

Online Study Materials on  
**INTERFAITH EDUCATION**

**46**

**INTERFAITH EDUCATION: ROLE OF  
CONSULTATION AND SYMPOSIUM**

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**CONSULTATION FOR INTERFAITH EDUCATION:  
A CASE STUDY**

Welcome to the website of the *Consultation for Interfaith Education*, an international consortium of organisations working for the advancement of the field of interfaith education.

- Collaborating on curricula and methodology.
- Building a network of educators who address the needs of religiously diverse societies with models of peaceful coexistence.
- Providing professional development opportunities for teachers and community organizers in schools, universities, and beyond the classroom.

The CIE hosted a Consultation on Religion and the MDGs (the U.N. Millennium Development Goals) in New York City in June 2005. The Millennium Goals, adopted by the nations of the world in 2000, set forth an agenda to cut global poverty in half by 2015.

To View the Programme and Read the Transcripts of the Addresses Delivered by Participants.

To learn more about the CIE's MDG consultation, click here: [CIE Consultation on MDGs](#).

The CIE convened an *International Symposium on Interfaith Education* in Barcelona (at the Parliament of the World's Religions meeting) in July 2004.

**WHO WE ARE**

In 2001, a group of organisations convened a conference to explore the emerging field of interfaith education. Out of this event, the Planning

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Committee for the Consultation on Interfaith Education was formed. This Planning Committee is comprised Auburn Seminary, ARIL/CrossCurrents, CLAL—the National Jewish Center for Leadership and Learning, the Loretto Community, the International Mahavir Jain Mission, the Interfaith Community, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development, and the Temple of Understanding.

The result of our initial collaboration was a conference series entitled “The Consultation on Interfaith Education”—the first being held in March 2003 in New York. This Consultation assembled an international body of representatives from the educational, religious, social service and diplomatic fields in order to exchange ideas, practices, information, and resources. It comprised a pioneering effort to navigate the complex landscape of interfaith education, identifying both its problematic and promising features, with the goal of reaching new horizons in practical problem solving, peacemaking, and tolerance through education.

In November 2003 the CIE sponsored a consultation at the American Academy of Religion’s Annual Meeting in Atlanta which brought the nascent field of interfaith education to the attention of the community of scholars of religion who teach in America’s colleges and universities.

These consultations have revealed that, while many interfaith organisations that work with interfaith education exist, the organisational and pedagogical support structures that would connect them as a field and lend coherence and momentum for growth are lacking. In response, our collective organisations are currently engaged in a multi-year project to provide integrated support structures and services to develop the field of interfaith education. We have formed a working group and, over the course of the next three years, our working group seeks to organize:

- regional, national, and international conferences
- several ongoing informational medium— including a website and database, an online peer-review journal, instructional videos and CD-ROMs, and resource publications—to share pedagogical approaches, best practice models, curricula, and research on interfaith education
- interfaith training institutes for seminary faculty, students, and administrators, as well as interfaith practitioners, educators, and religious leaders

Our first international event was the Symposium on Interfaith Education at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Barcelona,

July 8-11, 2004. The CIE's present focus is on the role of interfaith cooperation in advancing the Millennium Development Goals. The CIE will be convening a consultation on religion and the MDGs in New York City in June 2005.

The Consultation for Interfaith Education is an international association of organisations that have been drawn together by a common interest in the development of the field of interfaith education and by the belief that interfaith education is indispensable to the emergence of a less violent and more equitable social order on every level of our common life—locally, nationally and internationally.

- Project Directors
- Planning Committee Members
- Advisory Board

### **Project Directors**

Michael Gottsegen, CLAL— The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

Charles Henderson, Cross Currents/ARIL

Alison Van Dyk, Tiffany Puett, Temple of Understanding

Daniel Brenner, Auburn Theological Seminary

### **Planning Committee Members**

Orlanda Brugnola, International Association for Religious Freedom

Sheila Gordon, Interfaith Community

Michael Gottsegen, CLAL— The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

Lee Hancock, Daniel Brenner, Auburn Theological Seminary

Charles Henderson, Cross Currents/ARIL

Nurah Ammat'ullah Jeter, Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development

Janice Marie Johnson, Unitarian Universalist Association

Sr. Joan Kirby, Tiffany Puett, Alison Van Dyk, Diane Williams, Temple of Understanding

Sr. Betty Obal, Loretto Community

Ibrahim Abdil-Mu'id Ramey, Fellowship of Reconciliation

Laxmi Shah, International Mahavir Jain Mission

Ann Thurber, Cobb and Associates

**International Advisory Board (in formation)**

Wesley Ariarajah, Drew University

Ed Bastian, Spiritual Paths Foundation

John Berthrong, Boston University School of Theology

Josh Borkin, Council for a Parliament of World Religions

Patrice Brodeur, Connecticut College

Karen McCarthy Brown, Drew University

Paul Chaffee, Interfaith Center at the Presidio

Peter Cobb, Cobb and Associates

Heidi Hadsell, Hartford Seminary

Grove Harris, The Pluralism Project, Harvard University

Judy Harrow, Cherry Hill Seminary

Judith Hertz, Commission on Interreligious Affairs of Reform Judaism

Jim Keen, Antioch College

Paul J. Knitter, Xavier University

Leo Lefebure, Fordam University

Eboo Patel, Interfaith Youth Core

Betty Reardon, Teachers College, Columbia University

Jane Rechtman, The Masters School

Francesc Rovira, UNESCO Center of Catalonia

Rajinderjit Singh, Long Island Multifaith Forum

Robert Thurman, Columbia University

Arvind Vora, the Jain Society of Long Island

**OUR MISSION**

The *Consultation for Interfaith Education* is an international consortium of organisations working for the advancement of the field of interfaith education. Our work includes:

- Collaborating on curricula and methodology.
- Building a network of educators who address the needs of religiously diverse societies with models of peaceful coexistence.
- Providing professional development opportunities for teachers and community organizers in schools, universities, and beyond the classroom.

In 2001, a group of organisations convened a conference to explore the emerging field of interfaith education. Out of this event, the Planning Committee for the Consultation on Interfaith Education was formed. This Planning Committee is comprised Auburn Seminary, ARIL/CrossCurrents, CLAL—the National Jewish Center for Leadership and Learning, the Loretto Community, the International Mahavir Jain Mission, the Interfaith Community, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development, and the Temple of Understanding.

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Our first international event was the Symposium on Interfaith Education at the Parliament of the World's Religions that was held in Barcelona, July 8- 11, 2004. This symposium represented an important step in the broader project of nurturing a nascent field. Our Symposium on Interfaith Education was the product of a collaborative process involving all the members of the Planning Committee for the Consultation on Interfaith Education.

The Consultation for Interfaith Education invites organisations that are involved in the field of interfaith education to join the CIE and seeks membership applications from religious and inter-religious, sectarian and non-sectarian organisations that are interested in becoming part of our network. New members are welcome and every application will be considered by the CIE planning committee.

### **ON THE ROLE OF AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs): A CONSULTATION—JUNE 8, 2005**

#### **Getting from Here to There: Proposed Action Steps**

##### *Share Info and Ideas Synergize*

- Create an email list [and RSS news feed] to share info about the MDGs and about actions that religious communities can take in support of the MDGs, working separately or together. Recipients of this list were encouraged to share this info with their own religious communities via email newsletters and/or websites.
- Create a website for disseminating information on the MDGs and MDG-support activities for the religious and inter-religious groups.
- Create an inter-religious working group to discern and develop synergies that inter-religious coordination and cooperation on behalf of the MDGs might yield.

##### *Coordinate Take A Public Stand Together [Inter-denominationally and/or inter-religiously]*

- Set a date for a national day of religious and inter-religious prayer, action and advocacy on behalf of the MDGs.
- Develop an inter-religious consensus statement on behalf of the MDGs—or common affirmations or tenets—that different faith communities [or those represented here] could endorse in some manner. Place it online so individuals can sign it as well.

- Develop intra-religious consensus statements (and engage in joint-public education campaigns) on behalf of the MDGs across sectarian or denominational lines. [*e.g.* a joint statement by representatives of all Jewish denominations]
- Urge your own denominational synod, assembly, association, etc. to pass a resolution endorsing MDGs and 0.7%.
- Develop and fund a high profile coordinated media campaign for the MDGs with an inter-religious consensus statement of support at its core.
- Develop a religiously based civic action campaign – emphasising letters, emails and calls to Congress and White House, candle-light vigils, fasts.

*Preach It!*

- Write sermons on behalf of the MDGs—and share them with other religious leaders via TMI’s Sermons Project (see TMI below).
- Act politically! For example, bombard Congress with postcards around particular pending legislation re MDGs, malaria, etc.
- Host dinners to build support for MDGs (see TMI below).

*Teach It!*

- Develop study-guides grounding support for the MDGs in your own tradition.
- Plan day-long MDG education programmes for your own congregation(s) or denomination.
- Develop graded school curricula to educate American students about the developing world and about the MDGs. Educate and mobilize students—with focus on the practical feasibility of the goals... Make support for MDG-related projects part of curriculum or extra-curricular focus.
- Develop inter-religious curricula for teaching about the MDGs from various religious perspectives.
- Develop a face-to-face, people-to-people programme to bring young people together from across the country to meet up with young people from the developing world, and to follow this up with trips to the developing countries as well.
- Enlist American academics to focus on MDG-related development issues.

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- Educate and advocate on behalf of the MDGs in accessible “languages” that speak to people where they are.
  - Develop theological papers that address relevant religious issues that might stand in the way of your denomination’s support for the MDGs (*e.g.* eschatological views, or tensions between what is owed to near and far neighbors).
  - Develop a sophisticated public education strategy that will enable religious Americans to talk and solidarize across the lines that divide us.

### **Link It!**

- Link support for the MDGs to existing issue-advocacy movements, *e.g.*, link existing environmental groups to the MDGs.
- Mobilize and work with existing college groups on behalf of the MDGs.

### **Info Sharing!**

- The Millennium Initiative (TMI) Sponsoring whole range of activities focused on building American political will on behalf of the MDGs – including Dinner Projects and Sermons Project [For more info go to: <http://www.browdecommunications.com/> or contact Beth Browde ([bbrowde@earthlink.com](mailto:bbrowde@earthlink.com))]
- A Summer of Prayer and Advocacy to Halve Poverty and thus achieve the MDGs. Sponsored by Sojourners and Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation. Will take place September 11-16, 2005 at churches near US embassy and at the UN. 3 days of fasting and prayer will take place in advance. A Christian focused effort but with a multifaith engagement at UN with churches and witnessing... [contact Kritin Clark ([kmclark2@gmail.com](mailto:kmclark2@gmail.com))]
- Sojourners-sponsored National Day of Religious Mobilisation (September 12<sup>th</sup>). [contact Kritin Clark ([kmclark2@gmail.com](mailto:kmclark2@gmail.com))]
- University of Birmingham (UK) 5 year project on role of faith communities in advancing MDGs [contact Josef Boehle ([j.boehle@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.boehle@bham.ac.uk))]
- Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, a UN-Gov–Civil Society tripartite meeting to be held on June 22, 2005 on role of religion in creating culture of peace. <file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/MichaelG/Local%20Settings/Temporary%20Internet%20Files/Content.IE5/3XB9K0QD/www.interfaithconference.com>



Contact: Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace  
Tripartite Conference Secretariat Office UNESCO, Two UN Plaza,  
Room 900 New York, NY 10017 Fax 212-963-8014 Email:  
unescony@un.org

## **CIE'S SYMPOSIUM ON INTERFAITH EDUCATION**

**July 7-13, 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona**

### **The Work and Goals of the Symposium**

Many educators have begun to ask where education is taking us and how it is addressing the critical issues of our time. The forces of globalisation have produced a new religious pluralism and cultural multiplicity throughout the globe. Moreover, within this interdependent world, a global climate of religious mistrust and animosity has developed— a climate that has spawned intolerance, discrimination, and even violence. Today a growing number of educators, practitioners, and religious leaders are turning to interfaith education as a means of illuminating and responding to these challenges of the 21st century.

Interfaith education enables us to learn about religious traditions other than their own, while also deepening our understanding of our own traditions, engaging both the commonalities that bring us together and the particularities that make us distinct. Moreover, interfaith education offers the capacity for profound personal and societal growth, which is essential to fostering and sustaining cultures of peace.

The purpose of this symposium is to identify both the promising and problematic features of interfaith education, explore the multiple contexts in which it exists, ask how it can address the most pressing issues of our time, and consider the transformative potential it has to offer. While many organisations that work with interfaith education exist, the support structures that would connect them as a field and lend coherence and momentum for growth need to be strengthened. This symposium endeavors to create an interactive forum through which educators and practitioners can navigate the complex landscape of interfaith education by building networks, sharing resources and support, and collaboratively addressing the challenges necessary to developing this nascent field.

The Symposium on Interfaith Education, is part of a multi-year collaborative endeavor, sponsored by the Consultation for Interfaith Education: Auburn Theological Seminary, ARIL/CrossCurrents, Cobb and Associates, CLAL—the National Jewish Center for Leadership

and Learning, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Association for Religious Freedom, the International Mahavir Jain Mission, the Interfaith Community, the Loretto Community, the Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development, and the Temple of Understanding. For more information on this project, see <http://www.globalinterfaithed.org/>.

## Programme Description

### *Day 1: Pathways to Peace—The Multiple Contexts of Interfaith Education*

Within the broad scope of interfaith education lie the methods of the classroom, the academy, and the seminary, alongside the restorative practices of dialogue and community building among people of diverse religious backgrounds. In each of these contexts, interfaith education has distinctive characteristics and challenges that will be explored this first day. H.H. the XIVth Dalai Lama, who has promoted interfaith education for many years, will give the keynote address.

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|------------------------|--|
| 8:00 – 9:00 am<br>CCIB | Jain Meditation with Munishree Kirtiji, India<br>A revolutionary Jain monk from Shanti Niketan Sadhana Kendra ashram in Gujarat , Kirtiji has taught the scientific methods of Patanjali yoga and Jain meditation to thousands of peoples in India, U.S.A., Canada, and France.  |
| 9:30-10:00<br>CCIB     | Opening Ceremony: Gathering of the Community   |
| 10:00 – 11:00<br>CCIB  | Interfaith Education: A Global Imperative<br>Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos, India</li> <li>• Dr. Master-Moos, the Founder and President of the only Zoroastrian College in the world in Mumbai, India is the recipient of the Dag Hammarskjöld Award (1968) and the Medal for Interfaith Peace by HH Pope John Paul II (1989).</li> <li>• Dr. Betty A. Reardon, U.S.</li> <li>• Dr. Reardon is the founding Director of the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York and founder and General Coordinator of the International Institutes on Peace Education.</li> <li>• Dr. Heidi Hadsell, U.S.</li> <li>• Dr. Hadsell is the President of Hartford Seminary in Hartford, CT. She came to the Seminary from the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, Bossey, Switzerland, where she served as Director.</li> </ul> |

11:30–1:00  
Auditorium,  
Edifici Forum

Keynote address: His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, Tibet  
(*cancelled on account of illness*)

Tenzin Gyatzo, His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama of Tibet, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, has received many international awards, including the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize.

Respondents:

- Dr. Leo D. Lefebure, U.S.  
Dr. Lefebure is an associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York City. He is the author of four books, including *The Buddha and the Christ* (1993) and *Revelation, the Religions, and Violence* (2000).
- Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, U.K.
- Bhai Sahib Singh is the Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, member of the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL/WCRP), and advisor to the Sikh Heritage Trust (Anandpur Sahib).

3:00–4:30

Discovering the Best of Interfaith Education through Appreciative Inquiry

Sagrada Familia,  
AC Barcelona

This interactive session, facilitated by Appreciative Inquiry pioneer Diana Whitney, will allow participants and presenters to learn about and share their work in interfaith education through a process of small group dialogue.

### *Day 2: The Power of Commitment—Interfaith Education, Community and Justice*

Interfaith education offers an essential tool for creating cultures of peace. On this second day, we explore how interfaith education addresses religious and social conflict and the histories of violence and oppression found within many of our religious traditions, as well as the potential religions have to offer the peace building process.

8:00 – 9:00  
CCIB

Jewish Meditation with Eliyahu McLean, Israel  
McLean is the Coordinator of the Jerusalem Circle, a network of spiritual peace activists in Israel/Palestine. An Orthodox Jew, he has traveled worldwide with Palestinian Muslim Ibrahim Abuelhaw to promote dialogue.

9:30 – 11:00  
CCIB

Keynote address: Madhu Kishwar, India  
Kishwar is a senior fellow at the Centre for Studies in Developing Societies in New Delhi, India. She is the author of many books, including *Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays* and founding editor of the journal *Manushi*.  
Respondents:

- Dr. Al-Harith A.H. Hassan Al-Asady, Iraq  
Dr. Hassan, Dean of Psychological Research Center, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, in Baghdad, Iraq, also teaches courses in comparative religions at Babel College of Philosophy and Theology.
- Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, U.S.  
An ordained Orthodox rabbi, Hirschfield is Vice-President of CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. A commentator on issues of spirituality and public policy featured on ABC, he is currently at work on a book about new ways of commemorating the Holocaust.
- Paul F. Knitter, U.S.  
For the past 40 years, Paul F. Knitter, Emeritus Professor of Theology at Xavier University (USA) has been working to promote a globally responsible dialogue among religions.

11:30-12:15

Interactive Best Practice Session: The Relationship between Interfaith Education and Justice, Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation and Coexistence

*Sants Room*

- “Interfaith Education for World Peace”
- *Ela Gandhi, University of Natal, South Africa*
- “Interfaith Education in Action: A Young Adult Perspective”  
*Morse Flores, Philippines, and Ramola Sundram, U.K., Religious Freedom Young Adult Network*

*Example Room*

- “Tools for Conflict Transformation in Interfaith Dialogue”  
*Janice Marie Johnson, Educators for Social Responsibility, U.S.*
- Interfaith Education in Regions of Conflict:  
A facilitated dialogue among participants to share curriculum, explore specific challenges and network with colleagues

*Gracia Room*

- “Beyond Hate: Living With Our Deepest Differences in Northern Ireland”  
*Sr. Deirdre Mullan, RSM and Carol Rittner, RSM, Mercy Global*

*Concern, Ireland*

- Interfaith Education in Regions of Coexistence:

A facilitated dialogue among participants to share curriculum, explore specific challenges and network with colleagues

3:00 – 4:30

Sagrada Familia

Interfaith Education in a Violent World Panel and Dialogue

## Panelists:

- Sheik Abu Bakarr Conteh, Sierra Leone  
Sheik Conteh is the Chief Imam of three mosques in Freetown, Sierra Leone, as well as a Senior Lecturer in Religious and Moral Education at Freetown Teachers' College.
- Danielle Celermajer, Australia  
Celermajer is a fellow at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights and former director of policy with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Australia.
- Toh Swee Hin, Australia  
Prof. Toh is the founding Director of the Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre in Brisbane, Australia, a consultant for UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding, and recipient of the 2000 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.

*Day 3: The Wisdom of Listening—Interfaith Education and Transformation*

On this day, we address the contemplative aspect of interfaith education and the role of personal transformation. We explore the challenges that experiential pedagogical practices pose, ask how the experience of another religious tradition influences one's religious identity, and consider the risks and rewards involved.

8:00–9:00

Yoga Prayer: Embodied Christian Spiritual Practice with Fr. Thomas Ryan, U.S.

CCIB

Fr. Ryan directs the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. He is the co-founder and former director of Unitas in Montreal, an ecumenical center for spirituality and Christian meditation.

9:30 – 11:00

Keynote address: Raimon Panikkar, Spain

CCIB

Dr. Panikkar, the son of a Hindu Indian father and a Roman Catholic Spanish mother, holds doctorates in philosophy, chemistry, and theology. Among his major books are *The Vedic Experience*; *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*; *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*; *The Cosmotheandric Experience*; and *Blessed Simplicity*.

## Respondents:

- Rita M. Gross, U.S.  
Gross is Professor of Comparative Studies in Religion at the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire and the author of numerous articles and essays on women and religion.
- Ibrahim Abdil-Mu'id Ramey, U.S.  
Ramey, coordinator of the Peace and Disarmament programme of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, is a regular commentator on the Islamic Broadcasting Network and the 2002 co-recipient of the first Better World Award for activism from the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation.
- Mark Larrimore, U.S.  
Larrimore is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Eugene Lang College, New School University in New York.

11:30 – 1:00

## Interactive Best Practice Session: The Challenges and Rewards of Experiential Interfaith Education

*Sants Room*

- “Education in Europe: Interfaith Dialogue in the Classroom”  
*Jenny Banks Bryer, GERFEC, U.K.*
- “Primary Education for Peace, Human Unity and Harmony Among Peoples”  
*Kiran Vyas, Tapovan/Adi Shakti—Center of Integral Yoga and Ayurveda, France*

*Example Room*

- “Youth Interfaith Education Initiative”  
*Dr. Eboo Patel, Interfaith Youth Core, U.S.*
- “Building Bridges through Multi-faith Education”  
*Stacy Fagan and Rajinderjit K. Singh, Long Island Multi-faith Forum, U.S.*

*Gracia Room*

- “The Dilemmas of Interfaith Studies in a ‘Secular’ University”  
*Dr. David Cheetham, University of Birmingham, U.K.*
- “Values, Ethics, Religion and Spirituality: What Are We Talking About?”  
*Pilar Queta Colomina, Spain, and Diane Tillman, U.S., Living Values Education*

3:00–4:00	Visioning for the Future : Where Do We Go from Here?
<i>Sagrada Familia</i>	A collaborative workshop planning how we will work together in the future
4:00 – 5:00	One World: A Celebration of Global Values through Interfaith Education
<i>Sagrada Familia</i>	The symposium closes with the stunning visual and rhythmic sounds of the Taiko Drums and sacred music by Carman Moore, whose compositions have been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, where his Mass for the 21st Century was premiered.
<i>Familia</i>	Alison Van Dyk, Chair of the Temple of Understanding and Dr. Karan Singh, International Chair of the TOU, present the 7th Juliet Hollister Award to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Hans Kung Dr. Kung is a Professor of Ecumenical Theology, University of Tubingen, and the President of the Foundation for a Global Ethic. He was the drafter of “The Declaration toward a Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World’s Religions” in 1993.</li> <li>• Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan Pir Vilayat is the eldest son and successor of Hazrat Pir-o-Mursid Inayat Khan, founder of the Sufi Order in the West. His teaching brings the timeless contributions of the ancient Sufi mystics and poets together with the discoveries of psychology and science.</li> </ul>
	On the Role of American Religious Communities in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: A Consultation
	The Church Center at the United Nations
777	United Nations Plaza (1st Ave and 44th Street).
8:30	registration and coffee
9:00	<i>Welcome, Preview of Day, Rationale</i> Michael Gottsegen (Brown University, CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership)
9:30	<i>The United Nations’ MDG Campaign for a Better World and Religious Responses</i> Hon. Evelyn Herfkens (UN Secretary General’s Executive Coordinator for the Millennium Campaign (formerly Minister for Development Cooperation, the Netherlands)) Respondents: Rabbi Irving Greenberg (Jewish Life Network) Rev. Richard Cizik (National Association of Evangelicals)

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11:00	<i>Who is my Neighbour? Religious Reflections on the MDGs</i> (facilitated small group discussions and reporting back)
12:00	<i>MDGs in Focus Session One: Poverty, the Environment and Goal 8</i> Speaker: John McArthur (UN MDG Poverty Task Force) Speaker: Don Melnick (UN MDG Environmental Sustainability Task Force Coordinator)
1:15	Lunch (working discussions continue informally)
2:00	<i>MDGs in Focus Session Two: Health and Hunger</i> Speaker: Adrienne Germain, (UN MDG Child and Maternal Health Task Force member) Speaker: Richard Beahrs (UN MDG Hunger Task Force member)
3:00	<i>What are the obstacles to, and opportunities for, engaging religious institutions in support of the MDGs?</i> (facilitated small group discussions and reporting back)
4:00	<i>From Here to There: How should we proceed? Next steps/ strategies for engaging religious organisations and communities in support of the MDGs</i> (a town meeting style discussion)
5:00	Conclusion.

## SYMPOSIUM ON INTERFAITH EDUCATION

(Parliament of the World's Religions, 2004)

*Day 1: Pathways to Peace—The Multiple Contexts of Interfaith Education Jain Meditation*

### ***Namaste. Welcome to CIE***

We are delighted to have Mr. Kiran Vyas who is from Paris, France, and has ashrams in Paris and Normandy for the study of yoga, meditation, and cultures of India. His father was a friend of the Gandhi-ji and he has studied all the religions with deep knowledge of yoga and meditation.

### ***Mr. Vyas***

*Namaste.* I am very happy to be here for this interfaith gathering. I am a practitioner of Aryurveda, the Indian medicine, and an educationalist—that is to say in the field of education. For many years, I have been directing a few experimental schools in India because the goal was, the aim was, to have an integral education, to make persons free from all violence: *ahimsa*, that is to say, there should be no violence. The nonviolent movement of Gandhi-ji, the great soul of India, was to be practiced through education. Even the independence



of India was to be earned through nonviolence and that was one of the main things that I tried out with my father in some of the schools in India.

We shall start with the Navkav Mantra because you all know that this is the mantra of mantras from the Jain religion. There are so many religions on earth. The Jain monks would put something in front of their mouth not to kill even the bacteria or insects and some of the Jain members would clean in front of their feet before walking not to kill anything. But we shall start with nonviolence, *ahimsa*, because in order to live, one has to have peace in mind, one has to have an inner faith, one has to have an ear towards evolution, towards progress.

We are here to practice meditation. There is some need for our mind to understand why we should meditate. First of all, in all religions, in all faiths, there is always a meditation whatever might be your path. In all events of life, when there is a success, there is always a meditation behind. In fact, even in books, for example, a skier or somebody who is going to do a high jump or long jump, before he takes his run, he stands still sometimes with the eyes open, sometimes for a fraction of a second with the eyes closed. There is just this little bit of moment when he is immobile, when he is silent...and in fact before he takes off, as if he knows whether he is going to be successful or if he is not. It is this moment of meditation that puts the energy of success or it is this little moment where he knows that perhaps it is not for this time, it has to be for another time, but the success will come.

As I was born in this sort of interfaith atmosphere with Gandhiji, my parents used to go for meditation at 4 o'clock in the morning. We used to make all possible arrangements so that I could remain sleeping, but they were always surprised at how exactly quarter to four I would wake up and say I would like to go for meditation. What I learned right at the age of two, three or four, was all religions have the same path and that path is called the inner path. There is one outer movement and then there is one inner movement. If one wants to go into the inner movement, one has to follow a meditation. Of course, after that, when I grew up, I went to some of the ashramers, that is to say, the great masters, to learn such things. In fact, I stayed for twelve years in Aurobindo Ashram, one of the great philosophers of India. Meditation had been my inner life; at the same time, something that I consider to be one of the most important things. At the same time, this cannot be imposed upon. You cannot tell somebody, "Go meditate." Even

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Churchill during the Second World War, to get inspiration, would sit down for a while and meditate. In fact, he even went so far that he would like to take his bath when he had lots of problems, when the world was getting destroyed, and he would just close down in his bathroom with a tub full of water and he would start his meditation.

Once, in the Himalayas, the great mountains of India, I was looking for some people who would meditate. It is quiet, pleasant, in cold season, where there is ice and snow, and seeing those monks sitting in lotus position, we might be having warm clothes whereas they are almost naked just with some ashes on their face and body. We wonder, how come they can survive? Then in that search, one day somebody told me that there is one *sadhu*, one monk, who lives at the high top about 4,000 meters and up, more than about 3,000 feet. So I went to the Himalayas, the source of the River Ganges. Then they asked me to cross the glacier and climb up again, and there I met this half-naked *sadhu* who was sitting. I tried to go to him and to ask him "Please teach me meditation." He would not move. He would not even look at me. I was almost afraid. Then, after ten minutes, I saw that he was not getting wild with me, so I sat beside him, but he would not give any answer to any of my questions. I remained sitting half an hour, almost one hour, and then after an hour, he asked me "What would you like to know?" And I said, "Please teach me some secrets of meditation." He said "No. You know how to read. You know how to write. Why don't you go and read in the books? Everything is written." I said "But practice is certainly important." And he said "Well, you were studied. Tell me which part of the body or what cells are the most intelligent in the human body? The muscle cells? The bone cells? This or that?" And naturally I replied, "The nervous system and the nerve cells that I would say are the most intelligent in the human body." Then he asked me, "Where are they situated in the body?" I answered, "They are situated in the brain, in the head, and in the spine." Then he said, "There you come to the right place, but humanity has not progressed beyond this." I didn't understand anything. I said, "You mean to say that intellectual knowledge is not good or our arguments are not good or what is it? Please explain." And he said, "It is good. Everything is good. But the higher thing you can come to with your brain, with your nervous cells, is only this much." I said "What is this much?" One of his disciples was standing against the light from the fire. Then he asked me, "Please draw this box where these cells are concentrated." I didn't understand but then I drew in space the head, like this, and the vertical column, the spine, and the

coccyx the point. Then he said "What mark does it make? An exclamation mark?" Then I said "It is a question mark." So he said, "There you are. How intelligent can you be? The most that you can do is you come to the question, but you cannot go beyond the question and the meditation is certainly something beyond this question so would you like to go beyond it? That is the phenomenal question for you. The day that you decide that you would like to go beyond this question mark, then certainly something could be done."

Certainly, I went on questioning myself what to do, what not to do. I went to nonviolence and how to develop the nonviolence within one's self—that is something extraordinary. In India we have one small saying in Sanskrit, if I translate it into English, it will mean "One drop of practice is better than an ocean of theories." So instead of speaking about meditation, let us try to experience or experiment.

Each teacher will teach in a different manner, each master will teach in one's manner. But scientifically, I would say that when the right brain and the left brain come into some harmony, you will enter into meditation. When your energy or what you would call yin and yang, when they come into equilibrium, you will come into meditation. When your positive energies and your receptive energies...the word for meditation in India is ... and the word for meditation in Japan is zen. In India, the word went to Tibet, then it crossed the Himalayas, and then it fell on the other side of the Himalayas, in China it became chan and so became. And so going a few more kilometers, hundreds of miles, coming almost on this side of the ocean, but still in China, it became from to and when it fell down into Japan, they could not pronounce either, so it became zen. You see how the word became zen. But for meditation, techniques would be different. For example, Kirti-ji is a Jain monk and I am originally a Hindu Brahmin. We sit together, we discuss, and very often we go even to the other faiths and see, listen to their practices, and then we come back and we decide what lies behind because all the religions are using like the engineers. They use the science and the science is the meditation. There is a science of physics, how to use the electricity, and so almost all of the religions would use these techniques. So for example, one day we were listening to the Gregorian songs in one church, but then the sounds were repeating. The conclusion? That these sounds are the sounds that would help you to go to some sort of inwardness.

And so today of course I cannot make you go into all details, but we can try one thing...the breathing. The respiratory moment is certainly

related to the mind moments. For example, you want to be angry or you are very angry. Then your respiration would be all topsy-turvy, you would be breathing fast. It should not be that you close your nose or you close your mouth—then you would be suffocating. Only thing, you will not need to breathe so much and the breathing will calm down, meditation will take place. Similarly, people are most astonished when I tell them that the right nostril and the left nostril, they both do the work of breathing, but they have two different functions. They say “What? The function is to take the air in.” “No.” When you breathe through right nostril, it builds up the energy of *sadhu*, the soul energy. It builds up also the left brain synergy, that is analytical energy, questioning energy, and the vitality of energies. So if you want to give an order to somebody, then naturally you need to breathe through your right nostril. But on the other hand, if you would like to go into peaceful mind, to go into receptivity, certainly you have to breathe more through the left nostril. But let’s take an ordinary example. Suppose if you are a small little secretary and you have Big Boss, certainly the Big Boss gives you the orders. But one day, if you would like to convince your Big Boss you want to take a holiday. What should you do? You should breathe through your right nostril, and you should ask him “Please give me a holiday.” Your boss should breathe through his left nostril so that he is receptive and he says “Oh, how nice, please take a holiday.” Certainly this is not that easy; you will not go and close part of the nose of your boss, but when it happens, be sure that he is breathing in that way and you are breathing in this way. These things when you know, you can develop positive signs.

Just to start preparing your selves, please be seated, the back straight. The spine should be as straight as possible. Certainly in India we put our legs cross-legged, sometimes in the Lotus position. What is the reason to do this? Of course, laughingly we always say that if you are in the Lotus position, you cannot go to sleep or if you fall, you cannot fall down. But the true reason is you close the circuit of energies that are going below and you want the energy circuits to go above. The vertical column is the main branch where the solar and the lunar energies flow. So please be seated, the back straight, shoulders relaxed, take a deep breath, breathe in and then let it out slowly and softly. Before we start, let us just put our five fingers on our navel and just produce any sound, “Ou” or “Ah.”

Keep your eyes closed. Shoulders are relaxed. Eyes are closed. Your breathing is slow and smooth. Just verify that no part of the body is having any stress, the feet, the knees, the legs, the back, the

stomach, the chest, the hands, the arms, the fingers, the face, the eyes, ears, cheeks. No tension in the jaws, no tension anywhere in the body. Let your body become completely relaxed.

Your eyes are closed. Your breathing is going on softly, regularly, nice movement. You breathe in and you breathe out. Just concentrate on breathing in and breathing out. Be aware if you are taking the energy in and your letting out all the conceits. Breathe in; breathe out. Breathe in; breathe out. Your concentration is on your respiration.

Now imagine that you breathe in a new cosmic energy, an energy of peace, an energy of love, energy of harmony, energy of beauty. You breathe in this new cosmic energy and this energy, when you breathe out, it spreads in all of your bodies, in each part of your tissues, not only in your body, but it spreads around you. This energy of love, harmony, will touch the friends and the loved ones around you. This energy will touch and help the other people about whom you think and of those of whom you do not think and even the people who are in a position who are against you, who could be called your enemies. They will be touched by this nonviolence, by this inner peace.

Just go on breathing and give attention to your thoughts.

Do not let your head become a public place where anybody can come and anybody can go out. Let your head be your own house where you invite some people and similarly, in your head only some thoughts must have the right to enter. Certainly it is difficult. Do not worry. Let them come in and let them go out. This said, in the beginning, you let the thoughts come in and go out; you just observe your thoughts. You observe for one session of meditation, you observe for one month, for one year, for many years. In the beginning, you become an expert at observing. Just start seeing your thoughts with the idea of controlling, of becoming aware and of controlling your thoughts. And only for years of practice when you have been able to control a few of your thoughts, you go into mastering your thoughts, mastering your mind and only a few thoughts can come in and only a few thoughts can go out.

The most interesting thing is to let there be space and silence, silence which is there behind every thought, silence which is there between two thoughts like a monsoon sky or a sky full of clouds, where you do not see any patch of blue, clear sky and all of a sudden, you see a small little hole in the sky where you see a little bit of the blue of the sky...just try to penetrate through it and just go beyond

the clouds into the open sky. Similarly, among many thoughts, in between the thoughts there is silence that lives...just keep up with that silence and go in the world of silence. When you arrive in the field of silence, concentrate within yourself, within your heart, and imagine a small, little light, a flame of inner light that is there in you. Concentrate; meditate on that inner light. It is this inner light which is your true self, it is this inner light that is the true God, it is this inner light that is the true world.

*“Om Shanti-hi, Shanti-hi, Shanti-hi.”*

In fact, this is where we should go into meditation. There is a workshop on it and I will be able to show you some slides and be taking you into the education for this peacefulness of the inner mind or education for nonviolence or the true education.

## **GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY: OPENING CEREMONY**

### **Introduction**

#### *Alison Van Dyke, Temple of Understanding*

Welcome. I hope that you are ready to enjoy this beautiful day with us. I want to just tell you a little bit about the Consultation. We are a group of ten interfaith oriented organisations who began to realize that interfaith education was a subject that everyone knew about, talked about, all of the organisations say that they are doing, but we realised that there was no real coherence, no curriculum. Educators in interfaith education do not know each other. They want to communicate; they don't know how and so we began three years ago with our first Consultation to bring the educators together. Our plan was to have a programme in India, but unfortunately, after 9/11 it was impossible for us to travel to India. In the end, we had parallel conferences in New York and India. Out of this process, this present Consultation group has come together.

We have a three-day Symposium for you. We have some of the foremost interfaith educators from around the world and we have brought them together as keynotes, as panelists, and throughout the next three days, you will have a chance to talk with them, with each other. Part of our plan is for this to be an interactive experience.

The organisations represented are:

The International Association for Religious Freedom

The Interfaith Community

The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

Auburn Theological Seminary  
Cross Currents  
Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development  
Temple of Understanding  
Loretto Community  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
International Mahavir Jain Mission

We have designed the three-day Symposium so that if you want to know a lot about interfaith education, you can learn a great deal in depth by staying with us for three days. We encourage you to stay with us. We have a fascinating panel of experts in interfaith education.

Ibrahim Ramey is going to open with some explanation to you about his experience of interfaith education and will also talk to you about his work that is very much oriented towards justice and freedom. He will also help us move the process along to the next stage.

### *Ibrahim Ramey*

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, O Creator of the Hindus and Bahai's, O Creator of the Jews and Sikhs, Creator of the Christians and Yorubas, Creator of Muslims and Buddhists, Creator of Akan (?) and Hopi, Creator of Atheists and Agnostics, of Shintos and all living things and inanimate things, O Creator of our earth, our solar system, our galaxy, our universe, and the boundless universes that exist beyond number and comprehension. We give adoration and humble thanks to you today for having gathered us safely here in Barcelona to glorify you as we seek refuge in you from evil, from hatred, from suspicion and division, and as we strive to build a house of peace and justice for all living things on earth. May the work of this Parliament of the World's Religions and this Consultation for Interfaith Education enable us to contribute to the building of a sacred space of love among all of us, your children Amen.

As Alison said, my name is Ibrahim Abdil-Mu'id Ramey and I am pleased to serve as a Board member of the Temple of Understanding and as the Director of Disarmament Work for the Fellowship of Reconciliation of the United States. It is truly an honor for me to be here to welcome all of you as brothers and sisters to this Consultation for Interfaith Education and to the critical dialogue for peacemaking and mutuality that we will undertake over the next three days.

This Consultation is an evolving effort to deepen our understanding of faith and to bring this understanding to a more central place in

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both the institutions of learning and in the conduct of our own diverse faiths and spiritual traditions. We are challenged to examine ourselves in our systems of belief and practice while, in the words of our brother Raimon Panikkar, we strive to transform the nature of religion itself; that it might, “integrate us, link us, and make us whole and happy.” Our gathering here in the Consultation of Interfaith Education stands on the shoulders of previous Parliaments of the World’s Religions and on the visionary work of women and men who have taken to task the learning of faith in terms of universal love and service to humanity. One such person, one of only a number of illustrious brothers and sisters and people of faith was the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., a champion in the struggle for global peace and human rights. He wrote in 1967 an essay called “The World House.” This critical view of the human condition thirty-seven years ago reminds us yet today of the frailty of the human condition, of the perilous conditions of war, conflict, poverty and racial animosities that have afflicted all of us. Yet Dr. King, himself a deeply committed Christian, saw that our diverse faith traditions could be central to the building of a new world house; a house that rejects violence, militarism, and all forms of human oppression—a house that brings us closer to the realisation of peace, justice, and mutuality that represents the best of religions and the best that all faiths of all religions can offer today.

Yesterday, I engaged in the wonderful hospitality of the Sikh brothers and sisters in their community. As I was sitting and having a meal, I fell into a conversation with a young man from Mexico who asked me rather pointedly if I thought that religion was even necessary in the modern world. I reflected at that moment on the violence and the sad traditions of conflict in all faith traditions, and in the interaction of people of religion who are very willing to support war and the systematic destruction of each other. But I also had an insight that I wanted to share with you, and that is that religion is very much like water. At its worst, it is deadly and unfit for human consumption and will certainly kill us. But at its best, it is the core of physical life itself; a substance that makes up most of our existence in our bodies and without which all of us will die.

I believe that interfaith education and understanding is very much like water in that it is the mortar that holds together the bricks of the world house—and to create structures of understanding that are available not only to ourselves, but to our brothers and sisters in the world house, then that world house of mutuality and care and love will need to be solid and secure, and it will stand firm. I believe also



that this understanding of water, and this understanding of the centrality of water, is getting us off to a great start. The Consultation in Montserrat that directly preceded this Parliament gives us a perspective of what real interfaith cooperation might lead to, the human good that it would lead to, the mutuality that it would lead to, because by addressing the issues of water, the resettlement of refugees, handling the debilitating debt of Third World nations, and counteracting religious extremism and violence, we at this Parliament and at this Consultation can actually ground ourselves in practical work for the true peace of interfaith cooperation and global transformation.

Let us open our hearts and minds to the possibility of building the world house. Let us learn from each other, question each other, and in doing so, look more deeply at our own traditions and at the ways in which we might be aware of mutuality and cooperation in those traditions as we practice them.

I want to say one other thing and that is simply that as a person who works daily for global disarmament, both conventional and nuclear disarmament, one of the things that binds us together in my estimation is the fact that religions which can be willing to support war and violence also have traditions that have stood against war and violence, and that in fact have saved the lives of millions of people in areas of conflict.

The world spends approximately a trillion dollars every year on weapons and armaments. Many economists have estimated that only thirty percent of that amount of money would provide drinking water for every person in need, housing for every person in need, medical care and food for every person in need, and in fact, would contribute to the building of an infrastructure of peace and justice. I believe very strongly that people of faith and faith communities are central to the task of making that transformation real and that the best of who we are, and the best of the traditions that we represent may in fact bring us to that day of a world house for all of us and all the children of God.

In closing, thank you for being here. I honor you for being here. I celebrate the sacrifices that you have made to be here and know that in fact in the words of our own great writer, sister Toni Morrison, "that anything that we love can be saved;" that any religion that we love can be saved, that any community that we love can be saved, and in rallying ourselves in love and understanding, we will move forth from this Consultation to a better and deeper and more beautiful world. I thank you for being part of that.

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## INTERFAITH EDUCATION: A GLOBAL IMPERATIVE

### Day 1: Introduction

*Alison Van Dyk, Temple of Understanding*

It is now my pleasure to introduce our panelists. We have three in my mind amazing ladies before you—some of the finest interfaith educators that I know in the world. I am going to begin with Dr. Heidi Hadsell on my left. Dr. Hadsell is the President of Hartford Seminary in Hartford, CT, USA. She came to the Seminary from the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Switzerland where she served as the Director.

*Dr. Heidi Hadsell*

Thank you very much. We have been asked to speak about interfaith education as a global imperative. We all know why interfaith education is a global imperative. We live in a global village.

Economic globalisation is proceeding at a fast and relentless pace, although the optimism of the economists of a decade ago about globalisation has dimmed considerably in recent times. Economic globalisation is provoking cultural change at an equally fast pace which occasions, in all of our religious communities, disorientation, confusion, the breakdown of values and habits, ways of life, and the assumed truths of each of our communities, each in its own way. Economic globalisation and the changes it produces is throwing us together in unprecedented ways and pulling us apart in unprecedented ways.

So, as religious people, we are less sure of who we are ourselves and still ignorant about who the other is. Or, alternatively, in self-defense against change, we become more sure of who we are and the truth that we possess and more sure that the other, whoever he or she is, has nothing to offer. We find ourselves in a situation where on the one hand, we have disorientation and confusion; on the other hand, rigidity and rejection of the other. Meanwhile, the global processes continue—the economic, the cultural, the technological, the information. And unless we as religious people take hold of the moment or seize the time, as they say, the voices of our religious communities, the voices of our traditions, the knowledge of many centuries, indeed thousands of years that we carry, the truths that we profess, will be impotent to impact these global forces, these global forces that are so relentlessly shaping our lives. We will be impotent to impact them except negatively through the violence of the extreme elements found in many, if not most, of our religious traditions.

As we know, economic rationality has no nation, no religion, no culture (unless it is the Coca Cola culture), but it does have a logic and a value system. The logic and the values are ones that tend to level everything in their path. The common economic denominator is profit and loss, efficiency and inefficiency, free markets and consumption. These values may be fine for economists. I am not here to debate that point today. My point is that whatever else they are, they are not the sum total of human values and human wisdom. We are not condemned to live in the iron cage that Max Weber described over a hundred years ago.

As religious people, as carriers of other human sensibilities, sensibilities that give meaning and dignity and depth and order to human life, it is our common task—each in our appropriate ways—to not leave the public square empty of everything but the marketplace. A global reality has been given to us or forced upon us. It is up to us to decide what we do with this. It falls upon us as religious people to witness together to another vision, to alternative ways of being, to the potency and meaning of values that are too often marginalised.

An important way forward is the way of inter-religious education. Inter-religious education is multifaceted, it is formal, it is informal, it is academic, it is experiential. It all depends on who the learners and who the educators are at the moment. Some tell stories; others engage in almost mathematical theological debate. Each approach in inter-religious education is shaped by religious tradition, by culture, by the interests and the affinities of those involved and also dependent on local context. Some will educate through sharing of different spiritualities; others will do textual critique; others will concentrate on doctrinal matter; and there will be those who learn through the everyday dialogue of life together. And most of us will learn something from all of these approaches.

The best we can do as educators is to affirm each of these approaches. The thing we want to avoid is to spend our time fighting with each other about the right way to do inter-religious education. The carefully planned programme for the next three days of this Symposium lifts up and provides space for each of these approaches. My approach, for example, because I am a Christian from a liberal branch of one of the churches of the reformed tradition and I am also an ethicist, is an approach that privileges religious education that sheds light on themes that the global realities have put on our common agenda—themes that I think religious people need to think about

together: science; genetic engineering; cell research; euthanasia; the environmental questions such as our air, our water, our earth, and the common stewardship of our creation; human exploitation; child prostitution; forced labour; the roles of women in our societies. My list could continue. The point is that this is MY list, not YOURS. There is room and plenty of need for our multiplicity of concerns and involvements. It is critical, however, that whatever we concentrate on, we take seriously the global context in which we think and act. This context, and our awareness of it, should give us new eyes through which to read our texts, interpret our traditions, learn from other traditions, and see with new eyes as we carry out the self-critique that any genuine education requires.

In teaching social ethics on the kinds of themes I have just mentioned, I have discovered that I can't do my job as a Christian social ethicist without drawing upon and learning from experiences of communities and religious groups around the world of our many faith traditions. Muslim students in my classes in ethics greatly enrich the dialogue and the awareness and the debate that we have among us. Of course, more often than not, it is through education in other faiths, that we can best express the value commitments motivated by our own faith. An obvious example: my tradition teaches love of neighbour as do all of our traditions in one way or another. I have to figure out therefore and help my students figure out what that means in a global context. Clearly, in a global world, my neighbour is not just my neighbour across the street, but my neighbour is across the globe, and my neighbour is a Hindu, a Jew, a Muslim, a Buddhist, an Atheist.

I have been involved in many ecumenical conversations between Christians for many years. Christian ecumenists often say "Who can believe the Christian faith if Christians can't even talk to each other?" In the global and plural context of the 21st Century, one might say, and indeed one might insist, that the ability of religious communities to talk to each other and to learn from each other is similarly a question of credibility. Not the credibility of the Christian faith this time, but rather the faith of each of us and each of our traditions; the credibility of religious faith itself. It is not enough that we come together and learn about each other. We need to help each other find our voices and our common voice as people of faith so that we take not just other religions as learning partners, but also so that we can engage the wider world order. The conversation starts between people of faith, but it must move and extend beyond these boundaries.

My time is running out. As an earnest Protestant, I have talked about our tasks and our duties, and our obligations as people of faith as we learn together. I want to say that while daunting, these tasks, this process of inter-religious learning, is also a source of real joy. I have been involved in Christian theological education all of my professional life. I am now at an institution that does Christian theological education but is also fully engaged in inter-religious education, especially between Muslims and Christians. And I say with great joy, I can't remember a context I have shared in which the delight of discovery and the joy of learning together and being together is more palpable and more real. This joy that comes from inter-religious education is a source of energy and also a gift that we together offer to the wider world.

*Alison Van Dyk*

Our next speaker is Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos from India. Dr. Master-Moos, the Founder and President of the only Zoroastrian College in the world in Mumbai, India, is the recipient of the Dag Hammarskjold Award in 1968 and the Medal for Interfaith Peace by His Holiness the Pope John Paul II in 1989. It is my pleasure to turn the floor over to Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos.

*Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos*

Beloved souls, enlightened educationists, and dear friends, let me thank Alison Van Dyk and Laxmi Shah and the Temple of Understanding and all you good folks here who have gathered for organising this wonderful, educational seminar within the Barcelona Parliament.

At the outset, let me say that I am sure you have heard the name of Zarathushtra, the founder of the Zoroastrian Faith who endeavored to bring about this kind of spiritual awareness and revival of the wisdom, the ancient cosmic wisdom, that exists as the Golden Thread that unites all people of earth.

Let me commence by blessings.

The blessings of the archangels, the angels, all the good and holy spiritual beings, the souls who are the prophets of all the faiths, the soul of every great founder of different faiths, the blessings of Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb, the Prince of Peace of the present Aquarian Age, the Asho Farohars, the guardian angels, the blessings of the Holy Abed Sahebs—spiritually advanced Zoroastrian Masters who

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dwell in sacred abodes, the blessings of all the good persons who are living on Planet Earth, not just those who are physically present at this Parliament in Barcelona, but many millions of others who are with us in spirit if not in person, and the blessings of all the holy souls in heaven. I'd especially like to remember at this point Juliet Hollister who was one of the founders of the Temple of Understanding, thanks to whom I am sure, we have been greatly blessed.

What I'd like to highlight, considering the time limit, is what it is that draws us together here. The cosmic law that exists for all eternity, the divine universal and natural laws of the Creator of the universe, the Creator of light energy and matter. We are also governed by these laws whether we are evolving as stars in the cosmos or souls as constellations of stars, all coming closer to the solar system, as planets within the solar system, governed by these two beings referred to in the ancient language of Avesta—Spenta Mainyeu, Angel presiding over light and Anghre Mainyeu, Angel presiding over darkness. We have here the knowledge of these beings who preside over the forces of light and darkness, positivity and negativity, the electromagnetic field of the solar system which governs all the souls that exist within this solar system...the planets with their beautiful rainbow colors of light, governing the light of the evolving souls.

I think of Planet Earth which is a home and classroom for all the souls living here that have evolved from the level of the mineral kingdom to the plant kingdom with their beautiful myriads of colors with their flowers, their fruits. We evolve onwards to the connections with the plants and their life, to the level of the animal kingdom, the fish and the birds and the reptiles and the insects, and the four-legged animals and the two-legged animals, and evolve onwards to the level of being half angels and reaching the angelic beings. It is in this process of evolution that allsouls are endeavoring to progress spiritually. This is the purpose of our life on Planet Earth. It is the same purpose for all of us and knowing this, we are able to move forward toward the goal that every soul has of attaining at-one-ment with the creator of the universe by filling our souls with cosmic light of all the colors of the rainbow, gaining that high spiritual level of white light, of perfection, which enables us to become immortal, the white light of the creator. This goal is within the consciousness of every creature that lives.

What is it that we, as human beings on Planet Earth, have been given as our duty and our obligation and the moral laws that govern the whole universe? We have been given the sensibility that it is our

responsibility to enable all other souls to evolve. I am not speaking merely of pollution of the earth and the air and the water. Terrible things are happening. I have brought CDs full of what's going on with vibratory warfare that is perverting the mind not just of human beings, but destroying life of all levels and species. The crises faced by souls that cannot progress because their entire species in the form of plants and animals and fish and birds are gone. Not just dead as the Dodo, as the saying goes, but really extinct. It is our responsibility as human beings that, in the course of education, we impart not just technical education to our students, but this consciousness and awareness of spirituality; this underlying Golden Thread which is coming from ancient times through the high souls that have taken birth on Planet Earth, whether they lived in the Peshdadian and Kyanian Dynasties of about 9,500-12,000 years ago. This was the era, 9500 years ago, of Asho Spitama Zarathushtra whose name means the highest level of ancient spiritual Golden White Light of the Halo whose purpose was to influence all souls to evolve through practices that everyone can practice. He taught the method of spiritual progress through practising good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, *i.e.*, thoughts, words, and deeds in obedience of the cosmic laws...everyone can do that according to his or her own understanding and ability. Englishmen who followed the Greeks and the Greek Historians changed the name of Zarathushtra to Zoroaster in Greek and that is the name by which our ancient, oldest surviving monotheistic religion is known today – the Zoroastrian Religion in English. The Greek historians writing in the era of about 500 B.C.E. have recorded that Zarathushtra lived over 6,000 years before the Trojan War. Our own historians have ascertained, as well as by the scientific corroboration for astronomy, that the true dates are about 9,500 years ago from the present time period. But that is not the issue. The issue is what does this ancient wisdom have to offer for us now, here and now today, in the modern, present times?

Almighty creator of the universe has sent great souls from time to time in different places to remind humanity of these wonderful universal laws. Whether it was Shri Krishna who came to enlighten people in the Vedic Period or when times changed and the Vedic methods and systems fell into wrongful practices, Lord Buddha who came to revive the ancient faith, Lord Mahavir who brought the revival to the Jain faith, even Guru Nanak in a more recent time period, Lord Jesus Christ who came to teach us what was going wrong in the previous period of faith, Lord Moses who tried to make the people of that time

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period understand and be aware of the truths of God Almighty. And great souls have taken birth to honor the Golden Thread of knowledge of the divine laws with the ability to make people understand how to progress, how to be obedient to practices that are suitable for the souls taking birth at that time period, having their links with the planets and the stars, with all the different colors of the rainbow. The whole rainbow colors of light lead to one color—white light. That is what every soul is aiming at. And this perennial philosophy, the Golden Thread of ancient cosmic wisdom, has been kept alive in the last 200 years here also in North America and in Europe, from the time of Sir Francis Bacon and Mozart, the composer, “Who Spoke of Zarathustra” in his wonderful opera, *Zauberflotte*, from the time of Benjamin Franklin and Dr. John Howard Zitko. In India through the Theosophical Society Founder, Madame Blavatsky, and the late Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff who brought the light of illumination of Ilm-E-Khshnoom to the Zoroastrians in India which we now trying to spread in the English language for the benefit of humanity worldwide through the Mazdayasnie Monasterie and Zoroastrian College. Great souls have come and great souls, enlightened souls, are trying to follow and preserve the Golden Thread that educators should focus on.

In this Parliament in Barcelona—there have already been so many conferences, Parliaments before this—but something should come out of this Parliament and as I have suggested in this paper, it is that we form a working committee and through the working committee, invite people of all different religions, world scholars and practitioners of their own faith, to identify in different countries educators who have the capacity to write a series of graded textbooks for children from kindergarten up to the university level and through this method, within twelve years, to bring about a spiritual renaissance for the 21st Century so that Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb, the Prince of Peace of the Aquarian Age can be helped in his work to promote peace and understanding, goodwill, cooperation, harmony, amongst the people of Planet Earth instead of what we are witnessing today—senseless wars and destruction. This committee can then recommend and with the cooperation of such organisations as UNESCO and UNICEF and NGOs like the Temple of Understanding, like our Zoroastrian College, and the World Fellowship of Inter-religious Councils, the United Religions Initiative, and many other NGOs, we should identify those universities and colleges which are willing to promote this kind of spiritual education.



At the Zoroastrian College, we have given the facility through the Interfaith Peace Department to do research. Any person anywhere, in any country of the world, who is interested to write a research thesis for the degree of M. Phil. or Ph.D. can do so. You don't have to come to Sanjan, the Zoroastrian College. The Research Centre Library is located in a beautiful countryside in India. It has got one of the best libraries of ancient cosmic wisdom books—you can sit at home and do your own research and submit it to the College for promoting that awareness which will benefit you in the form of a degree, but it will benefit the whole world in the sense that you will be able to reach out to give your ideas and your contribution toward world peace.

Another project is for children. I recommend that a calendar be produced every year through the schools in different countries and in different languages giving the major holidays and festivals of the different religions so that children learn to participate actively in the festivals of their friends and not just simply celebrate Christmas or Eid or Diwali, but celebrate ALL of the festivals. The Zoroastrians celebrate every festival. We are perpetually enjoying ourselves celebrating with all of our friends.

We pray in the Avestan language, for all those good persons from amongst the living whose actions are good and whose goodness is judged by righteousness, Ahura Mazda, Almighty God Creator of the Universe. We are not the judges. The judge is above.

### **Alison Van Dyk**

Our next speaker is going to want me to explain to you that she is a peace educator; however, we have noticed that she is sneaking a lot of interfaith ideas into her peace education so we persuaded her to speak with us today. I now wish to introduce Dr. Betty Reardon. Dr. Reardon is the founding Director of the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City, USA, and founder and General Coordinator of the International Institutes on Peace Education.

*Dr. Betty A. Reardon*

Thank you all of those who have come to lend your energies to this effort and my special thanks also to the Temple of Understanding for this invitation to join my efforts to these efforts.

As Alison indicated, I speak to you not as an interfaith educator but as a peace educator. People say I am a person of faith. I think I am

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a person striving to be faithful to a faith and I do strive also to enact another faith that I think joins us—and that is the faith in the human capacity to overcome the problems that we have been reminded, that we are called, to confront.

As a peace educator, I believe that we have to do not just interfaith or inter-religious education; we have to do what I would call multi-faith education—we all need to understand what our sisters and brothers believe. We need to understand so that we can relate positively and fully to them, and so that we can engage in controversy with them when necessary around some of the civic issues in a fully respectful way. That is in a sense what peace education is about—trying to create those capacities.

I also think that we have another major task that faces all of us in the secular world. The problems we face require us to humanize the secularised world, to humanize those decision makers who rationally put themselves apart from some of the standards that we have embraced and internalised, some of us because of faith, some of us because of a deep reflection on what it means to be human. What it means to be human, those of us who practice peace education believe, is to realize human dignity and to take on human responsibility. I believe that if we were able to fully enact these two elements of peace education, we would be able to derive what UNESCO has called “A Culture of Peace.” Something that I like to refer to as “Cultures of Peace.” Many cultures of the world, not necessarily integrated into one, but living as the word was said yesterday, “convivially together,” a “*convivencia*” of cultures.

Now what as peace educators do we believe such a culture requires? Primarily the foundation is a commitment to human fulfillment of the whole person including spirituality as an aspect of human dignity; the realisation of the spiritual dimension of the human person no matter what form it takes is the major manifestation and the fruit of human dignity. Such a culture would also value religious diversity and freedom—the full freedom of diverse religions and cultures to practice their belief and to be fully respectful of each other’s traditions, and to work with each other when necessary to devolve what some U.N. language refers to as “harmful practices” in cultures. I like to think that the most harmful practice that takes place in religion which has been referred to several times this morning is the perversion of religion to political purposes, to enlist people in striving and sacrificing for the goals and objectives of political leaders in the name of defending their faith.

We need, I think, to ground what we do in the present form of peace education, whether this is done in the interfaith arena or not, in the ethics of human rights, in the specific articulation of those rights, in the international standards, and I would also say the specific treaties—I am adding to the list of civic education—and not only the treaties that refer to human life, but the international treaties that are coming close to a recognition of the fundamental sanctity of the earth itself. We need, I think, in order to do that, not only to work toward an education which commits us to strive for the preservation of religious freedom, the preservation of a culture, and for the renewal of the earth, but we have to educate very specifically about overcoming of all forms of violence, whether it is on the most intimate level, a subtle psychological abuse of a child, which we see everyday around us, through genocide, warfare, all those forms of violence are embedded in behaviours and institutions that we can educate to overcome if we have the intention to do so.

What is problematic, the specific problem that we face as interfaith or multi-faith educators? Peace education always looks to the goal of the realisation of human dignity, and human responsibility and to the transformation of violence into positive energy, into the nonviolence that would characterize a culture of peace. And it looks to the problematic and tries to find ways to frame the violence of the world in the forms of war and religious conflict.

In peace education, there are two frameworks that we can bring to educate toward understanding and overcoming the problematic of inter-religious violence and the violation of human dignity. One is the general area of intolerance in which we can specify religious intolerance. As some of you know, tolerance as a goal has been embraced fully into the programme of UNESCO, and they have developed many materials for teaching toward this goal. I, myself, developed a series on the topic that put forward a framework of how we can diagnose intolerance, including a typology and a scale demonstrating how it escalates and where societies should begin to take care. One seemingly small incident may be opening a path to the possibility of genocide. We find that intolerance follows a kind of pattern from discrimination against right up through destruction of a people. Perceiving such a pattern offers a way in which we can educate for understanding and changing, not only the attitudes of intolerance, but the process through which it can develop into severe violence. Viewing the problem as a process also helps to illuminate points of intervention to prevent inter-religious violence. Another framework would be the political problematic

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of the structures and institutions which pervert religions to their own intention. Political perversion of virtually every major world religion has produced a world-wide epidemic of sectarian and inter-communal violence to all world regions, an epidemic, producing major wars that undermine human security on a global scale, and pose new challenges to peace education.

What is the challenge for peace education? The challenge of peace education is to bring the problems of inter-religious conflict and the possibilities of inter-religious understanding, specifically and programmatically into all forms of education, formal and non-formal, systematically planning it, trying it out and doing it. The most promising approach to the challenge is human rights education, an integral element of comprehensive and holistic peace education is significant. An especially significant substance of this form of peace education would be Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on religious freedom and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance based on Religion and Belief. I advocate looking at these Declarations because they provide the cognitive terrain, the essential knowledge base for learning the principles of inter-religious tolerance and respect. One says to the learners "What is the meaning of this text? What are the conditions that gave rise to the text? What are the ways in which we can fulfill that meaning?"

There are two projects that are attempting to take up the challenge with the approaches I am advocating. One is called The Ethical and Spiritual Foundations of Peace Education. Alison mentioned that I am infusing inter-religious education into peace education. I believe that we should try to undertake to meet needs not being met by the others who are in the field. I found a great lack of looking into elements of religion that should be integral to peace education for the reasons I have noted. The International Institute on Peace Education works with various peace education centers. Three of them cooperate on this project; one in the Philippines, one in New York, and one in Japan. All have worked together on a general curriculum used in teacher training workshops, based on the major world religions, and also focusing on the ethical standards and the environmental principles in international documents. We are not trying to teach a course in comparative religions, but rather to prepare teachers with knowledge about what the major religions teach in regard to peace and justice issues— aspects we should all know that about each others' faiths.

A second of these projects was initiated by the International Association of Religious Freedom that cooperated with the People's

Decade for Human Rights Learning to devise a series of video dramas and a teaching manual based on hypothetical, but reality-based, violation of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to freedom of religious belief, for use in communities and schools to facilitate learning toward community action in support of freedom of religion and inter-religious tolerance.

Finally, I want to say that what has been said already by my fellow panelists articulates much of what peace education should be about. I wish that we had the kind of education that Dr. Master-Moos has spoken of throughout the world. So, too, I wish that we had the kind of intellectual challenging that Dr. Hadsell has spoken of in all of our universities. I hope that through our time together here we will find ways to make some of those models more possible. And please let us also remember our obligations to interact with the secular community and to bring about the humanisation of the full society. As we struggle for our own humanisation by understanding and reaching out to others who have all kinds of beliefs, we do, indeed, humanize ourselves and realize our own human dignity.

## **KEYNOTE PANEL**

### **Day 1**

*Michael Gottsegen*

We express our regret that the Dalai Lama is unable to be here today on account of his illness, but we will honor him by our dialogue on a topic that is close to his heart: the topic of interfaith engagement, of interfaith dialogue, of interfaith encounter and reciprocal enlightenment, of interfaith teaching and learning, of interfaith education—a matter that is of profound importance at this globalised moment in human history, a moment within which speed and ease of travel and shrinking of the globe place us in utmost proximity to the other who is no longer simply on the other side of the world, but instead, is right before me, the next man, my neighbour, my enemy, my friend.

Our four speakers today are Rabbi Abraham Sotendorf from the Netherlands, the first speaker. Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, from Birmingham, England, will be the second speaker. Our third speaker will be Dr. Leo LeFebure from Fordham University in New York City.

Let me introduce our first speaker more specifically. Rabbi Sotendorf is from Holland, he is a son and heir to a rabbinic family. He has built synagogues and interfaith understanding in the Netherlands and he

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is a Commissioner of the Earth Charter, a member of the Islam-West Dialogue Group and the World Economic Forum. Most importantly, when I asked him what he wanted me to tell you, he is a grandfather.

*Rabbi Sotendorf*

Shalom, Salaam, Peace.

And so, Holy Chosen One, grant your reverence on all of your works and on all that you have created, that all your works may fear and revere you, and all that you created prostrate themselves before you and form one union to do your will with a whole heart.

These are words for one of the High Holy Days in the Jewish Liturgy leading to words that we say three times everyday to mend the world under the ruler-ship of God. The global imperative for interfaith education, I was born into it. May '43, a man carries a suitcase, knocks on the door, a woman opens and the question was "Will you take care of this baby?" Because she did, doing the utmost deed of interfaith education to perfection, I am here.

We have come together today to be blessed forever. Just a few days ago in Montserrat, when a young man full of energy and ideas said "My greatest wish is to become a grandfather, but I don't know whether I will have grandchildren given the catastrophes of the world today," I could tell him as a grandfather, "Out of the catastrophes of this world, I have become a grandfather." I know that the door that was open to me is always open to God....shall we open the door to education, to life, to water or will we close the door? I believe that we will open it and that the grandchildren will drink healthy water of hope.

In 1973, two days after the outbreak of the War, with threat to life in Israel and surrounding Israel, I came out of a restored synagogue which had given life again to a Jewish community reborn (in Holland there were only 30,000 and now there are 40,000). I came out to meet the Dalai Lama, the revered spirit. With all the turmoil in my heart, I said to him that I had not slept that night. My heart tore me with the insecurity of life, but then I realised that I knew about the suffering of the Tibetan people, but that I did not have sleepless night because of it, and that somehow if the concern and anxiety could be unified, we would make this force to change. With a benign smile, the smile without an echo, he said "The Golden Rule is love your neighbour as yourself, but it is one commandment that you can only accomplish when the other responds. But one day," he said, "Jews and Arabs, Israelis and

Palestinians, Tibetans and Chinese, will love each other." It is for me a great honor to mention those intimate words that gave comfort to a rabbi in those difficult times. I wish him good health, to my brother, one of our great teachers.

Only yesterday, we were in a meeting in Montserrat and suddenly the meeting was interrupted because he had been taken ill. No one of us knew what happened to him, what his condition was. Fortunately, he is well. But at that moment, we turned in our discussions in a small circle and I suddenly realised, if God wanted that I should die, the last eyes I would see would be the people around that table. It was sudden. We didn't know we would be at this table, but I would see God in the eyes of the other for the last time. So when we see each other, we may remember that life and death are interconnected, that you and I may be the last ones to see each other on this earth. This indicates the preciousness of the unique individual.

Interfaith education is the innermost realisation that life is unique in each individual, that we are all half a shekel, with all our hearts a piece so that we can only be whole when the other is there.

Speaking at schools all over Holland and Europe, in the United States, I am so encouraged by young people who understand the need to share their knowledge about each other's spiritual traditions. I remember the day that a young man got up and said "Yes, but how it is with the handicapped because I only have half an arm. Is there a place for me?" And I suddenly was shocked. I didn't expect the question.

I said "Tell what you think."

He said "I feel at home in this school, but in the other school it was so terrible. That morning, that boy came to me and said 'Hey, you are only half a human being, half a human being.' It was so painful."

"What did you do?"

"What could I do?"

And then all the young men got up on their feet and applauded to show compassion. Only one moment, one boy, out of maybe some kind of mischief, hurt by words, some for life.

I asked the boy "Can I tell you a story because you are teaching more than the teaching of many generations of teachers. I realize you can say 'Only half a person,' or you can say 'You are half a person.' The one can be a curse; the other is a lesson."

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So, yes, I try also in my life always to remember that child who hoped to be reunited with his parents after the war. I try to build those bridges. One of them is something I would like to share with you. It was the beginning of the Parliament in Holland. Before the Queen's speech, there was a moment of reflection and it was always a prayer of Protestants, for Catholics, because that's the nature of Holland and used to be the nature of Europe. My question was "Could that not be inclusive?" I now have the privilege to chair a committee and we together, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Humanists, then Buddhists, Bahai, Brahma Kumaris, and many others join every time. Every one expresses words about his personal tradition.

Our theme is "Neighbour Stranger" because everyone is a neighbour and everyone is the Other. There are the two halves. So if we speak like was spoken in Warsaw at the meeting I attended about the extension of Europe, twenty-five countries now, and it was always negativism. I was asked to speak on the theme of the fear of the other, the hatred. And I said "Who could have believed in 1945 that Europe would unite, that German youth and the Jewish youth would work together; that celebrates neighbours. Every one of us is this stranger that is neighbour. "Love your neighbour as yourself" has another sentence that complements it. It is from the Book of Leviticus: "Love the stranger because you have been strangers in the Land of Egypt." This is the lesson for Israel and for Palestine, two halves of one expression, the innermost being, to be one together.

Interfaith education in every school in the world should be mandatory, not because Euros want it, but because God in all God's expression demands it, because a heart without a knowledge of spiritual partnership is poor. Let me say unequivocally, prayer, the echo of the near, of inclusiveness and so, together, we have also so much education to do. The world community, without knowing it, 149 nations have agreed on the universal Millenium Goals and they set a timetable. By 2015 all children in the world will have primary education, reading and writing and arithmetic, which means that our title "global" is also a commandment to make it global so that 135 million children who have no access to education, let alone interfaith education, will be able to seek an education. A simple suggestion: that every individual give every year an extra taxation and taxation is something in all our traditions, 1,000 of 1% of annual income. We would give a signal and money to make these Goals possible.

We are living, brothers and sisters, we are living, fellow speakers, with whom I share so much friendship, we live in sacred time. May



God give us the strength to make this time fruitful to reach out to meet each other, again and again, on the road to man's new world.

## **DISCOVERING THE BEST OF INTERFAITH EDUCATION THROUGH APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

### **Introduction**

#### *Alison Van Dyk, Temple of Understanding*

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Diana Whitney to you today. Diana is an international consultant and thought leader in the area of Appreciative Inquiry and positive change. In the next hour and a half she will provide an overview of Appreciative Inquiry and how it can be used as a process for interfaith dialogue. Diana is the author of ten books on Appreciative Inquiry, including *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry* which is wonderful—I have read it; it's very exciting. Appreciative Inquiry has been utilised by the United Religions Initiative group for over ten years. Diana is a founding member of URI. If you talk to people from URI, they will tell you that their success is due to the appreciative inquiry process that Diana and her colleagues created. Diana is a professor at Saybrook University and the founder of the Taos Institute along with being a successful business consultant. Her deep love of interfaith education is why she so graciously agreed to meet with us today. Let's welcome Diana Whitney.

#### *Diana Whitney*

When I got the call from Alison asking me to be part of the Interfaith Education Symposium, my answer was a clear "yes." In my mind, the question of interfaith education is at the heart of our future together. So to be able to bring my work to you all and have it be part of your dialogue about the future is wonderful.

As Alison said, my work is called Appreciative Inquiry. Today, rather than talk to you about Appreciative Inquiry, I am going to invite you into an experience of Appreciative Inquiry.

You have all been given an interview guide. In a few minutes, you will use it to interview one other member of the group. I would like you to look around the room and notice who looks the most different from you. Who is the person, if you were to say that there is a lot of diversity in the room, who looks the most different from you—they are old, you are young; they are Black, you are White; they are of a different faith religion than you. Find someone who is different to be your interview partner.

For twenty minutes, you are going to interview your partner. And then for the following twenty minutes, your partner will interview you. The purpose of the interviews is to really listen to your partner and to discover his or her interfaith story; who they are and what they care about when it comes to interfaith education; what is it about their practice—their unique spiritual or religious tradition that they bring to the question of interfaith education.

Listen and imagine your answers while I read the questions to you. Turn to page 2 where it says “Discovering the Best of Interfaith Education.”

### *Question 1*

Tell me a bit about yourself. What larger journey brought you to this place and time?

### *Question 2*

Tell me about a special moment in which you were deeply and positively touched by an interfaith encounter. Think about a time that you would say “Oh, that’s memorable; that was a highpoint. I learned something in that instant.” We have all had situations in our lives probably that we would say were interfaith encounters that were not positive, but we have all had interfaith encounters that were extraordinary and that have helped make us what we are. So think about one that has been a positive highpoint in your life and share that with your partner.

### *Question 3*

Share a little bit from your own religious traditions. What parable, what story, ritual, practice speaks powerfully to you about the importance of interfaith education and shapes your approach to interfaith education? Share a story from your practice, from your tradition.

For example, my practice is Native American Lakota. There is controversy about non-natives, people who are not born into these ways, practising these ways. But I have had the good fortune to be invited to a ceremony called a Sun Dance. The Sun Dance is one of the most sacred. A man named Albert White Hat, who is one of the chiefs of that particular ceremony, agreed to lead the ceremony only if anyone from any faith of any place in the world would be welcome. I have the great honor to have met him and to pray with him. That would be a story that I would tell in answering this question. Think of your own story.

#### **Question 4**

In your experience of interfaith education, what has been the most powerful and useful resource, programme, or person? If we were creating a guide to the world's best interfaith education, what one or two things would you recommend? Is there a teacher that you have had who knows how to really invite people of different faiths to get together? Has there been a book or programme or a gathering that we can all learn from by sharing?

Appreciative Inquiry says that the people who know the most about any subject are the people who are living it and doing it. In this session, we want to bring out the wisdom, your wisdom, about your experiences in interfaith settings and with interfaith education.

Now choose your partner and find a place in the room to do your interviews. You will have a total of forty minutes; twenty minutes for each interview. I will watch the time and tell you when twenty minutes are passed.

A central quote from my work is that there will be no peace in the world unless there is peace among religions. We will only know peace among religions when there is a conversation, a dialogue, among religions. The opportunity to meet people and to get to know one another is in and of itself a first step toward the kind of peace building that we all hope for the world.

What I would like you to do now is to introduce your partner to this new circle by telling what it is you have learned about him or her that makes you very excited to know this new person. The idea is not to read everything from the list. Share what is in your heart now that you want everyone else to know about this person that you have interviewed? Introduce your partner and share a story. If you heard an inspiring story about interfaith education from your partner, share it as you introduce your partner. You have fifteen minutes for the whole group to share—so two to three minutes for each person.

Enjoy.

*Circles of Stories*  
*Ela Gandhi and Grove Harris*

Ela: What is the larger journey that brought you to this place?

Grove: The smaller version of the journey is that I work for the Pluralism Project and am Managing Director. I have been there for ten years. We research religious diversity in the U.S. I had the opportunity with Parliament folks and the people doing this interfaith

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education consultation. There are a lot of areas of overlap and mutual benefit. It is really a treat to have a job that supports me in coming to this kind of event. To me, religious freedom is somewhat theoretical and needs a fair amount of work to make sure that it is more actual, that it is not majority ethos just by default. I started working with the Pluralism Project because I myself am a Wiccan Priestess. I wanted to make sure that there was more representation, and accurate representation within the Pluralism Project. I have been able to continue with this work and it has only grown larger, both for understanding religious difference in general and in my particular religious tradition because it is often denigrated. Beside being misunderstood, it is sometimes not considered a religion. I am very privileged to have my professional work dovetail with areas of my personal work.

Ela: What religion is your path?

Grove: The generic umbrella term is Paganism, but that means a lot of different things. For myself, my practice is an earth-based, feminist, eco-feminist and political with ritual that means following the cycle of the wheel of the year. In terms of feminist, it means that I am both a channel and a reflection of divinity. I might have intermediaries, but they are not required and I am an authority on what is divine. It is a very creative religion where I pray by using very concrete items, physical items as a kind of affirmation and intentional prayer, and is also called spellcasting. Does this reach any part of you?

Ela: It does. Yesterday, I had a talk about pagan religion and in Cape Town, there are aspects of this. I wonder why we call it pagan because pagan is a term that was coined by the Christians for a non-Christian? Why does one have to be a non-something? Why can't it be a positive term? I had read about some of the positive things that you did by going out to pray on the beach in Cape Town and the people who joined you also believe in spirits.

Grove: Certainly in spirit infusing all of life, including the trees and the rocks and the rivers. You raise a good point. I don't particularly like the word pagan. I use the word more as a category and within it, I practice Feminist Wicca. It is the way that I have put together to express my own particular denomination. I'd also be comfortable calling myself a witch but that can often elicit even more negativity. But then do you reclaim a term? There are so many different practices that there is usefulness in an umbrella term, though there is a benefit in not defining oneself in a negative way.

Ela: What brought me here is that I am involved in interfaith and there is a lot of misunderstanding. People do not really understand the meaning of what they are doing or of what they believe. They have a superficial understanding of their religion. I have been working with an interfaith organisation, WCRP, for the last fifteen years. We make sure that all of our official gatherings include people of all religious faiths and as we identify new faiths and new people, we tend to grow. We have prayers before the elections that are officially sanctioned. If we have other official functions, we offer interfaith prayers. These have become tradition and differentiate our position in South Africa and the position of particularism in other countries. Government and religion are separate in many places. In South Africa, we are saying that we do not separate these two; they are together. We have a religious leaders forum and all traditions are represented. It is very inclusive. When we have multi-faith prayers, we can't have so many players, but each group is asked to select someone to offer the prayer for that faith.

I felt that it would be important to share this perspective with everyone here. We are going to introduce interfaith education in our schools.

Grove: The study of religion rather than the practice of it, I would assume. When you said bringing together religion and the state, you are very clear about bringing together an interfaith religiosity as an interfaith approach. You cherish having the prayers present, but would require them to be inclusive of all people.

Ela: That's right. We also include the people who don't believe as well. Since we have a Communist Party, this is important. But there are people in that Party who do. People who do not believe often have silence or a meditation. Governmental positions use an oath or an affirmation.

Grove: How about a special moment?

Ela: I was born into an interfaith family. From early childhood, part of our prayer was inclusive prayer and we would say our prayers outside or in a room, not in a church or a temple or a mosque. We said our prayers and we included all of the traditions. I am a Hindu, though, and I am interfaith because it has been part of my tradition.

Grove: Where your parents from different religious traditions or did they simply join in creating a kind of interfaith or multi-faith expression?

Ela: They did join together.

Grove: Wow. That's very creative on their part to create what they wanted for their family rather than just following a pathway.

Ela: I think it is a rich experience, so I feel that this education is so important to be learned from childhood.

Grove: One of my questions about interfaith education relates to time. At what age does one put in the energy and resources? For yourself, you suggest that it should be quite young.

Ela: It was good for me because I don't have the prejudices of others. It does make a big difference...What has been a special moment for you?

Grove: Let me just tell one story that happened when I was teaching a course in World Religions in 2003 and one of the students—we were doing field work—was of a conservative Christian background. He went to visit a Hare Krishna Hindu Temple. He said that at a certain point he had to leave because he could feel the spirit move. The fact that he could see or perceive the spirit within a different tradition created for him a feeling of conflict; of disloyalty; of threat as though he might need to convert. He was welcome to be just simply a guest, but he felt that he needed to leave the temple. It was poignant to me. As his teacher, I said that it was his job to take care of himself and that he might want to speak to his spiritual advisors about the experience. But it was poignant for me because I feel free to see spirit wherever I find it. That is very precious to me. I do not have a problem if I sense it in a religious tradition that is not mine. I experience that as a gift that does not detract from my faith at all. I enjoy an eclecticism within my own tradition that gives me freedom in a way that I would wish for others. For this young man, I was sorry that the situation became so stressful. It does not need to be. I very much value openness to spirit, sometimes through hearing, through sight, through presence. To close it off feels to me like going in the wrong direction, but I do not need to judge for someone the need to be more exclusive.

Ela: People who have different experiences do teach us.

Grove: I do not feel that there are real boundaries on the way the spirit might move or speak to someone else. I feel that that multiplicity grows out of my own tradition. I think about spirit and energy and connection and awareness, yet they aren't developed by creating a container that is exclusive or narrow. I understand that for some that

is a way to generate connection, clarity or to be a certain kind of channel. For me, the breadth and more general openness is important. It is not an easy path because I do not have the comfort of habitual actions in the way that some traditions do. I like what I have and I view it as a gift in interfaith work. I believe that curiosity is important.

Ela: Not so long ago, I was off to give a talk at one of the Hindu festivals. It involved drama about the Monkey God. There are lots of interpretations...but the important part for me is the part about the virtues in which the king describes honesty as being his chariot, truth as the wheel. All you need are the values to be cherished, to be contemplated. What other people have doesn't matter if you have certain values.

Grove: My tradition is not textually based, so I can appreciate scriptures from other traditions. An elder in my tradition started to be involved in much political action. She shared a prayer: "May we be in the right place at the right time with the right tools to do what is needed." I cannot prepare or what to bring; I am going to need to be aware, to be pray for the divine presence to be in the right place. Sometimes I feel that people are simply trying to protect themselves in ways that they just can't. Maybe the life of the spirit is to help us be able to be vulnerable. What else would you like to say? Resources?

Ela: For me, that paragraph from the story is the most important resource. It is not always so important to have lots of resources, but to have access to core values. There is much in scripture to wade through, much that is artificial. Maybe it is part of nature to show us that we can be real, we can be equal.

Grove: Thank you. For me, I think science is a resource because we don't pay attention to the literal world around us. We need to pay attention to it.

Now that you have all experienced Appreciative Inquiry, you can see that it is unique from other processes in three ways:

1. It is relational. Appreciative Inquiry depends relatedness. When we invite people who do not normally engage in dialogue to interview one another they gain an understanding and respect for the other. We say Appreciative Inquiry works best with "improbable pairs" — people who are different from one another.
2. It is narrative based. Appreciative Inquiry seeks to uncover stories. When we hear another person's story—their life experience—

our heart opens and we feel compassion for them and their situation. Stories are the best tools we have for teaching the things that are most important to us. Through Appreciative Interviews we hear stories and we learn.

3. It is affirmative and life centric. Appreciative Inquiry is always positive, affirmative and life giving. We ask questions about what gives life, about when people are at their best. We recognize that we are not always at our best. And we know that if we study life at its best we will learn and bring it more fully into being. Appreciative Inquiry focuses on what we want more of in our world, for example, interfaith cooperation. By discovering the best of interfaith cooperation and education today we will learn how to make it our ongoing way of life.





## INTERFAITH EDUCATION, COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE: PERSPECTIVE AND RESOURCES

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### THE POWER OF COMMITMENT – INTERFAITH EDUCATION, COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE

#### INTRODUCTION

Nurah W. Ammat'ullah, Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development. I welcome you to the Consultation on Interfaith Education's Symposium on Interfaith Education... I have the very great pleasure of introducing our keynote speaker this morning. Madhu Kishwar is a senior fellow at the Centre for Studies of Developing Societies in New Delhi, India. She is the author of many books, including *Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays* and the founding editor of the journal *Manushi*.

But she is a whole lot more than that. As she describes it, *Manushi* came out of a human rights organisation that she founded over twenty-six years ago and to her that is her labour of love. The organisation focuses on economic stability for the very poor people and works to create inter-community peace, particularly in areas of orchestrated violence that on many occasions is premised on religious tensions and divisions. One of the missions of the organisation is to take social action to bring about change, but bring it about from well-informed and researched activism. It has also become popularly known as a women's rights organisation. Madhu, will you start please?

Throughout this year's Parliament of World Religions, I heard speaker after speaker reiterate the importance of cultivating a spirit of tolerance in individuals, about teaching them to rise above narrow

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creeds and learn to love and respect people of diverse faiths. Even in India, most of those working to promote interfaith harmony tend to take this approach. Individual transformation has an importance place in learning tolerant societies. However, we cannot expect each and every person to become a little saint or a model of virtue in order for us to build a world in which people of different faiths can live together in harmony. Some forms of hatred and prejudice cannot be banned; they can at best be kept under check and control.

Individuals pick up cues from and are heavily influenced by social institutions. It is only when individuals and groups interested in peaceful co-living that various religious communities succeed in creating a broad-based consensus in their societies and persuade their societies to institutionalize fair and just norms for developing the rights of various groups irrespective of class, nation, race, color, gender or religion that they create an essential pre-requisite for imparting interfaith education in a meaningful way. If people are not convinced about the intrinsic equality of all human beings, they are not likely to want to learn about their faith systems with a spirit of respect.

### **LEARNING FROM THE PAST**

Learning about other peoples' faiths is made easier if we see it first and foremost as an attempt to learn about their culture, values and collective aspirations. In pre-modern times, the task of interfaith learning and bridge building between diverse groups happened mainly through the following routes:

1. Occasionally, a few special individuals undertook long travels across major cultural and geographical boundaries, immersing themselves in the cultures of other communities and becoming two-way bridges of spiritual communication between distant peoples. Many of India's spiritual leaders were either roving preachers or took to preaching only after they had traveled far and wide. For example, Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, traveled extensively not only within the sub-continent, including remote regions, but also to the holy sites in the Middle-East before he began expounding his spiritual worldview. Not surprisingly, his following transcended religious groups and caste divides and he came to act as a bridge between the monotheistic Islam and polytheistic Hindu faiths. His followers too came from different faiths and sects. The holy book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, contains hymns composed by people of diverse faiths, castes and creeds.

2. Most ordinary people learnt about each other's religion through direct contact with neighbours and by participating in their festivals, important life rituals, and coming together to celebrate each other's occasions of joy and to share moments of loss and sorrow.

The Indian subcontinent that witnessed repeated invasions from the northwest by Central Asian peoples of the Islamic faith and cataclysmic regime changes for a whole millenium. And yet, over centuries of co-living, the vast majority of Hindus, Muslims, and other religious communities evolved humane and dignified norms of co-existing that included joining in the celebration of each other's festivals and having common shrines of worship as well as spiritual figures whose followings transcended religious divides.

In the Indic universe, there was no centralised religious authority issuing dictates regarding how one should relate to people of different faiths. People learnt how to act on the basis of their lived experience and enlightened self-interest. They realised that if they want safer lives, it is best not to provoke too much strife and hatred among one's neighbours. They did not need to study or be taught the religious traditions of others because they saw them practiced around them everyday and often even participated in at least some part of those observances.

## **BONDING DESPITE DIFFERENCES**

Such bonding was facilitated by a deep-rooted belief shared by people of different faiths that among many social responsibilities, *padosi dharm* (that is, the moral responsibility to one's neighbours or fellow villagers) is no less sacred than the responsibility toward one's family or caste members. For example, a woman born in a particular village was and is still expected to be treated as a daughter of the village by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike of that village who were and are still expected to be equally responsible for her safety.

This pact is not likely to have been observed uniformly in its pristine form by everyone in the entire subcontinent. But, that it constitutes the desirable moral code, transcending all religious divides in the Indic universe, is suggested by the fact that, starting from the early days of Indian cinema, an overwhelming majority of Bollywood films depict intimate inter-community bonds on the basis of neighbourhood and personal friendship between people of different religions. They repeatedly tell stories of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs living together with exemplary affection and camaraderie,

which includes exceptional respect for the other and even making enormous sacrifices, including that of their own lives, to protect their neighbours or friends in times of trouble.

Bollywood films never tire of showing a Hindu or a Muslim woman adopting a man of a different religious affiliation as her *rakhi* brother and the man chosen for this honour willing to lay down his life for the protection and well-being of his adopted sister.

The claims of neighbourhood, the bonds of friendship and affection are depicted as being at least equal, if not higher than blood ties. This is an important reason why Bollywood melodramas have come to be far more popular in the non-European world, especially in Muslim countries, than are Hollywood films. In such a moral universe, care for each other's religious sensibilities comes spontaneously. For example, it has been common practice for Hindu and Muslim neighbours to exchange food gifts on important festivals of both communities. However, Muslims take care to send only uncooked dry food to their Hindu neighbours out of respect for their individual taboos. Likewise, no Hindu family would offer a non-vegetative dish to a Muslim neighbour which is not made with *halaal* meat. For weddings and other feasts, traditional Muslims living in mixed neighbourhoods employ Hindu cooks to prepare separate food for their Hindu neighbours and vice versa. One can cite innumerable such examples of spontaneous and graceful mutual accommodation whereby differences in religion or caste-based taboos were, and are not, perceived as a cause of hurt or conflict. Unfortunately, many modern secularists who insist that inter-community harmony can be built only when everyone gives up all their religious rules end up creating more strife than harmony.

### **WHEN FREEDOM CAUSES HURT**

Currently, formal interfaith learning is mostly the domain of a small group of scholars. However, those who are academically knowledgeable about diverse religious faiths are peripheral, rather than central figures, in the waging controversies and confrontations in the political, social, and personal spheres. And yet, it is not uncommon for scholars of religion to trigger off inter-faith hostilities because their writings may be perceived as being 'hurtful' or 'insulting' to the believers of that faith. In India, we have been besieged by several such controversies over the years. Some of these involve Western scholars studying Indic religions and cultures. For example, a book on the Hindu God of auspicious beginnings, *Ganesh*, by an American scholar named Paul Courtright, caused a major uproar last year because

the author used Freudian analysis to interpret the mystery of Ganesh's elephant head and trunk which was interpreted as symbolising a limp phallus so that Ganesh is unable to compete with his father, Lord Shiva, for his mother Parvati's love. Shiva is described as a notorious womanizer. Ganesh's broken tusk is described as a symbol of castration, his love of *laddoos* (an Indian sweet specially used on auspicious occasions) interpreted as a symbol of satisfying his erotic hunger through oral sex. Those Hindus who led the campaign against this book saw it as part of a deep-rooted bias in Western academia, part of a tendency to trivialize or demonize Indic religions and cultures. The book undoubtedly is the product of painstaking research carried out by the author over several years. Courtright can genuinely claim to know more about the stories, myths and legends surrounding Ganesh, and has studied more traditional texts of Hindu mythology, than most believing and practising Hindus. What offended believers was not a lack of knowledge but by his use of a totally inappropriate tool of analysis to deal with a belief system and iconography of a faith that does not at all lend itself to the Freudian worldview.

This is a classic example of conflicts arising not out of ignorance but surfeit of knowledge combined with the unconsciously imbibed arrogance of Western academia which assumes that its tools of analysis and value systems enable them to understand impart judgment on the experiences and heritage of all human beings, including those who operate with very different worldviews. Instead of dealing with criticism leveled at the intellectual tools, many Western Indologists treated the conflict as a case of 'academic freedom' versus the intolerance of Hindu community leaders, thus leading to a bigger stalemate—this despite the fact that Paul Courtright himself showed willingness to discuss the issue and refrained from assuming an aggressive posture.

There is indeed a conflict between the demands of academic freedom and the right of every community to be treated with respect. Those of us interested in interfaith harmony need to consider seriously how we can reconcile these two conflicting claims, and evolve tools of analysis that can encompass and deal with the experiences and value systems of diverse peoples inhabiting our planet.

#### **WESTERN VISION PREDOMINATES**

The problem is further compounded by the fact that the study of other religions and cultures is a one-way process. While Western universities have any number of departments, centers and courses for study and teaching religions and cultures of non-Western societies as

well as their own, most non-Western countries are not engaged in similar studies of Western faith systems or even their own. Thus, for a serious scholarly study or teaching of Hinduism, Indians end up going to American, British or Australian universities because there are hardly any opportunities available for such study within India. So deep is the prejudice against religious study among the intellectually colonised secular intelligentsia of India that many of them think such education or research would only lead to strengthening obscurantism and communal prejudices.

When I organised the First International Conference on Indic Religions through the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in December 2003, many activists and academics let loose a defamation campaign arguing that this was a Hindutva inspired initiative and therefore ought to be shunned. Fortunately, very few people believed this slander, given the track record of CSDS and *Manushi* on the issue of minority rights. But it did frighten several scholars who stayed away from the First Conference lest they be forever tainted.

Such blind targeting and hate campaigns have meant that only politicians from the extreme right articulate religious concerns, while serious scholars who do not trash the religious and cultural traditions of India or do not join partisan campaigns on behalf of left leaning political parties run the risk of being dumped in the RSS-VHP camp and are assumed to be responsible for everything from the Gujarat riots to the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Thus, most of the serious scholarship ends up being processed in Western universities with inevitable inbuilt biases. This is not to deny that works of great scholarship have also been produced in these universities which have made knowledge of distant cultures accessible to people educated through the English language. But such insightful studies are small in number and remain confined to a very tiny intellectual elite.

Today, most people know the faiths of others through brief exposure to superficial descriptions on TV, in newspapers, film, and other mass media. The dominant forms of international mass media have deeply imbibed a distorted Eurocentric world view, with its tendency to see the cultures and faiths of non-European peoples as intrinsically inferior and backward, as mainly of anthropological interest, existing as a curious hangover of a lower stage in the evolution of humankind. Therefore, instead of leading to greater understanding, fleeting mass media of alien practices, when viewed in very different cultures, have

so far tended to increase divisions, strengthen prejudices and negative stereotypes.

### **EXCLUSIVIST CLAIMS HINDER**

We cannot provide meaningful interfaith education without effectively combating the culture of intolerance derived from the belief in the inherent ideology of an exclusivist, hierarchical jealous God, and without connecting such views to the powerful imbalances that came to define the economics and politics of our planet during the 19th and 20th Centuries. It is important to recognize that there are strong connections between authoritarian ways of thinking and tendencies to see god as an intolerant, tyrannical authority figure that punishes those who will not do His bidding.

Monotheistic faiths have consistently claimed that the commandments of their Gods are somehow more superior and justified than those of other faiths. But this attitude is not confined to them. For instance, the historic clashes between Shaivites and Vaishnavites in India would not have occurred if superior claims were limited to monotheistic traditions. Similarly, superior claims do not necessarily lead to violent attacks. The followers of various Hindu sects do believe that their own faith tradition is the best but that does not usually lead them to hate or attack others. Most believing Jews do hold that Judaism is the only true religion. But from the onset of the diaspora until the founding of the state of Israel, Jews were not usually known to have instigated violent clashes with other faiths. They were almost always at the receiving end.

Riots, massacres and genocidal attacks are almost always linked to conflicts over economic and political power. In such charged situation, religion often becomes the match to light the tinder. This is an important reason why politicians co-opt both the ideology and the articulators of claims of religious superiority in their battles with rival communities.

### **THE COLONIAL DIMENSION**

The historical process of military, political, and economic colonisation witnessed very aggressive onslaughts on the cultures, faith, and value systems of colonised people. They were urged to believe that the reason they were subordinated was that their gods were false and that their faith systems were not just flawed but outright evil. Not surprisingly, the right of anti-colonial national movements simultaneously gave rise to social and reform movements during which the

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colonised people tried to defend their faith systems, family organisation and cultural values.

At first, many important religious reformers in colonised countries tried to *re-form* their faiths in ways that would make them conform to the high prestige ideas of religion current in the West in the last few centuries. The reformers often pretended to be able to purge their religions and faiths of supposed evil such as the worship of images and idols, and the belief in many different forms of gods and goddesses. In India, the Western educated reformers endeavored to prove to their colonial masters that their value systems were not really different from that of the supposedly superior West by dismissing polytheism as a lower form of Hinduism meant to aid the illiterate masses and by claiming to worship a 'higher' spirit, in the naïve belief that the Vedantic conception of the Divine adopted by the colonial Hindu elite was not very different from the Christian belief in the one and only one all-supreme God. The Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj are prime examples of such reform efforts, which attacked expressions of Hindu polytheism with no less vigor than did Christian missionaries.

Consequently, religious practices and religious organisational structures of various indigenous elite groups in colonised societies went through drastic transformations to conform more with what the West considered higher spirituality, and their self-view came to be heavily influenced by their desire to have the dominant Westerners view them with respect and approval. As a result, this elite stratum became increasingly ignorant about their own culture and faith. The compulsion to view their faith through the perspective of their oppressors first created the apologists who refashioned a new version of their traditional faith. The sense of humiliation and self-loathing encouraged by colonial education created whole new generations of confused people with a fragile sense of selfhood. Many the educated elite in India spoke with gusto about the evils of Hinduism in the same tone and tenor as that of their colonial masters. That legacy of self-contempt remains alive even today. A few astute minds like Mahatma Gandhi recognised that in most cases such reform efforts by culturally elite only served to further alienate them from the religious beliefs and practices of their own people while not ending the humiliations they continued to suffer for not fully jettisoning their faith.

This did not however prevent the intellectually colonised elite from asserting their hybrid religious/ethnic identity as representing



modernity and progress. They convinced themselves that they deserve to be the true inheritors of societal power in post-colonial India.

### **POISON OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM**

With the growth of ethnic nationalism we witnessed vigorous and aggressive country movements of religious-ethnic nationalists antagonistic to the apologists. They reinterpreted religious beliefs to solve their own resentments as well as to facilitate their own struggles for power and influence. Once the more obvious forms of rule by imperialist fathers diminished or came to an end, most societies with a long history of colonisation transferred the same aggressive accession of identities that were used in deep struggle against their foreign rulers into internalised accessions of religious identities and unleashed purifying tendencies within each community. For example, the Muslims of India began to be urged to become 'pure' Muslims and Hindus told to make their Hinduism more pristine. Those Muslims like Jinnah and Iqbal whose families had converted to Islam a mere generation or two earlier began to assert their separateness with much greater vigour than Muslims claiming Turkish, Persian, Afghan or other foreign ancestry. Not surprisingly, such leaders became the most insistent proponents of a separate homeland for Muslims.

Thus, the process of sharing learning and allowing their commonalities within different faiths to find appropriate faith accession got disrupted. Volatile prejudice came to replace easy acceptance of differences in India. Newly ossified identities then came to be used in the intercommunity political power struggle for domination. In many societies, contentious religious issues are raised mainly by politicians who are often able to organize select groups of politically partisan scholars and religious figures to lend their mystique to divisive causes.

The corrosive power of religious nationalism led to the bloody Partition of the sub-continent in 1947. In this process, a key role was played by the divide and rule politics of colonial rulers who had shattered the many sophisticated and humane arrangements for co-living that had been evolved by many religious communities over centuries. Not surprisingly, large sections of Hindus and Muslims in post-independent India have grown to be not only deeply estranged but also increasingly ignorant about each other.

### **DISTANCE STRENGTHENS FEARS**

This ignorance grew fast because of mutual fear. Most Hindus who were pushed out of Pakistan through violence were too afraid to

stay in mixed neighbourhoods. Most Muslims who stayed back also felt nervous about living in mixed neighbourhoods for fear of rejection and retaliation. The consequent tendency of the Muslims to huddle together in neighbourhoods dominated by their own community means that Hindus and Muslims of the post-independence generation know less about each other than their forefathers and mothers.

However, this divide has been bridged to some extent by Bollywood films which steadfastly continue to portray Hindu-Muslim relations through positive stereotypes and the essential oneness of all human beings. This indicates that ordinary people prefer to hear this message rather than divisive ones. The theme of one of the big Bollywood hits of the 1970s, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, is a typical example of the quintessential oneness of people of different faiths as represented by the Hindu Amar, Muslim Akbar and Christian Anthony. (I have provided a detailed analysis of this theme in my paper, soon to be published in the *Journal of American Association of Religions*). Bombay Films have persisted with this message no matter how turbulent the times. Therefore, they have come to be an effective source of interfaith education.

