

Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

EDUCATOR GUIDE



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

EDUCATOR GUIDE

SUMMARY

With support from the Fetzer Institute, Entropy Films is proud to introduce the first phase of *Beyond Our Differences*' Educational Series, to be launching in conjunction with the PBS television premiere of *Beyond Our Differences* on 'Bill Moyers Journal,' this December 26th, 2008.

This particular, internet accessible feature, is aimed to engage students and viewers all around the world as they grapple with many complex and relevant questions, including the importance of understanding each others' faiths in an increasingly diverse society; the urgency of engaging with and challenging religious leadership; learning how faith and religion can extend one's identity beyond sovereign borders; understanding the importance of communicating with and learning from outside communities, both secular and religious; and much more.

Our hope is that this guide will help foster meaningful and informative discussions around the globe, as audiences both young and old take this opportunity to look towards one another's commonalities in an increasingly divided world.



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

The first phase of our Educational Series for the classroom teacher is centered around a series of video segments, each of which is based on a central theme of the documentary film *Beyond Our Differences*.

The following issues are examined:

- Human Rights
- Forgiveness
- Conflict
- Poverty
- Stewardship of the Planet
- Commonalities of the World

Academic and religious luminaries such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Karen Armstrong, Chief Rabbi David Rosen, and many other provide commentary. The videos are accompanied with a series of suggested discussion questions in order to facilitate a strong and substantial discussion both with and between students. This initial series also provides suggested activities in which to engage with the students, and a series of pre-viewing questions to provide a good starting ground for the classroom discussion. There are also suggestions for how to facilitate smaller discussion groups within the classroom.

For non-student participants, we provide a 'Guide to Dialogue' for the film itself, which provides questions and considerations for each chapter of the documentary. This guide can be used in a variety of forums, such as religious and inter-faith groups, or it can be used by the individual viewer who wishes to guide his or her personal viewing.



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

MATERIALS NEEDED

For the teacher or instructor using the Educator Guide, a computer and an optional projector for showing on a wall-screen is needed to view the sequence of video clips. The following pages on this PDF are intended to be used as a guide for the video clips and contain lesson plans and objectives based on the viewing of each video. As a result, this file is fully printable to be used as a handout. Additionally, full transcripts of clips can be downloaded by clicking the link below each clip.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Students should have some basic knowledge of the major religions of the world, and the main written work accompanying each faith (or at minimum, some understanding of the Old and New Testament and the Qur'an would be useful.) An understanding of current events is also helpful when discussing the rise of fundamentalism and political conflicts. This curriculum is ideally suited for high-school age students.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The Educational Series aims to foster meaningful discussion both in an educational setting with students, and for the individual viewer and non-student groups who wish to gain a deeper understanding of the film's material.

Through this Series, our hope is that teachers will be able to:

- Enrich a social studies or history curriculum by engaging students with relevant, current problems facing our world today
- Expose their students to diverse perspectives and people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds
- Discuss the common moral grounds of various faiths and secular viewpoints
- Encourage students to extend a moderate voice to political and religious conflicts

FEEDBACK

The *Beyond Our Differences* Educational Series is committed to providing the best educational program possible. We strongly value the opinion of the classroom instructors and viewers who are using it, and would love to hear as much feedback as possible: What is and what isn't working for students, to what they are responding, whether the format allows for fruitful discussion and increased understanding, etc.

Please visit the "Education" section on our website (www.beyondourdifferences.com) and click on "Feedback." We look forward to hearing from you.



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ



BEFORE VIEWING THE CLIPS

Suggested Activity

On the blackboard or a piece of paper, ask the classroom the following questions, and record their answers on the board for discussion:

What is a word or sentence that you would use to describe the Islamic faith?

What is a word or sentence that you would use to describe Judaism? Christianity?

What do you know to be fact about Muslims? Christians? Jews? Buddhists? Hindus?

How would you define someone who is a fundamentalist?

What are some commonalities between different religions?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ



THE VIDEO CLIPS

The videos are available for viewing on our website: www.beyondourdifferences.com. Once you are on the website, please follow the link to the education section where the videos are ready to be played.

The six topics selected for viewing are:

- Human Rights
- Forgiveness
- Conflict
- Poverty
- Stewardship of the Planet
- Interfaith & Commonalities of the World

It is encouraged to show the students the post-viewing discussion questions before playing the video. The clips can be shown all at once, with students writing down notes as they watch, or each clip can be followed by discussion.

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 1 - Human Rights

Please locate the Human Rights clip at
www.beyondourdifferences.com/education.html



Ndungu Githuku
Poet and Human Rights Activist
Nairobi, Kenya



Gillian Caldwell
Executive Director
Witness



Brian Baird
U.S. Democratic Representative
from Washington's 3rd District



Mohammed Khatami
Former President of Iran
(1997-2005)



Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf
Co-Founder and Chairman
of The Cordoba Initiative



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev
Yogi and Mystic



Van Jones, Esq.
Human Rights Advocate



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

For more information about the individuals featured in this video, please visit
www.beyondourdifferences.com/about.html and locate the **interviews** button



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 1 - Human Rights (continued)

1. How would you define an “equal” society in a world as diverse as ours?
2. Do you agree or disagree that that only you have control over your personal dignity? What adds and detracts from it?
3. What is needed at the local level in order to help implement universal standards of human rights?
4. What did you take away from the “jailer and the jailed” story? Do you think the way you treat someone is more of a reflection of yourself, or of the other person?
5. What human rights do you believe to be basic?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 2 - Forgiveness

