

Teaching Guide

# THE FRONTLINES OF PEACE



**Séverine Autesserre**

*Prepared by Annie Renas, Mary Soledad Craig, and Sajdah Bey*

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## A Letter From the Author

Dear Fellow Instructor,

Thank you for choosing to teach *The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World* to the students in your class. No matter what country you are in or what level you are teaching at, I feel grateful that you are taking the time to share the valuable messages of hope, peace, and resilience that I convey through my book.

My name is Séverine Autesserre ([pronounced](#) sev-REEN' oh-tuh-SEHR') and I am a French-American author, researcher, and professor based out of Barnard College - Columbia University in New York City (USA). *The Frontlines of Peace* is my third book. The other two are based on the topics of [foreign interventions](#) and [peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#). You can read more about my research and teaching at my website: <http://www.severineautesserre.com>.

If you assign my book for your course, I would be happy to join in on a class session and speak with your students about it. I am available for up to one hour (and need sufficient advanced notice of your preferred dates, bearing in mind my availability and potential time zone constraints), and I can participate through an online platform such as Zoom or Skype—or if your institution has the funds to provide transportation so I can come to the classroom itself, that may also be possible. Please note that I do not make classroom visits (whether in person or virtual) to do “book talks” — in other words, I do not give formal presentations of the book to small classes as I do in large university settings. Instead, I ask that your students read my book before our meeting so that we can have a Q&A-style session.

Book reviews are tremendously important for both authors and readers. Will you also be so kind as to ask your students to write an online review of my book after they've read it? This is a great project for students, challenging them to summarize the text succinctly and think critically about its pros and cons. It also benefits teachers and professors because it's an idea for a creative assignment! You can review *The Frontlines of Peace* on [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), [Books-A-Million](#), [Goodreads](#), [Indigo](#) and many more.

You can contact me at [sa435@columbia.edu](mailto:sa435@columbia.edu) or follow me on Twitter [@SeverineAR](#).

Thanks for reading, teaching, and sharing!

All the best,



Séverine Autesserre

## Introduction

Séverine Autesserre’s *The Frontlines of Peace* describes the remarkable individuals who effectively confront violence in their communities. Throughout, she reveals that peace can grow in unlikely circumstances with the help of unlikely heroes. Written in a lively and engaging narrative style, *The Frontlines of Peace* is suitable for teaching to high school, college, and graduate students from all academic backgrounds and disciplines.

This teacher’s guide breaks down the book chapter by chapter, providing a thematic overview and questions to spark class discussion. While *The Frontlines of Peace* is an excellent choice for all students, some of the terms utilized throughout the book may be unfamiliar. Therefore, chapter overviews also contain “what to look for” sections listing of key vocabulary, people, places, and organizations to help acquaint students with some of the most common and pertinent terms employed by the author. This is followed by suggested activities and further reading, geared toward helping students engage in analytical thinking about the topics raised in the book.

## Before Reading

Prior to reading the book, the teacher or professor could ask students the following pre-reading focus questions. These questions will help students to begin thinking about prominent topics covered in the book. In addition, these questions can help the professor to gauge students’ familiarity with the subject matter of the book.

### **Pre-reading Focus Questions:**

- Why is it important to study peace?
- What does the illustration/image on the cover evoke?
- What, if anything, do you know about prevailing peacebuilding practices?
- What, in your opinion, makes for a successful peacebuilding effort?
- What, in your opinion, makes for an unsuccessful peacebuilding effort?

## Overview by Chapters

### **Preface**

#### Why read:

- The Preface offers many inspiring stories—in particular, the background of the author and that of the Resolve Network.
- The Preface introduces the concept of Peace, Inc. and the idea that foreign interventions are systematically flawed.

- The Preface explains that peace can be effectively built from the grassroots.

### What to look for:

- Séverine
- Justine
- Vijaya
- Resolve Network
- Luca
- Peace, Inc.

### Questions for class discussion:

- The author says that: “Real, lasting peace requires giving the power over to ordinary citizens.” Do you agree with that? Based on what you already know about peacebuilding, what are the strengths and weaknesses of that argument?
- There are a lot of stories in this preface. Which one moved you the most? Why?

