charge of recruiting women for non-traditional positions such as carpenters, electricians, plumbers and truck drivers. I was responsible for recruiting them and also for protecting them from sexual harassment.

This caught the attention of two women at *Executive Diversity Services*, Donna Stringer and Linda Taylor, who offered me a position as a trainer.

***What are some of the diversity activities you do today?***

First, let me clear up the big misconception of what diversity training is. Once the *Civil Rights Act* was enacted, there was a need to work effectively together. The approach was anti-discrimination, holding people accountable, telling them "Here's what you must do." While that was going on, a small number of consultants saw diversity management as creating an environment inclusive of differences, understanding the cultural

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Elmer Dixon

— *continued*

*A core challenge police officers now face is responding appropriately to people in conflict.*

nuances that impact our ability to communicate and helping people see the foundations of misperception and conflict.

***So your work draws its concepts from cognitive psychology, the “mental software” behind people’s thoughts and actions.***

Yes. It’s the brain and what the brain does with its understanding of cross-cultural differences. We look at diversity from a broad perspective, not just what we call “protected groups” according to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or age. We emphasize the broader picture of cultural difference and minimize the opportunity for harassment and discrimination. Our goal is to create inclusion.

For example, I’ve developed a training program for police officers using Mitch Hammer’s *Intercultural Concept Inventory* to help make them aware of their internal biases and what happens when people are in conflict across different communities. It’s a program that gets to the core challenges police officers face. When people are in conflict, they respond from their cultural norm. White police officers are largely using a style that’s almost the exact opposite of the cultural communities they operate in. It’s what you call culture competence, understanding other cultures as well as your own.

I once had a client who had an employee with a severe disability. She wanted us to do anti-harassment training but I told



her we don’t do that. What we do is help people understand culture in its broadest form, which includes disabilities, and lay the foundation for a more respectful workplace, thereby preventing harassment from happening in the first place. She said that was exactly what her company wanted.

Diversity training is really about creating inclusive environments. People don’t necessarily know what to call it. Over the years, they’ve been coming up with new terms, like “culture dexterity”, “culture agility”, “culture humility”. The reality is that they’re just rehashing the same thing over again.

***Turning to another topic, people in the U.S., as well as all over the world, are becoming more conscious of the injustices depicted by films, such “American X” or “12 Years a Slave”. But does this increased consciousness really generate change?***

It’s interesting you mentioned “12 Years a Slave”. It was an excellent film, not only because it was a true story but because it gave a vivid portrayal of what life was like during those times. And, for most people in the U.S., that’s not new information. But while the film sheds some light on an important point in history, I don’t think the film causes one to do anything, at least not in the U.S.

People watch it and say, “Boy, that’s terrible the way it was then, but that’s not happening now.” And I look at the condi-

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Elmer Dixon

— *continued*

*Public institutions are not properly addressing the needs of people who need extra education or social assistance.*



tions that exist now—not only in black communities, also in Latino and poor white communities — and the same things we were fighting for and against back in the '60s and '70s are the very same things that are going on today. Public institutions are not properly addressing the needs of people who need extra educational or social assistance. People don't want to see reality.

I just signed a contract where my main role is to facilitate a task force put together to address the disproportionate number of incarcerated black and Latino youth. Part of my work is to help communities recognize different cultural ways, such as how they respond to meeting notifications and what they do in meetings.

The fascinating thing is that — and this is all across the U.S. — the number of youth in incarceration has been dropping consistently over the last five or six years but the percentage of blacks and Latinos has increased three fold! There was recently a big uproar over the discipline rates of blacks and Latinos in schools, often called the *school-to-prison pipeline*. It's like we've come full circle; we're back where we were in the first place.

***Your thoughts touch on Donald Trump. His outrageous statements seem to have a strong attraction among disoriented, frustrated white Americans who don't understand the needs of minorities. With his billions, he pro-***

***jects this notion of winner-take-all power and anybody who shows empathy toward outside groups is a "loser" who "doesn't have a clue about life." In my opinion, he's appealing to primal, tribal feelings, not rational, civilized discourse. Your comments?***

I go back and forth asking myself if this guy is real or not. Is he purposely saying these stupid things to make the Republican Party look bad or is he really that disgusting? Regardless of whether he's for real or not, what's undeniable is he's been leading the Republican polls from the beginning. He's pulled all these divisive ideas out of the woodwork. The other Republican candidates don't know how to deal with him.

That's the sad and scary part, the extent to which many people hold those same ideas. They see nothing wrong with what he's saying. What I suspect is that a lot of people hold those same views but they don't say so because they don't want others to know they feel that way. It's an interesting situation as we prepare for the first elections after our first black president, who has by far been the most attacked president in the history of the U.S.

But Donald Trump in no way represents mainstream American thinking. I think the majority of Americans are level-headed, honest, caring people. And this is what I want to help bring forth—the good side of people — and make the U.S. and the world a better, more equitable place.