Please locate the Forgiveness clip at
www.beyondourdifferences.com/education.html



Father Thomas White
Chaplain - California State Prison



Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Rev. Michael Bernard Beckwith
Founder - Agape Int.
Spiritual Center



Karen Armstrong
Religious Scholar & Author



Nimah Nawwab
Poet & Activist

For more information about the individuals featured in this video, please visit
[www.beyondourdiversities.com/about.html](http://www.beyondourdifferences.com/about.html) and locate the **interviews** button



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 2 - Forgiveness (continued)

1. What is the difference between true forgiveness, and simply “getting over” or forgetting the incident?
2. Do you agree with Desmond Tutu that there is no deed that is past forgiveness?
3. Do you agree that racism, bigotry, or a general lack of compassion are related to one’s maturity?
4. Why do you think forgiveness and compassion are basic tenants in so many religions?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 3 - Conflict

Please locate the Conflict clip at
www.beyondourdifferences.com/education.html



Professor Robert Thurman
Department of Religion
Columbia University



Karen Armstrong
Religious Scholar & Author



Brian Baird
U.S. Democratic Representative
from Washington's 3rd District



Chief Rabbi David Rosen
Interreligious Leader

For more information about the individuals featured in this video, please visit
[www.beyondourdiversities.com/about.html](http://www.beyondourdifferences.com/about.html) and locate the **interviews** button



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 3 - Conflict (continued)

1. How is the concept of an “enemy” unreligious?
2. How does fundamentalism contradict some of the core values of the very religion fundamentalists subscribe to?
3. Why might it be important to be engaged in the religious world and with religious leaders, even if you yourself don't consider yourself a religious person?
4. Who do you think most strongly represents the “voice” of religion today?
5. When does “certainty” in one's faith become an inhibiting trait?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 4 - Poverty

Please locate the Poverty clip at
www.beyondourdifferences.com/education.html



Katherine Marshall
Counselor to the President
World Bank



Karen Armstrong
Religious Scholar & Author



Dr. Gilbert Bond
Anabaptist Theologian



Dr. Drago Stambuk
Croatian Ambassador to Japan



Sadiq Al Mahdi
Prime Minister of Sudan
1986-1989



Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Jakaya Kikwete
President of Tanzania

For more information about the individuals featured in this video, please visit
www.beyondourdifferences.com/about.html and locate the **interviews** button



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 4 - Poverty (continued)

1. Why do you think so many religions are preoccupied with issues of misery and poverty?
2. Is it necessary, or even useful, to combat today's problems with a romantic or utopian view of the world?
3. Do multinational companies and businesses have a moral responsibility to help those in need? Do individuals?
4. How does the well-being of the poor affect the well-being of the wealthy? How inter-dependent are we?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 5 - Stewardship of the Planet

Please locate the Stewardship clip at
www.beyondourdifferences.com/education.html



Karen Armstrong
Religious Scholar & Author



Marianne Williamson
Spiritual Author & Lecturer



Dr. Gilbert Bond
Anabaptist Theologian



Jessie Kaur Singh
World Aid International
Ambassador & Sikh



Deepak Chopra, M.D.
Author



Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp
Founder - Jewish Institute
for Human Values

For more information about the individuals featured in this video, please visit
www.beyondourdifferences.com/about.html and locate the *interviews* button



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 5 - Stewardship of the Planet (continued)

1. How can faith and spirituality deepen one's commitment to protecting the environment and its resources?
2. How does protecting nature's resources tie-in with many religions' basic principle of compassion?
3. How is religion similar to the sense of interconnectedness we have with others through our ecosystem?
4. What steps can we take to slow the abuse of our natural resources?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 6 - Interfaith & Commonalities of the World

Please locate the Interfaith clip at
www.beyondourdifferences.com/education.html



Dr. Ali K. Merchant
Secretary, National Spiritual
Assembly of Baha'i



Dr. Mustafa Ceric
Grand Mufti of
Bosnia-Herzegovina



Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Karen Armstrong
Religious Scholar & Author



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev
Yogi & Mystic



Chief Rabbi David Rosen
Interreligious Leader



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

For more information about the individuals featured in this video, please visit
www.beyondourdifferences.com/about.html and locate the **interviews** button



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Lesson 6 - Interfaith & Commonalities of the World (continued)

1. Should we recognize our commonalities or celebrate our differences?
2. What are the pros and cons of the world getting “smaller”?
3. What are some misconceptions you have personally held of another religion? What can you personally do to help stop the spread of misinformation?
4. Why is it important for a religious person to embrace the idea of a variety of religions? Is it erroneous to think that only one specific type of religion can understand God?

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ



Additional Suggested Activities - After watching the clips

1. Divide the classroom into six groups, and have them each focus on one of the video themes. Have each group demonstrate its discussion results through a debate forum, where students within the group present their case to the class; or if they agree, have them present a unified opinion to the class. The point of this exercise is to remind students that each group does not have to have one, unified answer to each question - there can and should be disagreement on how to answer each one.
2. Break students into four or more groups, and assign each group a major religion. Have each group write the basic tenants of each religion, using textual quotes from the religions' written work to prove it. Share the results with the rest of the classroom and see how they compare.
3. Divide the students into various groups, and present each one with a conflict situation. Have each group create a peaceful, non-antagonistic response. Share the results with the class, and have the class decide if that solution is both fair and strong enough in response.

Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ



Room for Additional Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ



Room for Additional Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Room for Additional Notes:



Beyond Our Differences

A FILM BY
PETER BISANZ

Room for Additional Notes:

