

# WITH EYES TO SEE



## GLOBAL WARMING POLITICS AND GLOBAL DIMENSIONS

ideas for  
teachers  
  
who want  
to  
integrate  
social  
justice  
concepts  
  
into what  
and how  
they teach

September  
2008

Since its establishment in 1972, Concern America has made a measurable difference in the lives of more than two million people in thousands of communities around the world. In an effort to bring the spirit and lessons learned from this transformative work to people in this country, the Development Education Team of Concern America created the "Developing a Heart that Yearns for Justice" Workshop, an experience inviting people from all walks of life to place building a just world at the heart of exercising leadership. The theme of the second of three days of the workshop is global justice. As part of this day, participants look at the world on three Levels of Reality: Personal, Interpersonal, and Societal by examining a variety of problems at home and around the world and by brainstorming possible solutions to the problems at each of these Levels.

Through this exercise, participants quickly realize the need to approach every problem at each level, but that often the solution that has the best chance of success may be found on one of the levels. What about *Global Warming*? Certainly, the work that each of us does to make this world "greener" on our own (Personal) and with those around us with whom we have a personal relationship such as our family, neighbors, school, place of worship, etc. (Interpersonal) are important. Yet, it is certainly obvious that the change needed to reverse this *Global Warming* train we are on must also include governments, large corporations, countries, and the entire world community. Alternative fuels, environmental protection, energy efficient vehicles and appliances, etc. exist to a large extent due to the political will of governments, the actions of companies, and the education and actions of many consumers.

The "Societal" level change does not happen on its own, however. Collective, collaborative work by individuals and groups are the reason for "Societal" Level change! The Vietnam War didn't end because a U.S. President woke up one day and said no more; it was the people themselves that convinced our elected leaders to take this exceedingly necessary, life-preserving action. Similar examples abound of the three Levels of Reality forming and informing each other in our world.

This edition of *With Eyes to See* will look at the Societal level by exploring the Politics and Global Dimensions of *Global Warming*. The second and third editions of *With Eyes to See* for the 2008-2009 school year will continue to focus on the timely and important topic of *Global Warming*. Stay tuned!

CONCERN AMERICA

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### Global Warming and Levels of Reality

A good place to start looking at the global dimensions of Global Warming is to take students through a Levels of Reality exercise. Try the following:

1. Have each student write down a list of what, in her/his opinion, is wrong in the world. Gather the students into small groups to share their lists and together decide on a list of three issues. Then, as a class, determine the top three issues and set them aside.
2. Draw three large, interlocking circles on the board with the following sets of words (one set/circle): Personal (me alone), Interpersonal (me and my friends/family), and Societal (city/state/country/world). Ask the students to discuss what they think this diagram means. Fill in background information as necessary (we all live/ operate on three levels of reality; the interlocking circles reflect that these levels are distinct and also interconnected; when looking at an issue, it helps to determine on which level it can be most effectively addressed).
3. Return to the list of the classes' three problems and, using the Levels of Reality, together brainstorm examples of what the solutions to each problem would be on each level. When completed, determine as a class which solution on which level has the best possibility, the best hope of success. At this point, if Global Warming was not chosen as one of the top three problems, do this same exercise using this issue.

Possible discussion questions include: Will my personal and/or interpersonal efforts alone solve Global Warming? Is it even worth doing anything in my home to help the environment (Personal/Interpersonal) when the problem is global in scope? How can youth make an impact on the Societal Level?

"We do not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."  
-Chief Sealth (Seattle)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."  
-Margaret Mead

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### Global Warming and World Maps/Statistics

If pictures speak a thousand words, maps aren't far behind. An innovative tool that can help users put global statistics into perspective is Worldmapper.org. With more than 600 different world maps, the Earth's territories are re-sized on each according to the subject of interest. For example, on map #174, Human Poverty, North America is little more than a sliver of land, while India, China, and the countries of central Africa are larger than on a standard land area map; on map #295, Carbon Emissions, the U.S. and Europe look bloated while Africa and South America can barely be seen. There are a number of Global Warming and environmental-related maps (maps 295-328) that can be used to compare the "size" of countries in terms of many factors including carbon emissions, forest depletion, etc. The maps speak for themselves, and powerful lessons can be carried out simply by presenting various maps and discussing what is seen. With so many maps at Worldmapper.org, this resource can be used on any number of global issues.

The Worldmapper site essentially takes statistics and converts them into visual maps. Using the statistics themselves can also be a powerful tool. It is interesting and informative, for example, to compare the following statistics: Carbon Dioxide Emissions Per Capita vs. Per Country. It is widely known that the United States is the number one producer of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases in the world, but it ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in terms of per capita emissions (Qatar is number one, at more than three times the U.S. levels). Have students compare these and related statistics and then come up with a list of questions they would use to get others to think about what the numbers tell us.

Per Capita List: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_carbon\\_dioxide\\_emissions\\_per\\_capita](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_carbon_dioxide_emissions_per_capita)  
Per Country List: [www.ucsus.org/global\\_warming/science/each-country-share-of-co2-emissions.html](http://www.ucsus.org/global_warming/science/each-country-share-of-co2-emissions.html)

6-12

## The World's Response to Global Warming

The United Nations officially came into existence in 1945 in an attempt to bring together the nations of the world to stop wars and to provide a platform for dialogue. As the "Global" in Global Warming became increasingly recognized, the U.N. created the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, a treaty that was spearheaded by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (established in 1988, and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with Al Gore, Jr.). The UNFCCC was signed by then President George H. W. Bush, though the more powerful update of the convention in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol, has not been signed by his son George W.