## **Chapter 1**

### Why read:

- Chapter 1 employs the case study of Idjwi to demonstrate how local people’s involvement is the key to building peace.
- Chapter 1 encourages peacebuilding that connects to communal folklore and superstition or magical beliefs. The author discusses the success of such tools in Idjwi.

### What to look for:

- Idjwi
- Havus
- Kaer
- Congo’s Wars
- Livingston
- Magical Beliefs
- Pygmies
- Mwami

### Questions for class discussion:

- Can you think of other examples of “cultures of peace?” How many are there? Why or why not do they exist in abundance?
- What are your reactions to the use of magical beliefs in peacebuilding? Can outside interveners ethically support or utilize such strategies in the country they are working in?

## **Chapter 2**

### Why read:

- Chapter 2 offers the example of the Life and Peace Institute as a model for successful international peacebuilding.
- Chapter 2 tells the stories of the Life and Peace Institute’s work in Congo and the non-linear road towards its “success.”

## What to look for:

- LPI
- Urbain
- Rasta
- Pieter
- Alexandra
- Déo
- Ruzizi Plain
- Hans
- Loochi

## Questions for class discussion:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of LPI's Participatory Action Research approach?
- Does LPI's successes change the way you conceptualize peacebuilding? If so, how?

## **Chapter 3**

### Why read:

- Chapter 3 exposes the problematic systems of Peaceland and Peace, Inc.
- Chapter 3 discusses the tensions between local insiders and foreign outsiders that are counterproductive to peacebuilding missions.
- Chapter 3 explains that despite these systematic flaws in the peacebuilding industry, there are ways that we can reshape the relationships between insiders and outsiders and boost peacebuilding success.

### What to look for:

- Michel Losembe
- Nerim
- "Curriculum Idiots"
- Power Hierarchy
- Insider/Outsider

## Questions for class discussion:

- Consider foreign interveners' paternalism in the host country. Can we trace this back historically?
- As we saw in this chapter, outside interveners can be quite problematic. In your opinion, are they even necessary?

## **Chapter 4**

### Why read:

- Chapter 4 further explains the limitations of "Peace, Inc."
- Chapter 4 analyzes the top-down approach to peacebuilding and pervasive assumptions many international interveners hold about it.
- Chapter 4 highlights the possibility for devastating consequences while explaining why these detrimental beliefs and flawed intervention strategies nevertheless persist.

### What to look for:

- “The Troubles”
- Northern Ireland
- Democratization
- Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
- Rwandan Genocide
- Isabelle
- Lena Sundh

### Questions for class discussion:

- What are some key assumptions of the “Peace Inc.” approach and what problems have arisen from this framework?
- What arguments and methods could be used to convince those committed to “Peace Inc.” to be open to other forms of peacebuilding?

## **Chapter 5**

### Why read:

- Chapter 5 highlights three notable communities that have successfully built and sustained peace in the midst of extensive violence.
- Chapter 5 includes the stories of Somaliland, the peace zone of San José de Apartadó, and the Israeli-Palestinian village of Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom to show that ordinary citizens, grassroots activists, and local leaders can effectively promote peace.

### What to look for:

- Somaliland
- Clans
- al-Shabaab
- Zones of Peace
- Colombia
- San José de Apartadó
- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom

### Questions for class discussion:

- What are the similarities between Idjwi and Somaliland that allowed for relative peace to grow in both locations?
- Do you think that these “zones of peace” can be replicated in other conflict zones? What key components would be necessary?

## **Chapter 6**

### Why read:

- Chapter 6 explains how peacebuilders can learn from the success stories presented throughout the book.

- Chapter 6 emphasizes the characteristics of effective peacebuilders and advocates for a method of building peace that utilizes both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

### What to look for:

- Timor-Leste
- James Scambrary
- Banu Altunbas
- Neo-colonialism
- Donors
- NGOs

### Questions for class discussion:

- Drawing on all the examples introduced throughout the book, what qualities are essential to being a model intervener?
- What does peace really look like? How do you measure success in peacebuilding?
- Thinking back on your answers to pre-reading questions, has your image of successful peacebuilding changed?