*Interview conducted by Patrick Schmidt*

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland



Click below for the video of Sandra Bland's arrest:

<http://www.executivediversity.com/#!/Video-of-Sandra-Blands-Arrest/c1po3/2>

by Elmer Dixon

The arrest and death of Sandra Bland last July in Texas is the latest episode in a string of horrifically brutal and too-often tragic encounters between law enforcement officers and Black people captured on video for the world to see and judge. Many have expressed outrage over what they see as a pattern of racism, overly aggressive tactics and systematic abuse of people of color.

But is that the only explanation for a series of troubling scenarios being played out live and in color in a multimedia driven society? Or are there other causes that lie beneath the surface of our perceptions that play a role in the inter-actions between two individuals from different cultural backgrounds?

When one examines the differences in the way we communicate and respond to conflict there are several, not so subtle, ways for us to misinterpret one's responses as hostile or uncaring. Research shows that a large percentage (55-88%) of Black and Latinos tend to communicate in expressive and feeling-based styles that are often misinterpreted by Whites as emotional and irrational. Whites (55-88%) tend to communicate in matter of fact, non-emotive, monotone styles that can be misinterpreted by Blacks and Latinos as non-caring and in your face.

Add this to what happens when we are in conflict and our "culturally learned" responses to challenging situations, and it's easy to see where breakdowns often occur. Dr. Mitch

Hammer, creator of the Intercultural Conflict Inventory (ICS) says states that conflict involves two elements." First, conflict arises when we disagree with one another and is more than a misperception or misunderstanding. Second, conflict gives rise to affective or emotional reactions." This can heighten stress, anxiety, frustration, anger and even fear".

While there are many variables one thing is clear, our responses to conflict are different enough that our reactions to each other can lead to distrust and even volatility. These differences in response can often put the two on a direct path for confrontation. On the one hand, when an individual using an emotionally restrained style sees emotion, their trust goes down and their anxiety level rises. And when the other individual is using an emotionally expressive style sees little or no emotion coming from the other person, their trust level goes down and their anxiety rises. Couple all of this with our unconscious bias affecting how we perceive one another and the stage is set for a potential volatile and even deadly confrontation.

Whether or not one believes Ms. Bland committed suicide or was murdered once she got to the jail, one must examine the events leading up to her arrest for a simple traffic infraction and her eventual incarceration and subsequent death and ask, "How could this have been prevented?" and "Could cultural differences have played a role and to what extent?"

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22



# The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics:

## *The case in Tintin*

by Ljiljana Simic

In the field of cultural studies, representation is regarded as a constitutive image of value, meaning and knowledge. Various theories in the social field claim that cultural representations, such as comics, influence the way people perceive reality.

As entertainment products, comics may seem devoid of serious intentions, but paradoxically they play a role in the construction of social or cultural perceptions — especially in Belgium or France where comics since the 1930s have been widely read. Thus, it would be interesting to consider how Belgo/French comics dealt with issues such as colonialism, ethnocentrism and the construction of European identity.

To what extent comics influenced their readers and played a role in the construction of social representations may remain difficult to measure objectively, but this research will try to show that these popular culture products offered a particular, but not always consistent intercultural view on national identities. This article will focus on the cultural stereotypes found in the comic strip Tintin.

### ***Tintin - its intercultural dimension***

The Tintin comics became popular throughout the mid-twentieth century and is still a subject of interest in the media, education and popular culture. The adventures of the young reporter Tintin and his dog, who travelled the world, has



been translated into 58 languages and three million books are sold every year. The comic has survived various political regimes, a world war, changing consumer tastes and accusations of racial stereotyping and colonialism. Movie, TV, radio, books and theatrical adaptations and exhibitions have continuously kept the cult of Tintin alive.

The story of this comic is at the same time the story of its author. Hergé was born in 1907 in Brussels, as a son of Walloon father and Flemish mother. The author often said that he felt like a 'synthetic Belgian', referring to disputes between residents of the two Belgian communities. His work of Tintin and Milou first appeared as a comic strip in 1929 in a Belgian Catholic newspaper. The early stories had basic drawings and a few stereotypes. The first, *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* (1929) is example of anti-communist propaganda and *Tintin in the Congo* (1930) is a reflection of the colonial values in those days. His first comics were quite naive by today's measure. They highlight certain prejudices about Russians and African people, adhering to the stereotypes of his time.

Hergé introduced a style known as clear lines - '*ligne claire*'. It is characterized by lines of equal thickness, with no particular emphasis on individual objects or characters. Combining caricature drawings, when it comes to characters with realistic backgrounds, provides a very simple drawing, but

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Comics... — continued

*The prevailing colonist's attitude  
in the Congo during the 1930s.*



at the same time, a nice and easy story to follow. The drawing is usually very dynamic, which contributes to the realism, as you would experience in the movement of film.