### **IMPORTANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

The big challenge for intellectual leaders in post-colonial societies is to generate adequate self-knowledge about the religious and cultural traditions of their own communities without which it is far more difficult for people to get to understand others. Interfaith learning is like language learning. A person who is not in command of his or her own language will find it difficult to learn alien languages and certainly will not be able to understand their nuances. In a similar manner, it is more likely that those who are deeply rooted in their own faith and belief system will find it easier to understand that of others.

Those of us committed to interfaith education need to listen carefully and with respect to the living traditions within our own faith community. We need to become a living part of its own internal ever-transforming traditions and beliefs. Out of such a secure relationship with the vital elements of one's own faith—a relationship that does not need to look over its shoulder for some sort of stamp of approval from outsiders as a sign of its own legitimacy, or from those claiming exclusive authority over that tradition—each of us can better identify those elements of it that need to be explained to others and thereby make a better contribution to interfaith harmony.

When approaching interfaith education, we have a lot to learn from Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest modern day prophet and practitioner of inter-community harmony. He was very adverse to use of the word “tolerance” as a basis for such understanding because he believed that: “tolerance may imply a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one’s own whereas *Ahimsa*, nonviolence, teaches us to entertain the same respect for religious faith of others as we accord our own, thus admitting the imperfection of the matter. If we had attained a full vision of truth, we would no longer be near seekers but would have become one with God for God is truth...we must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faiths also yet not limit on that account but try to overcome those defects. Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only hesitate, but would think it our duty, to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths.” Thus Gandhi’s *dharma* encompasses the good in all religions, including his own, without being hostile to any. He recognised limitations and imperfections of all, including his own, and yet remained deeply and happily rooted in Hinduism.

### **LIVING VS. OSSIFIED TRADITION**

It is futile to base interfaith learning on the premise of teaching “true Hinduism,” “true principles of Christianity” or true tenets of Islam.” Religions cannot be known or understood through their tenets alone but are best grasped through understanding how and why individuals, at different times, interpret, practice, modify or reject those tenets in their daily lives and seek spiritual solace in a variety of ways that do not always conform to its tenets. Believers and apologists often tend to overlook the way religion is actually practiced by most believers. The tendency to dismiss those practices we don’t like as being “un-Islamic,” “un-Christian,” or “corrupt Hinduism” leads to only more conflict. Interfaith education should make people aware of these diverse interpretations and practices within the same religious group rather than merely attempt to teach the official principles of each faith.

Along with interfaith learning that teaches us the little particulars of each faith, what we need is a broad-based consensus on some basic behavioural principles and institutional arrangements that are just plain common sense:

1. Persuade the believers in hierarchical, exclusivist monotheistic religions to comprehend the limitations of their belief that their God is the only true God and all others are false.

2. Institutionalize ways to prevent hate speech and hate literature in religious preaching, even while people should be free to expound the virtues of their own religion.
3. Combat the growing culture of hatred promoted by the adherents of the new religions of revenge, who have chosen the path of violence and manipulation of state power in a desperate attempt to compensate for the historic humiliations and exploitation they have suffered at the hands of the dominant Eurocentric powers.
4. Build a broad-based consensus supported by institutional arrangements that ensures that no group will be allowed to use violence or the brutal might of the state power in settling disputes with other groups.
5. Build effective redressal mechanisms to mediate genuine grievances among religious communities as they arise so that people are not compelled to resort to violence to get a hearing.
6. Ensure that minority religious communities are not ghettoized out of fear or compulsion and that the majority community does not isolate itself from others.
7. Pre-empt the more powerful of the majority religious communities from using the power of missionaries to demand special privileges for themselves and we need to have minority rights in place.
8. Keep politicians out of religious issues and religious institutions which should remain under the charge of spiritual leaders.
9. Pre-empt the attempts by politicians to erase the multi-layered identities of people in favour of the monolithic identity based on religion. For instance, in India it is only when political leaders try to insist that all Hindus or all Muslims have identical sets of interests—no matter whether they are from Kerala or Maharashtra, whether peasants or artisans, Urdu-speaking or Tamil-speaking, rich or poor, Sunni or Shia, lower caste or higher caste—that they can be pitched against other as permanently hostile monoliths.

As long as Hindus and Muslims can come together to safeguard their economic interests as farmers or traders, vendors or peasants, Gujaratis or Kashmiris, to assert their various linguistic, economic or regional identity, or acknowledge bonds of commonality on account of being from the same village or neighbourhood, they cannot easily be pitched against each other as hostile, warring groups on an all-India basis by letting their religious identity overwhelm all other identities. In the process of asserting their multi-layered identities,

people of different religious faiths who cohabit within a particular region tend to learn about differences in each other's faiths very spontaneously as well as evolve areas of commonality in their cultures.

### **EVOLVING COMMON BONDS**

I would like to conclude by sharing some of our own recent experiences of strengthening such common bonds between Hindus and Muslims in Delhi. It all started with *Manushi's* attempt to protect street vendors from routine human rights abuses, humiliation, assaults on their livelihood and huge extortion rackets organised by our corrupt officialdom and a tyrannical police force. During our sustained campaign to attempt to get all those laws and regulations changed or removed that facilitate such extortion, we also undertook the challenge of combating the prejudices against vendors among officialdom and influential citizens who see them as sources of squalor and chaos in the city. In that process, we began organising the vendors to take responsibility for maintaining cleanliness and observe exemplary civic discipline.

To drive home the message that cleaning one's physical environment is as sacred a duty of every citizen as cleansing our system of governance of corruption and abuse of power, we began the practice of worshipping the humble broom with all the rituals that go with worshipping regular deities. Our broom deity slowly acquired a human form. We named her *Manushi Swacchnarayani*. Its literal translation would mean the Goddess of Cleanliness but she represents many more qualities. She incorporates the qualities of Laxshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, and Prosperity, Durga the Warrior Goddess who restores justice and destroys evil, and Saraswati, the Goddess of Wisdom and Learning.

However, we added some special attributes to her. The symbols of power put in the hands of our new ten-armed goddess are a broom to symbolize our respect for cleanliness of the physical environment as well as our resolve to cleanse the government machinery of corruption; a weighing balance symbolising our commitment to social justice; a movie camera, because a large part of the success of our campaign for policy and law reform for street vendors was due to our showing on videotape these human rights violations and using the documentary film for campaigns and lobbying; a *diya* (earthen lamp) to symbolize the dispelling of darkness and bringing hope for the poor and vulnerable; a pen and account book as symbols of the Goddess of learning and our honest account keeping; a conch shell symbolising purity and transparency as well as a clarion call for self-organisation;

*Sudershan Chakra* as Vishnu's weapon for defeating evil doers; a stall of barley to symbolize multiplication of wealth as well as the spread of our message since one seed can produce an unlimited number of grains; the tenth hand shows money pouring from the palm of the goddess held in *abhay mudra* to communicate our hope that citizens be able to earn a dignified livelihood without fear, harassment and extortion. The goddess stands on a lotus flower to convey how we are attempting to create beauty out of squalor.

All our vendor members, whether they are Hindus or Muslims, upper caste or lower caste, enthusiastically join in the rituals honoring our broom wielding deity with prayers from their respective faith traditions because they see clearly that *Swacchnarayani* increases their self-respect as well as strengthens their solidarity with fellow vendors for secular causes and lends vigor to their resolve to fight for their right to a dignified livelihood.

As the power of those politicians who run extortion rackets that victimize street vendors gets progressively challenged, they are making all possible attempts to weaken the organisational solidarity of our members. Some local politicians have also tried to make our ritual worship of the broom and camera wielding goddess into a contentious religious issue. But so far, they have not succeeded since the vendors of the area have happily accepted some of our Muslim members as local leaders on account of their organisational qualities, even though Muslims are in a minority. Far from acting as a divisive ritual, our broom worship has succeeded in making members collectively aware of the need to make their market a model of civic discipline and clean politics.

This is just one of numerous examples I can cite of how simple, everyday live interaction on the basis of shared interests leads to far more spontaneous inter-faith learning and common cultural bonds than is possible through mere classroom teaching or academic dialogues. When live interaction becomes routine, interfaith learning through the formal education system becomes more easy, meaningful and likely to lead to the moral, spiritual and cultural enhancement of all those who imbibe it. Without these pre-conditions being met, it might even create more discord.

### **Rabbi Hirschfield**

Thank you. Good morning. It is worth taking just a second to drink in what we have just heard. I believe that it would take a lifetime to

implement it, but I think it is possible to implement. I think to be able to come into a space and really challenge ourselves about the insufficiency of tolerance which at its base suggests that you go sit in your corner, I will sit in mine, and nurture the fact that neither one of us really likes each other, but there's nothing we can do about it. While in the short term, that may make us a little bit safer, in the long term, it will get us all killed. To embrace instead the infinite dignity and equality of every human being, of all people through direct contact and exchange, is actually one of the strengths that you shared with us. With great modesty, our speaker apologized for drawing examples only from India. It is actually quite the opposite. Each of us would agree to draw examples not from the theory of other people's existence, but from the reality of our lives, we actually could begin to move past tolerance and to that real open embrace.

In that spirit, I want to share a story that doesn't reflect so well on me. It is a real story from December 23, 2001. It had been a very long week and I was on my way to give a talk in London. All I wanted to do was to get into the departure lounge at JFK, read my newspaper, and let the world go by. I had just started to get comfortable when a whole group of gentlemen walked in. They looked like an ad for "Come, Join the Taliban." I was scared. I don't know if I was scared, or more scared that I was scared, but I was going to talk myself through this and grow past it. As I got to that place, because God has a sense of humor, they unrolled their rugs. I said if I leave, this could be one of the most shameful days of my life. On the other hand, I had better call home and tell my wife what I am planning to do, so that if I do die, she doesn't think I died of stupidity. I called and explained what was going on. She said "Yeah, so...I am just curious. When you show up early in the morning and put on your talit, your prayer shawl, and wrap up in your phylacteries, do you think people have a right to be scared of you?" Oh. Of course, what I had to deal with that night, again because God has a sense of humor, was that we were seated in the "Special Food Section." I spent the night speaking with two of these gentlemen, them with their Halal meal, me with my kosher meal, and it was unbelievable because in the end, I was real to myself, but they were not real to me. They were cartoons and I had to confront what it meant that other human beings, just because of my fears, were nothing more than cartoons.

I think interfaith education is less about learning about each other's faiths than learning with each other's faiths. That's how we become

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real to each other. I will never in my life know as I could or as I should about other faiths because, in all candor, I don't believe that I will ever know as much as I could or as I should about my own. But I absolutely can learn with people of other faiths and that is when we become real to each other, when we no longer see individuals as mirrors of some generalised community, but actually see the community as made up of the real people we have come to know. When that shift occurs, it is amazing how much justice is actually doable. It takes time. In a room like this, it would be very easy for us to tell "They—those people out there—that they have to do such and such." But there is no "there" because when we're there it will be here and we will have to go further. In my own tradition, the verb most associated with justice is "pursue." There is another word for procedural justice in Jewish tradition—it's called *mishpat* in Hebrew. You go to the judge and get a judgment rendered. You don't pursue that. You either pay the fine or you don't. But justice, not procedural justice, as a vision of the way the world could be is eternally pursued. It is never arrived at because it is always about going beyond yourself.

Peace is about wholeness in Hebrew. The same root for the word *shalom* is the word *shalem*, to be whole. Justice is a vision of transcending whatever individual, communal, national or religious story most animates you. In transcending, you do not leave it behind, but you always know that you are part of something larger. In the end, Jewish mystical tradition, which actually evolved in this community, teaches that it is justice more than any other trait that unifies the presence of God on earth because justice is always about the reach beyond where you are to the next larger thing, as you actually approach the Infinite. Interfaith education is the process of reaching out beyond our selves, beyond our comfort zones. It not only brings justice, it is justice.

### **Tiffany Puett**

Our next speaker is Dr. Al-Harith Hassan. Dr. Hassan is the Dean of the Psychological Center at the University of Baghdad, and is also the head of two NGOs: Health and Safety, and the Iraqi Parapsychology Society. In addition to teaching psychiatry and cognitive psychology, he also teaches comparative religions at Babel College of Philosophy and Theology in Baghdad. He recently completed the summer Peace-building Institute in Religion and Peace-Building and Conflict Transformation at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisburg, Virginia. Without further adieu, Dr. Hassan.



**Dr. Hassan**

Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here with you this morning. Ms. Kishwar was speaking about politicians and about India. India is subcontinent with lots of cultural differences. If we talk about developing countries, there are lots of differences. If we speak about politicians in democratic countries, it is very difficult to speak about interfaith education without politicians because they have the power and we have the wisdom as interfaith educators. We need to bridge the relationship between wisdom and power to establish commitment for a better world.

The second point I want to make is about Gandhi. We need to develop, to add more, to improve Gandhi's sections, particularly as we talk about the Middle-East dilemma with the new fanatical religious movements in Islamic countries. For example, in Iraq now, the fanatical trends are happening under the cover of Islam that is a religion of love, of peace. We need to improve and re-write Gandhi's motto to fit with our circumstances.

The third thing is that we need to study fanaticism and extremism as the other side of the continuum when we study interfaith education. We have got to have life stages in interfaith relationships. We have positive and negative processes in these life stages. We have trust versus mistrust, autonomy, identity, generativity, integrity. We have to have the initial contact with the Other, we have to trust the Other, but at the same time, we have to have our Arabic status. We need to honor religious otherness. If I have the autonomy, I have got to have the initial step of trust and can then arrive at the point of agreeing to disagree. The negative aspects have similar steps. If one starts by mistrusting the Other, then one wonders how to have a good relationship.

Another point is about interfaith and interface. As part of our commitment to find fruitful and positive links between religion and science, it would be a great opportunity to assimilate between interfaith relationships and education in religions and interface relationships and education in physics. The first is between faiths and religions; the second is between particles and matter. We should go there and see how particles and matter try to act together, try to love each other, try to do something for the other. We human beings, we do not do that so we have to assimilate between the interface education and interfaith education.

The last thing is a very important subject. The practices versus theory in religions is our dilemma. It is the dilemma of the current days in developing countries. We all know about the others from their practices...We talk in science about practicality and not only theory. With religion, we need to talk more about theory. I cannot understand the Other unless I know more about the theory of the religion. We need to start in the primary and secondary schools with the teaching of the basics of all of the religions. To make people love each other, understand each other, we need to teach them different philosophies of religions. We might then approach interfaith education in a very good way. We all ask for peace.

God bless you.

### **Tiffany Puett**

Thank you. Our final respondent is Dr. Paul Knitter. Dr. Knitter for the past years has been working to promote a globally responsible dialogue among religions. He is Emeritus Professor of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Since the mid-80s, he has been worked with the ecumenical peace group, CRISPAS, Christians for Peace in El Salvador. Recently he has published a critical survey of Christian approaches to other religions, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2002). He is also on the Board of Trustees of the International Committee for the Peace Council. Without further adieu, Dr. Knitter.

### **Dr. Knitter**

Thank you. Here I am, as I tell my friends, always on the edge of things, always falling off. I am very happy to be here with you and to respond to Dr. Kishwar's excellent paper.

### **Ibrahim Ramey**

I think that what you said, Dr. Kishwar, is worthy of response. I do not hear the speakers responding to you; I hear them presenting their own interpretations. This is also so typical of the way men treat women.

### **Dr. Knitter**

While I don't fully agree with you, I will try to take your admonition seriously. I would like to focus on what Dr. Kishwar has presented very clearly as an issue in interfaith education when she said "We cannot provide meaningful interfaith education without effectively

combating the cultural intolerance derived from the belief in the inherent superiority of an exclusivist, hierarchical jealous god and without connecting such views to the power imbalances that come to define the economics and politics of our planet during the 19th and 20th centuries." I think what she is pointing out here is that absolute claims can lead to intolerance. Such intolerance feeds or supports the unjust and violent economic and political policies that have caused so much human and environmental harm during the 19th, 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries.

With some slight reservations, I agree heartily and also sadly with you. The truth is that this is the reality of religion. Today, we are witnessing a world in which religious intolerance becomes religious violence. Because I feel that my religion is superior to yours, not only do I look down on you (that's the intolerance), but I am prone to take up the sword or the guided plane or the guided missiles when I think you have offended me. But I would not say that superior claims necessarily lead to intolerance or to violence against others. They do not necessarily lead to violent action, but they are one of the principal reasons why religion is so easily used, co-opted, by the politicians—both in Baghdad and in Washington, D.C.—to justify violence against others.

I think the primary causes of intercultural or inter-ethnic violence are generally economic or political. That's the tinder; that's the combustible material of conflict. But religion can be used as a match to light that tinder into a conflagration. Why is religion such an available match? One of the reasons is because of superior claims.

While I admit that the monotheistic religions have a record of making superior claims and the worst historical record for promoting violence, still, superior claims are not limited to the monotheistic religions. All religions have held themselves up in some form at some time in their history as being more enlightened or representing a higher stage of consciousness than others. All religions must recognize that there is violence in their historical records.

What we have to do in our interfaith education is deal with this issue. Different religions have made superior claims and we must look at why such claims are dangerous. Also, we must look at how such claims can be corrected or re-evaluated. When religious educators attempt to criticize or to re-evaluate some of these claims to be the superior religion or to have the final truth or the final prophet or the only savior, they run into problems within their own communities. "It

is not uncommon for scholars of religion to trigger off interfaith hostilities because their writings may be perceived as hurtful or insulting to believers of that faith." Such hostilities are not only interfaith, but intra-faith, when scholars criticize or raise these concerns within their own communities. Many Christian educators and theologians are facing such problems. Any effort to revise traditional Christian claims of having the only savior and the final truth are running into problems within their own communities. It is not only the Catholics with statements that have come from the Vatican, but I know that Methodist and Presbyterian friends are running into the same problems.

A truly mutualistic religious education, mutualistic in the sense that we know who we are and we make space for the others, means that interfaith educators must go about their work on the basis of a deep commitment to listening carefully and with respect to the living traditions within our own faith community. We need to become a living part of our own internal, ever-transforming traditions and beliefs. Educators have to show that one can be thoroughly committed to one's own tradition and at the same time, critical of it. We are critical because we love our tradition. This is a challenge. To show how one can be fully committed to one's own religious identity and tradition, and at the very same time, to be fully open to the truth and challenges that can be found in other traditions. Fully committed to one's own...fully open to others. That isn't easy, but that's the real challenge and I am not sure how to respond to it. It contains a paradox and will have to be dealt with differently within different traditions. Speaking from my own Christian tradition, I can say that my commitment to Jesus whom we call the Christ requires me to open my mind and heart to others. For me, Jesus is the Way that is open to other Ways. I suspect and I hope that the same can be said of Buddha or Krishna or Moses or Mohammed.

Thank you.

### **Tiffany Puett**

Thank you very much. I know that many important issues have been raised but unfortunately, we have run over time. Perhaps we can have just a few questions from the audience.

### **Dr. Knitter**

Basically, the need to recognize that religious education is part of a humanistic, total education. We need to show how the religious part

of education can be related to all of the other aesthetic, economic, or political aspects of our humanity.

### **WOMAN'S VOICE**

I simply wanted to underline the importance of what Madhu Kishwar said about our multi-layered identities. None of us is completely a religious being. We are also citizens. We have many regional and cultural identities. It is important to be able to speak, as Paul Knitter said, out of the Christian identity at times, but also out of the citizen's identity or out of an academic identity. We can be a religious people; we can also speak out of an intellectual tradition with sympathy and understanding towards other traditions towards a subject; then also speak out of our civic need to be secular in some sense. I am a secular person and a religious person at the same time. This multi-layeredness is something so important and I thank you for it. It is important for America and it is important for India.

#### **Dr. Kishwar**

Since I agree with so much of what the respondents have said, I will just make three points. I wish to clarify that the sense of common occupational group and citizenship that we were able to inculcate among street vendors was made possible because although Muslims are a minority, we went out of our way to make sure that they had an integral place and that they are in leadership roles.

I made the point that there is a need to keep politicians away from religious institutions. This is not because I disrespect politics. Politics has a very important place as does religion. I respect the role that politicians play, however, I do have problems when they begin to take control of religious institutions and dominate their agendas. In India, a lot of interfaith fights are about who is to control religious institutions and elections to these bodies are run as precisely on party lines just as state elections are fought. Fights over resources are often for partisan and political ends which has created unhealthy situations. As long as they stay in their domain, I salute you.

Now about superior claims, I agree with you that they are not confined to monotheistic religions. Lots of Hindus treat the faith systems of impoverished tribal communities with as much disdain as others have treated Hinduism. It is not an integral part of Hinduism. One is constantly dealing with multiplicity of faith systems, of ritual systems, and therefore it is much harder and people sometimes produce

disastrous results. While I agree that they don't need to lead to violence always, violence is built into such claims. The moment you treat someone as inferior or in a lower state of evolution, which is how many Hindus treat tribal people, it is easy to dehumanize others. That process of dehumanisation can easily take on the form of violence, ethnic cleansing, and becomes a very real challenge.

Thank you again very much.

### **Interactive Best Practice Sessions**

The Relationship between Interfaith Education and Justice,

### **Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation, and Coexistence**

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

### **INTERFAITH EDUCATION FOR WORLD PEACE**

#### **Ela Gandhi, University of Natal, South Africa**

Welcome to this session of the Consultation on Interfaith Education. I would like to introduce you to a woman who needs no introduction, to a friend, Ela Gandhi, grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi. Ms. Gandhi was a vigorous, nonviolent opponent of apartheid and a member of South African Parliament for nine years. She is currently editor of *Santiagraha*, Secretary of the Gandhi Development Trust, Vice President of WCRP-South Africa, and a member of the Commission on Religious Affairs of African National Congress. Ms. Gandhi, you have the floor.

#### **Ela Gandhi**

Thank you. I would like to thank The Temple of Understanding for including me in this panel. It is really my privilege to be here and to share my experiences and my ideas with you.

Firstly, about interfaith education, I think it is extremely important that we should think about introducing interfaith education all over the world. I want to tell you two stories. One of them is from our experience in South Africa.

As most of you know, South Africa was a divided society. We had a polarisation of the white people from the black people. The division manifested itself in different residential areas, different schools to which the different children went, and completely different lifestyles because the African people lived in a particular township, the Indian people lived in another township, there was no sharing or no interaction between the two except at work places. Even at the workplaces, because

of the hierarchy of jobs, you always experienced your relationship in that hierarchy where the top level management posts were always white, the middle management was always Indian and colored, and at the bottom were the African people in South Africa.

The division affected our lives. It kept us apart. It kept us away from understanding each other, each other's cultures, each other's languages. Today, after ten years of democracy, we cannot say that we are able to change what happened for 300 years in our society in ten years because we cannot tell you how much harm that separation did to South African society. If we were able to share, to live together, go to the same schools, experience each other's lifestyles, and be able to communicate, things would have been a lot different in South Africa.

Hopefully, in the next ten years, things will be a lot different in South Africa because the children are going together to school. At primary school level, the children mix, they play with each other and look at each other as human beings and not as different colors, different races. But in high school or university, there are different pockets, there are different places where African children will gather together, where Indian children gather together, where colored children gather together and where white children gather together. That is what this separation has done to us. At high school level and at university level, there isn't much mixing. Some people will say that it is natural for races to be apart, but when you go to the primary school, you see the children embracing together and there is no question of race.

We can apply the same principle to religion, for as long as we don't understand each other's religions, we are apart. We consider each other with suspicion. How will this person accept me? How can I accept them? There is a fictional understanding that they are different from us; they believe in certain things that we don't believe in. Such fictitious information was put into our heads by a government that was intent in promoting separation. If we want to look at how the different faiths and races can come together, we need to address the issue of how to create a better understanding.

The second example I want to give today is my grandfather's story. Gandhi-ji was born in a family where everyone was respected. His parents had friends in all of the different religious groups and they visited the family home. Gandhi-ji used to sit with his father and listen to the conversations. People were talking about their own beliefs. That was his introduction to religion and because it was, he was able to later investigate, to understand, other people's religions. He didn't

have any hesitation in reading the *Koran*, in reading the *Bible*, in reading all the other Holy Scriptures, and in interacting with all the different faiths because that is how he was brought up in his home. If there is that kind of ethos within the family, you find that those people are able to adapt to circumstances where there is this kind of diversity and are able to respect each other's religions.

There is a big debate that is happening in our country as well as in many countries as to when you should introduce this religious education. It is my belief that it is to be introduced at the earliest possible age. The child needs to know about his own or her own religion and the parents are going to teach them. A lot is also learned from what they see. Children see and expect people to behave in the same as what they are saying to the child. If you tell the child to speak the truth and if the child sees you telling lies, that child is going to say "I will do what adults do and not what they say." Therefore, it is important to set that standard. Gandhi-ji actually applied these principles in his life and that is how he himself grew up with these ideas.

Having said that, I want to say what we have done in South Africa. During the years of apartheid, we saw that there was a deliberate attempt to keep us apart, not only as different races and ethnic groups, but also different religious communities. You may know that apartheid was actually based on a fictitious religious belief which today everyone in South Africa denies. At that time, they said that "This is what the Bible says—that the white race is the superior race and that the black race are supposed to be the slaves." They based their whole apartheid idea on that fiction. That is how religion was used and today you may in many countries religion used to promote somebody's own agenda. In order to prevent that, we as the community in South Africa said that we are not going to allow them to divide us. We have to get together and we did, despite the fact that there was separate schooling. We got together and we had a huge mass democratic in South Africa. We brought all the races together in South Africa. We brought all the religions together in South Africa. The mass democratic movement was one of the pillars of the struggle in South Africa which resulted in toppling the apartheid regime and getting the democratic dispensation in South Africa.

How did we do this? The religious community was very active in our struggle in South Africa. All members were on the front lines. The religious community played a big role in our struggle. Around 1989, there was talk of a change in South Africa. We called all of the religious



communities together. The initiative was taken by the WCRP in South Africa to have a discussion with all of the communities and to draw up a charter of rights and responsibilities of religious communities. We said that we are not just going to talk about rights, but rights AND responsibilities of religious communities. It was a difficult conference. We had many discussions because every clause, every word, had to be acceptable to all the different faiths. It was a heavy process but it was worth it because we came out with a charter that was acceptable to everyone. The kitchen language of every religion happens within the religious community; it is not exposed to others. When you are within your own sector, you speak about certain things and you may even have names or designations for other religious groups. That is your kitchen language and that is never exposed in the public arena. Here, in this conference, it had to become exposed because we looked at every word—would it be acceptable in your own kitchen? That whole consultation was a very important process.

As a result of that consultation and the work we did in drawing up a charter, we now in South Africa have a number of different things that protect interfaith work in the country. For instance, at every single national or government function, interfaith prayers are said. Every group comes to say their prayers. We have a forum of religious leaders which meets with the president at least two or three times a year. They have the right to say what they feel about the laws, the situation, and the policies of the government, and the president can tell them about what is happening or being planned. The religious leaders are taken on board and their ideas are listened to. We have programmes on the radio and t.v. of all the different faiths which exposes the whole South African population to divergent or diverse beliefs in the country. It is very useful because people begin to understand each other in that way.

In a small way in our newspaper, the *Santiagraha*, we also print every month something about a different religion. We talk about the mainline religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and so on, but we don't talk about the smaller groups. Yesterday, we heard about the pagan religion. To understand each other, we need to write about them and to bring out their stories. We do this through our newspaper. There is also a process through education. Children are taught basic values that all religions propagate and the beliefs that each religion has. This is brought into the syllabus of the schools right from infancy up to high school level. The important thing about this is that the

process of getting to the curriculum is as important as the content of the curriculum. You cannot just say “You’ve got a good syllabus and I will apply it in the US” because the situation in one country is different from South Africa. The process is important. You have to bring together the parents and the community in order for them to accept that this is what the child needs to learn about. The process is important otherwise there will be feelings of discontent, animosity among different people, concern about conversion or hidden agendas. It is going on at the moment in South Africa.

What I am doing at the present moment is developing Gandhian ideas because Gandhi-ji had a lot to say about religion and the importance of religion in a person’s life. I want to qualify also that we also respect people who don’t believe. Just because they don’t believe doesn’t mean that they don’t have values. They believe in something. They believe in a set of values or an ideology which promotes certain values. Therefore, we also respect those people who don’t believe. They may not believe in a god or a spirit, but they still believe in these values. If you are sworn in as a member of Parliament, you must take an oath. In our country, we have an oath or an affirmation. If you believe in the Bible, your hand is placed on the Bible. If you don’t believe, you can say that you affirm the laws of the country. There is provision in our laws for people who don’t believe.

Gandhi’s ideas on interfaith work are being put down on transparencies and then shared during courses in universities. I have to teach at the university and I talk to different groups of students, for example, I spoke with students in a course on public administration. It was very important to bring out Gandhi’s ideas in this group of people who were involved in public administration. These students were already in employment. They were working as teachers, paramedics, in police services, and other administrative tasks. My work was to talk to them about Gandhian ideas and values. In talking about those values, a good public service is promoted. I cannot emphasize the importance of having such a course introduced into the universities and the different tertiary institutions where public service workers are trained.

I think I am going to leave you with these examples because these are what we have done in South Africa and what we are still doing—we are engaging in processes and I think that the rest of it can come out in discussions.

Thank you very much.

Comments in response to questions:

“The process that we have embarked on in South Africa is to have discussions. In these, we have people from all different faiths and then, once the curriculum is put together, we have community discussions and then the curriculum is implemented in the schools. There is not one kind of fixed model. The model comes out of the discussions.

Religious groups respond similarly to the process. At the back of everybody’s mind is how can I promote my own religion. And the other thing at the back of the mind is that I must stop the other person from taking away my congregation. Once these two barriers are overcome, which is very difficult, one can get to the essence of religious beliefs.

Gandhian ideas of simplicity, of honesty, of truth, of compassion are very important principles for people in public administration. The problem is corruption because people want more money or because they are not concerned about issues of honesty and truth. If you are able to begin those values in public service, there will be a big change for the public servant is the first person encountered by a citizen.

In South Africa, we all have the right to decide who the leaders will be. We have quite a wide group. People will approach us. I am a member of the Commission of Religious Affairs of the African National Congress and ANC is the government in power. They are represented. Every sector of each tradition is represented.

### **INTERFAITH EDUCATION IN ACTION: A YOUNG ADULT PERSPECTIVE**

*Morse Flores, Philippines and Ramola Sundram, U.K.*

### **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM YOUNG ADULT NETWORK**

#### **Musical Prelude**

Good morning. My name is Morse Flores from the Philippines. First, I would like to thank my elders even though they are not here for they give me the blessing to share our issues, our hopes and our dreams for everyone. What I have just played is a nose flute. I think that we are the only tribe in the world to play the flute on the nose. We usually use the nose flute to gather the spirits among us and to set the meeting in a more profound and relaxing way. The chant called all of my elders to be with us today...

Hello. I am Ramola, the Young Adult Coordinator of the International Association for Religious Freedom. The role that we will

be playing here is that some of the young adults from the RFYN, as we call it, would like to introduce something about our methodology – not necessarily the fact that you have to work with young people – we believe that it is a style that can be used in a variety of contexts and we truly believe that our work should be inter-generational as well.

The people who have been watching young people over this Parliament have seen what generates their enthusiasm and how tender, how compassionate, they can be to each other. Please try to share this. Just in this brief time, our aim is that you learn a bit about some of our methodologies. Our Filipino young people are an example and the reason we have chosen them to be here is because indigenous spirituality has been suffering. We want to show that we support young people and young adults of any religion, any creed, any belief, as long as it doesn't impinge on other people's rights.

Throughout each of our projects, we use different methodologies. We incorporate creative workshops so people are encouraged to dance, to write poetry, to do drama, but all linked with our work in religious freedom and interfaith understanding. We are here to build bridges, so mutual trust and understanding is important. These young people are going to explain a few of our methodologies, giving examples.

Morse: We are going to illustrate some simple movements. Please follow after us. It is very important to be very solemn and silent.

### **Movements**

Ramola: That was a little example of what we might do to start an activity, to try to have people feel that they are part of a team. We will do many things to build up a team. In our PowerPoint, which we might have time to show, we use a variety of techniques to build up this team feeling. Without team feeling, one is not going to break down the barriers of mistrust. One has to feel comfortable enough to share one's innermost issues with the people in the group. That can only take time.

Woodrow is going to explain how this Religious Freedom Youth Network or RFYN-Filipinos started. It shows how, over a period of time with huge dedication and commitment, one can build up activities. The process can be a model for other things.

Woodrow: We are wearing indigenous costumes that are from different parts of our country. I like Ela Gandhi's statement that there

is a difference between religious education and religion education. Religious education is done by our spiritual leaders who are in charge of our souls. In religion education, we get to understand the other sides. I am, for example, Roman Catholic and there is much prejudice about other traditions. The Philippines is the only Christian country in Asia. The majority of the religion is Catholic or Christianity. We have the Muslims and the Christians.

One methodology is the interfaith pilgrimage. My parents would not allow me to be part of it. There is so much prejudice. But I joined RFYN. My parents were afraid that I would be converted, but the pilgrimage was a turning point for my life.

Ramola: Woodrow's parents were really against the pilgrimage and many projects have experienced this fear. The interfaith pilgrimage is a simple idea. It can happen in your home town or on a vast scale. We are about to have one to Japan and the U.S.A. with young Jews and Unitarians in order to learn about Shinto, Buddhism, spirituality, Judaism and Unitarianism. Terry is going to give one example. We have discussions, empowerment training to give people confidence and understanding. We also have what we call social action or, in India, *shramadan*, the gift of labour.

Terry: In the Philippines, we used the social action methodology in ten major tribes in the South. People were working together with many activities such as the empowerment training for youth leaders.

Woodrow: We are focusing on education in our programme. Growing up in tribalistic communities, we are often put in small cages. My parents would say you can only play with certain people or marry a certain person. We came to recognize that war and violence start in the minds of men, as UNESCO says, and it is only in the mind of men that people can change. Only through education can we do this with the freedom to explore. Immersion and study programmes, the social action programmes, are important. We joined together to build a sacred site.

Morse: In India, this is *shramadan*. In the Philippines, it is called labour of love. All of the Muslim and Christian representatives gathered together to repair the building so that the local tribe could have a better worship space. This working together is very unusual in our country.

Shabbi: In the last year, we began a student group in Tel Aviv University in Israel with Muslims, Christians, and Jews. We gather

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together once every two weeks. We discuss topics concerning religion and the connection to society. Through these discussions about our beliefs, we hope that we can achieve great understanding. There are a lot of biases.

Many people don't know, for example, that Muslims are 20% of the Israeli society. The students in the University are really open-minded and we are hoping for a better future.

Ramola: We have had an example of a discussion group. Something that is potentially very difficult can be made simple by bringing religious texts to the group for sharing. It is part of the Israel Encounter Association, Youth Section. But part of the RFYN is to do something. Great to have international conferences, but the work starts at home. There may be tolerance, but complete understanding takes time. Interfaith is not easy.... Interactive groups are important.

Olivia: Morse, you specifically talked about how we inherit our prejudices from our elders. Could you say something about how you have been able to impact the thinking of your elders as a result of their entrusting you to an international, interfaith community?

Morse: At first, it was not easy for me to go beyond my own comfort zones. I had to have the resources. I was growing up in my mother's tribe. I had to change my name because I had my tribal name. I was going to register in a Christian school and I had to change my name; otherwise, I wouldn't be going to school. But in my tribe, when I used that name, they wouldn't know me. This became a problem with conference registration. Now I am the first to go to university and I am studying in Japan. I come home with lots of ideas. The people that I trust are the first people I have to persuade. My parents are very supportive, especially my Mom. We still have this culture that only men should go to school. Bring our sisters to the school. "Educating a man is like educating a person, but once you educate women, you educate the whole nation." I brought this to my community. My sisters are going to school now and we are trying to change the culture, but it starts in the family.

Ramola: We had a programme in December. We were insistent that we had the blessings of the elders, that the Muslim, Christian and indigenous elders supported us. The elders listened to the young people and the young people listened to the elders. The elders stayed for special ceremonies for the first couple of days, but three elders stayed for the entire time. They saw the social action programme, the

discussions, and were very moved. We invite people in. Dancing, for example, is part of the spiritual tradition. We had a special celebration at the end with candles and a spiritual dance. The hands together are what we would like to achieve.

### **The Dance**

Ramola: Interfaith education, interfaith in action in Gudjerat, India, involved a huge social action project with young Muslim and Hindu adults helping to rebuild a temple and a mosque that had been destroyed in the earthquake. The reason we went there was because it was an area of religious intolerance. We also had international young people and national Indians. During the riots, our Indian Muslim coordinator stayed with a Hindu family. The Indian contractor stayed with a Muslim family. That was their private show of solidarity with each other. It can take one spark, one moment, but it needs passion, commitment, dedication, and a little bit of thought. People attend who are living in tense situations, so one should think carefully about interfaith involvement.

We are here to learn from you as well. The RFYN is a dialogue process. If you are interested in learning more about our work, we can introduce you to people who are doing great work in the U.K., Israel, India and many other places.

Thank you.

## **TOOLS FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

### **Janice Marie Johnson, Educators for Social Responsibility, USA**

In the Educators for Social Responsibility programme, we start off with a gathering and an interactive workshop. We use these methods of gathering, building an agenda, to teach skills of conflict resolution in the New York City school system. A typical agenda includes beginning with a gathering, time for introductions, an agenda review to look at the different elements of the agenda, community practices, skill building activities, and move towards closure with appreciations and a closing.

Let's look at conflict resolution and conflict transformation. What is conflict? Fighting, antagonistic difference, elections, tension. Is there anything positive about conflict? Striving for justice, resolution of contradictions, dialectic in nature. My premise is that conflict is conflict. It is neutral, it is neither good nor bad, it is a part of our daily lives. How do we teach conflict? I grew up understanding that conflict was

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a negative. I am trying to teach my daughter that conflict simply is a natural part of life. Certainly, the Chinese have an understanding of conflict or crisis as both danger and opportunity.

Conflict gives us an opportunity for deepening relationships. Does anyone have a friend who at one time was not a friend? That may be possible. We look at conflict in general and then turn to the terms conflict resolution, conflict management, conflict transformation. Over the years, I have moved from conflict resolution to conflict transformation. I understood conflict resolution to mean resolving the problem, putting an end to the conflict. I then understood conflict management to mean dealing with the problem, making sure that it is contained, managing it. In terms of conflict transformation, I believe that speaks to working with human beings, persons involved with the conflict, trying to effect change.

When I work in schools or at my best at home, we set up something that we call community practices or how we choose to be with one another. What does community mean? Relationships, sharing circumstances—certainly there are communities for which there is no safety net, no sense of community. What do you need to feel safe and nurtured within the community? It could be this community in which we find ourselves for the next few minutes. What would you need to feel comfortable and welcomed here? Feeling acknowledged, safety, respect, feeling able to share thoughts without correction or judgment, open...these are not rules, these are thoughts about how to be in relationship with one another. We can all be mindful of our practices.

Please move in groups of three, preferably with folks you don't know. Please think of the following question during this micro-lab, a timed activity that involves authentic listening. The question is "What messages did you receive about conflict when you were growing up?" Please consider the question and then decide who will go first, second, third. Each person will have a minute to answer the question.

### **Personal Sharing**

The second question is "What message would you like to give the people of the world about conflict?" Think for a moment. This is your chance to speak to the world.

### **Personal Sharing**

Thank you very much. Please acknowledge each other for sharing and please share some thoughts with the larger group.



## **Personal Sharing**

The challenge is how we teach these skills? How do we make them come alive for our young people and our not so young people? When I work with my little ones, we use little animal or people puppets. For example, we are walking down the hall and we bump into each other. The dialogue starts and the puppets are used to present conflict resolution. For Middle Schoolers on up, a role-play is what I would offer. We would go through the bump in the hallway without physical contact. Then we would replay the tape. Everyone in the classroom can strategize about what could have been different about the conflict.

The tools of conflict resolution can be used in any situation. Teaching options is important. One can have choices in how to respond to any conflict. With my pre-Kindergarteners, one needs to start small and move over time to the bigger questions. By then, they have the tools to deal with it. Another way would be to give an example as in the fight about the orange or use of the brand new laptop. Lessons in sharing involve using different examples to get to the message, to help the process of discernment about the conflict.

I will close by suggesting that one can engage respectfully in conversations about difference by recognising various points of view. What word would we offer the world? What gift of a word would we offer the world?

## **Gift Words**

Justice, love, hope, process...

Thank you very much for being here.

Interfaith Education in Regions of Conflict: A Facilitated Dialogue

*Ibrahim Ramey*

A very informal conversation, but hopefully a meaningful one, and since I have been tasked with the facilitation part, I will take a few minutes to set the context and then let's talk.

My name is Ibrahim Ramey and I would like to follow Janice's lead to introduce myself very briefly. I am a Muslim and the Director of the Disarmament Work for the National Fellowship of Reconciliation in Nyack, New York, and also a Board member of the Temple of Understanding which is one of the component groups of the Consultation on Interfaith Education. I am active in a lot of different communities. I am involved in media work with the American Muslim

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International Media Network, I do a programme three days a week on a radio station in Washington, D.C., that discusses issues of importance to the Muslim community around civil and human rights, and political issues, and when I have time, I do a fair amount of traveling and speaking publicly around issues related to conventional and nuclear disarmament.

By way of a quick description, the Fellowship of Reconciliation is the oldest interfaith peacemaking organisation in the world. It started back in 1914 as a Christian organisation in Europe; a dialogue between two ministers who were concerned with solidarity and brotherhood as Christians at the onset of World War I—one, a Lutheran from Germany, and the other, a Quaker from England. We grew to an interfaith organisation over the last couple of decades. We now have members from virtually all practising religions and others who are practitioners of spiritual traditions that are not necessarily defined as religions. We are actively committed to nonviolence.

### **Personal Introductions**

I want to start with an admission, this could be an extremely daunting task to facilitate a group of this power. This is trying to drive a Ferrari after two driving lessons and I am not quite sure that I am up to the task. Dr. Reardon, reading your book, *Sexism and the War System* was so very important in defining that intersection between war and patriarchy. It became part of my spiritual journey as a Muslim man who is committed to ending gender discrimination or challenging it within my own tradition as well as in the world. I just had a wonderful experience with you since you came here. I am just happy to have this sense of connectedness.

I want to start with a couple of things related to interfaith education and the nature of conflict. I am not from the Academy, so I will have a less academic view of how that might happen. When I was in Detroit three years ago, I was asked to do a talk at a little liberal arts Catholic college that was having a programme on peace education and peace building. I met an Israeli woman there named Dr. Hannah Safron, a Professor at the University of Haifa. She talked about a project that she has initiated there between women in her faculty and her community, and women who were attending University in the West Bank. The Palestinian university had been shut down for economic and political reasons during the *intafada*. Dr. Safron and her friends and colleagues were raising money to give to Palestinian women for

the continuation of their education and for the basic hardship of living under occupation. In very intense regions of conflict, there are still channels of interaction and communication and peace building that create the context for interaction and mutuality between religious communities. Even if the Palestinian authority and the Israeli government are in military conflict women on both sides of that conflict were able to build a constructive relationship to get to know each other, to not necessarily agree on every issue, but nonetheless to build a constructive relationship that made interfaith dialogue and mutuality possible. Conflicts are so polycentric that even in intense conflict there are opportunities for dialogue that can build a context for interfaith education through nonviolence and openness across lines.

People who are in faith traditions also have the responsibility to bring conflict analysis to the table that does not necessarily depend on spiritual tradition. When I look at what is going on between Israel and Palestine, I don't see so much a conflict between the tenets of Judaism and Islam, but what I do see is a conflict between a form of settlement on one hand and a colonised people who may or may not use violent or nonviolent means as a way of responding to the conflict. I come from an organisation that is committed to non-violence so we definitely do not want to see killing. We discourage it. We support conscientious objectors who are on both sides of the conflict that are under some pressure from their communities. Muslims, Christians and Jews, as well as their secular counterparts in the different communities, need to bring their collective analysis of the problem together so that the problem can become better understood not as a religious conflict essentially, but as a conflict over resources, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. Likewise, in places like Nigeria and Sudan where there are religious communities in conflict, there are also political, land, ownership, and sovereignty issues that underlie the conflict and that need to be talked about.

Finally, people in religious communities need to strive to define the conflict itself as other than a zero sum gain in which one religion wins and another one loses, or one group wins and one group loses. There needs to be a transformation in the way we see victory in a conflict—not as one side over the other, but as a victory for mutuality and for the ability of different groups to co-exist and to live in harmony as they learn more about each other and create intentional processes that grow upon their growing, mutual understanding. Those are just some ideas that the Divine Mother hit me with this morning. I don't

present them as a template for anything except as a some thoughts to create space for dialogue and for value, to create ways to redefine and to analyze conflict, and to recognize that conflict is not necessarily a zero sum gain but one in which every group may win.

### **Dialogue**

One of the very important things that I learned earlier in the year was the idea that religious identity and empirical analysis of real situations were not mutually exclusive so that I am free to practice in a religious tradition and believe in that, but at the same time, I am held to look at the world through eyes that actively discuss colonialism, the imperial project and domination, class and disparities of power. It is only through these discussions that I can effectively bring the value system that I profess to believe in some meaningful way as a means of resolving conflict. It is only when we understand the conflict that these things can be done.

### **Dialogue**

There are different ways of building relationships even within very set traditions. We have the responsibility within our traditions to make interfaith education and justice priorities. Clean drinking water is a right and not just a luxury. Relationships are not just built by the intellectualists; they are built by folk who take each other's hand, talk with each other, and learning by doing righteous work for all of humanity.

### **Dialogue**

You have questioned patriarchy as an essential element of the war system. I would argue that not only is that objectively true, but it is an essential flaw in many traditions that patriarchy is unacknowledged and unchallenged. I have had conversations with Muslim brothers about why so many mosques do not create roles for leadership for women or allow for leadership to emerge regardless of gender. Why is it so difficult to go to a mosque and find a restroom for women? Likewise, I get back to conflict resolution or transformation in the midst of war and would argue that women in Colombia, in Nigeria, in Palestine, in any number of places, from what I have seen objectively, have a much deeper commitment to resolution of conflict and real exchange across the divisions than men do. Men ought to be able to recognize that this is an area of leadership in which men are systematically deficient and need to step back and let the people who

have the ability to lead do that. It is a benefit to all of humankind that people who have a more developed sense of community and building community step up when there is conflict. I think that that's just essential.

### **Dialogue**

If you have one idea to promote interfaith understanding in areas of conflict, what would you suggest for us?

"We need to grieve. We need to understand the preciousness of life.

"A "Tapestry of Faith" programme...each person of each tradition was asked to share one thing that was important to an understanding of the tradition.

I would only add, as part of the international work of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (the headquarters are in the Netherlands), there is a women's peacemakers programme that involves nonviolence training and conflict resolution work among women in different parts of the world. We were treated to meet a woman from Zimbabwe who does wonderful work in difficult situations now, so I would just advocate that we look at the issue of patriarchy and gender oppression within and between religious traditions and that those of us who are peacemakers proactively lift up, strengthen, and support the voices of women who are doing peace and conflict resolution work. We need to see this as part of the interfaith education and dialogue work that the interfaith movement embraces.

Thanks to all of you. Hopefully, we will exchange information if we can and you will become members of the Consultation on Interfaith Education.

*Beyond Hate: Living With Our Deepest Differences in Northern Ireland*

Sr. Deirdre Mullen, R.S.M. and Carol Rittner, R.S.M.

Mercy Global Concern, Ireland

Carol Rittner

I am an educator. My own area of expertise is teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides. But in the 1980's, I headed up a foundation in New York called the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. We had organised a number of conferences in different parts of the world, in Israel, the U.S., in Norway, and they were conferences about hatred and about moving beyond hatred, about the anatomy of hatred.

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In late summer of 1990, I received a telephone call asking me if I could help with organising a conference in Northern Ireland at a place called Derry...Only later did I learn that this city is divided by a river with an East Bank and a West Bank. The West Bank is mostly members of the Catholic community. The East Bank has mostly members of the Protestant community. Only later did I learn that by how one referred to this city, one immediately revealed one's political as well as religious perspective. Catholics would call the city Derry whereas Protestants would call the city Londonderry. Immediately, one is in difficulty. As an educator, I was also a learner.

### **Sr. Deirdre**

May we invite you to introduce yourselves before we begin our session? The purpose of the seminar is how we help people in places of conflict to move beyond hate to learn from, and to live with, our deepest differences and what strategies I have used and Carol has used, and what has worked.

### **STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES**

Here is a picture of a woman. Please tell me what you see. Can you see a young woman? Can you see an old woman?

The picture of the old and the young lady tells us that there are two ways of looking at society. One person's terrorist is another person's hero. That causes terrible conflict for children inside their own family, in their own community, in their own cultural positioning and standing with their father or their brother who might be a cultural hero fighting the enemy. I understand that the same thing is happening in many parts of the world for how one defines terrorist. My question is how do you describe yourself? The name of the city where you come from, tell about your religion and your cultural identity.

In the north of Ireland, we have a society that operates on a sectarian mode. Sectarianism is a complex structure of attitudes, actions, beliefs at a personal and a communal level which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics. It arises as a distorted expression of positive thoughts especially for belonging, for identity, and for free expression of difference. It is expressed in destructive patterns of relating such as justifying or collaborating in the domination of others, and attacking others. The same idea applies to issues related to many phobias such as xenophobia.