What do these treaties say? What do they do? Why do a few countries not sign them, and which are they? Is there an update coming to the Kyoto Protocol? There are many worldwide efforts to counteract Global Warming, but learning about the UNFCCC process is a good place to start. Have students visit [www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int), or use the site to gather important details to use with them. Students can do a timeline of the UNFCCC, study the U.S. response to it, profile the current issues surrounding the upcoming 2009 meeting in Copenhagen, etc.

"Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know"  
-Aldous Huxley

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## China and the United States

China, the most populous country of the world, has been in the news quite a bit recently. Three examples include the Olympics, tainted foods and products produced in China, and the country's growing use of fossil fuels and natural resources to support a rapidly growing economy. The latter issue comes up a lot when talking about Global Warming as China's population is rapidly buying cars, industries are building numerous coal-fired power plants to keep up with energy needs, etc. Though China is ranked 91<sup>st</sup> in per capita carbon emissions (compared to the U.S., ranked 10<sup>th</sup>), its per capita output has jumped 45% over the last 14 years, while the U.S. increased by only 7%.

Present these statistics to the students and ask what they think about them. After a brief discussion, show the students this second set of statistics: China's per capita emissions increased from 2.1 in 1990 to 3.84 in 2004, while the U.S. increased from 18.9 to 20.4. Does this fact change any of the comments made during the first discussion? Bottom line: we often criticize countries like China and India for their rapidly increasing emissions while we fail to recognize our own voracious appetite for the Earth's resources.

"Like the sinking of the Titanic, catastrophes are not democratic. A much higher fraction of passengers from the cheaper decks were lost. We'll see the same phenomenon with global warming."  
-Henry I. Miller

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## How Are We Connected to the World?

A simple yet powerful activity to do with students is to trace the origins of everyday objects in our lives. Give students roles of paper (like those of a cash register) and have them write on the top the name of a common object in their lives (like an iPod, or a skateboard). Below the name of the item, list all steps/materials that went into making it. This will certainly require some prior knowledge and a lot of research! If we use the iPod example, we could start with the shell that is made of plastic, then list a place where plastics are manufactured, the raw materials of plastic, and where these materials come from. Connected to this are the vehicles used to ship the materials and finished products which opens up an entirely new stream to trace that which goes into making the vehicles and the fuel that powers them. The list will certainly be endless, so stop the students after their papers are getting long and lead (*continued on page 4*)

## RECOMMENDED

"A teacher who can arouse a feeling for one single good action, for one single good poem, accomplishes more than [s/he] who fills our memory with rows and rows of natural objects, classified with name and form."  
-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"Status Quo.' Latin for the mess we're in."  
-Jeve Moorman

**RESOURCES**

- A good youth magazine is **Faces: People, Places, and Culture**. The monthly publication explores a different theme, and the April, 2008 edition is about "going green."
- Another periodical is **Green Teacher: Education for Planet Earth**. *Green Teacher* is a magazine that "helps youth educators enhance environmental and global education inside and outside of schools." Look for more information about this resource at [www.greenteacher.com](http://www.greenteacher.com).
- In the 2002-2003 school year, four editions of *With Eyes to See* profiled the **Earth Charter** (visit the following link to download copies of the newsletters: [www.concernamerica.org/WETS/socialjustice/news.html](http://www.concernamerica.org/WETS/socialjustice/news.html)). Specifically, edition III focuses on **Ecological Integrity**, while in general, the Earth Charter is still a powerful document for use with our students.
- Try National Geographic's program **Six Degrees Could Change the World**, a movie based on the book *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* by Mark Lynas. *Six Degrees* travels the world over exploring the consequences of accelerated Global Warming ([www.channel.nationalgeographic.com/episode/six-degrees-could-change-the-world-3188/Overview](http://www.channel.nationalgeographic.com/episode/six-degrees-could-change-the-world-3188/Overview)).
- For a good read about the struggle for global justice and sustainability, try what author Vandana Shiva calls "The People's Project for a New Planetary Millennium": **Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace**.

**CONCERN AMERICA**

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Mozambique, and West Africa.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in California which include:

- \* Walk Out of Poverty
- \* Infusion Methodology Workshops for teachers
- \* "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- \* School and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- \* Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Feel free to contact the Education Coordinator at Concern America for more information on any of these projects.

### Concern America's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk Out of Poverty and 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Dance Out of Poverty Both a Great Success!

On March 15, 2008, Concern America hosted parallel events in Orange County, California and Chicago, Illinois to raise awareness and funds for its important work in Latin America and Africa. The Walk welcomed 663 walkers, a new record, and has raised to date more than \$52,500. The Dance saw 75 dancers and to date has raised \$4,000! If you live in southern California or the Chicago area, be sure to join us on April 4, 2009 for next year's Walk and Dance!

(continued from page 3) a discussion on what they have learned through this exercise about their connection to the rest of the world. A simpler exercise is to list the countries in which the students' clothes were made by having the students look at the tag of the shirt of their classmates; this is a quick and simple but powerful exercise that can be a jumping off point for lessons about how our actions are connected to the world.