When writing a story, we can also see the beginnings of documentary approach, a contribution to the development of the 9th art. Tintin is a cultural testimony, a time machine through the twentieth century — moving from Stalin's Soviet Union, through the colonial Congo to the United States, meeting with Al Capone and his gangsters, then dealing with smugglers of opium in India and attending the Japanese seizure of Manchuria, travelling through South America, Scotland. He would later find the secret city of the Incas, land on the moon before Nil Armstrong, work with a South American dictator and all this without repetitiveness, which is one of the greatest comic values.

### ***Tintin - geopolitical dimension and human rights***

While Belgium was under German occupation during the Second World War, Tintin was published in *Le Soir*, a pro-Nazi paper. *The Shooting Star*, first published in 1941, had a stereotypical Jewish villain, a wealthy industrialist called Blumenstein.

Some of the themes in Tintin resonate with human rights. For example, *The Red Sea Sharks* (1956) highlights the modern slave trade. In *Tintin and the Picaros* (1975), Tintin helps his friend General Alcazar regain power. The rebel

Picaros are supported by the International Banana Company, an ironic sign to the role of multinational fruit exporters in Latin American unrest. Democracy is not necessarily promoted in the comics. Hergé tackled racism in *The Blue Lotus* (1934), particularly when Tintin and his young friend Chang laugh at the ridiculous racist stereotypes ascribed to Chinese people.

There was also acknowledgment of the mistreatment of indigenous people in *Tintin in America* (1931) when they are pushed off their lands by oil speculators. Finally, Hergé highlighted the racism suffered by the Romas in *The Castafiore Emerald* (1961), who are forced to live on a garbage dump and are automatically accused, wrongly and without evidence, of theft. Hergé was not immune from employing racist stereotypes himself. For example, the Japanese in *The Blue Lotus* fare very badly.

*Tintin in the Congo* largely reflected the contemporary racist attitudes and paternalistic conception of colonialism. When Tintin travels to the Congo, it is not as a reporter; he goes as a colonialist, more often referred to as a missionary. And there you find how the Belgium view geography. In one episode, Tintin is teaching Congolese pupils the geography of their country — Belgium. It was the symbolic act of denying people their right of identifying their land as independent.

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Comics... — continued

*Tintin's somewhat naive view  
of the American Indian.*



Tintin may have rather simplistic story lines, but the underlying political commentary was highly controversial. The criticism of Tintin revolves around too much violence, racial stereotyping of non-Europeans and colonialism. Hergé's stereotypical imagery of Africans in *Tintin in the Congo* is undeniable. The colonialist themes were a simple reflection of pre-war Europe at the time. Because of the number of damaging black stereotypes, there was an attempt in 2014 to have the book banned in Belgium. The main argument was that the book was full of negative racist attitudes that could still have an impact on children who read it today. However, the Belgian court rejected claims of racism. Likewise, there was an attempt to have the comic banned in France, but it also failed.

While *Tintin in the Congo* may seem to reflect the values of its time, the same excuse is not easily applied to *The Red Sea Sharks*. Tintin hijacked a ship engaged in the slave trade — criminals who have tricked African Muslims into boarding with a promise of transport to Mecca. While the comic may have good intentions, the Africans are portrayed as naive in need of the help of white men. Every Tintin comic portrays its white hero as smarter than everybody else.

Women are almost absent from Tintin's world. Alcazar's wife in *Tintin and the Picaros* shows a classic misogynistic stereotype. The only major female character in the Tintin se-

ries is in *Bianca Castafiore*, a domineering opera star, who drives Tintin's best friend Captain Haddock mad with her demanding self-centeredness and irritating affections. The absence of women can be understood by the fact that the author was, as a boy, a Catholic scout and there weren't many females in the scout movements at that time.

Despite the criticism, by understanding Tintin and other characters facial expressions, body gestures and costumes we can clearly see how the story was a reflection of the society. This means that the cartoonist helps interpreting a political situation by comparing it with another, more familiar situation. Thus, the racist, sexist or other discriminatory portrayals of people were not deemed offensive when the cartoon was originally published. We have to take this cultural context into consideration.

In this regard, the Tintin books are a masterpiece chronicle of the last century. The comic addressed the rise of the USSR, colonialism, organized crime, capitalism, the prelude to Second World, racism, multinational corporations, the modern slave trade, the fight for control of oil, and even the media obsession with celebrity. From a historical point of view, the comic directly reflected popular beliefs and values of the time. And it reminds us of the unconscious feelings of the readers, who were not offensively targeted in the comic strip.

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Reporter's Sketchbook

...an American in Montreal

# Dogma

by Dan MacLeod

Michelle Obama refused to cover her head in Saudi Arabia.



A friend of mine once told me about visiting a friend of his from college. They'd been close as students, even worked together after graduating, and had kept in touch ever since. "But now he's a Born-again Christian. At one point I said 'Jesus' and he asked me not to 'curse' in his house. We've known each other for 40 years but suddenly I have to act differently, everyone has to act differently."

A year or two later my friend returned to the U.S. and, as always, visited his old buddy. I asked if he'd managed not to say any "bad words" this time and he told me, matter-of-fact, "Oh, that's not a problem anymore, he's back to being himself."

...