The society that I come from is divided. We have two societies: the Catholic community and the Protestant community, divided down

the middle, and they operate as ordinary citizens with hierarchical levels. Each level depends on the one above it; the structure remains in place because of the tension between the two sides. The ordinary citizens depend on the political and religious leaders, the paramilitary troops, and finally, the killers. That is how our society operates.

### **Carol**

When I was invited to come to the north of Ireland, I worked with a small group of Catholics. Although Derry has been a flashpoint for much of the political violence in the north of Ireland, January 1972 brought that terrible incident of Bloody Sunday when there was a peaceful demonstration of Roman Catholics with a few Protestant members of the community. The British Army was on the walls of the old city of Derry.

Derry is one of the last of the walled cities in Europe. It reminds me of Jerusalem. People are still disputing who started it, but it is said that the British Army fired on the marchers and thirteen Roman Catholics were shot. The belief in the Roman Catholic community has been that it was the British Army that opened fire unprovoked. The belief in the Protestant community was that the British Army was provoked and opened fire. These differences raise the notion of perceptions. In 1990, when I was invited, there was an attitude that the city was ready to begin reaching across boundaries. I was asked to organize an international conference entitled "Beyond Hate: Living with Our Deepest Differences."

The strategy was that, although we wanted to talk about *here*, here being Derry, Northern Ireland, the premise was that if you brought people from *there*, wherever the there is, the U.S., Canada, Latin America, continental Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, to *here*, and began to talk about "beyond hate and hatred" *there*, you would end up talking about it *here*. The people who listen to the people from outside who begin to talk about issues of conflict and hatred, will hear and see it through their own experience which is *here*. The feeling was that politically and religiously (I mean in terms of the churches and the church schools, the small organisations) people were ready to listen and ready to find new ways to talk to one another.

At this international conference that took about one and a half years to organize, participants came from twenty-eight different countries. For people to come to Derry, it took an effort due to transportation. February 1991 was the beginning of the land war in

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Kuwait and in Israel. Jewish people were sitting in sealed rooms due to fear of attack. I learned that there used to be a Jewish community in Derry and at that point, I decided to bring some Jews to Derry and some Irish people from Derry to Israel. We pre-evangelised the conference in Derry and held it in the Guild Hall in September 1992.

We brought four former hostages from Lebanon: Terry Anderson, Brian Keenan, Terry Waite, Fr. Jenco. Those men spoke to a large audience. No one could say that they didn't know what hatred was, that they didn't know what it means to have someone demean them, to have someone hold them hostage in a kind of bondage. Whether Catholic or Protestant, it was understood that these men were speaking out of experience just as people in that city were struggling with hatred. It was the most moving event of the conference. We then sent people out into the community at large. It was the first time that members of the main political parties sat together in the same room. Inez McCormick, a union organizer in Northern Ireland, came to a conference in Stockholm ten years later to report on the experience of sitting together and learning to speak together. That 1992 Conference became a template for many other experiences of meetings.

### **Sr. Deirdre**

In 1992, the political climate was beginning to change. Many of us realised that we wanted something different for children. The educational system didn't allow for this because young people were being educated separately. Many educators decided to try to change the system to bring the children together. The media, however, has often taken issue with certain events. A group wrote a plan called "Education for Mutual Understanding" and the media immediately went to war. People began to see it as a sell-out to the concept of a united Ireland. The Catholic community was frightened by the plan because they saw it as a way for the government to assimilate them into the life of Northern Ireland.

When the programme began, the parents were the people behind it because the programme was about self-respect, respect for the Other, and the improvement of relationships between people of different cultural traditions. The most tangible manifestation of education for mutual understanding was the contact between children from different religions and cultures, many of whom were engaged in cross-community activities together from different schools. This was beginning to happen in the late 1980's and the early '90's, and as a result of the "Beyond Hate" Conference and the opening up of the community, change came to many attitudes.



## **Carol**

Just as we had activities leading up to the conference, we had experiences afterwards. The second strategy that I used was the notion of the journey. I took the idea from Nelson Mandela. In his inaugural address in South Africa, he has a sentence: "We will journey together to learn about new ways of living in a divided society." I got the idea of taking an equal number of Catholics and Protestants to Israel in order to talk with Israeli Arabs and Jews. Using as the thesis going from *there* to *here*, we ended up talking about *there*. We spent ten days meeting people throughout the State of Israel.

Do we have anything in a divided society to both teach others and to learn from others about conflict and division?

## **Sr. Deirdre**

As a result of the "Journey of Co-existence," I wanted to do something similar with students through the Arts since music and dance are very important. I contacted a colleague in a Protestant school. We had forty-four young girls in their teens and for the first six weeks, the facilitator worked with the students on identity—Who am I? What is my culture? What does my culture teach me? Then we worked on perceptions of their own and other communities.

The most difficult part of the interaction was when different groups of students got together and walked around the room in silence to read the perceptions of peers. The activity caused lots of anger, followed by special exercises to open up beyond hate. Food was brought in by the Australian Fund for Ireland after school. The dance teacher did some warm up exercises and then the students were divided into two groups of mixed Catholics and Protestants. Through dance, with green and red groups as tribes, the students learned how they worshipped the same God but differently, how they enjoyed the Arts but differently. At the end, two students remained on stage with the choice to either slay each other or to look each other in the eye. They looked each other in the eye, the red and green costumes were taken off and the students recognised that they could be safe with each other.

In my school, the students finish their education in seven years. At the end of the time, they need to write about an experience that has been the most formative. Many of the students said that this Arts experience of the Other was the most challenging. It was a very, very good programme.

## Carol

On the “Journey,” we also brought Arabs and Jews to Northern Ireland. We also did a second major journey with Catholics and Protestants to South Africa. We tried to evaluate the programmes for change. We don’t really know whether these were meaningful, but we do know that in moments of conflict in Derry some of these people continued to be involved together in various activities.

One participant in the South African group wrote: “If I was to try to distill what I brought back to South Africa, it is this: there are certain principles that societies and communities ought to live by: justice, equality, liberty. Every community and individual must actively work to achieve these goals. Without them, there is no peace. At the heart of those principles are human beings. If what we do doesn’t improve someone’s lot or strengthen justice, then our policies and grand ideas don’t mean what they should and they won’t breed peace.”

We hope that what we have done and what we continue to do exemplifies the story of the Rabbi and the Student.

Rabbi: How do you know when the night has ended and the day has begun?

Student: Rabbi, you can tell that the night has ended and the day has begun when you look in the distance and you can tell a cow from a dog.

Rabbi: No, that is not correct.

Student: You can tell when the night has ended and the day has begun when you look in the distance and you can tell the difference between a cherry tree and an oak.

Rabbi: No, that is not correct either.

Students: But Rabbi, tell us.

Rabbi: You can tell when the night has ended and the day has begun when you look into the face of any person, and see there your brother and your sister. If you cannot do that, no matter what time of day it is, it is still night.”

We hope that what we did allows people to into the Other’s face and recognize his or her brother or sister.

## Interfaith Education in Regions of Coexistence—Facilitated Dialogue

Sr. Deirdre Mullen and Carol Rittner

The Protestant community has not taken up arms to massacre the Catholic community. Representatives of groups have been elected in

democratic processes, so one could say that there has been a lot of progress.

The dance was something that evolved out of the identity work from each school. We created the dance based on what was said within each school group of students. This made a very important difference....It would be interesting to see whether this activity would make a difference in Washington, D.C., which is a divided community....The students in Ireland gave each other gifts and chose Irish jewellery with the knot to show that they were forever entwined. Perfect.

Should one stop having church schools? The decision in Scotland is to continue with having some separate schools which continues a divided situation. If one chooses to continue that, then, legally, it would be good to have a programme such as the one described as part of the school curriculum. And if one doesn't do this, one shouldn't continue with divided schools since they are not healthy for social cohesion.

Politicians can manipulate religious perspectives. It is important for political and religious leaders to exercise humane leadership. Major leaders in the north of Ireland got behind the project, "Beyond Hate," which freed their constituencies to become involved.

We need to look at how we handle faith. What does it mean "to love each other?" How do we reveal Christ's message?

It is very difficult to integrate an education spiritually within a significant secular society, at least integration with good balance. The whole emphasis these days is on academic achievement rather than spiritual achievement. If one has only academic achievement, one breeds arrogance. One must have a balance between academic and spiritual development.

In Derry, through Honeywell Trust, there is still an effort made in cross-community work today. We have moved beyond education for mutual understanding to global citizenship. No one quite knows what this means, but it is developing because of the way in which the world is becoming smaller.

One might speak with people in Quebec due to the changes in the system. There is now a chaplaincy service system in the schools. One of the positive benefits is that parents who before relegated the whole educational process from the faith community to the school are now being challenged by the churches to become the primary religious

educators in the home. Parents are now enrolling in adult education courses so that they can learn how to better communicate to children.

A difficulty with religion, regardless of tradition, is that so few of us live what we say. Young people see the hypocrisy. We have so little credibility.

In America, it seems that there are lay people are taking more of a lead.

Auburn runs a programme called “Face to Face, Faith to Faith.” The regions of conflict are Ireland, Israel, Palestine, South Africa. The students have eye-opening experiences of their own religious traditions in different settings.

One needs to be constantly aware of one’s self and of direction.

Thank you very much.

### **DAY 3**

The Wisdom of Listening—Interfaith Education and Transformation

#### **Interactive Best Practices**

The Challenges and Rewards of Experiential Interfaith Education

Building Bridges through Multi-faith Education

Stacy Fagan and Rajinderjit K. Singh

Long Island Multi-faith Forum, U.S.A.

Example Room

Rajinderjit Singh

Good morning. My name is Ms. Singh of the Long Island Multi-faith Forum through which we do a lot of interactive, interfaith work in education. Today, we are going to present to you one of our programmes that involves mystery guests and two challenges. The first challenge is to guess each guest’s faith. The second challenge relates to each participant’s awareness of levels of prejudice.

We begin with “What is Your Faith?” We are not teaching about religion. We invite you to ask questions to which the mystery guests can only answer “yes” or “no” such as “Do you believe in God?” Sometimes, when only a lecture is given, it is not enough. But with these questions, we learn so much.

#### **What’s My Faith?**

Description: Individuals are chosen to represent each of the major faith traditions as mystery guests. They are asked to introduce

themselves by using the same name. The audience is given index cards on which to note special questions for the mystery guests.

There are some questions that cannot be asked, *e.g.* the name of the faith. Fifteen minutes are allowed for questions. Any one of the mystery guests can answer the questions.

Sample questions might include the following:

Q: "In your faith, do you have a founder?"

Q: "In your faith, do you have a written scripture?"

Q: "Is your faith based in the Middle East?"

Q: "In your faith, do you pray facing a certain direction?"

Q: "In your faith, do you have a dress code?"

Q: "Do you believe in more than one god?"

Q: "In your faith, are you allowed to eat animal meat?"

The questions continue in this fashion to the conclusion of the allotted time period. The participants are invited to guess the faiths of the mystery guests based on the responses to the questions.

One of the points of the game is to become more aware of the beliefs and of the common links between religions. Music and musical instruments are also important. All of us need to be more aware of faith and of the variety among faiths. We need to see beyond the individual and to understand that all human beings are related to God. The faith of humanity needs to prosper in this new world. Our world has been brought to a point of killing each other in order to be the "top one" or "the better one." We need to go beyond these superficial things now and to believe in a higher power.

### **INTERFAITH EDUCATION LINKS**

Auburn Seminary educates leaders to meet the challenges of religious and public life. Today, religious communities that seek to reconcile all people to each other and to God require leaders of great wisdom and skill. To prepare people for these challenges, Auburn sponsors programmes on complex issues in religious traditions and contemporary life, gathers critical intelligence about religion and education in our society, and encourages thoughtful conversation across the often divisive boundaries of faith, race, class and gender.

CLAL, long recognised for its important inter-denominational education programmes that are focused on religious differences within

the Jewish community, has become a leader more recently in interfaith education.

Understanding the search for meaning as universal and essential, we support that search as necessary to the nourishment of young people of conscience and community. We serve as a national resource for schools to encourage the moral, ethical, and spiritual development of young people. We promote community service, providing resources and a network for schools' involvement in community service and service learning. We develop programmes and services, which encourage a school climate of open ethical and religious inquiry and expression. We support instruction in world religions and ethics as essential components of a complete education.

The purpose of the GDI is to promote dialogue in the broadest sense among individuals and groups of different religions and cultures, focusing especially though not exclusively on the "opinion-shapers" of society, scholars, professionals, as well as institutional and business leaders.

The Pluralism Project was developed by Diana L. Eck at Harvard University to study and document the growing religious diversity of the United States, with a special view to its new immigrant religious communities. As part of this research, the Pluralism Project explores how the United States is changing as we begin to appropriate this new religious diversity in our public life and institutions, and in emerging forms of interfaith relationships.

WIFEA (Ontario) will build partnerships to design and promote relevant educational programmes which develop knowledge about diverse beliefs, faiths and spiritual traditions, and the skills necessary to nurture the values of mutual understanding, respect and cooperation among all people.

## **INTERFAITH CURRICULA**

The Syllabus Project offers a wide range of course syllabi from scholars working within the academic study of religion. Teachers in the field have contributed some of their most creative syllabi to this site.

The Centre's staff includes a unique team of Faith Tutors representing local Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities, working together to help develop better interfaith understanding. The work of the Centre includes supporting schools teaching their local Agreed Syllabus for

Religious Education, and a programme of weekly faith worship for Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh pupils in Bradford LEA schools. The Centre houses a bookshop, library and loan service. In addition to the Bradford Primary and Secondary syllabi, IEC Publications include: *Regarding Religion* (a handbook for partnerships in education for citizenship and shared values in European schools) and *Supporting Bereaved Children* (a handbook to support children from various faith backgrounds who have suffered bereavement).

This link provides access to the syllabi collection of Harvard's Pluralism Project. Most of the syllabi have been developed with an eye to America's religious pluralism. This course, conceived by Yehezkel Landau who teaches at Hartford Theological Seminary, explores the paradox of religion as a source of division and conflict, on the one hand, and of peaceful aspirations and compassionate, sacrificial service on the other. Theoretical approaches to this paradox, drawn from the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, will be supplemented by practical case studies, with particular attention given to the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab dispute over the "Holy Land." How can our faith commitments be effectively applied to promote inter-communal reconciliation? How can our own lives exemplify a peacemaking vocation in the face of religious extremists within our own faith community and those of our neighbours? These and related questions will be addressed, with a central goal being to integrate the lessons learned from the readings with our everyday challenges as peace-seekers.

This site offers a wide range of religion syllabi. Those whose teaching overlaps with other fields (*e.g.*, Classics, English) might be interested in consulting other Online Collections of Syllabi. Those interested in the scholarship of teaching concerning syllabi will want to consult the attached reference list, which also includes links with several university Instructional Development offices that are increasingly encouraging the faculty in their institutions to pay more attention to the construction of syllabi.

Some syllabi are PDF files to preserve formatting, and thus require the free Adobe Acrobat reader. More information on PDF files can be found on the PDF-Formatted Documents page.

The categories under which the following syllabi are listed reflect the AAR's Programme Units, expanded to take into account syllabi that do not fit these parameters. New syllabi that do not fit the current categories are welcomed.

**Religions of Africa**

- African Religion  
Katie G. Cannon (Temple University)
- History of Christianity in Africa  
Joel E. Tishken (Southwestern University)
- The Religions of Colonised Peoples (Africa)

**Religions of Africa**

- African Religion  
Katie G. Cannon (Temple University)
- History of Christianity in Africa  
Joel E. Tishken (Southwestern University)
- The Religions of Colonised Peoples (Africa)  
Teresia Hinga (DePaul University)

**Afro-American Religions**

- African Art and the Web Museum  
Benjamin Ray (University of Virginia)
- African Religions in the Americas  
Elias Bongmba and Mary Ann Clark (Rice University)
- African-American Religious History  
Daniel Sack (Hope College)
- Slave Narratives as Religious Sources  
Katie G. Cannon (Temple University)

**Religions of America**

- American Catholicism  
Winnifred Sullivan (Washington and Lee University)
- American Religion and Culture  
Susan (Bales) Ridgely (University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh)
- Breaking Bread: Religion and American Foodways  
Nora L. Rubel (Connecticut College)
- Contemporary Jewish Life in the United States of America  
Shawn Landres (University of Judaism)
- Cults and Conversion in Modern America  
Eugene V. Gallagher (Connecticut College)
- Discover Chicago: Sacred Spaces, Powerful Places in Chicago  
Jeffrey Carlson (DePaul University)



- Introduction to American Religion  
Winnifred Sullivan (Washington and Lee University)
- Lived Practice of Catholicism in the U.S.  
Heather Hartel (University of Iowa)
- Religion and American Culture  
James Treat (University of New Mexico)
- Religion in Multicultural America  
Diana L. Eck (Harvard University)
- Religion in the American Public Sphere  
Courtney Bender (Columbia University)
- Religion in the South  
Terry Matthews (Wake Forest University)
- Religious Life in the United States  
Terry Matthews (Wake Forest University)
- Religious Myths of America  
Christopher Buck (Michigan State University)
- Religious Worlds of New York  
Courtney Bender and John Hawley (Columbia University)
- The American Religious Experience  
Debra Washington (DePaul University)
- World Religions, War and Politics, in America  
Chris Hamilton (Washburn University)

### **Religions of Ancient Egypt**

- Ancient Egyptian Religion and Mythology  
Kasia Szpakowska (University of Wales Swansea)

## **PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS**

### **Animals**

- Religion and Animals  
Paul Waldau (Center for Animals and Public Policy, Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine)
- Religion, Science, and Other Animals  
Paul Waldau (Episcopal Divinity School)

### **Apocalypticism**

- Apocalyptic Texts in Scripture, Culture, and Politics  
J. Michael Clark (Warren Wilson College)

- Apocalypticism  
Richard Ascough (Queen's University)
- Early Christian Apocalypses  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- The End of the World in America  
Amy DeRogatis (Michigan State University)  
*(for film references, see the Class Schedule, Viewing, Thinking, and Writing, and Course Activities pages)*
- The End of the World: The Millennium and the End Times in American Religious Thought  
Liza McAlister (Wesleyan University)

### **Religion and the Arts**

- African Art and the Web Museum  
Benjamin Ray (University of Virginia)
- Artists, Shamans and Cosmology  
Thomas Peterson (Alfred University)
- Music in the History of Christianity: Johann Sebastian Bach  
E. Ann Matter (University of Pennsylvania)
- Music, Culture and Ideas  
Casey Haskins (Purchase College)
- Myth, Ritual, and the Creative Process  
Thomas Peterson (Alfred University)
- Spirituality and Theories of Acting  
Brendan McGroarty and Sally Montgomery (Catholic University of America)

### **Religions of Asia**

- Banaras: Life and Death in a Holy City  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- East Asian Religions  
Jeff Richey (Berea College)
- Exile and Religion in Asian Literatures  
Lavanya Vemsani (McMaster University)
- Gandhi: Non-Violence and the Struggle for Freedom  
K. I. Koppedrayar (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- God and Goddess in Hinduism

- Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Introduction to Asian Religions  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Introduction to East Asian Religions  
Russell Kirkland (University of Georgia)
- Religion, Community, and Conflict in South Asia  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Religions of China and Japan  
Jeffrey L. Richey (University of Findlay)
- Religions of India and Tibet  
Jeffrey L. Richey (Berea College)
- Religious Traditions of China and Japan  
Lavanya Vemsani (St. Thomas University)

### **Pedagogical Reflections**

- Ritual and the Arts in Asian Religions  
K. I. Koppedrayar (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- The Anthropology of South Asian Religion  
Michael Moffatt (Rutgers University)
- The Hindu Temple  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Yogis, Ascetics, and Monks in Indian Religions  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Zen Philosophy  
Eric Sean Nelson (University of Toledo)

### **Religions of Australia**

- Church : A Communion of Believers  
Gideon Goosen (Australian Catholic University)

### **Bible**

- Bible as Story  
Annette Yoshiko Reed (McMaster University)
- New Testament Introduction  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Paul and the Roman World  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)

- Synoptic Gospels  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- The Bible and Feminist Imagination  
Alicia Ostriker (Rutgers University)
- The Bible and Its Interpreters  
Celia Marshall (University of North Carolina, Charlotte)
- The Biblical Heritage  
Garth Kemerling (Newberry College)
- Understanding the Bible  
Bryan Rennie (Westminster College)
- Women in the Bible  
Naomi Steinberg (DePaul University)
- Women in the Biblical Tradition  
Annette Yoshiko Reed (McMaster University)

#### **Bible—Hebrew Bible/Old Testament**

- Five Books of Moses  
Annette Yoshiko Reed (McMaster University)
- Hebrew Prophets  
Victor Matthews (Southwest Missouri State University)
- Introduction to the Literature, History and Religion of Ancient Israel  
Robert W. Allison (Bates College)
- Introduction to the Old Testament  
Daniel P. Madden (Barry University)
- Literature and World of the Old Testament  
Victor Matthews (Southwest Missouri State University)
- Literature of the Old Testament  
Alan Altany (Marshall University)
- The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretations  
Peter Haas (Vanderbilt University)
- Torah/Pentateuch  
Jim Watts (Syracuse University)

#### **Buddhism**

- Buddha and Buddhism  
Celeste Rossmiller (University of Denver)

- Buddhism  
Russell Kirkland (University of Georgia)
- Buddhism and the Environment  
Sid Brown (Sewanee: The University of the South)  
Pedagogical Reflections
- Buddhist Traditions  
Ivan Strenski (University of California, Riverside)
- Buddhist Traditions  
Jim Dalton (Siena College)
- Introduction to Buddhism  
Nicholas F. Gier (University of Idaho)
- The Buddha and Buddhism  
Glenn Yocum (Whittier College)
- The Buddhist Tradition  
Jeffrey L. Richey (University of Findlay)
- Women in Buddhism  
Ding-Hwa Hsieh (Truman State University)
- Zen Mind  
Charles Strain (DePaul University)
- Zen Philosophy  
Eric Sean Nelson (University of Toledo)

### **Religions of the Caribbean**

- Caribbean Religions  
Darren J. N. Middleton (Texas Christian University)
- Religions of the Caribbean  
Alan Altany (Marshall University)

### **Religions of China**

- Chinese Religions  
Ding-Hwa Hsieh (Truman State University)
- Chinese Religions  
Joseph Adler (Kenyon College)
- Confucianism and Chinese Tradition  
Russell Kirkland (University of Georgia)
- Confucianism and Daoism  
Nicholas F. Gier (University of Idaho)

- Dimensions of Reality in Chinese Tales  
Russell Kirkland (Macalester College)
- Heaven and Humanity in Confucian Thought and Practice  
Joseph Adler (Kenyon College)
- Individual and Society: Perspectives from Classical China  
Russell Kirkland (Macalester College)
- Religion in China  
Stevan Harrell (University of Washington)
- Taoism  
Joseph Adler (Kenyon College)
- The Quest for Sagehood: An Introduction to Chinese Philosophical and Religious Thought  
Warren G. Frisina (Hofstra University)
- The Taoist Religion  
Ding-Hwa Hsieh (Truman State University)
- The Taoist Tradition  
Russell Kirkland (University of Georgia)
- Women in Chinese Religion  
Ding-Hwa Hsieh (Truman State University)

### **Christian Origins**

- Cultural Context of Early Christianity  
Michael Fuller (St. Louis Community College)
- Early Christian Apocalypses  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Early Christian Women  
Margaret Y. MacDonald (St. Francis Xavier University)
- Early Christianity  
Alan Altany (Marshall University)
- Early Christianity: Diversity, Conflict, Self-Definition and Dominance  
Robert W. Allison (Bates College)
- Early Church Doctoral Seminar: Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Gender and Family in Early Christianity  
J. Albert Harrill (DePaul University)

- Gnosticism  
Michel Desjardins (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- Gnosticism  
Patricia Miller (Syracuse University)
- Introduction to the History of Christianity  
Daniel Sack (Hope College)
- Introduction to the New Testament  
Donald D. Binder (Southern Methodist University)
- Introduction to the New Testament  
Michel Desjardins (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- Introduction to the New Testament  
Richard Ascough (Queen's University)
- Introduction to the Worlds of Ancient Christianity  
Michael E. Foat (Reed College)
- Jesus: Real to Reel  
Peter Gilmour and Richard Ascough (Loyola University)
- Methods in New Testament Criticism  
Daniel M. Patte (Vanderbilt University)
- New Testament Introduction  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Paul and the Roman World  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Paul in His Social Context  
Donald D. Binder (Southern Methodist University)
- Paul of Tarsus  
Michel Desjardins (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary and Ancient Debate  
Nicola Denzey (Skidmore College)
- Research Problems: Early Christian History  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Synoptic Gospels  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- The Acts of the Apostles in Its Greco-Roman Setting  
Donald D. Binder (Anglican School of Theology, University of Dallas)

- The Gospel of Mark  
Daniel M. Patte (Vanderbilt University)
- The Pauline Corpus  
Richard Ascough (University of the Incarnate Word)
- The Teachings of Jesus  
Alan Altany (Marshall University)
- The Women of Early Christianity  
Betsy Bauman-Martin (University of California, Riverside)
- The Writings of Paul  
Richard Ascough (Loyola University)
- Themes in New Testament  
Daniel M. Patte (Vanderbilt University)

### **Christianity**

- *The Da Vinci Code*  
Cheryl Rhodes (University of South Carolina)  
Pedagogical Reflections
- Catholic Social Thought  
Joe Incandela (St. Mary's College)
- Christianity  
James B. Wiggins (Syracuse University)
- Church : A Communion of Believers  
Gideon Goosen (Australian Catholic University)
- Early and Medieval Christianity  
Bobbi Patterson (Emory University)
- Early Byzantine Empire  
Timothy E. Gregory (Ohio State University)
- Early Christian Apocalypses  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Early Christianity: Diversity, Conflict, Self-Definition and Dominance  
Robert W. Allison (Bates College)
- Early Church Doctoral Seminar: Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Historical Theology I: Patristic Theology  
Tarmo Toom (John Leland Center for Theological Studies)



### **Pedagogical Reflections**

- Historical Theology II: Medieval Theology  
Tarmo Toom (John Leland Center for Theological Studies)

### **Pedagogical Reflections**

- History of Christian Doctrine 451-1650  
Marilyn McCord Adams (Yale Divinity School)
- History of Christian Thought, 200-1000  
E. Ann Matter (University of Pennsylvania)
- History of Christianity  
Debra Washington and Brett Smith (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary)
- Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval Europe  
Paul Hyams (Cornell University)
- Music in the History of Christianity: Johann Sebastian Bach  
E. Ann Matter (University of Pennsylvania)
- North African Christian Theology Through Augustine  
Roger Evans (Payne Theological Seminary)
- Paul and the Roman World  
James A. Kelhoffer (Saint Louis University)
- Portraits of the Marys  
Nicola Denzey (Skidmore College)
- Protestant Faith and Practice  
Laura S. Sugg (Agnes Scott College)
- Roman Catholic Theology Since the French Revolution  
Paul Misner (Marquette University)
- The Catholic World  
Alan Altany (Marshall University)
- The History of Christian Thought from 1000 to 1700  
E. Ann Matter (University of Pennsylvania)
- The History of Christianity  
Jeff Robbins (St. Bonaventure University)
- The Later Byzantine Empire  
Timothy E. Gregory (Ohio State University)

### **Comparative Studies of Religion**

- Comparative Religion

- Dale Cannon (Western Oregon University)
- Dialogue Between Jews and Christians  
Clark Williamson (Christian Theological Seminary)
- Experiences of the Sacred  
Jim Dalton (Siena College)
- God in Western Consciousness and Culture  
John Vielkind and Alan Altany (Marshall University)
- Gods in Transit: How Religions Spread  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Marriage, Family, and Religious Values: A Multicultural Approach  
Liz Wilson (Miami University of Ohio)
- Religion, Community, and Conflict in South Asia  
Timothy Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- Religion, Economy and Values  
Ivan Strenski (University of California, Riverside)
- Religious Myths of America  
Christopher Buck (Michigan State University)
- Sacrifice  
Jim Watts (Syracuse University)
- Sainthood in Four Traditions  
Timothy Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
- The Idea of Scripture  
Jim Watts (Syracuse University)
- The Religious Quest: Judaism and Christianity  
Ruth Langer (Boston College)
- Yogis, Ascetics, and Divine Incarnations in Indian Religions  
Timothy Lubin (Washington and Lee University)

### **Contemporary Religious Thought**

- Contemporary Religious Thought  
Paula Coe (Trinity University)
- The Anguish of the Jews: Issues of Historical and Contemporary  
Anti-semitism  
Brenton Dickieson (University of Prince Edward Island)

### **Religion and Culture**

- American Religion and Culture

Susan (Bales) Ridgely (University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh)

- Buddhism and the Environment

Sid Brown (Sewanee: The University of the South)

### **Pedagogical Reflections**

- Contemporary Problems in Religion and Culture

William C. James and Ellen Goldberg (Queen's University)

- Indian Religions: Self-Discipline And Social Activism

Lavanya Vemsani (St. Thomas University)

- Religion and Culture

Kevin Lewis (University of South Carolina)

- Religion and Popular Culture

Gail Hamner (Syracuse University)

### **Death and Dying**

- Contemporary Religious Thought: Death and Dying

Amir Hussain (California State University, Northridge)

- Death and Dying

Liz Nutting (Temple University)

- Death and Dying

Lucy Bregman (Temple University)

- Death and Its Beyond: Experience, Myths and Rituals

James Halstead (DePaul University)

- Grief, Death and Dying

Christopher Ross (Wilfrid Laurier University)

- Love and Death

Paula Coe (Macalester College)

- Pastoral Care in Times of Grief and Loss

Lee Ramsey (Memphis Theological Seminary)

- Sociology of Dying, Death, and Bereavement

Michael R. Leming (St. Olaf College)

### **Religion and Disabilities**

- Bioethics

Mary Jo Iozzio (Barry University)

- Bioethics Today and Yesterday

Mary Jo Iozzio (Barry University)

- 
- Disability and Difference: Theological and Ethical Perspectives  
Debbie Creamer (Ilf School of Theology)
  - Justice and Peace Struggles: Faith Communities and People with Disabilities  
Debbie Creamer (Ilf School of Theology)

### **Religion and Ecology**

- Buddhism and the Environment  
Sid Brown (Sewanee: The University of the South)

### **Pedagogical Reflections**

- Foundations for Ecological Ethics  
Jame Schaefer (Marquette University)
- Religion and Ecology  
Ahmed Afzaal (Connecticut College)
- Religion and Ecology  
Laura Hobgood-Oster (Southwestern University)
- Religion and Ecology  
Paul Waldau (Tufts University)
- Religion and Ecology in Native North America  
Ines Talamantez in collaboration with Sean M. Connors  
(University of California, Santa Barbara)
- Religion and Nature  
Joseph Adler (Kenyon College)
- Theocentric Foundations for Environmental Ethics  
Jame Schaefer (Marquette University)

### **Religion and Ethics**

- Bioethics  
Mary Jo Iozzio (Barry University)
- Bioethics Today and Yesterday  
Mary Jo Iozzio (Barry University)
- Business Ethics and Society  
John Wall (DePaul University)
- Business, Ethics, and Society  
John T. Leahy (DePaul University)
- Christian Ethics and Human Sexuality  
Julie J. Kilmer (Elmhurst College)

- Disability and Difference: Theological and Ethical Perspectives
- Debbie Creamer (Ilf School of Theology)
- Ethics  
Stacy Patty (Lubbock Christian University)
- God, Science and Designer Genes  
Donna Yarri and Spencer Stober (Alvernia College)
- Our Soul and Money  
Edward Tomasiewicz (DePaul University)
- Religion and Contemporary Values  
Michael Horace Barnes (University of Dayton)

### **Religion and Evil**

- Evil and Its Symbols  
Michel Desjardins (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- The Problem of Evil  
Jeff Robbins (Syracuse University)

### **Religion, Film and Visual Culture**

- Faith and Film  
Elizabeth Tillar (St. Anselm College)
- Jesus in Fiction and Film  
Darren J. N. Middleton (Texas Christian University)
- Philosophy and Film  
Casey Haskins (Purchase College)
- Religion and American Film  
Judith Weisenfeld (Vassar College)
- Religion and Contemporary Film  
Tony Michael and Ken Derry (University of Toronto)
- Religion and Film  
Amir Hussain (California State University, Northridge)
- Religion and Film  
Gail Hamner (Syracuse University)
- Religion and Film: Viewing Films Religiously  
Anne Moore and Kathleen O'Grady (University of Calgary)
- The Bible in Contemporary American Film  
Nicola Denzey (Skidmore College)

- The Bible in Contemporary Fiction and Film  
Cheryl B. Rhodes (University of South Carolina)

### **Food and Religion**

- Breaking Bread: Religion and American Foodways  
Nora L. Rubel (Connecticut College)
- Diets and Deities: Food Themes in World Religions  
Katherine Ulrich (DePauw University)

### **Greek Religions in Antiquity**

- Ancient Greek Religion  
Patricia Miller (Syracuse University)
- Gods, Heroes, Magic, and Mysteries: Religion in Ancient Greece  
Robert W. Allison and Loring M. Danforth (Bates College)
- Graeco-Roman Religions  
Patricia Miller (Syracuse University)
- Greek Goddesses  
Patricia Miller (Syracuse University)

### **Health, Illness and Religion**

- Bioethics  
Mary Jo Iozzio (Barry University)
- Bioethics Today and Yesterday  
Mary Jo Iozzio (Barry University)
- Wellness, Disease and Aids in Cultural Perspective  
Edward Tomasiewicz (DePaul University)

### **Hinduism**

- Hindu Myth, Image, and Pilgrimage  
Diana L. Eck (Harvard University)
- Introduction to Hinduism  
Nicholas F. Gier (University of Idaho)

### **Holocaust and Genocide Studies**

- Theology after the Holocaust  
Roy S. Furman and Jeffrey Carlson (DePaul University)

### **Religions of India**

- Exploring India: From Alex to Bill  
Pankaj Jain (University of Iowa)

- Goddesses of India  
Philip Lutgendorf (University of Iowa)
- Indian Religions: Self-Discipline And Social Activism  
Lavanya Vemsani (St. Thomas University)
- Mahabharata as Literature, Performance, Ideology  
Philip Lutgendorf (University of Iowa)
- South Asian Religions  
Jeffrey L. Richey (Berea College)
- The Ramayana as Literature, Performance, Ideology  
Philip Lutgendorf (University of Iowa)

### **Interfaith Dialogue**

- Buddhist-Christian Dialogue  
Jeffrey Carlson (Dominican University)
- Christians and Religious Neighbours  
Judith Berling and Jeff Richey (Berea College)
- Dialogue Between Jews and Christians  
Dennis Sasso and Dean Clark Williamson (Christian Theological Seminary)
- From Diatribe to Dialogue: Studies in the Jewish-Christian Encounter  
Robin Jensen and Ruth Langer (Andover Newton Theological School)
- Jews and Christians: Understanding the Other  
Ruth Langer and Philip Cunningham (Andover Newton Theological School)
- World Religions: Diversity and Dialogue  
Diana L. Eck (Harvard University)

### **Introductory Courses**

- Classics of Religious Literature  
Alan Altany (Harvard University)
- Classics of Religious Literature (previous edition)  
Alan Altany (Marshall University)
- Comparative Religious Thought  
Jeffrey Wattles (Kent State University)
- Debates about God

- 
- Jeffrey Carlson (DePaul University)
  - Eastern Religions  
Dale Cannon (Western Oregon University)
  - Experiences of the Sacred  
Jim Dalton (Siena College)
  - Individual and Society: Perspectives from Classical China  
Russell Kirkland (Macalester College)
  - Introducing Religious Studies  
Joe Incandela (St. Mary's College)
  - Introduction to Asian Religions  
Tim Lubin (Washington and Lee University)
  - Introduction to Religion  
Herbert Berg (University of North Carolina, Wilmington)
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  - Introduction to Religion in the Modern World [World Religions]  
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The Pluralism Project at Harvard University: A Case Study

## **SYLLABI**

These syllabi offer a small sample of the ways religious diversity in the U.S. is being taught on college campuses in the U.S. Many more syllabi are available at the American Academy of Religion's Syllabus Project.

- World Religions: Diversity and Dialogue: Fall, 2005

Dr. Diana Eck, Harvard University

## **Archive of Older Syllabi**

- World Religions in America: NEH Summer Seminar: Summer, 2000 (also available in PDF format)

Dr. Diana Eck, Harvard University

- Religion in Multicultural America: Fall, 1997

Dr. Diana Eck, Harvard University

- Pluralism in America: Seminar: Spring, 1993

Dr. Diana Eck, Harvard University

- World Religions in the Lens of America: The Problematic of Pluralism: Fall, 1993

Dr. Diana Eck, Harvard University

- American Religion, Twentieth Century: Spring, 2000

Dr. Jeanne H. Kilde, Macalester College

- Exploring American Spiritual Worlds: Fall, 2000

Dr. Mark MacWilliams, Holmes College

- Islam in the United States: Winter, 2002

Dr. Aminah B. McCloud, DePaul University

- Representation of Muslim Women in Text

Dr. Aminah B. McCloud, DePaul University

- Religion in America: Spring, 1999

Dr. Arnold Wettstein, Rollins College

- Thought and Practice of Contemporary American Religions: Fall, 2002  
Dr. Gayle Graham Yates, University of Minnesota
- Thought and Practice of American Religions: Spring, 2000  
Dr. Gayle Graham Yates, University of Minnesota
- Religion and American Culture: Fall, 1999  
Dr. Gayle Graham Yates, University of Minnesota
- The American Academy of Religion Syllabus Project.





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**CASE STUDY: PLURALISM PROJECT  
AND OTHER INITIATIVES**

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**THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

In the past forty years, immigration has dramatically changed the religious landscape of the United States. Today, the encounter between people of different religious traditions takes place in our own cities and neighbourhoods. In 1991, the Pluralism Project at Harvard University began a pioneering study of America's changing religious landscape. Through an expanding network of affiliates, we document the contours of our multi-religious society, explore new forms of interfaith engagement, and study the impact of religious diversity in civic life. In 2000, we expanded our study of pluralism to other multi-religious societies.

**SPOTLIGHT**

- "The Role and Impact of Religion in the 2008 Presidential Election"  
A news conference featuring Diana Eck, Welton Gaddy, and Amy Caiazza.
- Summer Research on World Religions in Boston By Tradition And Researcher
- Twenty Most Recent Research Reports
- Acting on Faith DVDs

To contact the Pluralism Project, email [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org). Please write to us with suggestions about new books, articles, or sites to include, with announcements of conferences or special events, or with corrections.

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## THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### What is Pluralism?

The plurality of religious traditions and cultures has come to characterize every part of the world today. But what is pluralism? Here are four points to begin our thinking:

- First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but *the energetic engagement with diversity*. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies.
- Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but *the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference*. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but it does not require Christians and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and ardent secularists to know anything about one another. Tolerance is too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity. It does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence. In the world in which we live today, our ignorance of one another will be increasingly costly.
- Third, pluralism is not relativism, but *the encounter of commitments*. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.
- Fourth, pluralism is *based on dialogue*. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the “table” will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table—with one’s commitments.

—Diana L. Eck

## THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### From Diversity to Pluralism

All of America’s diversity, old and new, does not add up to pluralism. “Pluralism” and “diversity” are sometimes used as if they

were synonyms, but diversity is just plurality, plain and simple — splendid, colorful, perhaps threatening. Pluralism is the engagement that creates a common society from all that plurality. On the same street in Silver Spring, Maryland the Vietnamese Catholic church, the Cambodian Buddhist temple, the Ukrainian Orthodox church, the Muslim Community Center, the Disciples of Christ church and the Mangal Mandir Hindu temple are all located in the same neighbourhood. This is certainly diversity, but without any engagement or relationship with one another it may not be an instance of pluralism.

Pluralism is only one of the possible responses to this diversity. Some people may feel threatened by diversity, or even hostile to it. Throughout American history there have been groups that have expressed prejudice and intolerance toward newcomers of other religions and cultures. Other people may look forward to the day when all these differences fade into the landscape of a predominantly Christian culture. Clearly the pluralism that would engage people of different faiths and cultures in the creation of a common society is not a “given,” but an achievement.

From the historical perspective, the terms “exclusion,” “assimilation,” and “pluralism” suggest three different ways in which Americans have approached this widening cultural and religious diversity. For exclusionists, the answer to the tumultuous influx of cultural and religious diversity that seemed to threaten the very core civilisation of America was to close the door, especially against the entry of the “alien,” whether Asians, Catholics, or Jews. For assimilationists, like those who envisioned America as a “melting pot,” the invitation to new immigrants was to come, but leave your differences and angularities behind as quickly as possible. Come and be like us, come and conform to a predominantly Anglo-Protestant culture. For the pluralists, like Horace Kallen in the early twentieth century, the American promise was to come as you are, with all your differences and angularities, pledged only to the common civic demands of American citizenship. Come and be yourself, contributing in your distinctive way to the “orchestra” of American civilisation.

In today’s discussion of America’s religious and cultural diversity, there are echoes of these voices of the past. America’s new religious diversity has produced faultlines, those cracks that indicate deep fractures and divisions. Stereotypes and prejudice have old and new forms as they are experienced by immigrant Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim communities. There are encounters, sometimes hostile encounters, over

“zoning” and “traffic” as new religious communities move into the neighbourhood. They are often legitimate concerns, but they are also ways of expressing fear and uncertainty about newcomers in the community. Unfortunately, there have also been incidents of vandalism and arson directed against the religious centers of newcomers.

But America’s religious diversity has also produced a new period of bridge-building, as diverse religious communities build unprecedented relationships with one another. A church and a mosque buy property together and build side by side in the San Francisco area. Councils of churches and synagogues gradually include mosques and temples, becoming interfaith councils. Today, they are beginning to constitute a new interreligious infrastructure in America’s cities and towns. There are interfaith dialogues, interfaith coalitions to fight hunger and homelessness, and interfaith Thanksgiving services. In school boards, there are real encounters, often heated, over issues of the proper role of religion in the public schools.

Today, as in every era, Americans are appropriating anew the meaning of “We, the people of the United States of America...” What does it mean to say “we” in a multireligious America? How do “we” relate to one another, when that “we” include Buddhist Americans, like the Hawaiian born Buddhist astronaut who died on the Challenger, Muslim Americans, like the mayor of a small town in Texas, and Sikh Americans, like the research scientist in Fairfax, Virginia. What, then, is pluralism?

First, pluralism is not the sheer fact of plurality or diversity alone, but is active engagement with that diversity. One can be an observer of diversity. One can “celebrate diversity,” as the cliché goes. Or one can be critical of it or threatened by it. But real pluralism requires participation, engagement. Diversity can and often has meant isolation and the creation of virtual ghettos of religion and sub-culture with little traffic between them. The dynamic of pluralism, however, is one of meeting, exchange, and two-way traffic. Kallen’s analogy of the orchestra, sounding together, may be a good one. But as Kallen was well aware, it is always an unfinished symphony. The music, perhaps more like jazz, depends upon having an ear always attuned to the genius of the other players.

Second, pluralism is more than the mere tolerance of differences; it requires some knowledge of our differences. There is no question that tolerance is important, but tolerance by itself may be a deceptive virtue. Sometimes an attitude of tolerance may stand in the way of

engagement. Tolerance does not require people to know anything at all about one another. As a result, tolerance can let us harbor all the stereotypes and half-truths that we want to believe about our neighbours. Tolerance does little to remove our ignorance of one another. Tolerance is definitely important, but it is probably too thin a foundation for a society as religiously diverse and complex as that of America.

Third, pluralism is not simply relativism, but makes room for real and different religious commitments. Some people are wary of the language of pluralism, insisting that it effectively waters down one's own religious beliefs by acknowledging that others believe differently. Some mistakenly think that a pluralist perspective assumes that there is no real difference among various religious traditions and their values. On the contrary, the encounter of a pluralist society is the encounter of real commitments and real differences. Pluralism does not require relinquishing the distinctiveness of one's own tradition of faith to reach the "lowest common denominator." In the public square of a pluralist society, commitments are not left at the door. Rather, pluralism invites people of every faith or of none to be themselves, with all their particularities, and yet to be engaged in creating a civil society, through the critical and self-critical encounter with one another. Pluralism is a process of creating a society by acknowledging, rather than hiding, our deepest differences.

Fourth, pluralism in America is clearly based on the common ground rules of the First Amendment to the Constitution: "no establishment" of religion and the "free exercise" of religion. The vigorous encounter of a pluralistic society is not premised on achieving agreement on matters of conscience and faith, but achieving a vigorous context of discussion and relationship. *E Pluribus Unum*, "out of many, one," envisions one people, a common sense of a civic "we," but not one religion, one faith, one conscience. *Unum* does not mean uniformity. Perhaps the most valuable thing people of many faiths have in common is their commitment to a society based on the give and take of the civil dialogue at a common table.

Fifth, pluralism requires the nurturing of constructive dialogue, revealing both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the "table" will agree with one another. The process of public discussion will inevitably reveal both areas of agreement and of disagreement. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table — with one's commitments. Discovering where the metaphorical "tables" are in American society and encouraging a climate of dialogue is foundational for pluralism.

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Where are those public spaces, those “tables” where people of various religious traditions and none meet in American society? They are certainly in neighbourhoods and community organisations, schools and colleges, legislatures and courts, zoning boards and planning commissions, interfaith councils and interfaith coalitions, chaplaincies and hospitals. In every one of these areas of public life, Americans are now facing new questions, new challenges, and new tensions in appropriating a more complex sense of who “we” now are.

—*Diana L. Eck*

## THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### Mission

Our mission is to help Americans engage with the realities of religious diversity through research, outreach, and the active dissemination of resources. In the past thirty years the religious landscape of the United States has changed radically. There are Islamic centers and mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples and meditation centers in virtually every major American city. The encounter between people of very different religious traditions takes place in the proximity of our own cities and neighbourhoods. The results of the 2000 census underscore the tremendous scope of ethnic change in our society, but tell us little about its religious dimensions or its religious significance.

Pluralism has long been a generative strand of American ideology. Mere diversity or plurality alone, however, does not constitute pluralism. There is lively debate over the implications of our multicultural and multireligious society in civic, religious, and educational institutions. How we appropriate plurality to shape a positive pluralism is one of the most important questions American society faces in the years ahead. It will require all of us to know much more about the new religious landscape of America than we presently know.

The Pluralism Project: World Religions in America is a decade-long research project, with current funding from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, to engage students in studying the new religious diversity in the United States. We will explore particularly the communities and religious traditions of Asia and the Middle-East that have become woven into the religious fabric of the United States in the past twenty-five years. The overall aims of the Pluralism Project are:

1. To document and better understand the changing contours of American religious demography, focusing especially on those

cities and towns where the new plurality has been most evident and discerning the ways in which this plurality is both visible and invisible in American public life.

2. To study the religious communities themselves, their temples, mosques, gurudwaras and retreat centers, their informal networks and emerging institutions, their forms of adaptation and religious education in the American context, their encounter with the other religious traditions of our common society, and their encounter with civic institutions.
3. To explore the ramifications and implications of America's new plurality through case studies of particular cities and towns, looking at the response of Christian and Jewish communities to their new neighbours; the development of interfaith councils and networks; the new theological and pastoral questions that emerge from the pluralistic context; and the recasting of traditional church-state issues in a wider context.
4. To discern, in light of this work, the emerging meanings of religious "pluralism," both for religious communities and for public institutions, and to consider the real challenges and opportunities of a public commitment to pluralism in the light of the new religious contours of America.

## THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### History

In the fall of 1990, some 25 students joined Diana Eck for a course at Harvard University on "World Religions in New England." Each week, the class would divide into teams to visit religious communities in the Boston area and then meet to discuss what we had learned. From Sri Lakshmi Temple, located close to the starting point of the Boston Marathon, to New England's first mosque, established in the shadows of the cranes of Quincy's shipyards, we began to discover and document a religious landscape being transformed before our eyes. The guidebook *World Religions in Boston: A Guide to Communities and Resources* grew out of this initial research.

Based on our findings in Boston, we set out to investigate more broadly the changing religious landscape of other American cities, and to consider the implications of this more complex religious landscape for American public life. From the beginning, it was clear that diversity alone does not constitute pluralism. Pluralism requires a degree of engagement with our diversity and the knowledge—both of others

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and of ourselves—that such engagement brings. And so, in 1991, the Pluralism Project was born.

The Pluralism Project engaged the best energies of Harvard students from both the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Divinity School in “hometown” research in such cities as Denver, Houston, and Minneapolis. Some had a more specific focus: Hindu summer camps in Pennsylvania, Vietnamese Buddhist struggles with zoning laws in California, the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America in Kansas City, or the history of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Each year, during the subsequent fall semester, the researchers presented their work at a Pluralism Project research conference. And for one semester each year, all the researchers participated in a working seminar to revise their research into substantial papers.

Beginning in 1994, a team of students from Harvard University worked toward the production of a multimedia CD-ROM. We expanded the scope of our work to cover key cities across the country, to include the many other religious traditions of the United States, and to explore the historical and contemporary challenges posed by religious diversity. In 1997, *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*, was released by Columbia University Press. The CD-ROM serves as an introduction to the new religious landscape of America, from a Cambodian Buddhist temple set amidst the farmlands of Minnesota, to a multiethnic storefront mosque on a sloping San Francisco Street. *On Common Ground* makes the findings and insights of the Pluralism Project available to teachers, students, researchers, and religious leaders in a dynamic, informative, inviting, and data-rich multimedia format.