## **Chapter 7**

### Why read:

- Chapter 7 demonstrates how the lessons from war-torn localities can be applied to ostensibly peaceful countries.
- Chapter 7 discusses what readers who are moved by the analysis can personally do to improve the situation in their own communities.

### What to look for:

- Leymah Gbowee
- Gun Violence
- Chicago
- Live Free
- Cure Violence
- White Supremacy
- Daryl Davis
- Christian Picciolini

### Questions for class discussion:

- What conditions are needed for those actively engaged in violence to be able to disengage?
- Think of a conflict situation in your own school, university, or neighborhood. What strategies have you learned from peacebuilders in this chapter and how can they be applied to building peace in your own life?

## Activities

### Activity #1: Where else in the world does local peacebuilding exist?

Ask your students to go to <https://www.peaceinsight.org>, a project by Peace Direct and the Alliance for Peacebuilding that has mapped over 1,800 peacebuilding organizations around the world. They can click on a country of interest and read up on a local organization that Peace Insight verified as credibly working on sustained efforts towards building peace.

### Activity #2: What's at play in this book?

Have your students fill out this diagram to keep track of the various non-governmental organizations mentioned in the book.

|  | Where do they work? | What do they do? | Notes: |
|--|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| A Better LA                                      |                     |                  |        |
| Arche d'Alliance                                 |                     |                  |        |
| Cure Violence                                    |                     |                  |        |
| Gangsline  |                     |                  |        |
| Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa                   |                     |                  |        |
| Life & Peace Institute                           |                     |                  |        |
| Live Free  |                     |                  |        |
| Mothers/Men Against Senseless Killing            |                     |                  |        |
| Médecins Sans Frontières / Médicos Sin Fronteras |                     |                  |        |
| Peace Direct                                     |                     |                  |        |
| Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle            |                     |                  |        |
| Resolve Network                                  |                     |                  |        |

Next, ask your students to fill out this diagram with key individuals in the book.

|                       | Where do they work? | What do they do? | Notes: |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| Alexandra Bilak       |                     |                  |        |
| Banu Altunbas         |                     |                  |        |
| Christian Picciolini  |                     |                  |        |
| Daryl Davis           |                     |                  |        |
| Déo Buuma             |                     |                  |        |
| Hans Romkema          |                     |                  |        |
| Isabelle              |                     |                  |        |
| James Scambary        |                     |                  |        |
| Jean-Marie Guéhenno   |                     |                  |        |
| Jean-Pierre Lacroix   |                     |                  |        |
| Kalegamire Baozi Kaer |                     |                  |        |
| Lena Sundh            |                     |                  |        |
| Leymah Gbowee         |                     |                  |        |
| Livingston Shaniavu   |                     |                  |        |
| Loochi Muzaliwa       |                     |                  |        |
| Luca & Justine        |                     |                  |        |
| Michel Losembe        |                     |                  |        |
| Milt Lauenstein       |                     |                  |        |
| Onesphore Sematumba   |                     |                  |        |
| Pieter Vanholder      |                     |                  |        |
| Randal Rhoades        |                     |                  |        |
| Séverine Autesserre   |                     |                  |        |
| Tobias Petrelius      |                     |                  |        |
| Urbain Bisimwa        |                     |                  |        |
| Vijaya Thakur         |                     |                  |        |

Finally, consider having your class fill out this chart to keep track of the major settings in the book.

|                              | What part of the world is it in? | Which organizations or people are associated with it? | Why is it special? | Notes: |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|--------|
| Idjwi                        |                                  |   |                    |        |
| San José de Apartadó         |                                  |   |                    |        |
| Somaliland                   |                                  |   |                    |        |
| Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom |                                  |   |                    |        |

### Activity #3: Where is the evidence?

In this activity, ask your students to go back into the reading and find evidence to support the following claims.

- The peacebuilding industry is inherently flawed in its approach.
- Peacebuilding is most successful when it is developed from the bottom up with support from the top down.
- Being a model peacebuilder requires you to relearn your role.

## Further Reading

Interested students may wish to learn more about the various countries, conflicts, and organizations referenced in the book. Please guide them to the Appendix of the book, which features extensive resources for further reading.