It's not only the *passing-fancy* aspect of it — not just the obligatory respect due a sudden new set of social laws — but also the inherent accusation. Demanding everyone change their behavior as the price of interaction is a *de facto* way of getting people to accept a world-view they don't espouse. It's an automatic rejection of everyone else's customs and beliefs, a dismissal of all "others" as miscreants \*. But it's proposed as cultural self-defense.

Making Western women wear head-scarves in Muslim countries comes to mind. Often they're not tourists but invited guests-members of political, business, academic delegations. They are nonetheless made to appear to endorse a practice almost all of them find degrading. Not everyone can be Michele Obama.

\* *miscreant: non-believer, sinner, criminal*

In Canada, in the U.S., in England and elsewhere, we allow these sorts of social anachronisms even if we disagree. Free speech means free expression means you can wear what you want when you're not at work.

When we started seeing veils in Montreal, it reminded me of how women had to wear hats in church when I was a kid. It seemed extreme to have to cover your head in public too but, even then, it made think of the ridiculous "penguins" of my Boston childhood, covered from head to toe except the face, nuns.

And that's the thing, I think of it as simply that: ridiculous. On the wrong side of history, as they say. The kind of cultural oddity destined to disappear in a generation or two, soon to be seen only in old photos.

It's like, in high school in 1975, seeing a Jewish kid wearing a *yar-mulke* on the bus, I'd think, "Poor bastard...His parents must be hell." Then, "Ah, he'll be off to college in a year or two and he'll be free."

We started seeing veils in Montreal in the late 1990s — migration from the Middle East and North Africa — and my girlfriend immediately objected to the message it sent to young *Québécoises*. If tolerated in the classroom, it meant schoolmates of theirs could be visibly bound by religious rules that went against our own democratic values. A winning argument, as far as I was concerned, and one I adopted.

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Dogma...

— *continued*

*For the "New York Times", Justin Trudeau represents an "antidote to cynicism in Canada".*



I still thought of kids as transitory, soon-to-be-free if they'd but move away or otherwise rebel once they became adults. Except Montreal isn't Boston and Canada's "cultural mosaic" could allow this kind of custom to implant itself, to become accepted, as opposed to melting in the American fashion.

In the end, it's the annoying price of democracy, to respect the rights of people you don't agree with.

...

It is, in fact, the main reason why Stephen Harper's government — playing on fear and racialism — recently fell to Justin Trudeau's "sunny ways" (a variation on Abraham Lincoln's "our better angels", coined by former Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier in 1895).

Canada's Conservatives adopted what's called the "dead cat strategy", throwing an object which can't be ignored onto the table in the middle of a discussion (i.e., election campaign). In this case, the Muslim veil which covers all but the eyes. A woman went to court for the right to wear the *niqab* while being sworn in as a citizen. The government could have changed the "rules of dress" for these ceremonies and banned it. Instead, they waited for the Supreme Court to rule in her favor and made the spectre of Sharia law a central election issue.

Justin Trudeau's father, Pierre, was a social-democrat and a champion of minority rights — he saved francophone communi-

ties outside Quebec from assimilation — but Trudeau père was a Jesuit-trained Cartesian and a snob. "Justin" is more egalitarian and a lot more Zen in his preference for consensus over conflict. He intuitively embraces the separation of powers and champions minority rights in part by letting the structure of government do the work, especially the judicial branch.

Harper's Conservatives, on the other hand, spent the past five years attacking the Supreme Court with a nastiness, a crassness and a vehemence never before seen in the country's history. Not exactly the sign of a healthy Executive and, even more, *very un-Canadian*.

This is no accident. Since the election of George W. Bush in 2000, the Conservatives have increasingly relied on Republican strategists, think-tanks and PR firms based in Washington. And the Canadian petroleum industry, attacking the science of global warming, has relied on the same people who once defended American tobacco companies against the science of cancer.

...

Dogma. A form of blinding. Self-blinding but mostly an attempt to blind others.

Harper got his start in the petroleum industry and, once he gained power, the Canadian economy became eggs-in-one-basket dependent on the fate of the Alberta's "oil sands" (known as "tar sands" by everyone but Conservatives).

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Dogma... — continued

*International aid often reflects donor culture rather than local needs.*



One of the first things he did was tear up the Kyoto agreement; overnight Canada went from being a progressive environmental force to a “global scourge”, singled out for derision at international conferences. And the Minister of Science and Technology refused to answer science questions on faith-based grounds. Asked if he believed in evolution, he said “I’m a Christian and I don’t think it’s appropriate to ask me questions about my religion.”

As far as scientists, they haven’t been allowed to give interviews or, in fact, speak publicly about anything for several years now. What Bush did in the U.S., Harper did a few years later *à la canadienne*. Anything concerning climate change, for example, was no longer funded. Research in all sciences, including socio-economics, was cut drastically and, in the case of the latter, national statistics became non-scientific, legally non-existent.