The CD-ROM has three main sections: “Exploring the Religious Landscape” provides portraits of some 300 communities of faith in 18 cities and regions of the United States, including mosques, gurdwaras, churches, and temples. “Discovering America’s Religions” includes an introduction to fifteen religious traditions in the American context, from Afro-Caribbean traditions to Zoroastrianism. “Encountering Religious Diversity” looks at the ways America has responded to religious difference historically, and studies the current challenges as communities, schools, and public institutions take stock of America’s new religious diversity. *On Common Ground* received considerable critical acclaim, and a number of awards; it received the EDUCAUSE Medal in 1998, cited as “an extraordinary resource” and a “pioneering work.” The CD was a Media and Methods 1998 Awards Portfolio winner; on



Choice's 35th Annual Outstanding Academic Books list; and a finalist for the 1998 EdPress Distinguished Achievement Award. These achievements are a credit to the efforts of our students, academic advisors, and staff, especially Susan Shumaker and Terry Rockefeller.

As we completed the CD-ROM, we also began developing an online presence with our website, pluralism.org. This site, first launched in December 1996, began as an online flyer for the Project; over the years, the site has emerged as our most important tool for outreach and education. In 2003, the Pluralism Project website was named "Best of the Web" in the Spirituality category at the 7th Annual Webby Awards. Webby Award nominees are judged on six criteria: content, structure and navigation, visual design, functionality, interactivity, and overall experience. This award is a tribute to the hundreds of individuals who have contributed to the work of the Pluralism Project and to the richness of resources we are able to offer online; it also recognises the efforts of our Webmaster, Alan Wagner, who has worked on the site for more than a decade. The Pluralism Project website was re-designed and re-launched in November of 2006.

One of the key resources of the Pluralism Project website is Religious Diversity News (RDN), created in 1997 to track news articles related to religion in multireligious America. This resource highlights media coverage of interfaith relations and issues related to religion in the public square, with a special emphasis on Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, and Sikh communities in the United States. In 2003, Religious Diversity News expanded its coverage to multireligious societies around the world. News articles are searchable by tradition, key themes, state or country, and date. Key themes cover a range of topics, including: religion in public life; statistics on religious identification; religious discrimination and accommodation; and women and gender relations. The staff of the Pluralism Project compiles Religious Diversity News from major newspapers and regional media, as well as from ethnic media and religious advocacy organisations. The News Headline Service enables a range of organisations to incorporate these materials into their websites, and reach a wider audience.

Shortly after the release of *On Common Ground* and the creation of our website, we extended our research on America's new religious landscape by engaging affiliate religion departments, theological schools, and researchers in the work of the Pluralism Project. Mini-grants enabled professors and departments to involve themselves and their students in research on the changing religious life of their own city or region,

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with special attention to the new presence of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Zoroastrian religious communities. This work further expanded our geographic reach and extended the impact of the Pluralism Project.

Since 1998, we have hosted annual gatherings of the Pluralism Project at the American Academy of Religion (AAR). These receptions bring together many former student researchers who are now leaders in the field of religious studies, along with advisors, affiliates, and other friends of the Project. We provide opportunities for informal exchanges among students and scholars in disparate but related fields of study, and highlight new and innovative research being conducted by our affiliates. In addition, we have hosted bus tours for scholars of religion in many of the host cities.

In 1999, we hosted two groundbreaking consultations on multireligious America, where for the first time, activists and representatives of diverse advocacy groups shared a common table. Long-established Jewish and Christian organisations were represented, as were their counterparts in the Hindu and Muslim communities. Representatives from major advocacy groups, such as the ACLU, the Freedom Forum, and the NCCJ participated alongside representatives from Baha'i, Buddhist, Jain, Native American, Sikh, Wiccan, and Zoroastrian communities. The first "Consultation on Religious Discrimination and Accommodation" was held in May 1999 at Harvard University and was followed a "Symposium on Civil Society and Multireligious America," in November 1999. The second meeting took a broader look at the issues of civil society, included a panel on public and private schools, and involved representatives from the White House, the Armed Forces Chaplains Board along with some of our affiliates and advisors.

Among the many outgrowths of these symposia were a greater awareness of the importance of teachers on the front lines of pluralism, and the need to highlight women's voices in the context of religious diversity. In 2000, the Pluralism Project hosted a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for Schoolteachers. The seminar, on "World Religions in America," brought together teachers from across the United States and from a range of disciplines and subject areas to explore together the new religious diversity of the United States. Through seminars, field trips, and informal gatherings, we learned alongside these teachers, who represented some of the strength and diversity of American educational systems. Participants included an African American Muslim educator from Atlanta; a Brother from a

West Philadelphia Catholic High School; and a Monk from a Buddhist school in California, Developing Virtue Boys High School. We involved teachers from esteemed institutions such as Phillips Exeter Academy and the National Cathedral School as well as educators from public and private schools in Washington, Louisiana, Texas, Illinois, and North Carolina.

This seminar helped us to re-ground our work in the concerns of secondary school teachers. Schoolteachers are truly at the forefront of grappling with America's religious diversity: there is no place where the impact of our new religious reality is felt more forcefully. After the NEH seminar, we developed additional Teachers' Resources and began offering specialised teacher affiliate grants. We also began offering grants to independent researchers, photographers, and filmmakers so that we could explore and document the many dimensions of our religious landscape. In addition, we began making research grants available to students from colleges and universities across the United States, with an interest in developing the next generation of scholars and researchers of religion.

In September 2000, we began to convene a series of lunch discussions with faculty across Harvard University who are interested in immigration and religious pluralism. The Interfaculty Working Group has included professors and visiting scholars from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Faculty of Divinity, the Kennedy School of Government, the Graduate School of Education, and the Harvard Law School. These discussions include presentations from leading thinkers and activists from diverse religious communities, particularly those with acute concerns about current policy issues. This interface between religious communities and the academy, and across fields of study, is a special emphasis of the Pluralism Project. Over a period of five years, we have developed and expanded these collaborations and conversations through an emphasis on American civil society.

In 2001, we embarked on a new initiative to convene, and cultivate, Women's Networks in Multireligious America. At our first consultations of religious advocacy organisations, we recognised that women rarely held formal leadership positions, but played critical roles within the community. The common concerns of religious women represented important opportunities for collaboration, yet their voices were rarely heard within the public conversation, or the traditional structures of interfaith dialogue. We hosted the first in a series of multi-religious consultations with women leaders, activists, and academics in April

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2001 at Harvard University. The first meeting served as an introduction to a range of individuals and organisations, providing a much-needed forum for conversation across difference and identifying important points of intersection.

In November 2001 we held a second consultation, one that had not been originally planned, as a means to respond to the crisis that minority religious communities were facing in the aftermath of September 11. This meeting, held at the Harvard Club of New York City, powerfully illustrated the urgency of multifaith conversation as we navigated new fault lines and worked to build stronger bridges. The following spring, in April 2002, we hosted a consultation focused on public policy, planned in conjunction with the Women and Public Policy Programme at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. In April 2003, we incorporated an international perspective, uniting our women's networks members with participants from a groundbreaking 1983 gathering, "Women, Religion and Social Change." In the fall of 2004, we hosted "Women's Votes, Women's Voices" at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. This public forum took place as the nation approached the 2004 presidential elections; it served to amplify diverse religious women's voices and forged new linkages with secular women's organisations.

In 2004, we began working with Rachel Antell, a former Pluralism Project staffer and award-winning documentarian, to develop a film that would enable the concerns of the women's networks to reach a broader and more diverse audience. *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America* is a documentary film that offers an intimate look at the lives and work of three American women – one Buddhist, one Hindu, and one Muslim – for whom faith, activism, and identity are deeply intertwined. The film premiered at Harvard University on April 26, 2005 to a standing-room only audience. Since then, the film has been used as an educational tool and has been featured in film festivals, conferences, and special events.

In 2005, we launched four research initiatives related to religious pluralism and civil society:

- The Interfaith Initiative studies the fast-growing interfaith movement with its new forms of relationship, dialogue, and civic engagement.
- The Civic Initiative investigates the practical challenges of religious pluralism by developing case studies and forging relationships with civic leaders.

- The Women's Initiative explores the varied expressions of women's religious leadership, and provides opportunities for collaboration with secular women's organisations.
- The International Initiative expands our study of pluralism to other multi-religious democracies, broadening our network of affiliates to include research projects in other countries.

As we look to the future, we will continue to emphasize the role of student research in the documentation of our new religious reality. Student research is at the foundation of the Pluralism Project: students contribute as field researchers, affiliates, interns, and staff members. Students have made critical contributions: from the initial fieldwork on religious diversity in Boston, to the development of *On Common Ground*; from their work on convenings and special events to the creation and ongoing content development for the website. For many years, we have hosted annual Student Research Conferences at Harvard University to highlight some of the best student research efforts in a public forum. Beginning in 2004, we developed a summer internship programme, which has drawn top students from across the U.S. and abroad. We look forward to expanding this programme, and developing new ways to integrate the energies of students into the work of the Project.

Senior staff who have guided the Pluralism Project and share in the leadership of its programmes and initiatives include Elinor Pierce, Senior Researcher; Grove Harris, Managing Director; and Kathryn Lohre, Assistant Director. All hold degrees from the Harvard Divinity School, and began working with the Project as student researchers.

Finally, the history of the Pluralism Project would be incomplete without mention of the role of the religious communities themselves. We would like to recognize the generosity of the countless individuals who have been our gracious hosts, learned teachers, informed contributors, and fellow researchers. Thank you for your contributions: our work is inspired by your example, infused with your spirit, and informed by your wisdom.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is Pluralism? What does the Pluralism Project do?**

We address this question on our home page. Our mission is “to help Americans engage with the realities of religious diversity through research, outreach, and the active dissemination of resources.” You can read more about it on our Mission page.

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**How has religion changed over the last ten years in my home state?**

By looking through our online resources, you can get an idea of the way your home state has changed over time. First, our database of Religious Diversity News articles is searchable so you can explore articles about your state. Next, check our Resources by State to see if we have an affiliate studying your area. Finally, several articles written by Diana Eck and our affiliates can provide a background about changes on a national level, giving a broad context to local examples.

**Can you help me learn about Buddhism (or Islam, or Sikhism, etc)?**

Our Resources by Religious Tradition offers many resources to help you through your search. This site includes research reports, center profiles, news articles, and bibliographies about each tradition. You might also be interested in talking to a member of the tradition, or a local religious center may have an open house or community education programmes. Use our Directory of Religious Centers to find a religious community in your area by searching under tradition and state. Finally, if you are interested in taking a more formal, academic class on this tradition, we suggest looking into local colleges and universities that might offer classes that would suit your needs.

**How many Buddhists/Hindus/Muslims are there in my home state? In the U.S.?**

Please visit our statistics page. You can also search Religious Diversity News using “statistics” as a keyword for additional information.

**I am looking for a Buddhist/Hindu/Muslim speaker for an interfaith panel in my hometown. Can you recommend someone?**

The Pluralism Project does not maintain a national speaker list; however, our online Directory of Religious Centers may provide some help. Check the directory for local interfaith groups who may have such a list for your area. You can also check the directory for local temples, mosques, gurdwaras and centers near you that may be able to supply you with the contacts you need.

**I want to start an interfaith group. What resources can you suggest to help me get started?**

The Online Interfaith Resource Guides is a collection of links to resources from a variety of interfaith groups, and includes guides, suggestions and tips, and other helpful information. Our Interfaith Initiative page also offers extensive useful resources.

**What resources do you have on religious diversity and the environment, religious diversity and poverty, religious diversity and the workplace, etc.?**

The best way to find these resources is to do an overall website search with key terms. You can search using your interest (poverty, environment, peace, etc) as a keyword, which will lead you to related research. For example, a search for “Environment” will provide our “Selected Links: Interfaith Environmental Resources”, and a search for “Workplace” will provide Dr. Douglas Hicks’ work on “Religion and the Workplace”. Our Religious Diversity News database can also be searched by keyword to provide you with leads.

**I’d like to invite Diana Eck to speak. What is the best way to reach her?**

Please email [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org) with the details of your request. We can forward the email to her and may be able to suggest alternative sources for speakers in the likely case that her demanding schedule prevents her participation.

**How can I order a copy of *Acting on Faith* or *On Common Ground*?**

Ordering information for *Acting on Faith* is available [here](#). *On Common Ground* is available through Columbia University Press. The materials in *World Religions in Boston* are now available online.

**How do I subscribe and unsubscribe to the newsletter?**

Please send an email to [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org) with “subscribe” or “unsubscribe” in the subject line and we will make the change to our mailing list.

**I want to use a photograph from the Pluralism Project website. What’s involved?**

Many of our photographs are joint copyrighted with our affiliates, others are our copyright alone, and others we do not have any further rights to offer. Please send an email to [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org) detailing the specific photograph(s) you wish to use and for what purposes. Include a link to where the photograph appears on our site. We will then be able to let you know the status on the rights, and we may refer you to the photographer directly. Fees may be involved, especially if you require specific formats for publication.

**How do I add or correct information in the Directory?**

If your organisation is not in the Directory of Religious Centers, or has an incorrect address or phone, please email [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org)

with the information and we will correct it as soon as possible. Please note that we include Christian and Jewish centers in our Center Profiles, but not in our Directory; the reason for this is we must reasonably limit our project, and since there are already a great deal of resources and directories focused on Christian and Jewish centers, we do not specialize in these areas.

### **Can we have our organisation's Center Profile changed?**

Please email [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org) with the corrections you suggest, and we may make the changes ourselves or may need to contact the researcher. Unlike the directory, the Center Profiles are the work of individual researchers, and reflect a snapshot of a particular time in a center's history. We appreciate receiving updates.

### **Do you offer research grants?**

Currently, we no longer are able to offer research funding. We continue to offer affiliation and unfunded summer internships; click [here](#) for more information.

### **Can you add a link to our organisation's website?**

Send an email to [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org) with the link. If your organisation is in the Directory of Religious Centers, we will add the link to its entry. Suggestions for our Selected Links pages will be reviewed periodically.

### **Will you publish or publicize my book/movie/event?**

We are always interested in learning more about current events and new publications. However, we only publicize events or publications which we have participated in, sponsored, or otherwise partnered with. Articles written by our affiliates and research associates are featured on this site. You may wish to consider applying for affiliation. We welcome submissions for our library and archives.

### **How can I become involved in the Pluralism Project?**

There are many ways to help with our work—First, you can join our e-newsletter. If you see local news articles that involve religious diversity, send a link to the article to [staff@pluralism.org](mailto:staff@pluralism.org) and we may include it in RDN. People conducting research on America's religious diversity can apply to be a Research Affiliate: our affiliate application materials are online. Books, movies, and articles can be donated to our hardcopy library of research resources. We also accept financial donations.



## **CIVIC INITIATIVE**

Civic life includes all the places in the “public square” where people encounter one another as citizens. It is the visible space of our identity, whether in cities and towns, or at the state and national level. The basis of civic life is not one or many religious traditions, but the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the range of ways in which citizens cooperate in civil society. In the Civic Initiative, we focus on the ways in which various religious communities, especially the newer minority communities participate in the civic life of American society. How is the public square changing with new voices and perspectives? What are the biggest challenges, whether in education, zoning, health care, or civil rights? Here our goal is to provide, through research, a more complex picture of American civic life at the beginning of the 21st century.

### **Research on Civic and Public Issues**

- Election 2008: Candidate Endorsements by Religious Groups and Leaders
- Minority Faith Involvement in the 2006 Immigration Debates
- America’s National Day of Prayer
- Getting the Balance Right: a Diversity of Responses to the 10 Commandments Debate (2005)
- The Debate Over Evolution in Kansas Public Schools (2005)
- Air Force Academy Addresses “Challenges to Pluralism” (2005)
- Religious Diversity and the Workplace (2004)

### **The City Hall Project**

In the work of the Pluralism Project, “City Hall” is shorthand for the local public square: the city councils, town meetings, zoning boards, civic associations, and school committees where we, as citizens, conduct our civic business. Mayors, city councils, and other civic leaders have key roles in shaping the climate of pluralism in America’s cities and towns. This civic space is, increasingly, a space where the voices of people of many religious traditions are heard. The City Hall Initiative represents a vital stream of our work at the Pluralism Project. We track, and highlight, issues of civic importance through Religious Diversity News and we have three case studies now in development; each of which will provide a much needed “thick description” of the complex and contested public space.

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## Research of the City Hall Project

- America's National Day of Prayer
- Diversity Training Series: Educating Chicago's Law Enforcement on the City's Many Religions
- Boston Ten Civic Practices

## CASE STUDIES

Our work on local issues has led to case studies that exemplify some of the critical issues that citizens face in the civic arena. The case study approach, we believe, is uniquely suited to the study of religious diversity: through "thick description" we are able to unpack some of the complexities of religious diversity on the ground, as rich, ongoing narratives with multiple perspectives and competing interpretations. Three case studies in development include:

- *Simpson v. Chesterfield County*. A Wiccan priestess in Chesterfield County, Virginia filed a lawsuit to obtain the right, as a religious leader, to offer invocations at her local County Board of Supervisors meetings. While a District Court Judge ruled in her favour, the Board appealed and the decision was reversed. This case offers a striking example of the conflict over definitions of civil religion and governmental establishment of the Judeo-Christian tradition and illustrates how First Amendment non-establishment concerns are negotiated on a local level. While the Supreme Court declined this case, it is clear that the issue of religious pluralism and public invocations is far from finished: in *Wynne v. Great Falls, SC*, the court ruled against the exclusive use of the term Jesus Christ in civic invocations, barring the term entirely. How this ruling and similar rulings across the nation play out remains to be seen. These case studies are being researched and written by Managing Director Grove Harris.
  - o Wiccan Invocation: 2005 Update
  - o Wiccan Invocation: A Canary in the Mineshaft of the United States' Non-Establishment of Religion (2004)
  - o Wynne v. Great Falls, SC (2005)
- *The Palos Heights Mosque Dispute*. In 2000, the City Hall of Palos Heights, Illinois filled with concerned citizens: "word on the street" was that Muslims were coming to town. The Reformed Church of Palos Heights had entered into a real estate contract with Al Salam Mosque Foundation, and many citizens in Palos

Heights wanted the city to intervene. One Alderman compared the Muslims to Nazis; a neighbour declared Islam to be a “false religion”; some argued that the building was needed for recreation. Ultimately, the City Council voted to offer the Muslims \$2,00,000 to “walk away” from their offer. The city became known as “Palos Hates,” but amidst the bigotry, new bridges were being built: Mayor Dean Koldenhoven vetoed the buyout offer and wrote a letter of apology to the Muslims; local ministers worked tirelessly to educate their parishioners about “loving your neighbour”; and a local dialogue group, still active in 2006, was born out of the conflict. This case study is being researched and written by Senior Researcher Elinor Pierce.

### **Religious Diversity News**

Through Religious Diversity News (RDN), the Pluralism Project tracks coverage of issues of civic importance: we include coverage by progressive and ethnic media outlets and highlight the perspectives of religious and ethnic advocacy groups. We identify critical stories and follow them across their full trajectory, for months and even years, linked through key themes and ongoing stories. Examples of key themes include: Advocacy, Workplace, Universities, Education, Health and Hospitals, Military, Prisons, First Amendment, Violence/Vandalism, and Zoning.

### **Selected Links**

At the Pluralism Project, we are often asked about the contributions of minority religions to our common welfare, and these links offer a broad overview of such contributions.

### **SPOTLIGHT**

Candidate Endorsements by Religious Groups and Leaders.





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## NOTABLE UN INITIATIVES WITH FOCUS ON GOLDEN RULE CURRICULUM

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### INTERFAITH INITIATIVE

As the United States finds its way forward as a truly multi-religious democracy, one of the most important new forms of civic life is the growing interfaith movement. The events of September 11, 2001 demonstrated the importance of interfaith groups already formed; the ensuing years have seen the emergence of hundreds of new interfaith initiatives. While the interfaith movement is expanding, there is still little understanding of what these new instruments of relationship and dialogue will mean for American society. As our country becomes more religiously and culturally complex, increasingly interfaith initiatives are significant for the kind of engagement we describe as “pluralism.” In building a foundation for this initiative, we are exploring emerging trends and best practices, both in the U.S. and internationally.

#### **Research on Interfaith Activity**

Our organisational profiles and research reports explore interfaith initiatives, groups, events, and trends. They represent the diverse nature of interfaith work, which varies greatly in location, size, structure, mission, and focus. Our profiles outline an organisation’s actions, motivations, and membership. Our research reports include interviews with interfaith leaders, studies of national and local networks, examples of civic practices, and an overview of national and international interfaith trends.

- Profiles
- Research Reports

## Directory

Foundational to our interfaith work has been the extensive development of our directory of interfaith initiatives, interfaith centers, interreligious councils, and multifaith projects. Our directory now numbers 628 interfaith groups. While this will continue to expand, it now gives us easy access to a range of interfaith groups for the next phase of our work.

We have created a map of the data from our interfaith directory listings, which offers a visual presentation of the distribution of this activity across the United States.

## Interfaith Religious Diversity News

Our Religious Diversity News and International Religious Diversity News offer a wide range of news stories of interfaith activities in progress. This searchable database gives both the most up-to-date news as well as a searchable archive, a virtual treasure trove for those exploring the growth and development of the interfaith movement.

- Religious Diversity News
- International Religious Diversity News

## Selected Links

This short set of links will give you an overview of the more prominent interfaith organisations and resources in the United States.

## Slide Shows

The images in these slide shows demonstrate the spaces and contexts of interfaith initiatives.

- “T.I.D.E. (Teenage Interfaith Diversity Education): The Wave of Change” conference co-sponsored by Interfaith Action, Inc.’s Youth Leadership Programme and The Pluralism Project
- Sacred Space: Practices and Potentials
- The Interfaith Landscape of San Diego
- Religious Diversity in Southern Mississippi
- “A Lively Experiment”: A Multireligious Historical Overview of Rhode Island
- The Hindu and the Cowboy... and Other Kansas City Stories
- The Pluralism Project of Ohio
- World Religions in Metropolitan Detroit

## **World Religions in Boston**

Our research on the religious diversity of Boston includes a survey of the interfaith activity in this urban area, offered as a set of profiles.

## **INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES FOR RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**

In a globalising world, linked in so many ways by economic, political, and security concerns, it is important to recognize the local impact of the global and the global impact of the local. Religious pluralism is not just American challenges, but is a challenge for multi-religious democracies around the world. We are working to broaden our network to include international academic affiliates, finding synergies with research and study projects at centers and universities in other countries. This initiative is greatly informed by the insights of international visitors to the Pluralism Project, and by Diana L. Eck's visits to countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

## **International Organisational Profiles**

We are engaged in identifying a range of projects, centers, and institutes around the world that also focus on the promise and challenge of religious pluralism. We plan to get an overview of the architecture of this growing group of institutions.

- Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies (Yogyakarta, Indonesia)
- International Center for Islam and Pluralism (Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia)
- Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center (Amman, Jordan)
- Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (Amman, Jordan)

## **International Research Reports**

- Malaysia, Truly Asia? Religious Pluralism in Malaysia (2006)
- Religious Pluralism in Indonesia (2006)
- Marta Benavides, El Salvador (2004)

## **International Portraits**

- Portrait of Indonesia (2007)
- Portrait of Nepal (2007)
- Portrait of Thailand (2007)
- Portrait of the United Kingdom (2007)

### **International Directory Entries**

This growing list focuses primarily on research centers and allied projects.

### **Religious Diversity News: International**

The expanded international scope of Religious Diversity News offers a broader awareness of the ways in which the issues of religious pluralism are on the agenda in the international arena, not only through well-known and oft-reported headline news, but in the regional and local ways that are our signature in tracking religious pluralism.

### **Events**

An increasing number of international visitors have requested to meet with us at the Pluralism Project: some are individual scholars, and others are with delegations sponsored by the U.S. State Department's International Scholarly Exchange and International Visitors Programme. These conversations with international colleagues invigorate our sense of purpose in our outreach and allow us connections with the centers and universities they represent.

### **Pluralism Project International Affiliates**

Affiliates around the world contribute to a growing body of research.

### **Slide Shows**

- Mauritius: Hinduism and Religious Pluralism
- Religious Diversity in Central Europe: Asian Immigrant Religions in Germany and Switzerland

### **Sources of Information on Global Religious Distribution**

These are online resources for background information on religious distribution, geographic data, and political systems in countries around the world.

### **WOMEN'S NETWORKS INITIATIVE**

Since 2001, the Pluralism Project has convened a series of multi-religious consultations with women leaders, activists, and academics. In giving voice to women who are developing new forms of civic and religious leadership, these events have provided a much-needed forum where participants have forged new linkages and identified common ground. While forming the basis for the Pluralism Project's women's networks initiative, these consultations have been accompanied by



focused research, local convenings, and a documentary film called *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America*. In the ongoing work with this initiative, the networks will be expanded to include strategic partnerships with secular women's organisations.

### **Focused Research**

Identifying emerging forms of women's religious leadership and networks is an integral component of our women's initiative. Focused research on these trends by senior staff and student research associates is an important tool for taking stock of and developing new directions for our work.

- Women's Interfaith Initiatives in the United States Post 9/11 (Kathryn Lohre, Fall 2006)
- Women in Buddhism in the U.S. (Kate Dugan, Summer 2006)
- "Dialogue and the Echo Boom of Terror: Religious Women's Voices after 9/11" (Dr. Diana L. Eck, Fall 2005 in *After Terror: Promoting Dialogue Among Civilisations*, edited by Akbar Ahmed and Brian Forst)
- Snapshots of Muslim Women's Leadership (Kate Dugan, Spring 2006)
- Gamma Gamma Chi Sorority (Kate Dugan, Spring 2006)
- "What Does it Mean to be a Presbyterian Woman? Women's Interfaith Networks" (Kathryn Lohre, Summer 2005 in *Horizons: The Magazine for Presbyterian Women*, entitled "Beloved Strangers: Christian Faith in a Pluralistic World.")

### **Women's News**

Through Religious Diversity News (RDN) we are able to track women's leadership, activism, and scholarship, both in the U.S. and internationally. We are also able to identify the events and issues that have a particular impact on the lives of women of faith.

- Religious Diversity News
- International Religious Diversity News

*Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America*

In April 2005, we premiered a documentary film produced and directed by one of our affiliates, Rachel Antell, and narrated by Dr. Diana L. Eck called *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America*. The film was developed out of the conversations that have taken place in our women's networks over the years. It features

Dr. Shamita Das Dasgupta, co-founder of Manavi, Inc.; Dr. Leila Al-Marayati, spokesperson for Muslim Women's League; and Mushim Ikeda-Nash, former chairperson of the San Francisco Zen Center Board Committee on Diversity and Multiculturalism and diversity facilitator.

### **Harvard Events**

Events hosted here at Harvard serve as an important link to the broader conversation of our women's initiatives within the university context.

### **Other Events**

In addition to events hosted at Harvard, we have actively participated in events hosted by other campuses, organisations, and centers. These have all contributed to our participation in the conversation on women's leadership and networks. We are always pleased to consider invitations and requests—either to host a screening of *Acting on Faith*, or to participate in a conference or event. Please feel free to contact Kathryn Lohre at <mailto://klohre@fas.harvard.edu> or 617-496-2481 with any invitations or requests related to this initiative.

### **Profiles**

The organisational profiles available here include many of the organisations that have been active in our women's networks.

### **Selected Links**

This set of links includes our women's networks members and other related sites that highlight women's participation and leadership in religious life.

## **GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH**

These guidelines were originally developed for Harvard University students conducting field research. You may wish to adapt these for your own use.

### **A. Background Reading**

- Please be sure that you have done some background reading before visiting religious centers. To begin with, you should review the Pluralism Project's CD-ROM, *On Common Ground: World Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). The CD-ROM provides important background information on each religious tradition, a directory of religious centers, as well

as organisational profiles and other resources which may assist you in fieldwork preparation.

- Other good sources of information include:
  - John R. Hinnells, *A Handbook of Living Religions*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984). This book provides a good chapter of background on each religious tradition, including helpful things such as time lines, ground plans of mosques and temples, discussions of major holidays, etc.
  - Raymond Williams, *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). A study of Asian-Indian and Pakistani immigrant communities and their religious traditions in America, with profiles especially of the Nizari Muslims and the Swaminarayan Hindus, including city-portraits of these communities in Chicago and Houston.
  - E. Allen Richardson, *Strangers in This Land: Pluralism and the Response to Diversity in the United States* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1988) and *East Comes West* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985). These books provide good general introductions and will give a sense of the “big picture” that will be enhanced and enriched by the city and community portraits you are researching.
  - Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1981). A lively and readable history of Buddhism in America. See also the books by Emma Layton and by Charles Prebish on this topic, both of which contain very useful introductions to the various strands of Asian Buddhist communities in America.
  - Stuart M. Matlins, *How to be a Perfect Stranger: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People’s Religious Ceremonies* (2 vol. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997). These guides provide some basic information on etiquette. While not an ideal resource, as it tends to be repetitive, it can be a helpful starting point.
  - Helen Tworikov, *Zen in America* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989). A study of several Zen lineages in America and the American dharma heirs of Japanese Zen masters.
  - Don Morreale, *The Complete Guide to Buddhist America* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998). An annotated guide to the

many Buddhist centers in the U.S. organised by Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana and listed region by region.

- o Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, first published, 1955). A classic of the fifties which discusses the second and third generation phenomena among immigrant groups who distance themselves from and then reclaim the traditions of the first generation immigrants.
- o Yvonne Haddad, *Islamic Values in the US* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). A study of the appropriation of Islamic values among American Muslims. Also *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), an edited collection of essays on Islam in America today.
- o E. Waugh, Abu-Laban, and Quereshi, *The Muslim Community in North America* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983). A collection of essays on Islam in the U.S. and Canada, including a directory of mosques and Islamic centers.
- o Issues of *Hinduism Today*, *The Muslim Journal*, *Islamic Horizons*, *The Minaret*, *World Sikh News*, *India Abroad*, and *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*.

## B. Orientation and Preparation

- Get oriented in your city. Get a detailed map. Find out who is there: how many temples, mosques, churches, meditation centers, synagogues, gurdwaras, etc. Start with the Pluralism Project Directory (see printout or access the directory online). Check the Yellow Pages under “churches,” “religion,” etc. Make a note of how centers are listed, as this differs from city to city. In LA, we find “Churches-Buddhist” listed just after “Churches-Baptist”; we even find “Churches-Muslim Mosques.” The Yellow Pages will not give you a complete listing. Usually, they contain just a small fraction of the communities we are looking for, so you will have to develop a complete list by your own research. One contact leads to another.
- Go to the major newspapers. Meet the religion editor or reporter if there is one. Find out what he or she knows and has written about the various religious communities. Check the library, or online, for religion articles in the local papers.
  - Surf the Internet. Check for information at the Pluralism Project site (<http://pluralism.org/index.php>), find information on your local area using Yahoo.

- ([dir.yahoo.com/Regional](http://dir.yahoo.com/Regional)), and explore the sites of religious organisations, such as: the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (<http://www.jaina.org/>); Federation of Zoroastrian Communities in North America (<http://www.fezana.org/>); and the Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council's list of Sikh Organisations and Gurdwaras in the U.S. ([members.nbc.com/busikhs/nishkam/organisations/usa.html](http://members.nbc.com/busikhs/nishkam/organisations/usa.html)).
- Contact religion departments at other local universities. Find out who else may have worked on the religious communities of the area. Have there been research projects? Was anything written by students or faculty?
- Call the local council of churches. Find out if there is an interfaith organisation or if the council of churches has listings of mosques, temples, etc. in the area. Check the "Interfaith" listings on the Pluralism Project Directory.
- Do your homework. We do not need to "re-invent the wheel," so it is important to get a sense of what has already been done before starting off on your work.
- Start a small notebook for your research notes. What ideas do you have, what leads do you have? Begin by reviewing interfaith calendars to get listings of the religious holidays that are taking place during your research period. Make a log of your research progress. Most importantly, take detailed notes on the names, affiliations, and contact information of people you speak with in the course of your research. This information may be crucial for referrals to other members in a given community, follow-up, thank you notes, and potentially, for your own future research.

### C. Etiquette

#### 1. General Principles:

- o Please remember that while conducting research, you are a representative of your college or university, as well as the Pluralism Project. Identify yourself when you call or visit, and briefly explain your role in the research project. If you sit down in a more or less formal situation to interview someone, give a fuller description of the Project, and offer literature.
- o Before visiting a religious center, contact the religious or lay leader of the community as a courtesy. Inquire about the best time to observe religious services and ask who you might

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Speak with to find out more about the history and current activities of the community. You should plan to visit more than once in order to write a profile of the community.

- o Please keep in mind that, in addition to being a researcher, you are also a guest. As such, please be respectful of the atmosphere of ritual or worship; always respect and follow the practices of your host community. Be sure to thank your hosts for their time and efforts on your behalf, and send thank you notes when appropriate.
- o Closely observe the practices of community members, and when appropriate follow their example. If everyone is taking off their shoes at the door, offering a particular greeting, or speaking in hushed tones, follow suit. If unsure, ask a member of the community; inquiries often should be directed to a person of the same sex.
- o Ask for permission before taking photographs, videotaping, or tape recording in any religious center. Avoid talking or note taking during a worship service. Don't take out pen and paper, camera, or tape recorder, unless you have made quite certain that it would not be intrusive or rude. Use this as an occasion to sharpen your powers of sheer observation. If the atmosphere permits, making a few notes as you visit a place will permit you to recall more accurately when you sit down later to write field notes.
- o Both men and women should dress modestly and neatly; loose clothing is recommended as, in many centers, you may sit on the floor.
- o Guests at religious centers are discouraged from openly displaying jewellery with other religious symbols or images, including the cross, the Star of David, zodiac signs, pentacles, or images of people or animals.
- o Wear shoes that are easily removed, as it is the practice to take off one's shoes before entering the prayer halls of gurdwaras, masjid or Islamic centers, Hindu, Jain, and Zoroastrian temples, as well as most Buddhist temples.
- o In many of the aforementioned communities, feet should not be touched, should not touch another person, should not be stretched out in front, and should not point directly towards the altar, holy book, or religious leader.

- o In many situations, it is appropriate to avoid physical contact, particularly with people of the opposite sex. Many religious communities discourage shaking hands with someone of the opposite sex; others, such as some Muslim communities, discourage a private meeting between a man and a woman. (This can be circumvented by working in teams, or arranging to meet with two community members at the same time.) Other communities, such as some Buddhists, might discourage touching the head of another person, even that of a child.
2. Guidelines by Tradition: These are not intended to be comprehensive, but are intended to provide some basic information for first-time visitors.
- o Baha'i
    - There are few Baha'i centers in the U.S. Most Baha'is gather in private homes, or, on occasion, in rented facilities.
    - There is no ordained ministry in the Baha'i faith; every local community is organized by a Spiritual Assembly.
    - Visitors are eagerly encouraged to attend "Firesides," regular meetings which are geared for people outside of the faith; however, visitors may not be welcome at religious ceremonies.
  - o Buddhist
    - In most cases, it is appropriate to remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall, meditation room, or main temple.
    - One should not enter or leave a temple during meditation.
    - Participation in worship is optional.
    - In some instances, it is appropriate to make a small donation to the temple (\$1–\$5, generally in a small box marked accordingly).
    - Religious leaders have various titles, including "Monk," "Reverend," "Venerable," "Minister," "Priest," "Lama," or "Roshi," depending on the denomination.
    - In some communities, the religious leadership may not speak English; you may ask to speak with the temple president.
  - o Christian
    - Participation in worship is optional. Visitors are always welcome.

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- On the whole, participation in communion is limited to baptized Christians; in some cases, it is limited to members of that denomination. There are usually words of invitation at the beginning of the communion service that make clear who is invited to participate.
  - o Hindu
    - Remove your shoes before entering the temple, as well as most private homes of Hindus.
    - It is appropriate to offer the greeting of “Namaste” (with the palms of the hands pressed together in front of your chest, bowing slightly).
    - Participation in worship is optional.
    - During the service, food and water that has been blessed, “prasad,” may be offered to participants. One should accept the “prasad” with the right hand. Non-Hindus are welcome and encouraged to accept “prasad.”
    - During the service, an oil lamp of “arati” may also be passed. It is customary to pass fingers through the flame and then touch the fingers to the forehead.
    - Religious leaders may be called a “Pandit,” “Priest,” or a “Pujari.”
    - In some communities, the religious leadership may not speak English fluently; you may ask to speak with the temple president.
    - In some instances, it is appropriate to make a small donation to the temple (\$1–\$5, generally in a small box marked accordingly). In some temples, a box called a “Hundi” is provided for this purpose.
  - o Muslim
    - Remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall of a masjid or Islamic Center; in some cases, the shoes are removed at the front door.
    - Women should cover their heads and wear loose-fitting clothing that covers their legs and arms. A large scarf, draped over the head, neck, and shoulders, is ideal. Men should also dress modestly; wearing a “kufi” (skullcap) is optional for men.
    - Some masjid or Islamic Centers have separate entrances for women and men. All prayer areas have separate sections



- for men and women. The women's area is often in the back of the room, sometimes separated with a divider; in other cases it is in a separate room.
- The Muslim greeting is “Salaam Alaykum” (Peace be upon you); the response is “Wa Alaykum Salaam” (And upon you Peace). Non-Muslims are welcome to exchange this greeting with their hosts.
  - The religious leader is called an “imam”; he leads prayers and delivers the “qutbah” (sermon) during Jum’ah prayers (weekly communal prayers held mid-day on Friday). In some cases, he will serve as a spokesperson for the community; in other cases, the center may have a President or community member designated for this role.
  - Non-Muslims should not participate in worship, although visitors are welcome in the prayer hall. N.B. Visitors do not enter prayer rooms in Nizari Ismaili *jamaatkhanas*.
  - One should never walk in front of a person who is performing their prayers. Please keep this in mind if you have been given permission to take photographs during worship.
- o Jain
- Remove your shoes before entering a Jain temple, as well as most private homes of Jains.
  - Participation in worship is optional.
  - At some Jain events, men and women sit separately.
  - Few U.S. Jain communities have resident religious leaders; many do not have temples or may share space at a local Hindu temple. Visiting monks from India give lectures and perform ceremonies at many Jain communities.
  - Most communities have a local lay person, often a “President” or other member of a community association, who will be able to provide information about community activities.
- o Jewish
- The religious leader, or “Rabbi” may be the best contact person; in some cases, the temple president is designated for outreach.
  - In Orthodox synagogues, women and men worship in separate sections.

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- Women should cover their head and wear clothing that covers the arms and legs in Orthodox synagogues; head coverings are required in some Conservative synagogues as well. Men are required to wear a small head covering, known as a *yarmulke*, or *kippah*, in Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist synagogues, as well as some Reform synagogues. They are available at the entrance to the main sanctuary.
  - o Native Peoples
    - Follow the terminology used by the community: some prefer to be called “Native Americans,” others may prefer “American Indians.”
    - Many Native American religious ceremonies are not open to the general public. Ask before joining in any worship activity, including drumming or dancing.
    - It is rarely appropriate to take photographs of Native American religious practices, places, or people.
  - o Pagan
    - Participation in worship is optional.
    - You may be invited to place personal items on an altar during Pagan ritual; however, never touch anything else on the altar.
    - If you have joined a circle and wish to leave, you must acknowledge and honor the circle before doing so. (Visualize an opening, step through, and visualize the space closing as you leave.)
    - While the event may be celebratory, with dancing, singing, and feasting, remember that it is a religious ritual.
    - It is rarely appropriate to take photographs of Pagan religious practices.
  - o Sikh
    - Both men and women are required to cover their heads before entering the prayer hall of a gurdwara, or during a religious ceremony in a private home. At some gurdwaras, head coverings are available at the door for men; most women drape a large scarf over their head.
    - Shoes should be removed before entering the gurdwara.
    - It is appropriate to bow before the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the holy book) on entering the prayer area, and, often, to make a small donation (\$1-\$5).

- Participation in worship is optional.
- During the service, food that has been blessed, “prasad” may be offered. One should accept (and eat) the “prasad” with the right hand.
- After services, a communal meal called “langar” is served. Hospitality is extremely important; guests are strongly encouraged to join in the “langar” meal.
- Religious leaders, called “Granthi,” lead the community in the reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.
- In some communities, the religious leadership may not speak English fluently; you may ask to speak with the president.
- o Zoroastrian
  - As a non-Zoroastrian, ask permission before entering a temple. In India, only Zoroastrians are permitted in fire temples.
  - Both men and women are required to cover their heads before entering a Zoroastrian temple, or during a Zoroastrian ceremony.
  - Shoes should be removed before entering the temple.
  - Participation in worship is optional.
  - Religious leaders, called “Mobeds,” serve U.S. Zoroastrian communities. Most Mobeds work full-time jobs in addition to taking care of the ritual needs of their communities. Often, the local association president, or other member, may be a more appropriate contact person.

#### **D. The Basics of Field Research**

A few basic guidelines on how to conduct Pluralism Project field research include:

- Look at bulletin boards for notices of activities. Collect pamphlets, schedules, and publications. The humble pamphlet or flyer is an extremely important document for a researcher in popular, and as yet largely undocumented, religious life. Collect duplicate copies if you intend to maintain files at your home university.
- Talk to as wide a range of people as possible. Do not get all your information from leaders or priests, but meet participants, lay people, young and old, women and men.

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- You will find your own style and way of questioning by trial and error. There is no one correct method, but you should make sure that your questions don't imply or include a particular answer. Open-ended questions that follow the interest of the person being interviewed, are generally best. For example, ask: "Why did you have trouble getting a zoning variance?" rather than, "Did you have trouble getting a zoning variance because the neighbours were concerned about traffic?"
  - Take careful notes. Set aside some time as soon as you leave the temple, gurdwara or masjid to write as full and extensive an account as you can of your visit. Be as descriptive as your boldest prose will stretch. The more extensive your daily digest of field notes, the easier it will be to write up a final report.
  - Take along a camera, preferably with slide film, on every visit. Please photograph each center from the outside, and don't be deterred by the fact that some of the buildings may appear plain or uninteresting. A masjid in a former one-story office building, or a storefront temple are also important to document. As for interior photographs, or photographs of religious practices, be certain to ask first if taking photographs is acceptable.
  - Take along a tape recorder, but be prepared to take notes. Getting people to talk about their own experience requires a certain amount of trust and confidence. Be yourself. Introduce yourself. Talk about the Pluralism Project, and the institution with which you are affiliated. Be simple and straightforward about who you are and why you are there. You will learn a great deal informally over coffee or tea in the social hall of the temple or masjid. You will also want to fix times for conversations that might more properly be called interviews. You are the best judge of how much you will be able to ask. Take notes, at least recording key phrases and words that will allow you to reconstruct the conversation when you leave. Depending on the occasion, you might well ask to use a tape recorder, which frees you for a more spontaneous encounter. For many people taping is not intrusive and both of you will forget about the tape recorder after the first minute; however, others may be apprehensive about taping.
  - Fieldwork is challenging. The work that all of us will be engaged in for the Pluralism Project builds upon our academic work, and yet challenges us to learn more by engaging in fieldwork.

For most everyone, this can be difficult at times. It means putting oneself in new situations, introducing oneself to strangers, and being in the role of stranger or guest in a community that is not one's own. It is immensely rewarding, but it also presents unique challenges.

- Safety first. If there are situations in which you feel unsafe or unsure, take a friend along or don't go.

### **E. Research Questions**

- Gather basic information on each religious center. You may use the Pluralism Project Research Template as a guide. Some of the questions you might ask include:
  - What is the history of the temple, masjid, etc? When was it built or acquired? If the community purchased an existing building, what sort of building was it? Who was involved in establishing the center? Was there a previous place of worship? When was the first center established in the area?
  - What were the considerations in choosing this building or in deciding on this property on which to build? Did the community encounter any difficulties in acquiring or building this place for use as a religious center?
  - Who worships here now? Is it a particular ethnic group, or is it ecumenical? Has the composition of the group changed significantly in recent years? What is the community's self-understanding? To bring people of a particular sectarian group together? To bring Hindus together, or Muslims together, whatever their background? To bring people of a particular ethnic group together?
  - What is the size of the community that gathers here? Has it changed in recent years? How many of the community members are children?
  - Who is in charge of the center? What kind of leadership? Are there lay leaders? Religious leaders? Teachers?
  - How are decisions made? Is there a governing board?
  - What happens here everyday? Every week? Every month? What are the major festivals and events celebrated or observed? What family rites and rituals take place here?
  - What language is used most commonly here in prayer, worship, and conversation?

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- o Is there a newsletter or other publications? Can the Pluralism Project, and the affiliate, if desired, get on the mailing list? Ask for a current issue and inquire about back copies.
  - o Does the community have a website or email address?
  - o Are there particular programmes for young people? Educational programmes? Summer Camps? Language programmes? Programmes for women? For students? For men? Community service? Describe.
  - Find out about wider community contacts and networks.
    - o What is the relation of this temple to the wider Hindu community in this city, in this state, nationally? Is there a network or organisation of gurdwaras? A council of masjid or a regional Islamic society? What activities or events are shared? Does the temple belong to any national organisations or associations?
    - o What is the relation of this center to the other faith communities in this city or area? Is there an interfaith council? Are there dialogue meetings? Are there other organisations in which Sikhs or Buddhists meet Jews, Christians, etc.? Have there been particular joint projects?
  - Get the stories. Once you get to know people, ask about some of their own stories in relation to this community. A portrait needs more than facts; it requires people and the story as told from their perspective. One might ask:
    - o This temple must have been a big project. How were you involved? What made you decide to become involved? What was it like the day the temple was dedicated? What kind of ceremony was it? How did you feel that day?
    - o What was it like when you first moved to Denver? Was finding a masjid a top priority? What were the problems for you and your family in settling down here?
    - o Are there particular times you felt misunderstood by people unfamiliar with Hinduism here? Do you feel accepted by your neighbours here in Phoenix? What are the major difficulties you experience here?
    - o Are there particular stories of connections made and bridges built between people of different religions here? What do you like most about the religious environment of the U.S.?

- o What are the special concerns your children have? What concerns do you have about your children? What do you suppose this community will be like by the time your children are grown?
- o How different is this temple or masjid from the ones you knew in India or Pakistan? In what ways is it different? Are there some religious practices that are just impossible here in the U.S.?
- o What adjustments or adaptations has the religious community had to make here in America? What are the biggest adjustments you yourself have had to make?
- o What do you think is the role of the gurdwara, temple, or masjid in the life of the community? At what times in daily life is it most important?
- o What life cycle rites or observances are most important to you, and how are they done? What role does the temple or masjid have during these times?
- Get the big picture, the community picture.
  - o Hospitals: Visit a hospital and speak an administrator to find out about chaplaincy. Are there chaplains of many faiths affiliated with the hospital? How does the hospital deal with special religious needs of people of various faith communities in times of crisis? How do they address special food needs, for instance, for Hindus or Muslims.
  - o Schools: Visit a school principal or the school superintendent, even a school teacher. How is the religious diversity of the student body approached in the school system? Are various holidays discussed, with this being the opportunity for education? Do teachers have some training in the religious traditions of the students they teach? Is religion excluded completely, or included? Has there been discussion of teaching about various religious traditions in the school system?
  - o Government: Visit city hall and speak with the mayor or someone in the mayor's office about the way in which the city has dealt with the new religious diversity of the population. Are there particular issues that have come up? Are there substantial changes in the city's population make-up as reflected by the most recent census? Are there multi-cultural projects or programmes sponsored by the city?

- o Religious Community: Visit with the leaders of several churches and synagogues. In what ways do relations with people of other faiths come up in the church context, either in terms of outreach or education? Visit the council of churches and the local synagogue association. Is there a local chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice? the Interfaith Alliance? Is there a local interfaith association? Who belongs and how often do they convene? What issues are on the agendas of these interfaith organisations?

## **F. In Conclusion**

As your field research period reaches its conclusion, be sure to:

- Send materials for review. Send center profiles to each community for their review, and integrate any corrections.
- Send thank you notes. Send thank you letters to any individuals or communities who have been particularly helpful.

## **MOST RECENT RESEARCH REPORTS**

- Portrait of Nepal (2007)
- Candidate Endorsements by Religious Groups and Leaders
- Interfaith and Faith Peace Organisations (2006) (Interfaith)
- Religious Discrimination in the Military (2004)
- America's National Day of Prayer (2006) (Interfaith)
- Gujarati Hindu Temples in Metropolitan Houston, Houston, TX (Hinduism)
- 32nd Annual ICNA-MAS Convention 2007: "Muhammad: Mercy to Humanity and Beyond...", Hartford, CT (Islam)
- American Muslim Music (Islam)
- International Portrait: United Kingdom (2007)
- International Portrait: Malaysia (2007)
- International Portrait: Indonesia (2007)
- International Portrait: Thailand (2007)
- Bangla-O-Biswa Durga Puja (2006), Maynard, MA (Hinduism)
- Women's Interfaith Initiatives in the United States Post 9/11 (2006) (Interfaith)
- Religious Pluralism in Indonesia (2006)
- Progressive Faith Bloggers Convention (2006) (Interfaith)



- 2006 Young Jains of America Convention: Jain Evolution: Making Our Life Our Message (2006) (Jainism)
- Malaysia, Truly Asia? Religious Pluralism in Malaysia (2006)
- Minority Faith Involvement in the Immigration Debates (2006)
- Muslims Gather on July 4th Weekend for 2006 ICNA-MAS Convention (2006), Hartford, CT (Islam).

### **UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

Security Council Resolution 1325 was passed unanimously on 31 October 2000. Resolution (S/RES/1325) is the first resolution ever passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

#### **THE SECURITY COUNCIL,**

Recalling its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999, 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, as well as relevant statements of its President and recalling also the statement of its President, to the press on the occasion of the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace of 8 March 2000 (SC/6816),

Recalling also the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed conflict,

Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

Expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and recognising the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation,

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the

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importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

Reaffirming also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,

Emphasising the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls,

Recognising the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and in this regard noting the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693),

Recognising also the importance of the recommendation contained in the statement of its President to the press of 8 March 2000 for specialised training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations,

Recognising that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,

Noting the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls,

1. Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;

2. Encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

3. Urges the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard calls on Member States to provide candidates to the

Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralised roster;

4. Further urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;

5. Expresses its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace-building measures, invites Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment and further requests the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;

7. Urges Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, *inter alia*, the United Nations Fund for Women and United Nations Children's Fund, and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant bodies;

8. Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, *inter alia*: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;

9. Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention Security Council-5-Press Release SC/6942 4213th

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Meeting (PM) 31 October 2000 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

10. Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;

11. Emphasises the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions;

12. Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its resolution 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998;

13. Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants;

14. Reaffirms its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;

15. Expresses its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups;

16. Invites the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;

17. Requests the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council, progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;

18. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

**UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
(SUMMARY VERSION)**

1. Everyone is free and we should all be treated in the same way.

2. Everyone is equal despite differences in skin color, sex, religion, language for example.

3. Everyone has the right to life and to live in freedom and safety.

4. No one has the right to treat you as a slave nor should you make anyone your slave.

5. No one has the right to hurt you or to torture you.

6. Everyone has the right to be treated equally by the law.

7. The law is the same for everyone, it should be applied in the same way to all.

8. Everyone has the right to ask for legal help when their rights are not respected.

9. No one has the right to imprison you unjustly or expel you from your own country.

10. Everyone has the right to a fair and public trial.

11. Everyone should be considered innocent until guilt is proved.

12. Every one has the right to ask for help if someone tries to harm you, but noone can enter your home, open your letters or bother you or your family without a good reason.

13. Everyone has the right to travel as they wish.

14. Everyone has the right to go to another country and ask for protection if they are being persecuted or are in danger of being persecuted.

15. Everyone has the right to belong to a country. Noone has the right to prevent you from belonging to another country if you wish to.

16. Everyone has the right to marry and have a family.

17. Everyone has the right to own property and possessions.

18. Everyone has the right to practise and observe all aspects of their own religion and change their religion if they want to.

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19. Everyone has the right to say what they think and to give and receive information.

20. Everyone has the right to take part in meetings and to join associations in a peaceful way.

21. Everyone has the right to help choose and take part in the government of their country.

22. Everyone has the right to social security and to opportunities to develop their skills.

23. Everyone has the right to work for a fair wage in a safe environment and to join a trade union.

24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.

25. Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living and medical help if they are ill.

26. Everyone has the right to go to school.

27. Everyone has the right to share in their community's cultural life.

28. Everyone must respect the 'social order' that is necessary for all these rights to be available.

29. Everyone must respect the rights of others, the community and public property.

30. No one has the right to take away any of the rights in this declaration.

Human Rights Education Associates (HREA)

### **TEXT OF THE CONVENTION**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or
- enterprises.

The Convention provides the basis for realising equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life—including the right to vote and to stand for election—as well as education, health and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

## **ONLINE INTERFAITH RESOURCE GUIDES (2006)**

### **Interfaith**

The work that interfaith organisations do is vital to promoting understanding, dialogue, and cooperation among religious traditions. Numerous interfaith groups have produced training manuals, 'how-to' documents, and useful guidelines. We have begun compiling links to online versions of these guides on a range of subjects such as creating a local interfaith dialogue group, increasing cooperation between local governments and religious organisations, and educating students about

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religious diversity. We will continue to add to this list as we become aware of additional resources.

### **Australian Multicultural Foundation**

Religion, Cultural Diversity, and Safeguarding Australia. 2004. This research report covers “the place and function of faith traditions and religious groups in an increasingly multicultural Australia operating in a world that is also increasingly globalised. It identifies current and emerging issues as a basis for policy recommendations to government, and provides a basis for informed debate and concrete action in different sectors of the Australian community.”

Muslim Australians: Their Beliefs, Practices, and Institutions. 2004. Resource manual prepared by the Australian Multicultural Foundation to “document and analyse recent occurrences of racist and bigoted attacks, both verbal and physical, on faith communities and their members, including post-September 11th, and to develop educational material about Islam, the Islamic diaspora and the history, role and contribution of Muslim Australians.”

Constructing a Local Multi-Faith Network, 2004. Resource kit developed by the Australian Multicultural Foundation to “encourage dialogue, interaction and co-operation between Australia’s faith communities at local, state and national level.”

Achieving Harmony through Religious Understanding—a resource manual for teachers. 2000. This manual was developed through the Believing in Harmony project, which brings clergy panels to schools selected either by the Education Department or Department of Multicultural Affairs, providing students with the chance to hear first hand about traditions which may be different from their own. This manual was published so that all schools can participate in this project by hosting their own forum.

### **Cathedral Heritage Foundation**

Festival of Faiths Handbook. 2005. The Louisville Cathedral Heritage Foundation, in cooperation with the City of Louisville, has held a week-long Festival of Faiths for the past ten years. This handbook provides a guide to starting a similar Festival in your own community. (Our Research Report on the 2005 Festival of Faiths provides additional information about the Louisville festival.)

### **The Interfaith Alliance**

STOP the HATE curriculum. 2003. The Interfaith Alliance’s STOP the HATE curriculum offers resources to develop a faith-based



community response to hate violence. STOP the HATE is part of TIA's "Faith Does Not Exclude" project to address racism and racial inequality.

Worship Leader's Guide. 2003. A manual for religious leaders seeking to address political issues while "maintaining the integrity of our positions as religious leaders and preserving the sanctity of our houses of worship and religious traditions."

### **Interfaith Center at the Presidio**

Shared Wisdom: Growing Grassroots Interfaith Partnerships. 2004. A manual on developing and sustaining interfaith dialogue and friendship.

### **Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom**

Looking After One Another: The Safety and Security of Our Faith Communities. 2005. A guide for maintaining safe communities, created with over 100 member groups and in consultation with the Commission for Racial Equality, the Association of Chief Police Officers, and the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

Partnership for the Common Good: Inter Faith Structures and Local Government. 2003. "Good Practice Guidelines" looking at some of the issues involved in working with, and helping establish, local inter faith initiatives. Published in 2003 in association with the Local Government Association, the Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The Inter Faith Network's publications are available at <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/index.htm>.

Inter Faith Co-operation, Local Government and the Regions: Councils of Faith as a Resource for the 21st Century. 2000. Report on the June 2000 conference held in association with the Inner Cities Religious Council.

The Local Inter Faith Guide: Faith Community Co-operation in Action. 2005, second edition. A guide to setting up and running a local inter faith initiative. Published by the Inter Faith Network for the UK in association with the Inner Cities Religious Council.

### **Interfaith Youth Core**

National Day of Interfaith Youth Service Training Resources. 2005. This page has both the QuickStart Toolkit for starting a Day of Interfaith Youth Service in your area and an in-depth Organizer's Toolkit with more detailed information.

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## **National Conference for Community and Justice**

Denouncing Racism: A Resource Guide of Faith-Based Principles. 2003. "Denouncing Racism addresses how the concept of being actively anti-racist is documented in most faiths' spiritual practices and policies. It advances the moral responsibility of each person of faith to denounce racism and provides the foundation for working together in combating the divisiveness of racism." "When You Are Asked to Give Public Prayer in a Diverse Society: Guidelines for Civic Occasions." "Guidelines for inclusive public prayer as a tool for leading authentic prayer in a way that can easily be shared by listeners from different faiths and traditions."

## **National Council of Churches: Interfaith Relations Commission**

Interfaith Relations and Christian Living: Study and Action Suggestions. 2000. A study guide based off the Interfaith Policy Statement of the National Council of Churches USA.

Interfaith Relations and the Churches: A Policy Statement of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. 1999. The Interfaith Policy Statement from which the previous study guide was developed.

## **Scarboro Missions**

Golden Rule Meditations. 2006. Scarboro Missions of Canada has developed several workshops and discussion-group plans based on the Golden Rule. This website offers a set of 13 meditations on various faith traditions' statements of the reciprocity in the Golden Rule, and is suitable for individual and group use.

Golden Rule Curriculum. This curriculum was developed as part of the same process as the meditations, as a tool "primarily for high school juniors and seniors (ages 16 to 18) to demonstrate that the Golden Rule is more than a behavioural guide for small children."

## **United Religions Initiative**

Partners in Leadership: Best Practices that Exemplify URI Values and Enliven Leadership. 2005. Techniques and practices for leadership in URI and other interfaith communities. Creating Cooperation Circles: A Practical Guide. 2005. Information on creating a Cooperation Circle, a local organising group and branch of the URI.

Interfaith Home Gatherings: A Practical Guide. 2005. Information on how to initiate an Interfaith Home Gathering, to provide a local context for interfaith cooperation and dialogue.

### **Women Transcending Boundaries**

Tips on Starting a Group. Women Transcending Boundaries is “an egalitarian community of women coming together to respect and learn more about each others’ various spiritual beliefs and common concerns.” This is a set of ten tips for creating an interfaith group on the same model.

### **World Conference of Religions for Peace**

Women of Faith Transforming Conflict: A Multi-Religious Training Manual. 2004. A manual for learning “more about the controversial and often contentious role of women and religion in situations of conflict.” Building Peace from the Ground Up: A Call to the UN for Stronger Collaboration with Civil Society. 2002. Recommendations on ways to increase communication between grassroots peace-building efforts and UN-based and/or government-based initiatives.

### **World Council of Churches**

Online issues of Current Dialogue. Published twice yearly. A periodical on interreligious dialogue.

Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions. 2002. A revision and reevaluation of the WCC’s 1979 “Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies,” addressing new challenges and 30 years of interreligious dialogue. My Neighbour’s Faith and Mine: Theological Discoveries Through Interfaith Dialogue. 1986. This guide urges Christians to reflect on the theological significance of the faith and witness of their neighbours who do not share their religion.

## **GOLDEN RULE CURRICULUM FOR SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY**

### **1. Introduction**

It is likely that the most basic everyday guideline for human behaviour is to treat people as you would want to be treated if you were in the other’s position. In the United States, this guideline has been known as the “Golden Rule” since the 1800s.

Many human troubles, conflicts and tragedies involve situations in which people could have acted according to the Golden Rule but, to their sorrow, they did not. Cultural examples of this in American history include the treatment of African-Americans, Native Americans, other minority groups, laborers and women. Most people can think of personal situations that would have been less stressful if the Golden Rule had been used.

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The material in this document conveys the universality of the Golden Rule. The presentation here was developed primarily for high school juniors and seniors (ages 16 to 18) to demonstrate that the Golden Rule is more than a behavioural guide for small children. However, many young people will be able to use it effectively prior to their last years of high school depending on their reading ability. Any young person who understands the words being used in this document can profit from this lesson plan.

Moreover, this curriculum has relevance beyond the realm of public, religious and private schools. Sunday school teachers, home schooling parents, scout leaders, and other youth educators will find it useful (in whole or in part). The content of this lesson plan can also be utilised as a basis for constructing age-appropriate lessons.

The authors of this document hope that the instructors themselves will be inspired as they teach young people the joys of making the Golden Rule a lifelong moral standard.

## **2. The Golden Rule as a standard for moral/ethical conduct**

In a very real sense, the Golden Rule provides us with the most universal standard of behaviour that we have. One can find variations of the Golden Rule in ancient writings from around the world. There are good reasons for the prevalence of the Rule across history.

Consider the social nature of human living. We survive by living in groups and helping each other. Since people in a group are mutually interdependent, individuals are likely to treat others as they would want to be treated themselves. Otherwise, sooner or later the group will self-destruct or break up. That is to say, some sort of reciprocity within a group is an aspect of human behaviour that is necessary for long-term survival.

The earliest surviving written record of a Golden Rule statement goes back about 4,000 years—to the ancient Egyptian civilisation. However, this kind of behavioural ideal would have been a human understanding long before that time, and it remains so today.

Generations of children have been morally uplifted by the easily-remembered saying, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” In North America, they learned the Golden Rule from old school texts such as *McGuffey’s Eclectic Readers*. In addition, the saying has been printed on millions of school rulers and pencils. As in the past, parents today provide their children with moral instruction by repeating the Golden Rule and by using variations such as these:

“You should treat others the way you want to be treated.”

“If you do that, your brother may try to do the same thing to you.”

“Help your sister because sometime you’ll need help too.”

“If you don’t want her to behave that way, why are you behaving that way?”

## **ALTRUISM**

There is a self-interest and self-preservation element in the Golden Rule, as there is in most things that people do; but that’s not the only reason that the Rule is commonly followed. Altruism is also a human trait. Altruism means that people care about others’ well-being even when there’s no possibility of a return favour. They simply feel good when helping others. Think of relatives who take in a child if its parents have been killed. Think of people around the world who have aided the Asian tsunami victims and those who have suffered from hurricanes and other natural disasters.

The altruistic frame of mind that is fostered is significant—it shifts thinking from oneself to the welfare of others. Instead of thinking “what’s in it for me,” Golden Rule-minded people consider other peoples’ needs and desires—how other people will benefit (or at least not be hurt) by what one does. Such acts can be their own reward; they make people feel good about themselves—finding joy in doing things that make the lives of others a bit more pleasant.

Moreover, Golden Rule thinking expands as our group identifications expand. Compared to previous ages, we have larger numbers of “others” with whom we now identify. At one time group loyalty—a sense of belonging—did not go much beyond the family, the clan, the band or one’s tribe. “Outsiders” were not to be trusted.

Today we use “we/our” terms for huge groups, most of whose members are not personally known to us. For example, the vast majority of Americans are patriotic and regard the millions of other Americans as a part of “we/us”. And for many Americans, their loyalties extend far beyond the country’s borders. There are no outward limits to “we/our” feelings.

## **UN DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Golden Rule—treating others as you would want to be treated if you were in their situation—implies a general human equality, an

ideal that has slowly grown to be verbally honored around the world. The United Nations' 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* provides an example. Its provisions emphasize the "dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women...without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion."

The Declaration further states that no one is to "be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Governments are to be based upon "the will of the people...expressed in...elections" in which there is equal suffrage and secret votes. All children are to have "the right to education [that's] directed to the full development of the human personality."

We are far from realising these goals, but there are reasons to be hopeful. That such a "Declaration" exists is an achievement, and actual progress is being made. Slavery still exists, but it is being challenged. Despite problems, the number of democratic governments in the world has increased. In many societies, women now have a larger measure of economic and political power than in past times. Young people are raised more humanely than in previous centuries; girls' prospects for fully developed lives have greatly improved.

The morality of the Golden Rule and altruism—considering the well being of others as well as our own—is a part of human nature. It is found worldwide and in all enduring cultures. One's aspiration to live the Golden Rule needs nourishment, but it's not dependent upon one being a member of this or that particular group, religion, or cultural tradition.

### **3. A history of Golden Rule ethics**

The term "Golden Rule" and the various wordings of the Golden Rule familiar to most Americans are a relatively recent historical phenomenon, emerging in the 1800s. But the basic idea of the Rule is ancient—variations of the Golden Rule are found across history and in societies around the world.

#### **ANCIENT EGYPT**

The oldest written record of a recognizable Golden Rule comes from Egypt around 4,000 years ago (2000 BCE). One translation reads:

"Do for one who may do for you, that you may cause him thus to do." (R. B. Parkinson, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, Griffith Institute, Oxford, pp. 109-110)

## ANCIENT GREECE

Golden Rule-like statements are found in ancient Greek literature. In the 700s BCE, Homer wrote:

“I will be as careful for you as I should be for myself in the same need.”  
(*The Odyssey*, bk. 5, vv. 184-91)

Herodotus, writing in the 400s BCE, proclaimed:

“...what I condemn in another I will, if I may, avoid myself.” (*The Histories*, bk. III, ch. 142)

Plato came close to the Golden Rule in *The Laws*—when discussing property ownership, he wrote:

“...may I be of a sound mind, and do to others as I would that they should do to me.” (The Laws, Book 11, No. 913 in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 1952, Chicago, *Encyclopedia Britannica’s Great Books Series*, p. 771)

Philosophy professor, Jeffrey Wattles, has written an excellent book on the Golden Rule. In his book entitled *The Golden Rule*, Wattles maintains that Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato, was responsible for the “burst of golden rule thinking that entered...Greek culture” in the fourth century BCE. (Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 1996, Oxford University Press, p. 27) Isocrates was a philosopher who was very interested in education and like Socrates before him, he established an academy in Athens. In his *To Nicocles* letter, he advised a person:

“Conduct yourself toward your parents as you would have your children conduct themselves toward you.”

In *Aegineticus*, Isocrates used these words in advising the jurors in a court case:

“give a just verdict, and prove yourselves to be for me such judges as you would want to have for yourselves.” (Wattles, p. 31)

## EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Golden Rule expressions can be found in the religious and non-religious literature of East and South Asia.

Confucius is a European way of saying K’ung Fu-tze, or “Master K’ung.”

Confucius lived in the 500s BCE and his secular philosophy was put into writing by his disciples after he died. These writings include:

“Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you.”  
(*Analects* 15:23)

“Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.” (Doctrine of the Mean 13:3)

“Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.”  
(*Mencius VII A 4*)

Taoism developed alongside Confucianism in China and includes this instruction: “Regard your neighbour’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbour’s loss as your own loss.” (*T’ai Shang Kan Ying P’ien*, 213-21)

Hinduism is the oldest religion in South Asia, going back more than 3,000 years. Jainism is also an ancient Indian religion. Buddhism developed out of Hinduism about 500 BCE. Sikhism came into existence in the sixteenth century CE as a result of both Hindu and Muslim influences. All these traditions have variations of the Golden Rule.

The following Hindu quotations are from the *Mahabharata*, written in classical Sanskrit about 300 CE:

“Do naught unto others (that) which would cause you pain if done to you.” (*Mahabharata*, Bk. 5, Ch. 49, v. 57)

“One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself.” (*Mahabharata*, *Anusasana Parva* 133.8)

From Jainism:

“We should regard all creatures as we regard our own self.” (*Lord Mahavira*, 24th Tirthankara)

“A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.” (*Sutrakritanga* 1.11.33)

From Buddhism:

“Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful” (*Udana Varga* 5:18)

“...a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?” (*Samyutta Nikkei* v.353)

From Sikhism:

“As you deem yourself, deem others as well; only then will you become a partner in heaven” (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p.480)

## WEST ASIA

In West Asia, the Golden Rule can be traced to Zoroaster’s followers. Zoroaster was a philosopher who lived in Persia (present-day Iran) in the 600s BCE. The religion that developed from his teachings is called Zoroastrianism and this faith tradition continues to this day. Two renditions of the Golden Rule from Zoroastrianism are:

“... that nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself.” (*Dadistan-i-dinik* 94:5)



“Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others.” (*Shayast-na-Shayast* 13:29)

## HEBREW SCRIPTURES

The Hebrew Scriptures include similar moral guidelines:

“You shall not take vengeance, or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (*Leviticus* 19:18, RSV)

*Tobit* (or *Tobias*)—written about 200 BCE—was not included in the canon of Hebrew Scriptures, but it is included in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian versions of the Old Testament. The author of *Tobit* 4:16 says:

“Do to no one what you would not want done to you.” (*The Jerusalem Bible*, p. 528)

In the first Century CE (the time of Jesus) Rabbi Hillel said:

“That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow man.” (*Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 31a)

## CHRISTIAN NEW TESTAMENT

In the Christian New Testament, Jesus is quoted as saying:

“So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.” (*Matthew* 7:12, RSV)

“And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.” (*Luke* 6:31, RSV)

The unknown authors of Matthew and Luke both wrote their gospels about 80 CE.

## ISLAM AND BAHÁ'Í

Later, one finds Golden Rule statements in Islam and the Baha’i religion. From the sacred writings of Islam which came into existence in the 600s CE:

“None of you believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.” (*No. 13 of Imam al-Nawawi’s Forty Hadiths*)

“That which you want for yourself, seek for mankind.” (*Sukhanan-i-Muhammad*, 63)

Baha’u’llah, founder of the Baha’i faith in the 1800s CE, said:

“Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.” (*Baha’u’llah, Gleanings*)

## NATIVE AMERICAN

One can find a number of sayings related to the Golden Rule in the Native American tradition. Here is one from the Northern Plains:

“Great Spirit, grant that I may not criticize my neighbour until I have walked a mile in his moccasins.” (Sioux/Lakota/Plains Indians; Wattles, pp. 9, 194)

## AFRICAN

One African variation of the Golden Rule is this Ba-Congo saying:

“O man, what you do not like, do not do to your fellows.” (Wattles, p. 9)

### 4. When the Rule became the “Golden” Rule

“The Golden Rule” title itself seems to have come into general use in the early to middle 1800s in both England and the United States.

Since ancient times, the word “golden” has been used to signify what is highly valued. Aristotle used the idea of the “golden mean” to indicate that moral virtue is found between two extremes. As examples, he said courage was a virtue that lay between cowardice and rashness; appropriate pride in one’s accomplishment was the virtue between undue humility and vanity. (*Nicomachean Ethics, Book Two*)

However, apart from Aristotle’s “golden mean,” there seems to be no record of “golden” being used to refer to desired ways of behaving until the late 1600s. Then, in England in 1674, Robert Godfrey, an English physicist, wrote that, “Whilst forgetting that Golden Law, do as you would be done by, they make self the center of their actions.” (From *various injuries and abuses in chymical and galenical physick...detected* as found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, Second Edition, 1989, Vol. 6, p. 656 and VOA. 20, p. 50)

A couple of generations later, Isaac Watts spoke of “that golden principle of morality which the blessed Lord has given us.” (*The Improvement of the mind* [written in 1771], Chapter 14, Sec. 8 as found in *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 6, p. 856)

## THE USE OF THE “GOLDEN RULE” TERM

In the early 1800s, the morality of “treating others as you would want to be treated if you were in their situation” was clearly reflected in the values of those working for the abolition of slavery and for the civil rights of African-Americans in the United States. The great American abolitionist and civil rights leader Frederick Douglass gave

a speech in 1842 saying, "...Remember George Latimer in bonds as bound with him; keep in view the golden rule- 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.'" (Mieder, Wolfgang, "No Struggle, No Progress": *Frederick Douglass and His Proverbial Rhetoric for Civil Rights*, 2001, Peter Lang Publishers, p. 185)

Another early example of the title being used is "A Lesson From the Golden Rule" that appeared in the October 1853 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book* magazine. *Godey's Lady's Book* was rather typical of a number of women's publications of the time. Personal ethics and teaching children to be moral were two of the concerns of the magazine.

In 1859, Charles Dickens used the term in a story called "The Battle of Life," that follows "A Christmas Carol" in his *Christmas Books: Tales and Sketches*. (Nelson Doubleday, p. 228) Dickens uses the term in a satirical way. After a cleaning woman tells an upper class man that she tries to "Do as you-would-be-done-by," he almost ridicules her by saying that she will find the opposite idea "to be the golden rule of half her clients."

A straightforward, non-fictional reference to the Golden Rule in England comes from John Stuart Mill's book, *Utilitarianism*, published in 1863. Mill says, "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself." (*The English Philosophers*, 1939, Random House, p. 908) Utilitarianism was a widely discussed philosophy of the 1800s.

From this period onward, "golden rule" (uncapitalised) appears with increasing frequency. Charles Darwin used it in *The Descent of Man* published in 1871 (Chapter IV).

## AMERICAN SCHOOLS AND LITERATURE

By the end of the 1870s, the Golden Rule had become a children's textbook lesson in the United States. The 1879 *Revised Edition of McGuffey's Fourth Eclectic Reader* had a story titled "The Golden Rule" (Lesson 51) that had been written years earlier by Emma Embury. These school texts were used by millions of children through to the end of the century and beyond. Harlow Unger, writing in the *Encyclopedia of American Education*, claims that these school texts helped establish America's central ethical ideals. And these texts are still in print. Some home-schooled students and others in private schools continue to study from them (1996, *Facts On File, Inc.*, Vol. 11, p. 588).

As the McGuffey Reader's Golden Rule lesson was being distributed, notable American authors were also referring to the Golden Rule. William Dean Howells' 1885 novel, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, is an example. Howells was a leading American writer and editor in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In his story, a man named Rogers tries to influence Silas, a business associate, in this manner:

"Well, then, I want you to give me this chance to get on my feet again. You've no right to deprive me of it; it's unchristian. In our dealings with each other we should be guided by the Golden Rule, as I was saying to Mrs. Lapham before you came in. I told her that if I knew myself, I should in your place consider the circumstances of a man in mine..." (*Harpers' Modern Classics Series*, 1958. New York: Harper and Brothers, p. 342)

A final note: During this general time period—the early and middle 1800s—the exact wording, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, also became popular, apparently evolving out of folk tradition. Although many people assume that this way of stating the Golden Rule is ancient, even biblical, the phrase is not found in any classical reference or standard translation of the Bible.

### **MORE BACKGROUND ON THE TERM, “GOLDEN RULE”**

As noted above, the “Golden Rule” title seems to have come into use during the two decades before the Civil War. One early reference we found was from a ladies' magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book*, October 1853, pp. 323-326. *Godey's* was a widely circulated monthly magazine of the time, which, like others of that period, focused on literature, fashion, songs, recipes and household hints. Its “Lesson From the Golden Rule” was written by Louis Godey and Sarah Hale (using Alice B. Neal as a pen name).

Godey had purchased Hale's ladies' magazine in 1837 and persuaded her to become editor of his magazine. The title of Godey and Hale's story seems to indicate that there had been previous Golden Rule stories. One of these apparently was “The Golden Rule,” a story written by Emma Embury. Students may be interested to know that Sarah Hale wrote the ever-popular children's poem, “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” and she also convinced Abraham Lincoln to make Thanksgiving a national holiday.

Before the Civil War, the Golden Rule was clearly relevant to the issue of slavery and the treatment of African-Americans in the United States. For example, in 1791, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon on

slavery and Matthew 7:12 from the New Testament (in which Jesus expresses a variation of the Golden Rule). However, Edwards did not refer to that verse as the “Golden Rule.” Rather, he spoke of “the general rule given us in the [Bible] text” and this “divine maxim.” (*African American Odyssey online*). The authors of this lesson found Frederick Douglass’s use of the term “Golden Rule” because his 1842 speech was published. Most abolitionist speeches were not recorded.

After the Civil War, the Golden Rule phrase had become so well known that the short story entitled “The Golden Rule” was added to the 1879 edition of *McGuffey’s Fourth Eclectic Reader*, as pointed out above. At that time William McGuffey had nothing to do with its insertion since he was no longer living but the publisher owned the right to use his name. The story itself had been written years previously by Emma Embury, a well-known writer and on the editorial staff of major women’s periodicals of her time, including *Godey’s*, *Graham’s* and *The Ladies’ Companion*.

Embury’s Golden Rule story dates from before 1850 since by that time “a serious illness [had] ended her writing career.” (*American Women Writers: A Critical Guide from Colonial Times to the Present*, 1979, Lina Mainiero, Ed., Frederick Ungard Publishing Co., NY, Vol. 1, pp. 594-96) The publication in which her story originally appeared is not known to us.

## 5. Using the Golden Rule in difficult situations

The Golden Rule—to treat people as you would want to be treated if you were in the other’s position—is easiest to use:

- If people are equal in significant ways.
- If there is general agreement on what “good treatment” should be.
- If there is reason to believe the person wants to be treated as one would if one were in his/her place.
- If one personally wants to be treated in relatively normal, humane ways.
- If there is a reasonable hope that one will be treated well in return.
- If one is not in a “kill or be killed” situation, as a police officer or soldier might be.
- If one is not dealing with a psychopath.

However, ideal situations are often lacking. How then does one apply the Golden Rule? One answer is this: Use the Golden Rule together with critical thinking, analogy and interpretation. These are some of the methods that U.S. Supreme Court Justices use when determining constitutionality in situations not anticipated when the provisions were written.

### CRITICAL THINKING

First, the critical thinking category: Think of a very grouchy, sullen, angry, vindictive or otherwise “difficult” person. It’s hard to follow the Golden Rule when one can be quite sure that the other person will respond negatively regardless of how nicely or well he is treated.

Here, some critical thinking may help. One can think about reasons why the person is so anti-Golden Rule in his dealings. For example, the person may have been treated very badly when growing up, and he is treating people as he has been treated in the past. If so, he may gradually display a more positive attitude if he is treated nicely regardless of his own actions. Or he may not display a more positive attitude. In this latter case, one still treats him well so as not to be dragged down to his level. One continues to act in ways that will be personally uplifting regardless of his response.

Or, consider a street beggar. When walking by such a person, how is one to apply the Golden Rule effectively? Here are some questions and issues to think about when you meet someone begging on the street:

- If you look the other way or give money to no one, is that a way of following the Golden Rule? Explain.
- If you give some change to everyone who asks, is there not a good chance that the money will be used to perpetuate a drug problem or keep the person from being motivated to seek a more permanent solution to his or her problems? Explain.
- Should one give money to some individuals but not to others? Does the Golden Rule help us to make the give-or-not-give decision? If so, how?
- Are there other ways of responding to such a situation that would be in keeping with Golden Rule standards and allow one to break out of this either/or frame of mind? Explain.
- Are there other moral standards that should be combined with the Golden Rule in this decision-making experience? Explain.

Using the Golden Rule effectively (in a critical thinking way) may mean saying “No” in a rather direct way in order to maintain moral standards or to insure that people do not receive false impressions of interest. In class, students can be encouraged to discuss how they would interpret the Golden Rule when friends suggest dangerous or immoral activities. How would they suggest responding to telemarketers when one is uninterested in buying the suggested product or donating to the particular charity? Is quickly hanging up the phone a Golden Rule procedure in such a situation? If so, explain. If not, what response would be more in keeping with the Golden Rule?

### **USING AN ACTIVITY**

Encourage students to share difficult situations that they themselves have faced and have them reflect on how using the Golden Rule might have been helpful at least in the long run.

Or, have them consider soldiers in combat. Very often, soldiers practice the Golden Rule with respect to their comrades. But what about the enemy they are fighting? “The enemy” are also human beings. Very few people are so devoted to using the Golden Rule that they will allow themselves to be killed rather than fight or defend themselves. If soldiers practiced the Golden Rule with respect to the enemy, would they not endanger their own comrades? Would they not dishonor their country and risk being court-martialed? To abide by the Golden Rule with regard to one group in this extreme situation seems to mean it cannot be used in regard to another. How would a soldier who believes in the Golden Rule best deal with this situation?

A word of caution: Like all seemingly friendly acts, apparent Golden Rule behaviour can be used as an exploitative device. The “very helpful person” may be manipulative, trying to make people feel indebted or guilty if they don’t buy his product, support his cause or vote for his candidate. Young children in particular are warned about “helpful” strangers. Nonetheless, the Golden Rule is the most inclusive and altruistic moral guideline that people have in terms of governing their own daily behaviour. The Rule is time-tested and when interpreted sensibly, it has relevance for the many kinds of situations that people face.

### **6. Questions and projects**

This section contains a number of suggested activities for students as well as some multiple-choice questions. The latter is best used as a review activity, one in which students are asked to justify their selections.

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Lessons designed to heighten moral sensibilities imply changes in behaviour:

- Does the classroom atmosphere improve?
- Are “good deeds” performed?
- Are students more willing to tutor classmates?...to help with class chores?

If evaluations are needed, we suggest having students write essays. Essays are—or should be—the students’ considered reflection. The following question may be helpful in stimulating student reflection: “Without naming the names of people, describe a ‘bad situation’ that, in your judgment, could have been avoided if the people involved had followed the Golden Rule?”

Advanced students can profitably study Chapter 8, “The Golden Rule” (pp. 104-121) of Harry Gensler’s college text, *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction* (1998, Routledge). Probing questions are included, and additional resources are listed. Gensler’s book is sometimes available in local municipal libraries, and there is also good information on his web site: <http://www.jcu.edu/philosophy/gensler/goldrule.htm>

### **Questions and activities:**

1. In his Golden Rule statement, who did Confucius likely mean by “others” (see chapter #3 of this curriculum)? Who would “others” have meant to an ancient Hindu? To an Israelite?
2. Felix Adler (1851-1933) was the founder of the non-religious Society for Ethical Culture. He proposed this guideline: “Act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby the best in yourself.” (*An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, 1918, pp. 208-222) In your judgment, is this guideline a useful addition to the Golden Rule? Does it illuminate the message of the Golden Rule? What reasoning supports your answer?
3. What happens in a society if people generally fail to follow The Golden Rule? If the members of a society fail to follow the Golden Rule and social disorder results, can order then be imposed through more and stricter laws? Through harsher punishments? Explain?
4. How do you explain the following kinds of anti-Golden Rule statements? “Do others or they will do you.” Or, “Do to others as they would do to you if they had the chance.”



5. Are these examples of the Golden Rule?
  - a. A mentally ill man who hurts others so others will hurt him.
  - b. Doing to others the bad things that they have already done to you.
  - c. Doing to others what you think they would do to you if given the chance.
  - d. Using “An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth” as a guide when mistreated.
  - e. Giving someone a gift hoping that he will give you a more costly one.
6. In your judgment, should Rogers have used the Golden Rule as he did in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (see chapter #4 of this curriculum)? Or, do you consider his use of it to be too self-serving?
7. Secure *Christmas Books, Tales and Sketches* (see chapter #4 of this curriculum) by Charles Dickens. Describe in detail the situation in which Dickens uses the Golden Rule term in *The Battle of Life* story. What is his moral message?
8. What would you say to a child who hits his brother and justifies his act by saying, “He did it to me first. I just got even.”
9. Would you advise a timid boy or girl to use the Golden Rule if picked on by a classroom bully? Why, or why not?
10. Look again at Golden Rule sayings in this lesson (see chapters #3 and 4). Which one would you select for display in a classroom? Would you choose a positive approach: “do unto others...”? Or a negative approach: “don’t do to others...” Or, would it be necessary to include both types? (Note: the terms “positive” and “negative” are not used here as moral terms [that is, “good” and “bad”]. Rather, they are two different grammatical approaches to communicating a somewhat similar message.)
11. Why would the Golden Rule make a more appropriate public school display than the Ten Commandments? Explain.
12. Use the Internet to:
  - a. find additional ancient and modern variations of the Golden Rule (there are many).
  - b. find additional references to the specific “Golden Rule” title that were used in the United States before the Civil War.

- 
- c. provide class members with a short biography of one person—mentioned in this lesson—who championed the use of the Golden Rule.
  - d. provide class members with a short biography of one historical or modern person—not mentioned in this lesson—whose life embodied the Golden Rule.
13. What evidence, if any, can be found to demonstrate that worldwide progress has been made in using the Golden Rule as a moral guide? Explain.
14. Is “following the Golden Rule” all that’s needed to live a moral life?
- a. Yes, because \_\_\_\_\_, or
  - b. No, because \_\_\_\_\_.
15. What new perspectives, if any, has this lesson provided for you? Has it caused you to think about your own ways of responding to people and situations. If so, how? If not, why not? Do you already follow the Rule?

### 7. Multiple-choice questions

This section can be used as a review activity in which students are asked to justify their selections.

1. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is a wording of the Golden Rule that originally came from:
  - a. The Ancient Greeks
  - b. American folk wisdom
  - c. The Bible
  - d. Confucius
2. Forms of the Golden Rule are found in:
  - a. African cultures
  - b. Asian cultures
  - c. European cultures
  - d. All of the above
3. It is unlikely that a form of the Golden Rule would be found in:
  - a. Hinduism
  - b. Buddhism
  - c. A fascist philosophy
  - d. Christianity

4. Forms of the Golden Rule are found in:
  - a. Jainism
  - b. Islam
  - c. Judaism
  - d. All of the above
5. Forms of the Golden Rule are found in:
  - a. Ancient Egyptian writings
  - b. American literature of the 1800s
  - c. American folklore
  - d. All of the above
6. The Golden Rule's ethical guideline is closest to the idea of:
  - a. Egotism
  - b. One-upmanship
  - c. Reciprocity
  - d. Revenge
7. Of the four traditions listed below, whose version of the Golden rule most clearly extends beyond humans to include other creatures that can feel pain?
  - a. Taoism
  - b. Confucianism
  - c. Jainism
  - d. Christianity
8. Of those listed, which one was first to clearly state an altruistic form of the Golden Rule along the lines of "do unto others"?
  - a. Jesus in the New Testament
  - b. Homer in *The Odyssey* (Greek epic)
  - c. Sukhanan-i-Muhammad (Islamic scholar)
  - d. Baha'u'llah (founder of the Baha'i faith)
9. The earliest known written version of the Golden rule (from Egypt) is similar to that found in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (see chapter#4) in that both:
  - a. Seem focused on receiving help
  - b. Are based upon family ties
  - c. Are associated with religious beliefs
  - d. All of the above are correct

- 
10. Using the Golden Rule as an ethical guideline has some limitations because it:
    - a. Doesn't provide specific standards
    - b. Is found in only a few societies
    - c. Is a new, almost untried idea
    - d. Is very old and, therefore, out of date
  11. Golden Rule thinking is least likely to work if the people involved:
    - a. Have never heard of the saying
    - b. See the world through other people's eyes
    - c. Consider themselves to be enemies of others
    - d. Belong to different age groups—such as parents and their children
  12. Your Golden Rule actions can most easily be misunderstood by:
    - a. "In-group" people
    - b. People who think you want something in return
    - c. One's friends and family
    - d. New people moving into one's community
  13. Which of the following statements is most clearly shaped by the Golden Rule? A parent who says to a child:
    - a. "How would you feel if a person did that to you?"
    - b. "Stop that. It could become a bad habit."
    - c. "Shame on you"
    - d. "You'll be punished if you do that again."
  14. In the modern era, how far can the concepts of "my in-group" or "we/our" extend? To:
    - a. Friends and family who are personally known.
    - b. Friends, family and members of one's religious group.
    - c. All of the above plus the citizens of the country in which a person lives.
    - d. None of the above are correct. One can feel identified with people anywhere in the world.
  15. *The Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the United Nations in 1948:
    - a. Reduces the effectiveness of the Golden Rule by taking power from nations whose people are trying to live by it.
    - b. Goes beyond the Golden Rule and thus makes it obsolete.

- c. Broadens the focus of the Golden rule by emphasising human rights, gender equality, racial equality, etc.
- d. Is unrelated to the Golden Rule since it does not concern actual people.

Answers: 1-b, 2-d, 3-c, 4-d, 5-d, 6-c, 7-c, 8-b, 9-a, 10-a, 11-c, 12-b, 13-a, 14-d, 15-c.

## 8. Addenda—more discussion questions

1. To what extent are mottos such as “Do a good deed everyday,” or “Engage in random acts of kindness” similar to the Golden Rule? How are they different?

2. Think about soldiers who lose their lives trying to save their fellow soldiers in combat—or any person who dies trying to rescue others. Are these examples of the Golden Rule? Explain.

3. Is Golden Rule behaviour restricted to humans? Or, is it a part of our “animal nature” that we share with our evolutionary cousins? Frans de Waal is a primatologist who has spent his professional life studying chimpanzees, bonobos (pigmy chimps) and other primate species. In *Our Inner Ape* (2005, New York: Penguin Group), de Waal says:

Our golden rule –“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”–asks us to put on someone else’s shoes. We think of this as a uniquely human ability...but we are not alone. How many animals can do so? I have already described how Kuni, a bonobo, treated an injured bird she found in her enclosure. By trying to make the bird fly, Kuni recognised the needs of an animal totally unlike herself. There is no shortage of further examples of bonobos figuring out the needs of others.

One involves Kidogo, who suffered from a heart condition. He was feeble, lacking the normal stamina and self-confidence of a grown male bonobo. When first introduced to the colony at the Milwaukee County Zoo, Kidogo was completely confused by the keepers’ shifting commands inside the unfamiliar building...After a while, other bonobos stepped in. They approached Kidogo, took him by the hand, and led him to where the keepers wanted him, thus showing they understood both the keepers’ intentions and Kidogo’s problem. Soon Kidogo began to rely on their help. (p. 170)

4. Do you agree with de Waal’s judgment that these non-humans are able to think and act in simple Golden Rule ways? If you do not

agree, how do you see this kind of animal behaviour as being different from what we call “following the Golden Rule” in human society? If you agree with de Waal, can you provide other examples from your personal experience or from news items that you have seen or read?

Note: As a starter, the instructor may want to survey the class to see how many students know about the widely publicised—and televised—case of an ape acting in what de Waal thinks is a Golden Rule manner. In 1996, a female gorilla at the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois picked up a three-year-old child who had fallen more than 15 feet into a gorilla exhibit. The gorilla picked up the boy, briefly cradled him in her lap, gave him a few gentle pats and then took him to the exhibit door where the zoo staff retrieved him. (de Waal, p. 3)

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### **10. Print versions of this document**

Print versions of this Golden Rule lesson plan are available. The print version is entitled “The Golden Rule Basis for Ethics and Morality” and contains a lesson that was published in the 1879 edition of McGuffey’s Fourth Eclectic Reader as well as a section on how the Golden Rule relates to the Ten Commandments.

It is available to educators in the United States and Canada for \$1.00 (US funds) per copy. Please add \$1.00 per order for postage and handling. Include a check or institutional purchase order.

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## **SCARBORO MISSIONS**

### **MISSION, VALUES, VISION**

#### **Mission Statement**

Scarboro Missions is a Canadian society of Catholic priests and laity. Motivated by the Spirit, we dedicate ourselves to the person, teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, who said:

“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

Sent by the Church, we seek:

- To serve in creative and new endeavours where the Gospel has not been heard;
- To collaborate with a local church that invites our presence;
- To live simply and in solidarity with the poor and marginalised people of the world;
- To encounter and celebrate God’s presence in the life, history, culture and faiths of the people among whom we live;
- To collaborate with churches in Canada, generating enthusiasm for global mission and in promoting Gospel values.

### **Values**

As witnesses to the hope and joy of the resurrection, these are the values we endeavour to live by and which will sustain us in the future:

- A profound reliance on and trust in God;
- A call to participate humbly in Christ’s mission;
- A belief in the transforming power of God’s Spirit;
- A commitment to support and challenge each other to simplicity of life, hospitality, communal dialogue, mutual respect and concern.

We recognize, affirm and celebrate:

- The dignity of all people as members of God’s family;
- The invitation to all people to participate in the realisation of God’s Reign;
- The sacred gift of God’s creation, entrusted to everyone.

Guided by these ideals, we go forth in the spirit of St. Paul who prays, “Glory be to God whose power in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.”( Ephesians 3:20 )

### **Vision**

To serve the Reign of God through contemporary paths of mission.

### **WHAT WE DO**

Support interfaith dialogue with “The Golden Rule” poster, which shows the golden rule in the sacred writings of 13 faiths.

As more and more people hear about our work, individuals and groups are consulting us on interfaith issues. People in Toronto and across Canada are being inspired to take interfaith action as a result of hearing about our work.

### **OVERSEAS INTERFAITH WORK**

Our interfaith work here in Canada is also a support and inspiration to interfaith activity in Scarboro Missions' overseas missions. In Canada, we are likewise inspired and supported by Scarboro members working overseas in pluralist environments.

### **A GLOBAL VISION**

We are in touch with local, national and international interfaith activity and networks. And with Catholic interfaith activity around the globe.

### **LAY MISSION PROGRAMME**

An interfaith component is now part of our lay training programme. Interfaith exposure prepares students for the cross-cultural reality of overseas work.

### **EVENTS**

The Interfaith Office has created and sponsors numerous events.

### **GOLDEN RULE POSTER**

Scarboro Missions has developed a poster featuring the Golden Rule in the sacred writings of 13 religious traditions. Each scripture is accompanied by the symbol of the featured religion. Accompanying lesson plans for elementary and high school curricula are being developed and will be commercially published. A study guide for adult audiences is also in the works. A documentary about the poster has been aired on a national TV broadcast, and the poster is now on permanent display at the United Nations in New York.

## **WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED**

### **RACIAL HARMONY AWARD**

In 1999, the Scarborough Community and Race Relations Committee granted its Racial Harmony Award to our interfaith committee. Since then, members of the committee have received other awards for their interfaith efforts.



## **GREETINGS FROM JOHN PAUL AND OTHERS**

The 1998 special edition of Scarboro magazine, "Catholics and the Interfaith Conversation," has received letters of praise from John Paul II, Cardinal Arinze of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Father Kolvenbach, the international head of the Jesuit order, Cardinal Edward Cassidy in Rome, who has the chief responsibility for both interchurch work, and the Vatican's relations with the Jews.

## **HINDU TEACHER HONOURS SCARBORO MISSIONS**

In 2000, Swami Veda Bharati, an internationally renowned Hindu teacher from India, honoured Scarboro Missions for our interfaith initiatives. The Swami presented a gold etching of Jesus to Scarboro Missions during a multi-faith prayer service at a Hindu temple in Toronto.

## **GUIDELINES FOR GOLDEN RULE WORKSHOP**

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### **How to Order the Golden Rule Poster**

This striking and beautiful four-colour poster (22" X 29") features a symbolic and scriptural depiction of the golden rule in 13 religions. Produced by Scarboro Missions, the poster is now being used in schools, homes, hospitals, prisons, universities, workplaces and congregations.

### **Why Create a Golden Rule Workshop**

At a dramatic pace, more and more regions of the world are becoming environments of multi-culture and multi-faith. This trend is having a profound effect upon public education, religious education, ethical education and education for social justice. Growing numbers of educators are discovering that religious and ethical education can no longer be conducted from the perspective of only one religion or culture. Indeed, religious educators of the future will call upon the wisdom and teachings of numerous religious and humanist traditions.

These guidelines are meant to be a small step toward this now-and-future direction. In this proposed workshop or group discussion experience, participants will be invited to reflect from the perspective of a universal moral principle—the Golden Rule—in its many and various expressions across the world's religions.

People are often surprised and pleased to discover versions of the Golden Rule in so many religions and secular philosophies. In this workshop, you will be working with 13 expressions of the Golden Rule. It should be noted, however, that researchers have discovered versions in numerous other religious traditions. Because the Golden Rule crosses so many traditions and philosophies, it possesses tremendous moral authority and indicates a profound human unity.

This workshop has been tested in a number of environments and has consistently generated great enthusiasm, reflection and discussion. Any group or individual who decides to sponsor it can expect rich and varied responses. This workshop also aims to provide tools for reflection and action in terms of the great ethical and social issues of our time.

### **Preparation**

This is a do-it-yourself workshop. The guidelines that follow are meant to equip an individual or group to sponsor, create and facilitate a Golden Rule Across the World's Religions workshop. Any group interested in sponsoring this workshop would benefit by first forming a planning group.

The planning group can review the range of choices and options outlined in these detailed guidelines. Again, these are just guidelines. The planning group may want to change, adapt or shorten the proposed programme. For example, the guidelines contain suggested time frames for various sections of the programme. But these are just suggestions and can be varied.

You will note that there is a good deal of time allotted for the participants to do private reflection during the workshop. The developers of these guidelines have learned that the process of individual reflection deepens the experience of the participants. Again, the planning group may want to vary this component of the process.

The target audience for this workshop is both adults and youth. It is hoped, for example, that this programme will be utilised in adult and youth education programmes in mosques, temples, gurdwaras, synagogues, churches, meditation centres, spiritual fellowships, etc. In fact, on a given day, an adult workshop and a children's workshop can be offered simultaneously in the same locale.

Please note that the constituency for this workshop can be a single-faith or a multi-faith audience. This workshop is also relevant to

audiences that do not define themselves as “religious” or “spiritual” because the workshop content deals largely with ethics.

### **What you will need for the workshop**

- Paper and pens for journaling
- Flip chart for use in Steps 4, 5 and 9 below
- Questions selected for use in Step 4
- Preparatory questions for small group discussion (Step 5)  
Questions about the learnings and experience of the workshop participants (Step 9)
- Evaluation forms (Step 11)
- A copy of the 13 Sacred Writings for each workshop participant
- Golden Rule poster featuring a symbolic and written depiction of the Golden Rule in 13 religions. The poster is not necessary for the workshop but is a helpful visual aid.
- Order the poster here.

### *Workshop outline in 13 steps:*

Here follows a framework of 13 steps to guide the planning group in developing and presenting its workshop. As an aid to the planning group and facilitator, these steps are listed in both short form and long form:

Step 1—Welcome and Introduction

Step 2—Distribution of Sacred Texts

Step 3—Silent Meditation

Step 4—Individual Reflection

Step 5—Preparation for Group Discussion

Step 6—Group Discussion

Step 7—Plenary Discussion

Step 8—Appropriation of Learnings

Step 9—Sharing of Learnings

Step 10—Facilitator’s Comments

Step 11—Evaluation

Step 12—Next Steps

Step 13—Closing Prayer/Meditation

### **Step 1—Welcome and Introduction**

Facilitator welcomes the participants and outlines the programme and process of the workshop. If the group is not too large, participants can be asked to introduce themselves and comment on what attracted them to this workshop.

### **Step 2—Distribution of Sacred Texts**

Facilitator provides each participant with a sheet containing the 13 written versions of the Golden Rule.

### **Step 3—Silent Meditation**

All participants are invited to spend a few minutes in silence, reading and reflecting on the 13 Sacred Writings. Facilitator can explain that the practice of reflection and meditation on sacred texts in silence is common to many religious traditions.

Suggested time frame: 5 to 7 minutes

### **Step 4—Individual Reflection**

Workshop participants continue their private and silent reflection in response to two or three questions provided them by the facilitator. The questions can also be listed on a flipchart. Participants may wish to journal their reflections. Suggested time frame: 7 to 12 minutes.