*Statistics Canada* had been, for decades, an internationally-reputed source of information for journalists, sociologists, medical doctors, jurists, historians et al. Then the Harper government banished the long-form census as an invasion of privacy and *Statistics Canada’s* statistics were no longer viable. Things like poverty-versus-ethnicity, monoparental family nutrition, aboriginal mortality rates.

Anti-science, at its core — religious aversion to verifiable fact — but mostly convenient when slashing social programs. Obviously discriminatory, incredibly cynical. *Poison the information, then demand proof*. Sounds like Putin but Made in the U.S.A.

And the American influence was especially evident in the arrogant way it was carried out: adopting the voluntary short-form was touted as being the Chief Statistician’s idea. (He resigned in protest. Nothing changed.)

...

Harper also championed himself as a strong advocate for women’s health in the Third World and Canada has spent a lot of money on clinics in Africa. Except that all the money — all that internationally-applauded, *pro-women* effort — was contingent on abortion not being practiced, not even talked about. These are women who’ll perform coat-hanger surgery on themselves if they don’t get help. Yet Evangelical white people thousands of miles away consciously place them in mortal danger and put their (often monoparental) families at risk at the same time.

Just like in the Bush years in those same countries. He too was a champion of Third World women’s health — U2’s Bono praised his work in Africa — but the caveat was, as always, no discussion of abortion under any circumstances.

Just like today, in Texas and in half of the states in the U.S. Economically-deprived women, usually “colored”, aren’t treated according to the standard protocols operant in the rest of the Developed World — religion trumps medicine. Even when the patient is not of that religion. Especially so.

Cultural self-defence. Non-believers beware.

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Addendum

“Le vice le plus désespérant étant celui de l’ignorance qui croit  
tout savoir et qui s’autorise alors à tuer.”

*Albert Camus*

I sent the final version of “Dogma” — the three pages you just read — at 6:37 p.m. (Montreal) on Nov. 13th, then saw I’d received an e-mail four minutes earlier.

*“Turn on your tv. Paris again.”*

On the news, a concert hall, a restaurant and a café, six separate locations altogether. Between 120 and 140 dead.

I used to live in Paris, lived there nearly two years.

Mostly I lived in the *XVIIIe*, a largely Arab district. My friends were Algerian *Kabils*. They look and sound like Arabs but, in fact, were conquered by them, don’t speak the same language and don’t like them. When they go home to visit, they refuse to speak Arabic with the officials who check their passports, speak French to them instead.

But now, in France, mistaken for Arabs as always, their lives will become even harder. Collateral damage in the culture wars.

I also lived in the *XIIIe*, in a “*vieille France*” neighborhood: cafés filled with middle class white people with red noses happily drinking wine and gossiping, debating, joking, even singing — good-hearted people...

The hurt. The decimation of their city, profanation of their history, negation of their *liberté, égalité, fraternité* culture...

I watched for 25 minutes, then wrote the friend who’d just e-mailed me:

*I’m thinking of all my friends there, and the way it’s going to be there from now on... They not only kill people, they poison a city, change it’s history...*

“Non-believers beware” were the last two words of the piece I’d sent less than half an hour earlier. Specifically, I was referring to Evangelical abortion policy in Black Africa but all fanaticisms are the same, in their essence.

The next day, ISIS proclaimed victory over “non-believers”, called the victims of the theatre-shooting “pagans gathered for a concert of prostitution and vice.”

— *Dan MacLeod*

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Migrant Initiatives

*1. A field report by Mirka Molnár  
 former member of the SIETAR Europa Board*

*2. JAMK United for Refugees  
 JAMK University for Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä, Finland*



Photo: Patrick Kingsley

**1.** It is Autumn 2015. Many Slovak people are looking with concern at our doorsteps where thousands of migrants from Middle East (Syria) are marching towards what they hope will be a safer life in Europe. As countries are closing their borders one after another, the crowds of migrants are forced to explore new routes to get to Europe, in particular to Germany. Slovak society is still quite monocultural, so this phenomenon of immigration is new and troubling to many.

Nowadays the official position of our government is negative: the country is willing to accept only a fraction of what it actually is able to host in terms of our infrastructure and population, and they are looking exclusively for Christians. In contrast to the official positions of the Slovak government, the public is organizing itself to find ways to provide assistance that the government is not supplying. Collections of money, clothes and medication are being organized around Slovakia. Companies are donating non-financial gifts, and hundreds of volunteers are traveling to refugee collection centers, which are now on the Serbian-Slovenian borders to assist the migrants on site.

Large NGOs have been doing their job and often much more, but now smaller communities are also organizing themselves to help. For example, the community of a small protestant Church, which I attend, took the decision to proactively seek opportunities to contribute. Our first task each day is to identify where refugees are concentrated at the moment. Volunteers meet in our church's

kitchen to cook warm food in large quantities for refugees. This food is delivered to refugee camps near Slovak borders. Other aid efforts are being shipped to Serbia and Croatia, where the refugees are concentrated. We organized financial and non-financial collections. We see that the most urgent task to help those on the road, but we soon realized that we should actually be preparing for people who, in fact, will settle in Slovakia as well as those who have already begun building their new lives here.