Prior to the workshop, the planning group prepares two or three questions appropriate to its audience, to stimulate private reflection and group discussion. The planners may want to provide just one question. On the other hand, they may choose more than two or three questions, perhaps as many as five or six. By increasing the number of questions, the planners are able to provide more rich material for reflection. However, more questions may lead to overstimulation of the individual reflections and of the subsequent small group process and plenary. So again, this is a decision for the planning group.

If the constituency is a specialised group (*e.g.* hospital chaplains, teachers, teenagers, social justice activists), questions can be geared to its specific needs. If the constituency wants to deal with a specific issue (*e.g.* ecology, social justice, violence, compassion), the questions can likewise be oriented to such.

Numerous sample questions are listed below, by clicking each of the three categories:

- (a) the message of the Golden Rule,

- (b) the message of the Golden Rule for you,
- (c) the Golden Rule and its implications for society

### **Step 5—Preparation for Group Discussion**

Each participant prepares for the small group discussion by quietly reflecting for a few minutes on the fruit of her/his meditation in Step 4. To stimulate this reflection, the facilitator provides each participant with the following questions (please note that the purpose here is not to repeat or rehash the reflection of the previous step but to prepare the participant for the small group discussion):

- What new insights, thoughts, questions or good ideas do I have as a result of my reflection on these Sacred Writings?
- What feelings surfaced in me as I perused these writings?
- What would I like to share with my small group?
- How will I share, briefly, but completely?

Journaling is optional. Suggested time frame: 3 to 5 minutes

### **Step 6—Group Discussion**

Participants break into discussion groups (4 to 7 persons per group). The planning group may want to designate group leaders in advance. Suggested time frame: 20 to 45 minutes

### **Step 7—Plenary Discussion**

Facilitator convenes all participants into a plenary. Participants are invited to give feedback by way of either group reports or spontaneous comments. It may be helpful to record key elements of the feedback content on flip chart paper. Following the feedback, the facilitator stimulates discussion within the plenary. Suggested time frame: 20 to 45 minutes

### **Step 8—Appropriation of Learnings**

Facilitator asks each participant to take some quiet time (4 to 7 minutes) to reflect on her/his experience of and learnings from the programme (journaling is optional). Some of the following questions can be used to stimulate private reflection:

- What have I learned during this workshop?
- What new insights have surfaced for me?
- What is coming clearer to me, now?
- As a result of this workshop, I feel moved to...

**Step 9—Sharing of Learnings**

Facilitator asks some or all of the participants to share one learning from the programme. These could be recorded on a flip chart. Alternatively, these learnings could also be shared in groups of two.

**Step 10—Facilitator's Comments**

At this point, the facilitator may want to share some specific or general comments on the notion of The Golden Rule Across The World's Religions. The facilitator may also want to comment on the feedback reports and plenary discussion and make a summary statement.

**Step 11—Evaluation**

Participants are invited to evaluate the workshop process. The planning group may design evaluation forms in advance.

**Step 12—Next Steps**

The facilitator and participants take some time to determine if they want to do any follow-up to this workshop. For example, would it be helpful to organize additional workshops? Or to integrate the themes and learnings of this workshop into other projects that the participants or planning group are involved in?

**Step 13—Closing Prayer/Meditation**

Workshop could close with an experience of prayer/meditation/liturgy/song/poetry/chant related to the theme. One option is to have people meditate quietly for a minute on the Sacred Writings. Following this, 13 individuals can recite, one-by-one, in a rotation fashion, the individual sacred texts.

**Sample questions for use in step 4**

In Step 4, the participants are invited to do individual reflection in response to two or three questions provided by the facilitator. The planning group is responsible for creating these reflection questions. To aid the planning group in this task, numerous sample questions are listed below, divided into three categories:

- (a) the message of the Golden Rule
- (b) the message of the Golden Rule for you
- (c) the Golden Rule and its implications for society

**(a) The message of the Golden Rule**

- What is the message of the Golden Rule?

- A similar moral principle is expressed in the Sacred Writings of these 13 religious traditions. What conclusions can you draw from this fact?
- Can you see differences and similarities among the 13 Sacred Texts? What are they?
- Virtually all religions and spiritual traditions emphasize love and compassion for neighbour. How, in your opinion, does this universal teaching relate to the message of these Sacred Writings?
- Are you aware of the title or message of a TV programme, book or popular song which expresses the same idea as the Golden Rule? Explain.

**(b) The message of the Golden Rule for you**

- Which expression of the Golden Rule do you like the best? Why?
- How would you express the Golden Rule in your own words?
- Think of one occasion when someone treated you in the spirit of the Golden Rule. When was that? Who was involved? What was that like for you? How did you feel? How do you understand the behaviour of the other party involved in this incident?
- Think of one occasion when you treated someone in the spirit of the Golden Rule. When was that? Who was involved? What was that like for you? How did you feel? What is your sense of the other party's reaction to your behaviour in that situation?
- Think of one occasion when someone treated you in a manner that violated the Golden Rule. When was that? Who was involved? What was that like for you? How did you feel? How do you understand the behaviour of the other party involved in that incident?
- Think of one occasion when you treated someone in a manner that violated the Golden Rule. When was that? Who was involved? What was that like for you? How did you feel? What is your sense of the other party's reaction to your behaviour in that situation?
- Did anything in these Sacred Writings get you thinking? Identify it. Did it interest, stimulate or energize you? Or, did it irritate, challenge or bewilder you? Why?
- What surprises you about these Sacred Texts? Why? What challenges you? Puzzles you? Why?

- 
- What insights or good ideas come to you as you reflect on these Sacred Writings?
  - What doubts or questions are raised for you as you ponder these Sacred Texts?
  - Has anything in these Sacred Writings so caught your interest that you might want to investigate it more fully? What? Why?
  - Is there something you can name within your workplace (or school, family, city, etc.) that promotes or prevents the practice of the Golden Rule?
  - If you were to live by the Golden Rule each and everyday, what would be different in your life? Your personal life? Family life? Work Life? Community Life? etc.
  - Can the Golden Rule be realistically applied in day-to-day life? Why or why not? Can you think of a good example from your experience? Describe it.
  - Do you belong to one of the 13 spiritual traditions represented in this collection of Sacred Texts? If so, how do you understand your tradition's version of the Golden Rule in light of the other 12? And how do you understand the other 12 in light of yours?
  - Some people argue that the Golden Rule contains a profound call to solidarity with neighbour, a profound call to empathy and compassion for all. As you read and reflect on these 13 Sacred Writings, do you believe it is really possible for you "to get inside another person's skin", "to walk in your neighbour's moccasins", to feel the joy and pain of another person? Explain.
  - In light of these 13 Sacred Writings, what is your reaction to the following statement: "my search for happiness, meaning and freedom has everything to do with my commitment to bringing about your happiness, your meaning and your freedom"?
  - Do you see ways in which these Sacred Texts could be helpful to you in terms of prayer and meditation? Explain.
  - As a result of my reflections on these Sacred Writings, I feel moved to.....
- c) The Golden Rule's implications for society
- What could things be like if everyone behaved according to the Golden Rule? Why is it that sometimes we don't behave according to the Golden Rule?



- Do you think that people generally live by the Golden Rule? Why? Why not? If not, what Rule do you think many people do live by?
- How do people usually treat each other at work (school, home, etc.)? Why is that so? How might the Golden Rule make a difference?
- To what current issue in your city or country might the Golden Rule offer a solution? How so?
- Do you think that these Sacred Writings could be helpful in promoting conversation, communication and harmony within a family? Why or why not? Do you think that these writings could be helpful in promoting such communication among families, including families of various faiths? Why or why not?
- Select a social, political, economic or religious issue that interests you. How might these Sacred Writings contribute to your thinking about or acting on this issue?
- How, in your opinion, do these Sacred Texts challenge us in terms of our relationships with people who are hurting *e.g.* the hospitalised, the imprisoned, the abused, the homeless, refugees etc.?
- Do you think that these Sacred Writings could be helpful in bringing about equality between women and men? Why or why not?
- Do you think that these Sacred Texts could be helpful in healing a societal disease known as racism? Why or why not?
- Do you think that these Sacred Writings could be helpful in promoting a deeper appreciation of racial, cultural and religious diversity? Why or why not?
- From the domestic to the international level, there appears to be a growing reliance on violence to resolve conflict? Do you think that these Sacred Writings could be helpful in promoting a non-violent approach to conflict-resolution? Why or why not?
- For all beings on this planet, ecological destruction is a threatening development. Do you think that these Sacred Texts could be helpful in efforts to protect and heal Mother Earth? Why or why not?
- Do you think that these Sacred Texts could be helpful in efforts to promote social and economic justice for all? Why or Why not?

- 
- Do you see any connection between the message of these 13 Sacred Writings and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Why or Why not?
  - Across the planet, thousands of people including educators, humanitarians and religious people are working to develop a Global Ethic ([www.global-ethic.org](http://www.global-ethic.org)). This effort to develop a universal ethic, which calls upon the wisdom of the world's many religions, considers the Golden Rule to be a key reference point. Here, the Golden Rule is not just a moral ideal for relationships between people but also for relationships among nations, cultures, races and religions. Do you think that the development of a Global Ethic is important? Why or why not? If yes, do you think that the Golden Rule could make an important contribution to this universal ethic? Why or why not?
  - Do you think that these Sacred Texts could be helpful in efforts to promote interfaith dialogue? Why or why not?
  - Where do you think there is a special need for these Sacred Writings today? Why?

#### **A CURRICULUM ON HATE VIOLENCE PREPARED BY THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE: A CASE STUDY**

Thank you for participating in STOP the HATE. This project is the first step in raising awareness among people of faith about the epidemic of hate violence and about the prejudices out of which such violence stems.

This curriculum offers traditional religious sources that will help your community to develop a faith-based response to hate violence. As the sources included in this packet demonstrate, our diverse religious traditions share a number of core values. All of our traditions teach that human beings are divinely endowed with infinite dignity and worth. All of our traditions teach us to treat each other with civility and respect. Hate violence—and any type of prejudice—runs counter to these fundamental shared values.

This packet includes texts from thirteen religious traditions, organised around three central themes: human nature, responsibilities to others, and appropriate and inappropriate speech. Through these sources, we can begin to understand what our religious traditions teach about human dignity, and how our traditions demand that we treat one another.

While we have included a broad range of texts from a variety of religious traditions, these texts are only selections out of a vast body of literature. The texts representing any particular tradition are meant to offer a taste of that tradition, and do not necessarily present a comprehensive philosophy. We hope that you will supplement this curriculum with sources with which you are familiar. If you find any particularly helpful sources, please forward them to us, so that we can add them to our collection.

At the end of the curriculum guide, you will find two evaluation forms. One of these is for you, the facilitator to complete, and the other should be copied and completed by each programme participant. We ask that you fax us these evaluations as they help us to learn more about your needs and to improve our programming.

Thank you again for your efforts to create a community based on civility, understanding and respect. We hope that you find this curriculum helpful to your work.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy

### **PROGRAMME ONE: INTRA-FAITH DISCUSSION**

**Goal:** To understand what one's own religious tradition says about human dignity, interpersonal relationships and diversity and how this relates to hate violence.

**You will need:**

- Source sheets for all participants (copies of pages with your tradition's texts—if time is limited, you may copy a smaller selection of sources)
- Paper
- Pens/pencils

**Programme:**

1. Give each participant a source sheet.
2. Facilitate a discussion on sources.
3. Create (preferably in written form) a statement on hate violence or prejudice based on the sources. This statement should explain the relationship between these traditional sources and one of these modern issues.

*Note:* If you have a lot of participants, you can split group into smaller units, or even into pairs then have these smaller groups present their discussions to the entire group.

### Questions for discussion

#### *Human nature*

- What do these texts teach us about the nature of humanity?
- What is the relationship between the human and the divine?
- What do these texts teach us about the way we should treat others?
- What do these texts teach us about the way we should treat ourselves?
- In what areas of society/what current events do you see these values reflected?

Where do you see these values not reflected?

- How do we at this table try to reflect the values of these texts? How do we succeed/fail?
- What is the relationship between perception of the other and prejudice/hate violence?

#### *Responsibilities to others*

- What principles of relationships do these sources teach? How do these principles relate to the sources' definition of human nature? To your own definition of human nature?
- What groups do the texts mention as marginalised? Why do you think these groups are specified?
- How do the texts suggest we treat marginalised groups?
- What is the relationship between marginalisation and perceptions of human nature?
- Who today is marginalised?
- Have you ever seen someone treated in a way that contradicts the values of these texts? Have you ever been treated/treated someone in a manner contrary to these values? How did it make you feel?

#### *Appropriate and inappropriate speech*

- What is your perception of your tradition's attitude toward speech?

- What effect does speech have, according to these texts?
- According to these texts, what kinds of speech are appropriate and what kinds are not appropriate?
- Can you think of contemporary examples of the kinds of speech mentioned by these texts?
- Have you seen people get hurt/hurt others through speech? How? Which of the textual principles did they violate?
- What societal realities make it difficult to conform to the standards of appropriate speech that you have identified? How can we overcome these challenges?
- In what areas of our lives can we make changes in the way we speak?
- What is the relationship between the way we speak to each other and hate violence?

## PROGRAMME TWO: INTER-FAITH DISCUSSION

**Goal:** To understand what various religious traditions say about human dignity and interpersonal relationships and how this relates to hate violence

You will need:

- Source sheets for all participants (selections of a few texts from each of the traditions represented in your group)
- Paper
- Pens/pencils

### Programme:

1. Choose a few texts from each of the religious traditions represented within your group. (you may concentrate on a specific topic area—*e.g.* what various traditions say about human nature—or choose one or two texts from each tradition about each topic area.)
2. Facilitate a discussion on sources. (See suggested discussion questions below, but please don't limit yourself to these)
4. Create (preferably in written form) a statement on hate violence or prejudice based on the sources. This statement should explain the relationship between these traditional sources and one of these modern issues.

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## Questions for Discussion

### *Human nature*

- What do these texts say about human nature? In what ways are they similar/different?
- What are the different ways that these texts represent the relationship between the human and the divine?
- What can we learn about the different religious traditions from their presentations of human nature?
- What do these texts teach us about how we view ourselves and others?
- How do we succeed/fail in implementing the values of these texts in our lives?
- What is the relationship between perception of the other and prejudice/hate violence?

### *Responsibilities to others*

- What principles of relationships do these sources teach? In what ways are the traditions similar/different?
- How do the principles of these texts relate to the traditions' perceptions of human nature?
- How do the various traditions represent marginalised groups? What are the differences/similarities?
- What can we learn about the group identity of each of these traditions from the representations of the marginalised?
- Have you ever seen someone treated in a way that contradicts the values of these texts?
- Have you ever been treated/treated someone in a manner contrary to these values? How did it make you feel?

### *Appropriate and inappropriate speech*

- What kinds of speech do various traditions deem appropriate/inappropriate? What kinds of speech do you consider appropriate/inappropriate?
- What are the differences/similarities in the speech rules of various traditions?
- Can you think of instances (either in personal experience or in the news) in which people were hurt by speech?

- Can you think of times when you hurt others or were hurt through speech? How did you feel? How might different traditions address these kinds of speech?
- What societal realities make it difficult to conform to the standards of appropriate speech that you have identified? How can we overcome these challenges?
- In what areas of our lives can we make changes in the way we speak?

### **PROGRAMME THREE: TRADITIONAL SOURCES/MODERN ISSUES**

*Note:* This may be either an intra-faith or an inter-faith programme.

**Goal:** To understand the relationship between traditional sources and contemporary issues of prejudice and hate.

You will need:

- Source sheets for all participants (for an intra-faith programme, copy texts from your tradition; for an interfaith programme, copy texts from a variety of traditions)
- Copies of articles on prejudice/discrimination (pages 38-56 of sourcebook)
- Blackboard or big paper
- Chalk or markers.

#### **Programme:**

1. Give each participant a copy either of your own tradition's sources or of a selection of sources from different traditions on all three categories (human nature, responsibilities to others and appropriate/inappropriate speech)
2. Read the sources aloud and identify rules governing interpersonal relationships. On a blackboard or big sheet of paper, make a list of the principles by which we should treat each other, according to the sources.
3. Ask group to identify societal realities that make it difficult to conform to these principles. Have them discuss times when they felt their own standards compromised. (*e.g.* not responding when an employer told a racist joke; watching a sexist movie)
4. Split group into pairs or smaller groups. Give each pair/group one of the included articles on prejudice/diversity.

5. Have each small group examine its article based on the sources you have discussed. Have them determine what principles the people in the articles violate/uphold.
6. Have each group present its findings to the whole.

#### **PROGRAMME FOUR: TALKING TO CHILDREN**

*Note:* This may be either an intra-faith or an inter-faith programme.

**Goal:** To determine ways of teaching one's own children a faith-based approach to combating prejudice.

**You will need:** Source sheets for all participants (for an intra-faith programme, copy texts from your tradition; for an interfaith programme, copy texts from a variety of traditions)

#### **Programme:**

1. Give each participant a copy either of your own tradition's sources or of a selection of sources from different traditions.
2. Discuss sources using discussion questions from either programme one or two.
3. Split group into pairs. (If this is an interfaith programme, pairs should consist of two people of the same religious tradition so that they can construct a response based on their own tradition's sources.)
4. Have each pair choose one of the situations listed below or another situation they have witnessed. Have pairs discuss how they would respond to their children in this situation, using texts/ideas from their own religious tradition.
5. Have pairs role play situation they have discussed. After each role play, have group discuss the way that the pair addressed the situation.

#### **Situations:**

1. Your child comes home from school and tells you that the new student at school is "funny looking" because his/her skin is a different color. (ages 5-8)
2. Your teenage child tells you that s/he is gay. (ages 13-18)
3. Your teenage child tells you that a peer in her religious school class is gay and that therefore "God doesn't love him/her." (ages 13-18)
4. You overhear your child use a slur to describe someone in a different racial, ethnic or religious group. (ages 7-12)



5. You overhear your child use a slur to describe his/herself or someone else in his/her own racial, ethnic or religious group. (ages 7-12)
6. Your child tells you that s/he would rather be a different color or a different religion so that s/he could “be like everyone else.” (ages 8-14)
7. Your child tells you that people of a certain religion, race or ethnicity are smart/stupid/lazy/rich, etc. (ages 8-14)
8. You overhear your child mocking the sounds of another language. (ages 7-12)
9. You notice that even though your child’s class is very diverse, all of his/her friends are of the same ethnicity/race/religion as s/he. (ages 7-12)
10. Your child tells you that his/her friend who is black is “not really black.” (ages 8-15)
11. You overhear your child say to a friend of a different religion, “I really like you. It’s too bad you’re going to hell.” (ages 7-12)

#### **PROGRAMME FIVE: STEREOTYPE ROLE PLAY**

**Goal:** To understand the way that stereotypes demean people.

You will need:

- Source sheets for all participants (texts from your tradition or a selection of sources from different traditions)
- Two sets of index cards or slips of paper. For one set, write one stereotype on each card/piece of paper. For the other set, write one situation on each card.
- Blackboard or big paper
- Chalk or markers

#### **Programme:**

*Note:* This may be either an intra-faith or an inter-faith programme.

1. Give each participant a copy either of your own tradition’s sources or of a selection of sources from different traditions.
2. Read through the texts and derive from them a set of principles of behaviour. List these on the blackboard or on big sheets of paper.
3. Ask for two volunteers. Designate one the “stereotyper” and the other the “stereotypee.”

4. Have the stereotyper draw a card from the “stereotype” pile. This card represents the stereotype s/he has of the other person. (S/he should not show this card to anyone)
5. Have the volunteers draw one card from the “situation” pile. This card represents the situation they will role play. Give them a minute or two to prepare.
6. Have the two volunteers role play the situation, with the stereotyper treating the stereotypee according to stereotype.
7. Have remaining participants comment on the role play. Have them determine what the stereotype was, how the stereotype demeaned the volunteer, and what religious behaviour principles the volunteers violated. (For instance—the group may determine that the way in which the stereotyper spoke to the stereotypee violated some of the principles of appropriate/inappropriate speech.)
8. Ask the volunteers to discuss how they felt. Did the stereotyper feel powerful? Unfair? Did the stereotypee develop any stereotypes of the other person?

**Stereotypes:** stupid, rich, poor, immoral, lazy, smart, athletic, hard-working, druggedout, serious, alcoholic, intellectual, religious, naïve, violent, disloyal, unpatriotic, outgoing, reserved, sexist, racist.

**Situations:** job/admissions interview, planning a community programme; discussing a racial/ethnic/religious news event; comparing family traditions; comparing religious traditions; parent/teacher conference; asking for a raise; business meeting;

## PROGRAMME SIX: RESPONDING TO STEREOTYPES

**Goal:** To determine appropriate ways of responding to stereotypes.

You will need:

- Source sheets for all participants (texts from your tradition or a selection of sources from different traditions)
- Blackboard or big paper
- Chalk or markers

### Programme:

Note: This may be either an intra-faith or an inter-faith programme.

1. Give each participant a copy either of your own tradition’s sources or of a selection of sources from different traditions.

2. Read through the texts and derive from them a set of principles of behaviour. List these on the blackboard or on big sheets of paper.
3. Ask for two or three groups of three volunteers each.
4. Give each trio of volunteers a situation to role play. Allow them a minute to prepare.
5. Have the first three volunteers role play their situation.
6. Have remaining participants comment on the role play. Ask them to analyze the behaviour of the three volunteers. What principles of behaviour did each of the volunteers violate or uphold? How would they have behaved in the situation?
7. Ask the volunteers to discuss how they felt. If faced with the situation, would they have acted differently? How?

Situations:

- An employer tells a racist, ethnic or sexist joke to two employees.
- Three male friends are having dinner. One makes a derogatory comment about his wife or girlfriend.
- Three people are walking through an unfamiliar neighbourhood. When they notice that the majority of people in the neighbourhood are not white, one says "it looks like this is a bad neighbourhood."
- Three people are discussing a news story about the bombing of a building by an Arab-American. One of the people says, "Well, you know that that's typical."
- A shopper in a convenience store overhears one employee telling another a joke about the shopper's (not outwardly apparent) religious or ethnic group.
- Three teachers are discussing their students. One comments that students of a particular race/religion/ethnicity are the most or least intelligent.
- Three people of the same race/religion/ethnicity are talking. One uses a slur or tells a joke about the group to which they all belong.

## **AFRICAN TRADITIONS**

### **Human Nature**

Father, O mighty Force  
That Force which is in everything  
Come down between us, fill us  
Until we become like thee,  
Until we become like thee.

—Susu Prayer (Guinea)

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Nzame made everything: heaven, earth, sun, moon, stars, animals, plants—everything. When he had finished everything we see today, he called Mebene and Nkwa and showed them his work.

“This is my work. Is it good?”

They replied, “Yes, you have done well.”

“Does anything remain to be done?”

Mebene and Nkwa answered him, “We see many animals, but we do not see their chief; we see many plants, but we do not see their master.” ...

Working together, Nzame, Mebene and Nkwa created a being almost like themselves.

One gave him force, the second sway, and the third beauty. Then the three of them said,

“Take the earth. You are henceforth the master of all that exists.”

—Fang tradition (Gabon)

### **Responsibilities to others**

Wisdom belongs to everyone.

At one time, Tortoise decided that wisdom was more precious than wealth, so he began to collect wisdom. He took a little from everyone he met. He swept it up from the ground and caught it as it fell from the sky. Every time he found a piece of wisdom he took it and put it into a large pot. He gathered it for many days. He gathered it for many years. He gathered it until his pot was full of wisdom. Tortoise believed that he had all the wisdom of the world in his pot.

He decided that he would keep that wisdom for himself alone, but he was afraid that someone would discover his pot and steal all that wisdom. He wondered: What shall I do? Where shall I hide my pot? He thought and thought until at last he said: Unh hunh! That’s it. I shall climb a tree and hide my pot in its branches. Then, no one will find it.

So, Tortoise lifted his pot in his arms. He wanted to climb a tree. He held the pot in his left arm, but he couldn’t climb. He held the pot in his right arm, but he still couldn’t climb the tree. All the time that Tortoise had been trying to climb, his little child had been watching him. He said to his father: Papa, Papa, why don’t you tie the pot to your back and then you would be able to climb the tree?

Tortoise laughed at his child: Wey! Child, do you think you are wiser than your father? But he tied the pot to his back and Amazing! He was immediately able to climb the tree.

Tortoise sat on a branch. He held that pot in his arms. He felt very disturbed. He said: I thought I had collected all kinds of wisdom in my pot, but this little child possessed some wisdom which I lacked.

So tortoise sat there. He sat and sat. Then he took his pot and pushed it off the branch. All that wisdom scattered everywhere, to all parts of the world.

And that's how it is.

—Tradition from Cameroon

You are kind, you who cares for orphans.

You go as far as to treat even those who are not your own.

—Shona song (Zimbabwe)

*Appropriate and inappropriate speech*

If speech constructs the village, silence builds the world.

Silence adorned the world, speech made it hum.

Speech dispersed the world, silence reassembles it.

Speech destroys the village, silence makes its foundation good.

Silence hides the human matter of being from others, speech unveils it.

One does not know what the silent one thinks, but one knows the thought of the chatterer.

The secret belongs to the one who keeps quiet.

Silence delimited the paths, speech confused them.

—Bambara song (Mali)

A noisy bird builds a bad nest

—Kanufi proverb (Nigeria)

If the ear does not hear malicious gossip, the heart is not grieved.

—Yoruba proverb (Nigeria)

**BAHA'I FAITH**

**Human nature**

O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at

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all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you. O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

—*The Hidden Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* 68.

According to the words of the Old Testament God has said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” This indicates that man is of the image and likeness of God— that is to say, the perfections of God, the divine virtues, are reflected or revealed in the human reality. Just as the light and effulgence of the sun when cast upon a polished mirror are reflected fully, gloriously so, likewise, the qualities and attributes of Divinity are radiated from the depths of a pure human heart. This is an evidence that man is the most noble of God’s creatures....

Let us now discover more specifically how he is the image and likeness of God and what is the standard or criterion by which he can be measured and estimated. This standard can be no other than the divine virtues which are revealed in him. Therefore, every man imbued with divine qualities, who reflects heavenly moralities and perfections, who is the expression of ideal and praiseworthy attributes, is, verily, in the image and likeness of God. Or is human honor and notoriety the criterion of divine nearness? Can we apply the test of racial color and say that man of a certain hue—white, black, brown, yellow, red— is the true image of his creator? We must conclude that color is not the standard and estimate of judgment and that it is of no importance, for color is accidental in nature. The spirit and intelligence of man is essential.

—*Excerpts from a talk given by ‘Abdul-Bahá at the Fourth Annual Convention of the NAACP*

Thou hast asked me concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration

before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fails, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.

—*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* 73

### **Responsibilities to others**

From the beginning of time the light of unity hath shed its divine radiance upon the world, and the greatest means for the promotion of that unity is for the peoples of the world to understand one another's writing and speech. In former Epistles We have enjoined upon the Trustees of the House of Justice either to choose one language from among those now existing or to adopt a new one, and in like manner to select a common script, both of which should be taught in all the schools of the world. Thus, will the earth be regarded as one country and one home. The most glorious fruit of the tree of knowledge is this exalted word: Of one tree are all ye the fruit and of one bough the leaves. Let not man glory in this that he loveth his country, let him rather glory in this that he loveth his kind. Concerning this We have previously revealed that which is the means of the reconstruction of the world and the unity of nations. Blessed are they that attain thereunto. Blessed are they that act accordingly.

—*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 125-130

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem

on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

— *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* 130

*Appropriate and inappropriate speech*

O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy and is attired with the vesture of uprightness. Whoso is endued with courtesy hath indeed attained a sublime station. It is hoped that this Wronged one and everyone else may be enabled to acquire it, hold fast unto it, observe it, and fix our gaze upon it.

— *Lawh-i-Dunyá*

If you are aware of a certain truth, if you possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfils its purpose, your object is attained. If anyone should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest you deal unkindly with him.

— *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 15

## SELECTIONS FROM BUDDHIST TEXT

### Human Nature

Every being has the Buddha nature. This is the self. Such a self is, since the very beginning, under cover of innumerable illusions. That is why a man cannot see it. O good man! There was a poor woman who had gold hidden somewhere in her house, but no one knew where it was. But there was a stranger who, by expediency, speaks to the poor woman, "I shall employ you to weed the lawn." The woman answered, "I cannot do it now, but if you show my son where the gold is hidden, I will work for you." The man says, "I know the way; I will show it to your son." The woman replies, "No one in my house, big or small, knows where the gold is hidden. How can you know?" The man then digs out the hidden gold and shows it to the woman. She is glad, and begins to respect him. O good man! The same is the case with a man's Buddha nature. No one can see it. It is like the gold which the poor man possessed and yet could not locate. I now let people see the Buddha nature which they possess, but which was hidden by illusions.

— *Mahaparinirovana Sutra* 214-215



It is like a painter  
Spreading the various colors:  
Delusion grasps different forms  
But the elements have no distinctions.  
In the elements there's no form,  
And no form in the elements;  
Yet apart from the elements  
No form can be found.  
In the mind is no painting,  
In painting there is no mind;  
Yet not apart from mind  
Is any painting to be found.  
That mind never stops,  
Manifesting all forms,  
Countless, inconceivably many,  
Unknown to one another.  
Just as a painter  
Cannot know his own mind  
Yet paints due to his mind,  
So is the nature of things.  
Mind is like an artist,  
Able to paint the worlds:  
The five clusters are born thence;  
There is nothing it does not make.  
As in the mind, so is the Buddha;  
As the Buddha, so living beings:  
Know that Buddha and mind  
Are in essence inexhaustible.  
If people know the actions of mind  
Create all the worlds,  
They will see the Buddha  
And understand Buddha's true nature.  
Mind does not stay in the body,  
Nor body stay in mind:  
Yet it is able to perform Buddha-work  
Freely, without precedent.  
If people really want to know

All Buddhas of all times,  
They should contemplate the nature of the cosmos:  
All is but mental construction.

—*Garland Sutra* 20

### **Responsibilities to others**

All beings should be accommodated and served by me as attentively as I would show filial respect to my parents, due respect to my teachers, to elders and *arhats*, up to the *Tathagatas*, all in equality. I would be a good physician to the sick, a guide to those who have wandered from the path, setting their feet in the right way. I would be a light to those who wander in darkness. I would enable the people in poverty to discover vaults of treasure. A bodhisattva should thus benefit all beings in equal treatment, and bestow his loving care on all beings alike. And why? Because if a bodhisattva serves all beings, that is equal to serving Buddhas dutifully.

—*Gandavyuha Sutra*

A bodhisattva resolves: I take upon myself the burden of all suffering, I am resolved to do so, I will endure it. I do not turn or run away, do not tremble, am not terrified, nor afraid, do not turn back or despond. And why? At all costs I must bear the burdens of all beings in that I do not follow my own inclinations. I have made the vow to save all beings. All beings I must set free. The whole world of living beings I must rescue, from the terrors of birth, of old age, of sickness, of death and rebirth, of all kinds of moral offence, of all states of woe, of the whole cycle of birth-and-death, of the jungle of false views, of the loss of whole-some *dharma*s, of the concomitants of ignorance—from all these terrors I must rescue all beings... My endeavors do not merely aim at my own deliverance. For with the help of the boat of the thought of all-knowledge, I must rescue all these beings from the stream of Samsara, which is so difficult to cross.

—*Vajradhvaja Sutra*. *Sikshasamuccaya* 280-281

### **Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

When he is cited and questioned as a witness before a council or a company or amid his relations or amid a guild or a royal family, and is told, "Now, my good man, say what you know," although he does not know, he says, "I know," and although he knows, he says, "I do not know"; although he has not seen, he says, "I saw," and although he has seen, he says, "I did not see." Thus, his speech becomes intentional

lying either for his own sake or for that of another or for the sake of some material gain or other. And he is a slanderer; having heard something at one place, he makes it known elsewhere for causing variance among those people... In this way, he sows discord among those who were in harmony or foments those who were at variance. Discord is his pleasure, his delight, his joy, the motive of his speech.... If this kind of vocal conduct is followed, unskilled states of mind grow much, skilled states of mind decrease.

–Majjhima Nikaya iii.47-48, *Sevitabbaasevitabba Sutta*

A person is born with an axe in his mouth. He whose speech is unwholesome cuts himself off with his axe.... It is little harm if one loses money in gambling with dice, even losing everything, including oneself; but if one bears ill-will toward well-conducted ones it is greater harm indeed. Insulting men of real worth, bearing ill-will in thought and speech, leads to eons upon eons in the states of misery.

–*Sutta Nipata* 657-60

## CHRISTIANITY

### Human nature

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

–*Genesis* 1:26-27

The divine sphere, God Himself, does not exist in a vacuum, outside space and time. God is not dead but alive. He is One, but He is not for that reason one thing. But this being the case, He can become the creator and therefore have a counterpart outside Himself without any contradiction with His own inner essence, but in confirmation and glorification of His inner essence. Creation is something entirely new and free and nonobligatory in relation to His life in Himself, but far from being a denial, betrayal or surrender it is a revelation of His deity. Thus, the “Let us” might well have been the formula for all God’s creative utterances and actions...When man was to be the subject, it had to be said that the creative basis of His existence was and is a history which took place in the divine sphere and essence; a divine movement to and from a divine Other; a divine conversation and summons and a divine correspondence to it. A genuine counterpart

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in God Himself leading to unanimous decision is the secret prototype which is the basis of an obvious copy, a secret image and an obvious reflection in the coexistence of God and man, and also of the existence of man himself.

—Karl Barth. *The Doctrine of Creation*

Paul says that we are transformed into the image of God by the gospel. And, according to him, spiritual regeneration is nothing else than the restoration of the same image. (Colossians 3:10, and Ephesians 4:23.)...Therefore, the perfection of our whole nature is designated, as it appeared when Adam was endued with a right judgment, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well-regulated, and truly excelled in everything good. Thus, the chief seat of the Divine image was in his mind and heart, where it was eminent: yet was there no part of him in which some scintillations of it did not shine forth. For there was an attempering in the several parts of the soul, which corresponded with their various offices. In the mind perfect intelligence flourished and reigned, uprightness attended as its companion, and all the senses were prepared and moulded for due obedience to reason; and in the body there was a suitable correspondence with this internal order.

—John Calvin. *Commentary on Genesis*

### **Responsibilities to others**

Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

—I Timothy 5:1-2

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and

clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'

—*Matthew 25:31-46*

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

—*Luke 10:25-37*

The Samaritan, "who took pity on the man who had fallen among thieves," is truly a "guardian," and a closer neighbour than the Law and the prophets. He showed that he was the man's neighbour more by deed than by word. According to the passage that says, "Be imitators

of me, as I too am of Christ," it is possible for us to imitate Christ and to pity those who "have fallen among thieves." We can go to them, bind their wounds, pour in oil and wine, put them on our own beasts, and bear their burdens. The Son of God encourages us to do things like this. He is speaking not so much to the teacher of the Law as to us and to all men when he says, "Go and do likewise."

—Origen. *Homilies*

But we are not bound by any prescribed limit of hospitality. For why do you think that what is of this world is private property when this world is common? Or why do you consider the fruits of the earth are private, when the earth itself is common property? "Behold," He said, "the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap." For to those to whom nothing is private property nothing is wanting, and God, the master of His own word, knows how to keep His promise. Again, the birds do not gather together, and yet they eat, for our heavenly Father feeds them. But we turning aside the warnings of a general utterance to our private advantage, God says: "Every tree which has in it the fruit of a tree yielding seed shall be to you for meat, and to every beast, and to every bird, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth." By gathering together we come to want, and by gathering together we are made empty. For we cannot hope for the promise, who keep not the saying. It is also good for us to attend to the precept of hospitality, to be ready to give to strangers, for we, too, are strangers in the world.

—St. Ambrose. *On Widows* 1:5

Those who love peace are of course to be praised; but as for those who hate her, rather than provoking and challenging them by harsh words, it's better for the time being to pacify them by just giving them factual information and even just keeping quiet. The true lover of peace also loves his enemies.

—St. Augustine. "Sermon in praise of peace"

### **Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

Let us cleave, therefore, to those who cultivate peace with godliness, and not to those who hypocritically profess to desire it. For [the Scripture] saith in a certain place, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." And again: "They bless with their mouth, but curse with their heart." And again it saith, "They loved Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue; but their heart was not right with Him, neither were they faithful in His

covenant." "Let the deceitful lips become silent," [and "let the Lord destroy all the lying lips,] and the boastful tongue of those who have said, Let us magnify our tongue; our lips are our own; who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, will I now arise, saith the Lord: I will place him in safety; I will deal confidently with him."

—*1st Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*—Chapter XV

The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.

—*James 3:6-9*

Wherefore, O bishop, when you are to go to prayer after the lessons, and the psalmody, and the instruction out of the Scriptures, let the deacon stand nigh you, and with a loud voice say: Let none have any quarrel with another; let none come in hypocrisy; that if there be any controversy found among any of you, they may be affected in conscience, and may pray to God, and be reconciled to their brethren. For if, upon coming into any one's house, we are to say, "Peace be to this house," like sons of peace bestowing peace on those who are worthy, as it is written, "He came and preached peace to you that are nigh, and them that are far off, whom the Lord knows to be His," much more is it incumbent on those that enter into the Church of God before all things to pray for the peace of God. But if he prays for it upon others, much more let himself be within the same, as a child of light; for he that has it not within himself is not fit to bestow it upon others. Wherefore, before all things, it is our duty to be at peace in our own minds; for he that does not find any disorder in himself will not quarrel with another, but will be peaceable, friendly, gathering the Lord's people, and a fellow-worker with him, in order to the increasing the number of those that shall be saved in unanimity. For those who contrive enmities, and strifes, and contests, and lawsuits, are wicked, and aliens from God.

—*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles 2:54*

That we may not be as far from the ears of God as we are from His precepts, the memory of His precepts paves for our prayers a

way unto heaven; of which *precepts* the chief is, that we go not up unto God's altar before we compose whatever of discord or offence we have contracted with our brethren....The Lord, "amplifying the Law," openly adds *the prohibition of anger* against a brother to that of murder. Not even by an evil word does He permit it to be vented. Ever if we *must* be angry, our anger must not be maintained beyond sunset, as the apostle admonishes. But how rash is it either to pass a day without prayer, while you refuse to make satisfaction to your brother; or else, by perseverance in anger, to lose your prayer?

—Tertullian. *On Prayer* Chapter 11

When a man gets angry with his brother and swears at him, when he publicly insults or slanders him, he is guilty of murder and forfeits his relation to God. He erects a barrier not only between himself and his brother, but also between himself and God. He no longer has access to him: his sacrifice, worship and prayer are not acceptable in his sight.... When we come before God with hearts full of contempt and unreconciled with our neighbours, we are, both individually and as a congregation, worshipping an idol. So long as we refuse to love and serve our brother and make him an object of contempt and let him harbour a grudge against me or the congregation, our worship and sacrifice will be unacceptable to God. Not just the fact that I am angry, but the fact that there is somebody who has been hurt, damaged and disgraced by me, who "has a cause against me," erects a barrier between me and God. Let us therefore as a Church examine ourselves, and see whether we have not often enough wronged our fellow-men. Let us see whether we have tried to win popularity by falling in with the world's hatred, its contempt and its contumely. For if we do that we are murderers.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship*

## SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

### Human nature

There is a Principle which is pure, placed in the Human Mind, which in different Places and Ages hath had different Names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no Forms of Religion, nor excluded from any, where the Heart stands in perfect Sincerity.

—John Woolman



**Responsibilities to others**

In your daily work, and in your social and other activities, be concerned for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. Live not for yourselves but for others. Remember your responsibility as citizens for the government of your own town and country. Study the causes of evil. Work for an order of society based on mutual service and directed beyond all material ends to the true enrichment of human lives.

—*Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1950*

And all Friends, take heed of jars and strife, for that is it which will eat out the seed in you; therefore let not that harbour in your bosoms, lest it eat out the good in you, and ye come to suffer in your own particulars. Therefore, dwell in love and life, and in the power and seed of God, which is the honourable, royal state. And all that speak or preach abroad, see that you be in the life, and power, and seed of God, which will edify the body, and not in a brittle, peevish, hasty, fretful mind; but dwell in that which keeps down the contrary, that that may speak which edifies the body in love. And all take heed of vain words, and tattling idle words, but every where stop such; that love may continue in the body, and that the seed may spread over all, that unity may be kept. And all Friends every where, if Friends be poor, and in want, or in prison, that ye may in wisdom relieve and cherish such. And all Friends every where, stop the deceit, that would devour and destroy, which is out of the truth, and true wisdom; which must be limited, that transgresseth the spirit of God.

—George Fox *Epistle 131*

**Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

Evil words and evil communications corrupt the good manners; and if Christendom will learn the good, they must come every one to the Light of Christ Jesus the Spirit of God in themselves, and the Word of God in their hearts and mouths, which will teach them to forsake the evil words, and lead them from them, and to deny them; and this is the way to get the good manners. But who live in high expressions and complements, and full of evil words and flatteries, and disimulations, and call it good manners; their works and words testify, and manifest they are evil and corrupt; and such whose manners are evil and corrupt, quench, grieve and vex the Spirit of God in themselves, and hate the Light, and will not come to it because it reproves them for their evil words.

—George Fox

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## HINDUISM

### Human nature

The rich build temples to Shiva,  
 What shall I, a poor man, do?  
 O my Lord! My legs are the pillars,  
 My torso the shrine,  
 And my head, the golden pinnacle  
 Things standing shall fall,  
 But the moving ever shall stay

—*Basavanna, Vacana 820*

When totally free from outer contacts  
 A man finds happiness in himself,  
 He is fully trained in God's discipline  
 And reaches unending bliss.  
 The experiences we owe to our sense of touch  
 Are only sources of unpleasantness,  
 They have a beginning and an end.  
 A wise man takes no pleasure in them.  
 That man is disciplined and happy  
 Who can prevail over the turmoil  
 That springs from desire and anger,  
 Here on earth, before he leaves his body.

—*Bhagavad Gita 5:21-23*

As far, verily, as this world-space extends, so far extends the space within the heart. Within it are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and wind, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess; everything here is contained within it... That is the Soul, free from evil, free from age, free from death, free from sorrow, free from hunger, free from thirst, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real.

—*Chandogya 8.1.3-4*

### Responsibilities to others

The riches of the liberal never waste away,  
 while he who will not give finds none to comfort him.  
 The man with food in store who,  
 when the needy comes in miserable case  
 begging for bread to eat,  
 Hardens his heart against him

even when of old he did him service  
find not one to comfort him.

—*Rig Veda* X:117:1-2.

What sort of religion can it be without compassion? You need to show compassion to all living beings. Compassion is the root of all religious faiths.

—*Basavanna Vacana* 247

Let us have concord with our own people,  
And concord with people who are strangers to us;  
The divine Twins create between us and the strangers  
A unity of hearts.  
May we unite in our minds, unite in our purposes,  
And not fight against the divine spirit within us.  
Let not the battle-cry arise amidst many slain,  
Nor the arrows of the War-god fall with the break of day.

—*Atharva Veda* 7:52:1-2

### **Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

[Lord Rama] was always tranquil at heart and His speech was gentle— He never spoke haughtily to any man even though He had been reviled... He was intelligent, sweetly spoken, and would always speak first [thus allaying others' nervousness]. He was agreeable and valorous, but was not proud of His heroism. He never spoke an untruth, He offered all respect to the learned and the elderly; the people adored Him, and He loved the people. He would countenance no mischief, neither did He relish vulgar talk. Like Brihaspati, He could counter specious arguments with ease.

—Valmeeki Muni. *Srimad Ramayana* Canto I 10-17

Pleasant words fall from the lips of virtuous men,  
Full of tenderness and free from deceit.  
Better than a gift given with a joyous heart  
Are sweet words spoken with a cheerful smile.  
A kindly countenance and sweet words  
Spoken from the heart are virtue's way.  
Poverty-provoking sorrow will not pursue  
Those who speak joy-producing words to all they meet.  
Humility and pleasant words are the jewels  
That adorn a man; there are none other.

If a man seeks good works while speaking sweet words,  
 His virtues will wax and his vices wane.  
 Words yield spiritual rewards and moral excellence  
 When they do not wander far from usefulness and agreeableness.  
 Sweet speech which is stranger to pettiness  
 Imparts pleasure not only in this life, but in the next.  
 Why would anyone speak cruel words,  
 Having observed the happiness that kind words confer?  
 To utter harsh words when sweet ones would serve  
 Is like eating unripe fruits when ripe ones are at hand.

— Saint Tiruvalluvar. *The Holy Kural*. Chapter 10. Verses 91-100

## ISLAM

### Human nature

Anas and 'Abdullah reported God's Messenger as saying, "All [human] creatures are God's children, and those dearest to God are those who treat God's children kindly."

—Hadith of Baihaqi

Allah is He Who has created the heavens and the earth, and that which is between the two, in six periods; then He settled Himself on the Throne, You have no helper or intercessor beside Him. Will you not, then, take heed? He will establish His command from the heaven to the earth according to His plan, then it will ascend to Him during a period, which, according to your reckoning, will extend to a thousand years. Such is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Ever Merciful Who has created everything in the best condition, and Who began the creation of man from clay, Then He made his progeny from an extract of an insignificant fluid. Then He perfected his faculties and breathed into him of His spirit.

—*Qur'an* 31:4-10

O humankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you might know each other and not that you might despise each other. Verily the most honored among you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous.

—*Qur'an* 49:13

We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape; And the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a

scorching wind. Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape; When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him." So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together: Not so Iblis: he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves. (Allah) said: "O Iblis! what is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves?" (Iblis) said: "I am not one to prostrate myself to man, whom Thou didst create from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape." (Allah) said: "Then get thee out from here; for thou art rejected, accursed. "And the curse shall be on thee till the day of Judgment."

—*Qur'an* 15:26-35

### Responsibilities to others

Musa ibn Isma'il told us that Abu 'Awana told him on the authority of al-Ash'ath ibn Sulaym from Mu'awiya ibn Suwayd ibn Muqarran from al-Barra' ibn 'Azib who said: The messenger of God ordered us to do seven things and forbade seven things. He ordered us to visit the sick, to follow funeral processions, to bless someone who sneezes, to accept invitations, to greet everyone, to help the oppressed, and to help those who swear oaths. He forbade us to wear gold rings, to drink from silver vessels, to use silk coverings on saddles, to wear two kinds of silk or two kinds of silk brocade.

—Al-Bukhari. *Al-Sahih*.

We have created man committed to toil. Does he think no one has power over him? He says: I have spent enormous wealth. Does he think no one watches him? Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and pointed out to him the two highways of good and evil?

But he attempted not the scaling of the height. How should you know what the scaling of the height is? It is the freeing of a slave, or feeding, on a day of scarcity, an orphan near of kin, or a poor person reduced to penury; and to be of those who believe and exhort one another to steadfastness and exhort one another to mercy.

—*Qur'an* 90:2-20

Narrated Sahl bin Sa'd: The Prophet said, "I and the person who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in Paradise like this," putting his index and middle fingers together.

— Al-Bukhari. *Al-Sahih*. Volume 8, Book 73, Number 34

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: Charity is due from every limb of a person on everyday on which the sun rises. Doing justice between two persons in charity, to help a person ride his mount or to place his baggage on it is charity, a good word is charity, every step taken to participate in the salat is charity, removing anything from a path which occasions inconvenience is charity.

—Riyadh As-Salihin. *Gardens of the Righteous* 13:122

God's wisdom made us lovers of one another.  
 in fact, all the particles of the world  
 are in love and looking for lovers...  
 The desire of each lover is  
 that the work of the other be perfected.  
 By this man-and-woman cooperation,  
 the world gets preserved.  
 Generation occurs.

—Rumi. *Mathnawi*, III, 4391-4472

### **Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

You who believe, if some perverse man should come up to you with some piece of news, clear up the facts lest you afflict some folk out of ignorance and some morning feel regretful for what you might have done....

You who believe, do not let one folk ridicule another folk. Perhaps they are better than they are. Nor let women mistreat other women; perhaps they are better than themselves. Nor should you find fault with one another nor shout at one another using nicknames; it is bad to use a dirty name instead of one you can believe in. Those who do not turn away from it are wrongdoers.

You who believe, refrain from being overly suspicious: even a little suspicion is a vice. Do not spy on one another, nor yet any of you slander others. Would one of you like to eat his dead brother's flesh? You would loathe it! Heed God, for God is Relenting, Merciful.

—*Qur'an* 49.6-12

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Whoever does not give up false statements (*i.e.* telling lies), and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah is not in need of his (fasting) leaving his food and drink."

— Al-Bukhari. *Al-Sahih*. Volume 8, Book 73, Number 83

Narrated AbuJubayrah ibn ad-Dahhak: This verse was revealed about us, the Banu Salimah: “Nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness (to be used of one) after he has believed.” He said: When the apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) came to us, every one of us had two or three names. The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) began to say: O so and so! But they would say: Keep silence, Apostle of Allah! He becomes angry by this name. So this verse was revealed:

“Nor call each other by (offensive nicknames.)”

— *Sunan Abu-Duwad* Book 41, Number 4944

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah’s Apostle said, “The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger.”

— *Al-Bukhari. Al-Sahih.* Volume 8, Book 73, Number 135

Narrated AbuHurayrah: I heard the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) say: There were two men among Banu Isra’il, who were striving for the same goal. One of them would commit sin and the other would strive to do his best in the world. The man who exerted himself in worship continued to see the other in sin. He would say: Refrain from it. One day he found him in sin and said to him: Refrain from it.

He said: Leave me alone with my Lord. Have you been sent as a watchman over me?

He said: I swear by Allah, Allah will not forgive you, nor will he admit you to Paradise. Then their souls were taken back (by Allah), and they met together with the Lord of the worlds.

He (Allah) said to this man who had striven hard in worship; Had you knowledge about Me or had you power over that which I had in My hand? He said to the man who sinned: Go and enter Paradise by My mercy. He said about the other: Take him to Hell.

AbuHurayrah said: By Him in Whose hand my soul is, he spoke a word by which this world and the next world of his were destroyed.

— *Sunan Abu-Duwad* Book 41, Number 4883

## JAINISM

### Human nature

Every soul is independent. None depends on another. All souls are alike. None is superior or inferior. Every soul is in itself absolutely

omniscient and blissful. The bliss does not come from outside. All human beings are miserable due to their own faults, and they themselves can be happy by correcting these faults. The greatest mistake of a soul is non-recognition of its real self and can only be corrected by recognising itself. There is no separate existence of God.

Everybody can attain Godhood by making supreme efforts in the right direction. Know thyself, recognize thyself, be immersed by thyself—you will attain Godhood. God is neither the creator nor the destructor of the universe. He is merely a silent observer and omniscient. One who, even after knowing the whole universe, can remain unaffected and unattached is God. Fight with yourself, why fight with external foes? He who conquers himself through himself, will obtain happiness. All beings hate pain, therefore one should not hurt or kill them. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is the highest religion. A man is seated on top of a tree in the midst of a burning forest. He sees all living beings perish. But he doesn't realize that the same fate is soon to overtake him also. That man is fool.

—The Teachings of Lord Mahavir

The Law is that which leads to welfare and salvation. It forms conduct and character distinguished by the sense of equality among all beings.

—*Somadeva*, *Nitivakyamrita* 1.1

### **Responsibilities to others**

Having mastered the teachings and got rid of carelessness, one should live on allowed food, and treat all beings as one oneself would be treated; one should not expose oneself to guilt by one's desire for life; a monk who performs austerities should not keep any store.

—*Sutrakritanga* 1:10:3

Charity—to be moved at the sight of the thirsty, the hungry, and the miserable and to offer relief to them out of pity—is the spring of virtue.

—*Kundakunda* *Pancastikaya* 137

Appropriate and inappropriate speech Censuring others and praising himself, concealing good qualities present in others and proclaiming noble qualities absent in himself, he causes them to have low status. Disparaging himself and praising others, proclaiming qualities which are present in others and not proclaiming those that are absent in



himself, with humility and modesty he lift them to high status. No obstacle should be created in the development of others.

—*Tattvarthasutra* 6:25-27

## CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

### Human nature

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation. For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy. The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.

—*Doctrine and Covenants* 93.29-35

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, until his mind is capable in some measure of comprehending the propriety, justice, equality, and consistency of the same.

—Joseph Smith

### Responsibilities to others

And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to

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another. And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.

I say unto you, woe be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world. And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give. And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received.

And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you — that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God — I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength.

And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order. And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you borroweth of his neighbour should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin; and perhaps thou shalt cause thy neighbour to commit sin also.

— *Book of Mormon*. Mosiah 4:21-28

It is folly in the extreme for persons to say that they love God; when they do not love their brethren; and it is of no use for them to say that they have confidence in God, when they have none in righteous men. We are not here isolated and alone, differently formed and composed of different material from the rest of the human race. We belong to and are part of this family, consequently we are under obligations one to another, and the Latterday Saints in these mountains are under obligations to their brethren and sisters scattered in the

nations who, through indigent circumstances, are unable to gather to themselves in the comforts of life. Be just as independent as a God to do good. Love mercy, eschew evil, be a savior to yourselves and to your families, and to your fellow beings just as much as you possibly can, and go on with your independence and do not yield yourselves servants to obey an evil principle or an evil being.

It should be satisfactory evidence that you are in the path of life, if you love God and your brethren with all your hearts. You may see, or think you see, a thousand faults in your brethren; yet they are organised as you are; they are flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone; they are of your Father who is in heaven; we are all His children, and should be satisfied with each other as far as possible. The main difficulty in the hearts of those who are dissatisfied is, they are not satisfied with themselves.

—*Discourses of Brigham Young*. Chapter 24

### **Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbour, nor do him any harm. Thou knowest my laws concerning these things are given in my scriptures; he that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out. If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments. And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.

—*Doctrine and Covenants* 42:27-30

## **JUDAISM**

### **Human nature**

And God said, “let us make humanity in our image, after our likeness. They shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth. And God created humanity in God’s image, in the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them.

—*Genesis* 1:26-27

The statement of intent is unique to the creation of humans because of their stature, for the nature of the human is not like the nature of the animal and the beast that God created previously. The correct meaning of the expression “let us make” is that, as we already know, creation *ex nihilo* took place on the first day only, and after that, the

creations came out of this foundation. When God gave the water the power to bring forth living creatures, we have the following statement about them: "Let the water bring forth living things." About the animals, we have the statement: "let the earth bring forth animals." About the human, the text says, "let us make." This means, "I and the land already mentioned will make humanity; the land will bring forth the body from its foundations" as it did for the animals and beasts, as is evident in the statement "and Adonai God created humanity with dust from the earth." Furthermore, I will give humanity breath from the divine mouth, as it says "and God blew into the human's nostrils the breath of life." The text says "in our image, after our likeness" because humanity resembles both of them. Its body is like the earth, from which it was created; and its spirit is like the divine.

—Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman), commentary on *Genesis* 1:26-27

Mishnah: How do we intimidate witnesses? Witnesses in capital cases are brought in and intimidated [in this way]: "Perhaps you are only repeating hearsay or what another witness said, or what a trustworthy person said. Perhaps you don't know that we will check your testimony by inquiry and cross examination. You should know that capital cases are not like civil cases. In civil cases, [the witness] can make atonement [for false testimony] through payment. In capital cases, the witness is held responsible for the blood [of the convicted] and of his [potential] descendants until the end of time. We find this in the case of Cain, who killed his brother. The Torah teaches [that God says to Cain]: "the bloods of your brother cry unto me" It doesn't say "the blood of your brother," but rather "the bloods of your brother." That is to say, "his blood and the blood of his [potential] descendants." ...

For this reason, God created a single person: to teach you that whoever destroys a single soul of Israel, it is as though that person destroyed a complete world; and whoever preserves a single soul of Israel, it is as though that person preserved a complete world.

[Adam was created alone] also for the sake of peace among people, so that no one can say to another 'my father was greater than yours', and so that one cannot say that there are many rulers in heaven; also, to tell of the greatness of God, for if a person makes many coins from one mold, they all look alike, but God fashioned every person in the stamp of the first, and yet not one of them resembles another; therefore every single person is obliged to say: "the world was created for my sake." ...

Gemara: (38a) It has been taught: R. Meir used to say: The dust of the first person was gathered from all parts of the earth, as it is written, “Your eyes saw my unformed substance” (*Psalms* 139:16) and further it is written, “The eyes of God run to and fro through the whole earth” (*Zechariah* 4:10) —Talmud *Sanhedrin* 37a-38a.

The world is judged according to the majority [of its citizens] and each individual is judged according to the majority [of one’s deeds]. (Talmud *Kiddushin* 40b) Therefore, a person should see oneself as though the entire world were dependent on him.

—Rabbenu Bahya (Bahya ben Asher) on *Deuteronomy* 8:10

### *Responsibilities to others*

Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt—how, undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear. Therefore, when Adonai your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that Adonai your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget.

—*Deuteronomy* 25:17-19

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I, Adonai, am your God.

—*Leviticus* 19:33-34

“For you were strangers in the land of Egypt”: Do not criticize another for a blemish that you [also] have. “I, Adonai, am your God.”: I am *your* God and *the stranger’s* God.

—Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki) on *Leviticus* 19:34

Do not rob the wretched because he is wretched; Do not crush the poor man in the gate. For Adonai will take up their cause and despoil those who despoil them of life. Do not associate with an irascible man or go about with one who is hot-tempered, lest you learn his ways and find yourself ensnared.

—*Proverbs* 22:22-25

Let the dignity of the other be as dear to you as your own.

—*Pirkei Avot* 2:15

### Appropriate and inappropriate speech

It is forbidden to speak shamefully of another, even completely truthfully. According to the rabbis, this is always called "*lashon hara*" (evil speech)... This prohibition against *lashon hara* applies both if one speaks it, or if one writes it in a letter. There is also no difference between speaking *lashon hara* about someone explicitly and saying it by means of hints. Anything along these lines is *lashon hara*.

— Israel Meir Kagan. *Hafetz Hayim*. 1:1; 1:8.

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. They said, "Has God spoken only through Moses? Has God not spoken through us as well?" God heard it. Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any man on earth. Suddenly God called to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting." So the three of them went out. God came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, "Aaron and Miriam." The two of them came forward; and God said, "Hear these my words: When a prophet of God arises among you, I make myself known to that prophet in a vision and speak in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is trusted throughout my household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of God. How then did you not shrink from speaking against my servant Moses?" Still incensed with them, God departed.

As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales. When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales. And Aaron said to Moses, "O my lord, account not to us the sin which we committed in our folly. Let her not be as one dead who emerges from the womb with flesh half eaten away. So Moses cried out to God, saying, "God, please heal her!"

—Numbers 12:1-13

"Do not allow your mouth bring your body into sin. (*Ecclesiastes* 5:5)" Our rabbis said that this statement is talking about those who speak *lashon hara*.... What does the text mean when it says "don't plead before the messenger that it was an error? (*ibid*)" This means that you shouldn't say, "I will go and speak *lashon hara* and nobody will know." God says to this person, "Know that I am sending a messenger to stand next to you and to write down everything that you say to others."

—*Devarim Rabbah* Ki tetzeh 6:10

Our Sages said that all of a person's adherence to commandments and teachings are not enough to counterbalance what comes out of one's mouth.... Idle words are like powerful weapons which can reach from one end of the world to the other. Now this is true concerning mere excessive speech. Where forbidden speech is concerned—*e.g. lashon hara*, mocking, swearing, vowing, fighting and cursing... it is impossible to imagine the pain and suffering one will receive. No word is lost; everything is recorded. Winged beings attach themselves to everyone, recording all they say. "For a bird of the skies may carry the sound, and some winged creature may tell the matter" (*Ecclesiastes* 10:20). "Let not your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not tell the messenger that it was an error. Why should God be angered by your speech and destroy the work of your hands?" (*ibid.* 5:5).

—Iggeret HaGra (letter from the Vilna Gaon to his son-in-law)

We find that keeping the *mitzvah* (commandment) of speaking with another so as to give this person the benefit of the doubt, and of guarding the tongue are dependent on keeping the positive *mitzvah* of "love your neighbour as yourself," for if one really loves another, of course one will not speak *lashon hara* about this person.

— Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan. *Shmirat Halashon* 1:512

*Lashon hara* kills three: the one who says it; the one who hears it; and the one about whom it is said. Rabbi Hama ben Hanina said: What is the meaning of the verse "Death and life are in the hand of the tongue?" (*Proverbs* 18: 21.) Does the tongue have 'a hand'? This tells you that just as the hand can kill, so can the tongue. One might think that just as the hand only kills one who is close to it, the tongue also only kills one who is close to it; therefore we are taught: "Their tongue is a sharpened arrow." Then one might think that just as an arrow only kills what is within forty or fifty cubits of it, the tongue also only kills up to forty or fifty cubits. Therefore, we are taught: "They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth'....

What constitutes *lashon hara*? Rabbah said: For example [if one says] there is fire in the house of so and so. Abaye said: What is wrong with this? One is just giving information. Rather, [what this means] is that one says this in a slanderous way [as if to say]: Of course there is fire in the house of so-and-so. They are always cooking meat and fish there.

—Talmud *Arakhin* 15b

Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: The punishment for words is greater than the punishment for monetary complaints, for about the first, it is said “fear your God,” (*Leviticus* 25) and about the second, it does not say “fear your God.” Rabbi Elezar said: the first [is an injury] to the self, the second to one’s money. Rabbi Shmuel ben Nahmani said: it is possible to make up for the second [by paying back the money] but not the first. It was taught in front of Rabbi Nahman bar Yitzchak: Anyone who makes another blush in public, it is as though he spilled blood. He said [to the person who taught this]: What you say is correct. I have seen the redness go away and paleness come. (as in death, when paleness follows the spilling of blood)

—Talmud *Bava Metzia* 58b

Speech is breath (*ru’ah*) from the mouth of God. For God is associated with “the sovereignty of the mouth.” And this is associated with “the day that all the rivers flow into God” as it says “all the rivers flow to the sea, (*Ecclesiastes* 1:7),” and this is associated with God, as it says “God, open my lips (*Psalms* 51:17).” One who abuses speech makes the divine *ru’ah* into the *ru’ah* (wind) of a storm.... this is an opening for sin, as it says “guard the opening of your mouth (*Micah* 7:5).”... All of the slander and evil things that people say about each other comes from the *ru’ah* of this storm....and this is associated with the end of all flesh, as it leads to the destruction and the end of all flesh.

—Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav. *Likkutei MoHaRaN* 38:2

## NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS

### Human nature

In the beginning of all things, wisdom and knowledge were with the animals, for Tirawa, the One Above, did not speak directly to man. He sent certain animals to tell men that he showed himself through the beast, and that from them, and from the stars and the sun and moon should man learn all things tell of Tirawa. All things in the world are two. In our minds we are two, good and evil. With our eyes we see two things, things that are fair and things that are ugly.... We have the right hand that strikes and makes for evil, and we have the left hand full of kindness, near the heart. One foot may lead us to an evil way, the other foot may lead us to a good. So are all things two, all two.

—Eagle Chief (Pawnee)



### **Responsibilities to others**

Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life. Beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people. Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide. Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, Even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and bow to none. When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself. Abuse no one and no living thing, for abuse turns the wise ones to fools and robs the spirit of its vision.

—Tecumseh. (Shawnee)

Do not seek to benefit only yourself, but think of other people also. If you yourself have an abundance, do not say, “The others do not concern me, I need not bother about them!”

If you were lucky in hunting, let others share it. Moreover, show them the favorable spots where there are many sea lions which can be easily slain. Let others have their share occasionally. If you want to amass everything for yourself, other people will stay away from you and no one will want to be with you.

—Yamana Eskimo Initiation

### **Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

The Yellow Jackets and the Ants all lived together on the hillside about ten miles above *Tse-me-na-kem* (Lewiston, Idaho) on the Clearwater River. The two families were quite friendly, although every once in a while members would get into an argument, which is no more than natural.

There was quite a bit of jealousy between the Chief of the Yellow Jackets and the Chief of the Ants. This was not real hatred, but each saw to it that his rights were not harmed.

Chief Yellow Jacket was used to eating his meals on top of a certain rock, and he liked dried salmon the best. One day, he was seated on this rock, calmly eating a big dish of dried salmon.

Along came Chief Ant, and seeing Chief Yellow Jacket calmly eating his dinner, he became very angry. It is true that there were other rocks around for him to use, and he could have had dried

salmon if he wished, but the sight of Chief Yellow Jacket made him very angry. "Hey there, you Yellow Jacket," he shouted at him, "What are you doing on the rock? I have as much right there as you. You can't eat there without asking me."

Chief Yellow Jacket looked up in surprise. "Why, Ant, what are you shouting about? I have always eaten my dinner on this rock."

"That makes no difference," said the Ant. "Why didn't you ask me about it?"

Yellow Jacket had by this time become very angry too. He rattled his wings and snapped his legs and yelled, "None of your business, you little runt."

"Don't call me a runt," shouted Ant. "Nobody can insult me that way." So saying that, Ant climbed up the side of the rock, and he and Yellow Jacket began to fight all over it. They fought face to face, and with arms locked about each other, they reared up on their hind legs, biting and poking for all they were worth. Suddenly a great voice boomed out, "Here, you Ant and Yellow Jacket, stop that fighting."

It was Coyote, who happened to be passing down on the other side of the river. He had seen them struggling, but neither of them heard him because they were too busy fighting.

Again Coyote shouted, "You, Ant, and you, Yellow Jacket, I order you to stop fighting. My subjects cannot fight. There is plenty of room and plenty of food for all of us, so why be foolish?"

This time they heard, but neither of them would stop. A third time Coyote warned them, "This is the last time. I'm going to tell you now. Stop fighting or I shall turn you both into stone. You will no longer be great, for the *La-te-tel-wit* (Human Beings) are coming.

They paid no heed, so Coyote used his magic medicine, waved his paws, and just as Ant and Yellow Jacket were arched together, Coyote turned them to stone. To this day they remain for all to see, locked in each others arms on top of the big rock where Yellow Jacket ate his meals, but which became a battleground because of greed.

—Nez Perce legend

## SIKHISM

### Human nature

O my mind, you are the embodiment of the Divine Light — recognize your own origin. O my mind, the Dear Lord is with you; through the

Guru's Teachings, enjoy His Love. Acknowledge your origin, and then you shall know your Husband Lord, and so understand death and birth. By Guru's Grace, know the One; then, you shall not love any other. Peace comes to the mind, and gladness resounds; then, you shall be acclaimed.

— *Guru Granth Sahib* p. 441

This is a wonderful, unique discourse: The living self is the image of the Supreme Being. It is neither old nor a child; neither it suffers pain, nor in death's snare is caught; it is not shattered nor dies; in all time it is pervasive. It feels not heat nor cold; neither has it friend nor foe; it feels not joy nor sorrow: All is its own; to it belongs all might. It has neither father nor mother; beyond the limits of matter has it ever existed. Of sin and goodness it feels not the touch—within the heart of each being it is ever awake.

— *Adi Granth*, Gaund M.5. p.868

As out of a single fire, millions of sparks arise; arise in separation but come together again when they fall back in the fire. As from a heap of dust, grains of dust sweep up and fill the air, and falling fall in a heap of dust. As out of single stream, countless waves rise up and being water, fall back in water again. So from God's form emerge alive and inanimate things and since they arise from Him, they shall fall in Him again.

— *Guru Gobind Singh-Akal Ustat*

### **Responsibilities to others**

One who serves and seeks no recompense finds union with the Lord. Such a servant alone takes the Master's guidance, says Nanak, as on him is divine grace.

— *Adi Granth*, Gauri Sukhmani, M.5. p. 286.

### *Appropriate and inappropriate speech*

SHALOK, FIRST MEHL: O Nanak, speaking insipid words, the body and mind become insipid. He is called the most insipid of the insipid; the most insipid of the insipid is his reputation. The insipid person is discarded in the Court of the Lord, and the insipid one's face is spat upon. The insipid one is called a fool and is punished.

— *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 473

The slanderer shall crumble down like a wall of Kallar; hear, ye brethren, thus shall be known. The slanderer is glad when he sees a

fault; on seeing anything good he is filled with grief. He meditates evil all day long, but it befalls not; the evil-minded man dies meditating evil. The slanderer forgets God, and when death approaches, quarrels with God's saint.

— *Bilawal Mohalla 5*

## TAOISM

### Human nature

What do I mean by a True Man? The True man of ancient times did not rebel against want, did not grow proud in plenty, and did not plan his affairs. Being like this, he could commit an error and not regret it, could meet with success and not make a show. Being like this, he could climb the high places and not be frightened, could enter the water and not get wet, could enter the fire and not get burned. His knowledge was able to climb all the way up to the Way like this.

The True Man of ancient times slept without dreaming and woke without care; he ate without savoring and his breath came from deep inside. The True Man breathes with his heels; the mass of men breathe with their throats. They, crushed and bound down, gasp out their words as though they were retching. Deep in their passions and desires, they are shallow in the workings of Heaven.

The True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death. He emerged without delight; he went back inside without a fuss. He came briskly, he went briskly, and that was all. He did not forget where he began; he did not try to find out where he would end. He received something and took pleasure in it; he forgot about it and handed it back again. This is what I call not using the mind to repel the Way, not using man to help out heaven. This is what I call the True Man.

—Chuang Tzu 6

### Responsibilities to others

The Wise Man's mind is free but tuned to people's need: "Alike to be good and bad I must be good, for virtue is goodness. To honest folk and those dishonest ones alike, I proffer faith, for virtue is faithful." The Wise Man, when abroad, impartial to the world, does not divide or judge. But people everywhere mark well his ears and eyes; for wise men hear and see as little children do.

—Lao Tzu. *Tao Te Ching* 49

**Appropriate and inappropriate speech**

The highest goodness, water-like, does good to everything and goes unmurmuring to places men despise; but so, is close in nature to the Way. If the good of the house is from land; or the good of the mind is depth; or love is the virtue of friendship; or honesty blesses one's talk; or in government, goodness is order; or in business, skill is admired; or the worth of an act lies in timing, then peace is the goal of the way by which no one ever goes astray.

—Lao Tzu. *Tao Te Ching* 8

**CONTEMPORARY ARTICLES****BEHIND THE HATE: A RACIST 'CHURCH'**

—By Michael A. Fletcher

**Washington Post**

The World Church of the Creator teaches that Jews and non-whites are subhuman "mud people." Its insignia is a capital "W" topped with a red crown – to make it clear that the white race rules. And its battle cry is its creed: RAHOWA, racial holy war, which it sees as the inevitable confrontation in the group's quest to build "a whiter and brighter world." This was the doctrine imbibed by Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, 21, the suspected gunman in a string of drive-by shootings apparently motivated by racial and religious hate that left two people dead and nine wounded last weekend in Illinois and Indiana. The frightening outburst ended Sunday night in rural Illinois when Smith fatally shot himself while fleeing police in a stolen van.

The World Church of the Creator shares many symbols and much of its ideology with other groups that occupy the white supremacist subculture. Members deify Adolf Hitler and at times brandish swastikas and parade in Nazi uniforms. The group also is vehement in its rhetorical attacks against racial minorities, immigrants, Jews and Christians, who it sees as the unwitting pawns of a Zionist plot.

But while the rhetoric is mostly confined to the group's Websites, the virulent lyrics of the music its members listen to and the racist literature they circulate, the hateful words all too often explode into violence.

Even before last weekend's string of shootings, the group or its predecessor, the Church of the Creator, had been linked to the 1991

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murder of a black Gulf War veteran in Florida, foiled plots to assassinate black and Jewish leaders and to bomb the largest black church in Los Angeles in 1993, and to the bombing of a NAACP office in Tacoma, Wash., also in 1993.

In the past year, three members of the church have been accused of pistol-whipping and robbing a Jewish video store owner in Florida, purportedly to raise money for “the revolution.” Also, church members have been charged in the beating of a black man and his son in Sunrise, Fla.

“These incidents show the danger of groups like the World Church of the Creator,” said Brian Levin, who heads the Center on Hate and Extremism. “They are skilful and crafty in their attempts to avoid civil and criminal responsibility. But they take people who have a predisposition to do this stuff and mold them into ticking time bombs.”

Smith joined the World Church of the Creator more than a year before the shooting rampage, and he quickly became an enthusiastic adherent to the group’s racist gospel and a loyal disciple of its charismatic leader, Matthew F. Hale. Once last year Smith was named “creator of the month,” in recognition of his tireless efforts to distribute the group’s literature.

But Hale, the *pontifex maximus* (supreme leader) of the World Church, who like other leaders in the movement describes himself as a “reverend,” refused to take any responsibility for Smith’s attacks.

“For the same reason the pope in Rome doesn’t feel responsible for abortion clinic bombings, I don’t feel responsible for these shootings,” Hale said in a telephone interview from his East Peoria, Ill., home, which doubles as the church’s world headquarters.

Hale, a law school graduate who passed the bar exam, has been waging a well-publicised battle with Illinois officials, who have denied him a license because of his openly racist views. The most recent denial came last Thursday, and Hale speculates that Smith’s rampage could have been a reaction “to what he saw as an incredible injustice.”

Hale, 27, is credited with taking the nearly defunct group and transforming it into what law enforcement and other officials call one of the fastest-growing hate groups in the country. The group has 46 chapters across the country – including two in the Baltimore suburbs

– and Hale claims as many as 30,000 “believers” in the United States and 22 other nations.

“The church has grown by leaps and bounds under the leadership of Hale,” said Mark Potok, a spokesman for the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks extremist groups. The church has taken advantage of the explosive growth of the Internet to spread its word. It maintains several Websites and has special features targeting women and children, complete with coloring pages and crossword puzzles.

The Church of the Creator was founded in 1973 by Ben Klassen, a onetime Florida legislator who was financially independent because he invented the electric can opener, Potok said.

Klassen, with a long history of far-right affiliations, began his movement with his book, *Nature’s Eternal Religion*, in which he wrote that the white race was the supreme act of creation and that only whites are capable of further divine creativity. He even urged the use of Latin as a sacred language, since the Roman Empire had conquered non-whites in North Africa and Asia.

Klassen went on to publish other books, with titles such as *White Man’s Bible* and *On the Brink of a Bloody Race War*, which together formed the philosophical underpinnings of his small movement for nearly two decades.

Klassen continued his work into the early 1990s. But his organisation was thrown into disarray after George Loeb, a minister with that church, was convicted in the 1991 murder of Harold Mansfield Jr., an African American veteran of the Gulf War.

In the wake of the murder, a civil case was brought against the church by Mansfield’s family with the help of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The case ended in a \$1 million judgment against the church, leaving it broke.

In 1993, the 75-year-old Klassen committed suicide. The group slipped into dormancy before Hale emerged as its leader in 1996.

As a youngster, Hale read such works as *Mein Kampf* and *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. In eighth grade, he helped form a group called the New Reich, and by the time he was an undergraduate at Bradley University in Illinois, he had formed the American White Supremacist Party, a group with fewer than 10 members.

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When he took over the group, Hale renamed it the World Church of the Creator and promoted its presence on the Internet and elsewhere. Hale has frequently appeared on television to promote his views.

But Hale refuses to see any connection between his rhetoric and last weekend's shooting rampage. "We're not an army where I give orders," he said. "I minister the nonviolent message of white empowerment and white love.... That is why we simply can't be responsible for this at all."

## MEMOIRS OF A PROFESSIONAL RACIST

By Tracey Zollinger Turner

### Columbus Guardian

Pull off the hood and robe of a Ku Klux Klan member and you'll find a ranting, goldtoothed idiot with a gun holster and the brainpan of an amoeba. His knuckles scrape the ground when he walks. He hunts deer, keeps his truck up on blocks and has a bottle of Pabst Blue Ribbon permanently stuck into one of his mitts when he trolls around his trash-filled yard.

It's the easiest image to conjure when the words "hate group" or "bigot" are uttered. But ex-neo-Nazi Floyd Cochran has seen the framed college degrees of organised racists; their computer technology, their video cameras, and their psychological recruiting tactics. Cochran once donned a uniform with a swastika armband and preached the tenets of white supremacy and Christian Identity in rural communities. In the summer of 1992, he made a promise to himself to "take a step up from the negative doctrines of the master race to become a positive member of the human race." Now he stands shoulder to shoulder with long-time activists for social justice at teach-ins and conferences across the country. Under the auspices of his own anti-hate group organisation, Education and Vigilance, Cochran speaks about the tactics of bigots from his inside experience. He presses the point that white supremacists cross economic and educational lines; tells stories of their successful multi-media campaigns, and offers up solutions for combating organised bigotry.

"I didn't wake up one day and say 'oh, I can't join the chess club, so I guess I'll join the Klan.' It was a natural progression from the bigotry I learned from the world, from society," he says. "I lived in an all-white farming community in upstate New York, so the first thing I



learned to hate was New York City. Then the images of people on welfare or committing crimes were always black. Listening to my parents and teachers I heard that there were 'good colored people,' and 'bad colored people.' Never once, that I can remember, was I taught that there were just good people and bad people. I was predisposed to labeling, so the foundations were there."

Until 1989, Cochran milked cows for a living. When he was indoctrinated into Aryan Nations, he was given a title—Director of Propaganda for the Aryan Nation Church—and rigorously trained in public speaking. In 1990, his picture appeared in a *Newsweek* article on hate groups—it buoyed him from obscurity into his first fifteen minutes of fame. In 1991, he was a guest on the "Jerry Springer Show," where he hurled epithets at an African-American mother. A year later, he returned to the show to apologize to her face-to-face on the air.

His authenticity and integrity were constantly questioned as he moved away from white supremacy. But he's set out to prove that his ideological shift is not a capitalist venture, "I haven't written the book, there's no Tuesday night movie," he says.

He's spent the last three years doing most of his speaking engagements for gas mileage and hotel expenses—often times scheduling free educational programmes alongside those he is paid for. He is not "the pet former neo-Nazi," of any organisation, although he could draw a more consistent paycheck if he were. He wants to make his way on his own.

"I don't consider myself a liberal," he says. "A liberal is a person who has ideas and expects someone else to do the work. I'm a progressive, I have my own ideas, and I actually get involved in carrying them out."

There was no moment of catharsis that prompted Cochran to surrender his swastika, gun and Bible. It took time for him to realize the destructiveness of a movement based on hatred—from there, he began a new learning process. "I believe that the shift is still going on. I don't think I can say that I'll never have a bigoted thought or racist idea again. I've spent over three years as a non-racist and the shift has been a learning experience," he says. "I didn't become an organised bigot overnight and certainly you don't stop having bigoted ideas overnight."

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Cochran also goes where many members of the left fear to tread—rural white communities, churches and police departments. Rush Limbaugh and his kind, Cochran says, have successfully cast the left as anti-American. Someone needs to approach the meat and potatoes set with the idea that “you can have leftist ideas—ideas about equality, ideas about diversity—and still love America.” And there’s no better place to do it than the same turf where the Klan, Aryan Nation and the like are doing their most aggressive recruiting.

“I spend a lot of time preaching to the converted,” says Cochran. “And a lot of the converted get angry with me when I do conservative or fundamentalist radio shows—but those are the people who are joining hate groups—and those are the people who need to be reached.”

“If we’re going to put together effective solutions to combat hate groups, we have to change our perceptions about bigots. When people saw me as a stick figure, one dimensional, I had it made. They thought I was a kook so I could sit back and set the agenda. When people took me seriously as a threat, I was concerned. When government officials decide ‘if we ignore them, they’ll go away,’ racists continue to recruit, one at a time, planting the seeds. I think we’re much further ahead by acknowledging that we have these people here. When we have racists in our community, we have to ask ourselves, ‘now what are we going to do about it?’”

Violent anti-Klan protests generally made Cochran and his fellow neo-Nazis more determined in their efforts. When they were pelted with rocks, it was easier for them to play the victim.

“When you beat me up, it only confirmed that what I was doing was right, it didn’t make me change my mind. When white people would scream and yell at me, I often thought they looked at me and saw something in themselves they didn’t like,” he says.

“There are no programmes brought into schools,” he says. “Anti-racist people get arrested and the Klan is able to say ‘we were persecuted, we just wanted to do our American thing.’ Why not take that commitment, that militancy to fight bigotry and put it into education?”

The strategic manipulation of free speech and religion affords hate groups protection. The growth of Christian Identity—the faith KKK members and other neo-Nazis practice—is the glue that bonds the racist movement. “Being of religious faith helps the movement to

grow, affords it more protection from society. It allows you to mask your hatred in religious words and symbols," he says. "This movement is more than just gut-emotional hatred, it's an actual religion."

People like Cochran value the ability to examine the right wing's successful campaigns and learn from them. Stealing their tactics to forge a new progressive agenda could be the greatest hope for those who stand against bigotry.

"Wherever I go, I talk about taking our ideas and packaging them so that everyday people can understand them," he says. "The extreme right hits you in the gut with its message, they keep it down to short, simple phrases. There is the Christian Coalition or Aryan Nations. In the progressive movement you have the Pennsylvania Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice or the Pittsburgh Coalition to Counter Hate Groups and Bigotry— by the time you say that, you're tired. The Klan used a simple phrase, "peace, bread and land." They didn't put out vast intellectual arguments and expect the masses to sit down and read them. They talked in a language that everyone understood."

Because of his activism, Cochran now has white supremacists show up at his lectures with guns. He works hard to keep his phone number and address under wraps, but the neo-Nazis still find his property. When the periodic bigot decides to leave the hate movement and calls for help, Cochran takes other anti-racist activists along. He needs the physical protection, and he doesn't want anyone to think he will revert to his old ways.

"The new title the racists have given me is 'the greatest race traitor'," he says. "I'm not into titles anymore, but I like that one."

## **AN ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENCE**

By Anonymous

### **Southern Poverty Law Center**

Living the life of a gay high school student is a very difficult path to tread. An ideal school is one in which any student can come and feel welcome to learn important skills, to interact with other people his/her own age, and to explore new ideas. But, for many students, this couldn't be farther from the truth. Too many gay students dread going to school because of the stress and anxiety of being harassed and ridiculed and the fear of being assaulted, beaten up or even killed.

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And not only do these young men and women have to cope with the strain placed on them by their parents and classmates and teachers, they also are coping with themselves — their own sexual awakenings, their realisations of their sexualities, the conflict between what is natural for them and what they have been taught. Taking all this in stride along with the pressures that all teens go through, these brave souls struggle just to keep their heads above the water.

Everyone's journey to self-acceptance, dignity and respect is a little different, some more complicated than others, but, if I succeed in changing one person's perspective on the subject or help make one person's battle a little easier to win, I can take heart in the fact that all my years of effort haven't been a futile attempt.

It seems that I've always known I was homosexual, but I never attached a label to it. Of course, I knew it in kindergarten when I would have rather gone out with Johnny than Susan; I was Ken's number one fan, and Barbie was the only girlfriend I ever needed. I was always aware of my same-sex tendencies, but it didn't start to bother me until I realised the implications of my sexuality: no children, no storybook wedding, and my gay "bonuses": harassment, ridicule, AIDS and hell.

I remember the first time I came out to myself, when I was about 11 — everyone else in the house was in bed, but I couldn't sleep. I sat there in the darkness thinking about my jumbled emotions, feeling totally depressed and all alone. I whispered to myself, "You're gay."

They were the same words I had heard other people say to me so many times, but actually saying it myself was a hundred times worse. I cried, I prayed, I cursed, but as painful as this was, it was what I needed to finally begin to accept myself. I thought I was a horrible person. I just knew that I would go straight to hell. I was sure that everyone would hate me if they found out.

This was the opinion I had of myself for years. But, after the depression, anger, horror, and self-loathing vanished, I was a new person — not only a different person, but a stronger, freer, happier individual. I, myself, was only half of the problem; dealing with other people's ignorance was the rest of it. Daily, I heard the word "fag" or "queer" uttered as I walked down the hall or sat at my desk, and it bothered me solely because I let it. Words are only words, merely

sounds produced by a vibrating tongue, or in this case, verbalised stupidity. Words have no power unless you give them power.

I have encountered numerous people along my way who have criticised, harassed and verbally abused me – some truly hating the fact that I was homosexual, some scared of what was foreign to them and too terrified to think for themselves, and some just spitting out words they have been taught to say, like parrots or trained monkeys.

But there have been many helpful people who have offered support, both teachers and students alike. Although they may not have condoned the lifestyles of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, they fulfilled their responsibilities as human beings by speaking up, by not keeping their silence, by taking up for me, not necessarily as a young gay man, but as a child of God deserving to be treated with the decency and respect that is due to all living creatures.

A lot of time has passed since that tearful night I acknowledged my true self, seeing beyond the homophobia and discovering an acceptance of difference. Yet I have further to go still. Life is an endless road ruttled with pitfalls, but also littered with hidden rewards for those that know how to look for them.

## **THE SIEGE**

By Roger Ebert

### **Chicago Sun-Times**

“What if they were black people? What if they were Italian?” These words are spoken by an unseen character in “The Siege,” but they get at the heart of the film, which is about a roundup of Arab-Americans after terrorist bombs strike New York City. OK, what if they were black or Italian? What if the movie was a fantasy about the Army running rampant over the civil liberties of American Irish, Poles, Koreans? Wouldn’t that be the same thing as rounding up the Arab-Americans?

Not really, because the same feelings are not at stake. Of all our ethnic groups, only Arabs come from nations that are currently in a state of indefinitely suspended war with the United States. The vast majority of Arab-Americans are patriotic citizens who are happy to plunge into the melting pot with the rest of us (a point the movie does make), but a minority have been much in the news, especially after the World Trade Center bombing in New York City.

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Many Americans do not draw those distinctions and could not check off on a list those Arab countries we consider hostile, neutral or friendly. There is a tendency to lump together “towelheads” (a term used in the movie). Arab-Americans feel vulnerable right now to the kinds of things that happen in this movie, and that’s why it’s not the same thing as targeting other ethnic groups. (By way of illustration, it is unlikely, even unimaginable, after recent history, that a fantasy like “The Siege” would be made about the internment of Japanese or Jewish Americans.)

Oh, the movie tries to temper its material. “They love this country as much as we do,” one American says in the film, unaware of the irony in the “they” and “we.” The hero, an African-American played by Denzel Washington, has an Arab-American partner (Tony Shalhoub) who is angered when his own son is mistreated. The heroine, an American spy played by Annette Bening, grew up in Lebanon and has an Arab-American lover (although it’s a little more complicated than that). But the bottom line is that Arab terrorists blow up New York buses, a packed Broadway theater and FBI headquarters.

Martial law is declared, the Army moves in, and Arabs are detained without any due process. There’s cat-and-mouse stuff involving the tracking of Arab bad guys; the usual computer and satellite gimmicks, and suspenseful stand-offs and shootouts. The dramatic outdoor mob, action and army scenes are well handled by director Edward Zwick. I’m not arguing that “The Siege” is a deliberately offensive movie. It’s not that brainy. In its clumsy way, it throws in comments now and then to show it knows the difference between Arab terrorists and American citizens. But the prejudicial attitudes embodied in the film are insidious, like the anti-Semitism that infected fiction and journalism in the 1930s—not just in Germany, but in Britain and America.

Watching the film, I felt uneasy. Events like those in the film are familiar. The World Trade Center was blown up in real life, not in a thriller. We’ve recently fired missiles at suspected terrorist centers. “The Siege” opens with actual footage of President Clinton commenting on TV about those missiles, and the film implies that he is the president during the events in the story. Given how vulnerable our cities are to terrorism, and how vulnerable Arab-Americans are to defamation, was this movie really necessary?

The movie awkwardly tries to switch villains in the third act, adding an Orwellian twist. Its final thrust is against a military mindset that runs rampant over civil liberties. The FBI and its allies have a face-off with an American general (Bruce Willis) who becomes military commander of New York under martial law and has disdain for the Constitution. Denzel Washington has a good speech where he observes that the enemy doesn't have to destroy our liberties if we do it for ourselves.

By the movie's end, the filmmakers can truthfully say they tried to balance out the villains. But most audiences won't give it that much thought. They'll leave the theater thinking of Arabs (who are handled as an anonymous group), not of dangers to the Constitution, which can be dismissed as the fevers of one man (Willis), who is handled like a traditional megalomaniac. ("This is the land of opportunity," he tells Arab-Americans. "The opportunity to turn yourself in.")

Most people will not be watching a political movie, but a popcorn movie. They may even be a little restless during the speech-making toward the end. They'll be comfortable with the Arab villains because that's what they've been taught on the news. True, at the present moment most of America's enemies in the world are Arab. But at one time or another, this country has been at war with the home nations of most of the major ethnic groups in America. And it was "we" who were at war—all of us. Japanese-Americans who fought in U.S. uniform in World War II (or were in U.S. internment camps) will not have to have the buried message of "The Siege" explained to them.

### **FIREFIGHTER SUES, SAYS SHE WAS HARASSED MALE CO-WORKERS ACCUSED OF DEGRADING ACTIONS**

By Stacy Finz

**San Francisco Chronicle**

*March 17, 1999*

A Livermore-Pleasanton firefighter who says her male colleagues hung a pair of her underwear for public display in the station house is suing the department for sexual harassment, discrimination, defamation and retaliation.

Roann Verdie, a firefighter and paramedic with the southeastern Alameda County department since 1995, says that over the past three years male firefighters have made disparaging remarks about her gender,

mocked her work and put contaminated medical equipment in her locker.

When the men weren't picking on her, Verdie says, she was routinely subjected to sexually explicit comments made about women jogging past the station house.

"The department's supposed zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment is a joke," said Verdie, one of three female firefighters in the department. "My case shows that the department has zero tolerance for women firefighters who complain about sexual harassment but unlimited tolerance for the harassers."

Verdie and her attorneys filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in San Francisco on Friday against the Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department, the city of Livermore, which oversees the department, and firefighters James Wright III, Dwight Bandak and John Clanton.

The city has asked to settle the case out of court, but Verdie's lawyers rejected the offer, said Fire Chief Stewart Gary.

"What happened was completely unprofessional and objectionable, and I've held people accountable," Gary said. "We did everything that responsible employers are supposed to do under the law, and we are confident that the litigation will be resolved in the department's favour."

Gary said the department hired a private firm a year ago to investigate. It found that some of Verdie's allegations were true.

"There are some facts in dispute," Gary said. "But I'm not going to start trying this case in the paper. Disciplinary action was taken and we felt the problems were sufficiently dealt with."

Wright was placed on paid administrative leave for seven months and Bandak and Clanton were suspended for five shifts, according to the lawsuit. Gary, citing personnel confidentiality policies, would not discuss details of the disciplinary actions. He said Wright, Bandak and Clanton continue to work for the department along with Verdie. The male firefighters named in the suit could not be reached for comment.

Verdie's first complaint to supervisors came New Year's Day, 1998, when Wright allegedly hung her menstrual blood-stained panties at eye level on a partition in station 8. The underwear was visible to personnel and visitors in that part of the firehouse.



Gary said the panties were displayed no longer than 30 minutes and were only seen by the firefighter who put them on the wall divider and the fire engineer who asked that they be taken down.

A division chief was asked to look into the incident, according to the suit, but dismissed it as “boys being boys” and said the department was overreacting in conducting an investigation.

After she complained, Verdie said, the three firefighters retaliated by spreading lies that she was having an affair with the fire engineer who rose to her defense during the panty incident. The men allegedly spread the story that the two planned to cash in on Verdie’s discrimination claim and move to Colorado. The rumors reached Verdie’s husband, who is a firefighter in another department, according to the suit.

In addition, Verdie says that on six occasions she found used gloves, nasal and medical equipment—considered a potential health hazard—stuffed inside her locker.

The repeated harassment has caused Verdie to suffer from depression and significant weight loss and has taken a toll on her marriage, her lawyers said.

“She lives in fear,” the suit said, “that her safety and job performance is threatened as a result of retaliation for her opposition to and complaints regarding sexual harassment and discrimination.”





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## CASE STUDY: HATE VIOLENCE CURRICULUM OF INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

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### CREATING COOPERATION CIRCLES: A CASE STUDY

Inspired by the vision and hope of interfaith cooperation for a better world, people continents are creating Cooperation Circles. A Cooperation Circle is formed by people who come together to initiate acts of interfaith cooperation. Cooperation Circles serve a myriad of purposes, including: to share stories and perspectives from different faith traditions; to foster local peacebuilding; to offer humanitarian relief; to organize an interfaith music festival; to offer hospice counseling; to develop educational programmes; to create opportunities for intercultural encounter and interfaith re?ection.

- **Imagine** a growing global community of Cooperation Circles. Then join with others and imagine yourself as a part of that community.
- **Imagine** how a URI Cooperation Circle could take root where you live to address a particular community need or interest.
- **Discuss** how such a group could develop from the passion, determination, creativity and resourcefulness of the people in the group.
- **Explore** why an existing group to which you already belong might desire to engage as a URI Cooperation Circle as part of its work.
- **Discuss** the benefits of sharing in a relationship with similar groups around the world.
- **Imagine** what your CC could do to serve the worldwide community.

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings. The United Religions Initiative is a growing global community dedicated to cooperative action for a better world. It is being created by people on continents and from a multitude of faith traditions who share a common vision: that our religious and spiritual lives—rather than dividing us—can guide us to build community and respect for one another.

The URI is composed of self-motivated and self-organising groups called Cooperation Circles (CCs). Currently there are over 250 Cooperation Circles in countries. CCs pursue their own purpose that has local impact and is globally connected through the URI network. Through this network, every CC exchanges its experience and knowledge—inspiring and encouraging others.

Your participation in initiating and developing a Cooperation Circle contributes to the URI's ability to be an extraordinary force for good in the world. An existing group may choose to become a Cooperation Circle. For example, existing interfaith organisations join the URI as Cooperation Circles because they desire to be part of a global interfaith network for collective action. Some faith communities may also choose to form an interfaith group and participate in the URI. Forming a Cooperation Circle is an opportunity to reach out to others and connect with like-minded groups and organisations around the world who are dedicated to positive change through cooperation.

### **1. Gather People Together**

Who would you invite? You might begin with people you already know. Then you might extend your invitation to include people from different religions, spiritual expressions or indigenous traditions.

If you think that a group or organisation to which you belong, might benefit from becoming or creating a Cooperation Circle, plan a time to introduce the URI. Ask your group or organisation to consider how the URI might benefit from its work and what the group/organisation might bring to the URI community.

### **2. Appreciate One Another's Abilities and Values**

Begin by getting to know one another. An appreciative interview is one way for people to bring their hopes, values, experiences and talents to the circle.

You might begin the initial gathering with rejection, meditation or prayer and invite people to participate in appreciative interviews (example is on next page).

## **APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW**

Ask people to form pairs. Invite each pair to engage in an appreciative dialogue, asking questions such as the following:

### **1. Insights from important interfaith encounters**

As the world gets smaller, most of us experience more and more encounters with people from other spiritual traditions or religions. Can you share a story of an interfaith encounter that was especially memorable or meaningful, where you were surprised or humbled, where there was a genuine experience of respect and friendship?

### **2. Experience with cooperative action:**

We have all been part of efforts where we have joined with others and brought dreams of a better world into being. Reflect on a high point in your life experience—a time when you were involved in something significant or meaningful, when visions of a better world were actually brought into being. Please share a story about how this experience unfolded.

### **3. Vision of a better world:**

Cast your thoughts about thirty years into the future. Even though the future is in many ways a mystery, begin to visualize the kind of world you feel you are being called to realize, a better world, a world you really want. What do you see in your vision of a better world?

### **4. Interfaith cooperation:**

Imagine ways that interfaith cooperation can help create a better world. What might happen in your local community when people of different faith traditions work together? Imagine how your work, linked to a global network, might serve as a force for good in the world. What would you do to make this vision come alive through action?

### **5. Reflect on the Preamble, Purpose and Principles**

The URI is made up of people from many parts of the world who share meaning and common purpose in the values that are embodied in the URI Charter. Here are some suggestions for introducing people to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of this founding document.

As a group, read the Preamble, Purpose and Principles aloud. You might read the Preamble and Purpose in unison; then go around the room with a different person reading each Principle.

Reflect upon what is inspiring, significant, or challenging. When in your life have you been part of something that rejected the values expressed in these words? How might your group or organisation embody these Principles, in pursuit of the Purpose?

6. Choose the decision-making processes that will be used. Cooperation Circles have a right to self-organize. Their deliberations and decisions must be made by methods that fairly represent the diversity of affected interests and are not dominated by any.

### **7. Discuss rights and responsibilities of members**

The rights and responsibilities of members are listed in the Charter. They are the agreements that unite the members of the URI together in one shared community.

### **8. Give a gift to the URI**

Cooperation Circles have the responsibility to develop financial and other resources to help meet their needs and help meet the needs of other parts of the URI. In order to help support the worldwide URI community, Cooperation Circles are asked to offer a financial gift or make a contribution of service that rejects their own desire to care for the URI and all its members.

### **9. Apply for Membership**

Groups interested and forming a CC should apply to the URI Global Council for membership. Application forms to become a Cooperation Circle member are available from the URI office or website, [www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org).

## **GLOBAL STAFF AND CC SERVICES**

Global Staff, based in San Francisco and seven geographic regions, help to provide services and promote effective communication among new and existing CCs.

CCs are provided opportunity to communicate with one another using a special websites. CC activities and events are highlighted in global newsletters and bi-monthly e-bulletins sent to all CCs. CCs are invited to participate in URI regional and global assemblies and are encouraged to organize gatherings locally with other CCs for mutual support and exchange of information.

The GC is responsible for developing financial and other resources to meet the needs of the URI. The GC accepts eligible applicants for membership to the URI and manages its business affairs.

### **GLOBAL COUNCIL TRUSTEES**

As many as 41 individuals serve as Global Council Trustees. The Trustees are exemplars who manifest the vision and values of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles, and who model leadership and service by their actions. They have a deep commitment to serve the whole of the URI community. Every three years, Cooperation Circle members elect trustees to serve on the Global Council.

### **GLOBAL ASSEMBLY**

A Global Assembly is scheduled to occur every three years, in different places around the world. The Global Assembly magnifies the capacities of its members to carry forward their dreams and initiatives. It aligns people's strengths and offers a forum for speaking as a collective voice. Cooperation Circle members are invited to participate in the Global Assembly. Cooperation Circles join with Affiliates, Supporting Members, Global Council and staff to form the URI worldwide community.

### **AFFILIATES AND SUPPORTING MEMBERS**

URI Affiliates and Supporting Members are individuals, groups or organisations who support the values expressed in the URI's Preamble, Purpose and Principles and desire to be included in URI communication and activities, but do not desire the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a Cooperation Circle.

These members receive the URI newsletter, e-update and invitations to URI local, regional, and global gatherings, and may participate in an online community to share ideas and possible collective actions.

### **GLOBAL COUNCIL**

The Global Council serves as the Board of Directors for the URI. The purpose of the Global Council (GC) is to support the membership in practising the vision and values of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles. The Global Council's central spirit is not one of control, but rather one of service. The Global Council inspires and supports the URI worldwide community in cooperative global action.



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