We have begun collaboration with "League for Human Rights", an NGO which assists refugees to apply for asylum. The LFHR passes on to us the contact information for refugees who are looking for settlement and integration into Slovak society. We have initiated a "host program", where these individuals and families can twin with the refugee individuals and families. For example, my family and I meet regularly with Faisal a 17 year-old from Afghanistan, who works for IKEA and is studying Slovak. He is alone in this country, without family. When he came here at the age of 15, he was "diagnosed" with the biological age of 18 and was classified as an adult. It meant that he had no access to the education or special care that children are entitled to. Working with him we were able to connect him to a grammar school that belongs to our church, which voluntarily supplies a pedagogical tutor for him as well as providing him with buddies of his own age.

In order to prevent intercultural conflicts between the refugees

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist:          An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22



# Migrants ...

— *continued*

and Slovak people, we are currently undertaking to develop and deliver an intercultural training program for refugees and also for volunteers who work with refugees in the collection sites and here in Slovakia. The training is done with the kind support of SIETAR members, trainers and coaches from around the world. This report is to say “Thank you,” as well as encourage your efforts and imagination to respond creatively to this crisis. For more information contact: [mirka\\_lachka@yahoo.com](mailto:mirka_lachka@yahoo.com)

**2.** JAMK UNITED FOR REFUGEES is a student project from JAMK University. At the beginning of our Cross Cultural management course, headed by Steve Crawford, we talked about international cultural surroundings. Our discussion led us to the current news of the refugee crisis and made us wonder about how could we serve those in need. As consequence our project came to life and we decided to create an ongoing awareness and educational campaign.

You are maybe wondering how all this is related to the Cross Cultural management course. First of all, refugees are coming into new countries and have to change their cultural habits. At the same time, the inhabitants of receiving countries need to be more conscious, i.e. act with a proper behaviour, in order to take part in the cultural integration process. This work is enriching because we all have a common interest — as a group composed mostly of exchange students, we want to understand all the different backgrounds and points of view involved.



We first started by collecting information on the current situation, which enable us to find real and optimal solutions to help the refugees. At a later stage, we divided ourselves into four groups (resource, communication, solution and research groups) to better achieve all the specific goals, without forgetting the importance of interconnection and collaboration.

We are very happy to have received full support from higher spheres, including the rector of JAMK, and have the opportunity to collaborate with other important departments.

Of course, one of our purposes is to do something concrete. As a consequence, we organized several meetings open to all interested people and refugees. Moreover, we have also planned some social activities, such as a football match with refugees. Finally we are working hard to organise an event on our campus that shouldn't be seen as the end of the project but its real beginning. Our event will host keynote speakers, some exponent of the local press and a musical concert organised by JAMK students.

You can find more information and stay tuned on what is happening by visiting our official Facebook page called “JAMK United for Refugees”. Certainly all who are interested in helping are more than welcome. Contact us through Steve's mail address ([Steven.Crawford@jamk.fi](mailto:Steven.Crawford@jamk.fi)) or through our Facebook page.

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Book Review

### Live Connections

*Virtual Facilitation for High Engagement and Powerful Learning*

by Fredrik Fogelberg, Jude Tavanyar

Published by Normadic International Business Psychology

£19.95, 248 pages

I suppose writing a book about virtual facilitation makes some sense. The reader is removed in time and space from the author. *Live Connections* promises to improve your skills and comfort levels as you master remote technology and learn how to facilitate live groups for the purpose of learning.

This volume certainly takes its duties seriously when it comes to providing the A-Z of top tips about facilitation. The majority of the book covers the minutiae of putting on your show, running the show, and pushing buttons to do different things whilst facilitating the show. If you are mandated to give virtual sessions and wish to avoid every known pitfall known to man this is the book for you. If you are an interculturalist looking to advance your knowledge then, maybe, not so much. You may be better served finding other deeper intercultural sources.

The first three quarters of the book provides pointers in the form of a detailed checklist of the dos and don'ts of using WebEx, Lync, GoToMeeting etc. Just when you think there is nothing more to cover the book moves into learning theory. This refreshing change of topic keeps the reader engaged and looing for more to learn.

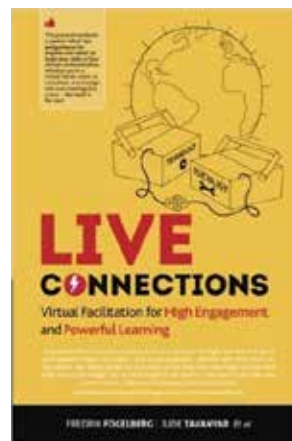
Chapter 8 is where the intercultural magic is meant to be found. Here Fredrik Fogelberg expounds on culture and tells us how we can apply this usefully in a multicultural setting. I was a little shocked to find bipolar dimensional continua with country names attached. Didn't we do this in the 90's? There are case

study boxes that operate at the country label level "In Russia, diversity and multiculturalism are sensitive issues....LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) is an untouchable topic and was left out of the training design." Not the most progressive of texts for a modern day interculturalist readership.

The genuinely original contribution is saved until last. Chapter 10 provides stimulating predictions about the "ecosystem" that will grow to support the virtual work spaces in the future. This chapter contains a combination of past predictions by such respected authors as Charles Handy, an overview of future-now technologies and a few genuinely insightful ideas for what has yet to be experienced. If the detailed checklist in the first part of the book is a little long, the treatment of new and exciting developments is a little short. Reporting the relative expectations and experiences of corporates for virtual working and flexible working was stimulating and backed up by the best graph in the book.

At almost £20, this book is not cheap. The professionally detailed checklist for the future virtual facilitator will make a return on their investment by preventing them making an array of technical errors. Of course, no book can substitute the learning experience of facilitating 10 or 20 virtual sessions and experiencing the sweaty reality of webinars and managing remote meetings. In conclusion, what this book misses in intercultural insight it certainly makes up for in detailed process and procedure for facilitating great virtual events.

*Reviewed by Matthew Hill*



## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

## Book Review

# Sevens Ways

*to Lighten Your Life*

*Before You Kick the Bucket*

By Walt Hopkins and George Simons

Online FlipBook Format, 129 pages

U.S. \$15.00 (Currently at <http://diversophy.com/collections/frontpage/products/book>)



‘To kick the bucket’ is an English idiom meaning to die. As the subtitle suggests, the book is a list of seven ways to live your life to the full before fate decides on your departure.

Authors Hopkins and Simons undertake a challenging task—to define the meaning of life, as it were — by offering an original approach as to what really matters at its end. Inspired by Picasso’s leitmotiv, “art is the elimination of the unnecessary”, it’s a guide to kicking out what brings you down and picking up the things that make you happy.

The rationale is that, when the time comes for us to kick the bucket, it hurts less when the bucket is empty. Although the book claims to be primarily for senior men, it can be read by anyone, regardless of age or gender, as it gives witty, perceptive and sometimes audacious explanations for why we live.

The book divided into seven chapters, the first four offering ways to lighten your life: 1. Chucket — drop the things you no longer need in life; 2. Shucket — strip away the non-essentials so you see what you do need; 3. Ducket — dodge the demands that don’t fit your values; 4. Fucket — stop doing what you’re fed up with doing. The last three are meant to enlighten your life: 5. Plucket — reach for what you want to have, do and be; 6. Trucket — keep on doing what’s important to you; and 7. Tucket — appreciate what you’ve done and what you’ve given.

Each chapter tells stories, from the authors’ lives as well as the lives of others, and provides questions to think about, then encourages the reader to reflect on his own experiences. Take “Shucket”. “Shuck” is what you do to an oyster shell to get at the oyster. One has to pit cherries, peel onions, unstring the string beans: discard the useless to get to the good stuff.

This led me to think about the elements of good intercultural training — we look underneath the social constructs that define and limit our experience. The ultimate aim of any cross-cultural encounter is to shuck preconceived notions and allow ourselves to intuitively grasp the feeling of appropriateness that accompanies a new situation.

Although the graphics are less than ideal, *The Bucket Book* is food for thought on multiple levels and, by carefully working through it, one comes away with a deeper understanding of the human spirit. As the authors put it, “We can deal with life in a way that the light, beauty and possibilities contained may be revealed and released.”

With Mark Twain-like humor and age-old wisdom, the work reflects American optimism by reducing complex issues into easy-to-remember sections and providing readers with real insight into the mystery of why we’re here.

*Reviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Book Review

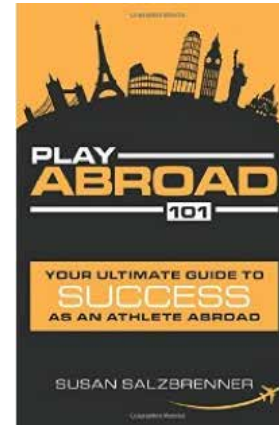
## Play Abroad 101

*Your Ultimate Guide to Success as an Athlete*

by Susan Salzbrenner

Published by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

£11.97, 126 pages



The best description for Salzbrenner's book would be "applied intercultural savvy." To me it says there should be a lot of books like this that take what we know about becoming culturally competent and applying it, simply and directly, to the variety of specific needs, which individuals and groups have when attempting to travel, work or live abroad.

Athletes in particular need not only know how to get along socially and find a healthy meal, but the cultural implications and dynamics of teamwork and competing with others, to say nothing of the mindset, steps and arrangements that one needs to make in order to engage in a sporting world elsewhere, to travel in a healthy fashion, whether you are going to compete abroad professionally or just for the pleasure of it.

It's all here. Salzbrenner has written a vademecum that serves precisely this purpose, and does it in a simple, attractively readable and strongly interactive way, clarifying the steps, both mental and practical, for getting to one's destination "in shape" and performing well in the cultural context as well as on the track or in the field.

The layout and presentation are particularly simple and attractive and, unlike all too many books about culture and going abroad, are presented in simple, understandable lan-

guage and visuals. Competing abroad? Let Susan be your coach!

*Reviewed by George Simons*

*About the author:* Susan Salzbrenner's work with athletes and sports teams focuses on transition management, integration abroad, strengthening their cultural and emotional intelligence, and supporting a sustainable career path. As an organizational psychologist, intercultural trainer and global nomad, she coaches and trains on the impact diversity can have on our performance. She's lived in six countries on four continents, traveled to many more, learned (and failed) at many languages, and played basketball along the way.

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon	3
<i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22



The conflicts around us are increasing, be it on the social, international or professional level. Which professional answers do we have?

As representatives of different fields of work and cultures, we invite you to an exchange of perspectives and approaches.

The SIETAR Germany FORUM 2016 is dedicated to events, conflicts and challenges of our time, that generate cultural diversity. How do we face conflicts and cooperation approaches from the perspective of different disciplines and cultures? Which models and methods of conflict resolution and cooperation have proven to be successful?

In this forum you will have the possibility to get to learn about different ideas and approaches, to discuss and try them out. In innovative large and small group formats you will have inspiring impulses and the opportunity to interact with other experts and to network.

Keynote speakers will be Professor Dr. Gesine Schwan and Professor Dr. Friedrich Glasl.

This event, held in German, will take place at the Gustav Stresemann Institut, Bonn, 18 -20 February, 2016. Pre- and post-conference workshops on the 17th and 21st February respectively.

For more details on forum attendance, please visit our online site:

<http://sietar-forum.de/>

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon <i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	3
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22

# Events, workshops, congresses

## Bath, U.K.

11-15 January & 7 - 11 March 2016  
*Developing Intercultural Training Skills* This 5-day course is for those, wanting to develop their knowledge and skills to design - deliver intercultural training into their current courses.

14-18 March & 27 June-1 July 2016  
*Designing and delivering intercultural training.* This 5-day course is a follow up to the above course, also suitable for trainers who already have experience in the intercultural field. Courses in 2015 may be eligible for EU funding under the new Erasmus+ programme. More information at [www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm](http://www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm) or contact [adrian.pilbeam@lts-training.com](mailto:adrian.pilbeam@lts-training.com)

## Bremen, Germany

January 18 - 29, 2016  
*Winter Academy on Intercultural Competence* This 10-day training course, organized by InterCulture and Jacobs University in Bremen, is carried out in English and does not only impart theoretical frameworks regarding intercultural learning, but also practical competencies and knowledge, to enable participants to work as intercultural trainers themselves in the future. For more information, click on [winteracademy-bremen.org](http://winteracademy-bremen.org).

## Bonn, Germany

18 - 20 February, 2016  
*Culture, Conflict, Cooperation — Intercultural Challenges* SIETAR Deutschland is organizing an international forum on the intercultural challenges of our times. There will be seven different tracts, varying from cultural changes in international organizations, social and political policies toward refugees, conflict prevention, intercultural approaches to religion and ethics, etc. Most conferences and workshops will be in the German language. More information at [www. http://sietar-forum.de/](http://www.sietar-forum.de/)

## Milan, Italy

25-27 February, 2016  
*Constructivist Foundations of Intercultural Communication: Applying the Paradigm* Milton Bennett will focus a constructivist paradigm and review a coherent set of intercultural principles. Intended for both new and experienced interculturalist who wish to be more effective in their training and research.

29 February -1 March, 2016  
*Embodied Culture* While the idea of “culture” is an abstraction, how conscious are we of the fact that culture is inscribed in our body? Ida Castiglioni will explore into the individual and collective embodied experience

as a key concept for understanding culture. Intended for interculturalists, counselors, educators and coaches. More information at [dri@idrinstitute.org](mailto:dri@idrinstitute.org)

## Winterthur, Switzerland

7 - 9 June, 2016  
*Interactive Training Strategies* This workshop, conducted by Thiagi, practices what it preaches. It helps you design and conduct 24 different types of effective training games, simulations, and activities.

10 June, 2016  
*Tools for Intercultural Training* This one-day workshop will explore topics related to intercultural training and teamwork as well as debriefing read-to-use simulations and games. More info at [info@diversityandinclusion.net](mailto:info@diversityandinclusion.net)

### Online Everyday

The SIETAR Europa group, discussing

#### “What is an interculturalist?”

on LinkedIn, has now over 8000 members. Plus it offers videos, articles, books, tools for the intercultural profession.

For more information, contact George Simons at [diversophy@gmail.com](mailto:diversophy@gmail.com)

<b>Editorial</b>	2
Elmer Dixon <i>From Revolutionary to Interculturalist: An interview with an exceptional American</i>	3
The Arrest and Death of Sandra Bland	8
The Intercultural Dimensions in Comics : <i>The case in Tintin</i>	9
Dogma	12
Migrant Initiatives	16
Book Reviews	18
Events, Workshops, Congresses	22



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