

# WITH EYES TO SEE



## PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: SCHOOL AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY

ideas for  
teachers

who want  
to  
integrate  
social  
justice  
concepts

into what  
and how  
they teach

May  
2004

The Shona people of Zimbabwe greet each other this way:

"-Good morning."

"-Good morning. How did you sleep?"

"-I slept well if you slept well."

What does this greeting say about the Shona people and how they view themselves within their society? Do we in this country base our own sense of well-being on how our neighbors are doing? The quotes surrounding this page challenge us to view our lives as inextricably linked with people throughout the world, and if we hope for a world of peace and dignity for all, we are told to embrace our common humanity by sharing in the joys, feeling the pains, and working to create a world where we all belong.

This edition of WITH EYES TO SEE is the fourth and final newsletter for this school year looking at **"Building Community from the Classroom to the World."** We hope the newsletters have been of use to you and your students, and we look forward to connecting with you in the Fall. Peace to you.

*"The only way for me to think and, therefore, act productively, is to view the people I have encountered as local--far away perhaps, but nevertheless my neighbors."*

*-Elizabeth Whelan, photographer*

*"We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent upon the well-being of other nations, far away."*

*-Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

*"In every community there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart there is the power to do it."*

*-Marianne Williamson*

*"No peace which is not peace for all, no rest till all has been fulfilled."*

*-Dag Hammarskjold*

*"Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on the earth. I said then and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."*

*-Eugene V. Debs*

*"Therefore we pledge to bind ourselves to one another, to embrace our lowliest, to keep company with our loneliest, to educate our illiterate, to feed our starving, to clothe our ragged, to do all good things, knowing that we are more than keepers of our brothers and sisters. We are our brothers and sisters." -Maya Angelou*

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# IDEAS: SCHOOL AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY

## The School and the World Community

The first edition of *With Eyes to See* this school year centered around Mara Sapon-Shevin's five characteristics of community in classrooms (paraphrased). The five characteristics, adapted here to reflect this edition, can help guide our work towards building ties between the "School and the World Community":

1. SECURITY: a safe place to be oneself
2. OPEN COMMUNICATION: among schools, students, and people around the world
3. MUTUAL LIKING: opportunities for students/schools and others around the world to work together, learn from each other, leading to mutual respect and understanding
4. SHARED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: a sense of ownership among all people for "our world," focusing on "us," not "them"
5. CONNECTEDNESS AND TRUST: students feel part of and trust others around the world, and others feel connected to the students

"mitakuye  
oyasin  
we are all  
related"  
Lakota

"Courage is not demonstrated by domination of others, but in mastery of our deepest emotions. Transforming fear and hate into compassion for all human beings is a powerful way to turn the world away from darkness."  
anonymous

## What Unites Us?

Few forums exist where all countries in the world can come together to talk about the current state of the world, and act towards creating a world of peace. The largest and most important of these is the United Nations, and, while the organization is not free from criticism nor do all countries have the same power within it, the U.N. is an enormously important institution in our world today. As a way to learn more about the U.N. and internationally recognized codes of conduct, use the following exercises:

6-12

• **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the U.N. As such, it is meant to be the principal vehicle through which human rights are promoted and judged throughout the world. The Declaration is an amazingly powerful document, and one which we should all be aware of. A good way to learn about the Declaration and its 30 articles is to divide the articles with groups of 2-3 students. Each group could summarize the articles in their own words and create an image to accompany each one large enough to be seen across the classroom. Then have each group hang its articles around the room and present them to the entire class. Good discussions can take place surrounding the students' popularized version of the Declaration. What do the students think about the document? What rights exist in the United States? Which do not? What about other countries (especially of students from immigrant families)? Have any rights changed in the U.S. over the past 50 years (for better or worse)? What rights are missing? (download a copy of the Declaration at [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html), and other classroom activities at [www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/index.html](http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/index.html))

3-12

• **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** has been ratified by 192 countries; only two countries have yet to take this step: Somalia and the United States. Like the Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention is an important document for recognizing and working towards making the rights that all children of our world should enjoy a reality. Students can go through an exercise like that mentioned above, or for younger grades with access to the internet, try a game similar to "Concentration" or "Memory" at [www.celebratingpeace.com/child\\_rights.htm](http://www.celebratingpeace.com/child_rights.htm). (download a copy of the Convention at [www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm](http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm))

While at [www.celebratingpeace.com](http://www.celebratingpeace.com), make use of their resources, links, information, peacemaking skills, art, etc. This is a good site for younger children wanting to explore issues of peace.

## How We Judge "Other" Cultures

6-12

When studying other cultures, especially those very different from one's own, children (and adults!) often judge customs as weird, unhealthy, silly, unacceptable, etc. When learning about different cultures and countries, it can be very helpful to talk about these biases and encourage students to have open minds when learning about other people. A fun way to do this is to teach the students about the Nacirema people of North America. The exercise, by Horace Miner, is an anthropologist's account of the Nacirema (American spelled backwards!) in which he describes health and beauty rituals in this country in anthropology-like language: "The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live." In this example, the "shrine" is the bathroom, and the box is the medicine cabinet. Upon reading the description of the Nacirema, have the students share their thoughts on the people, and write their responses, without comment, on the board. Then write "Nacirema," and ask the students to read it backwards. How did they describe the culture of their own country? The negative responses can be posted in the room as a reminder not to prejudge other cultures, and help set the stage for more open minded study of "others." (to download the piece, go to [www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html](http://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html); activity adapted from Teaching Tolerance, Fall 2002, by Richard Storrs)

"I spent a lot of time writing about the disappointment of discovering, somewhat first-hand, the degree of evil of which we are still capable. I should at least mention that I am also discovering a degree of strength and of basic ability for humans to remain human in the direst of circumstances."  
Rachel Corrie

## "Are My Hands Clean?"

4-12

How are our lives related to people in El Salvador, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tabago, and Haiti? Short of having family or friends in those countries, most of us do not feel connected to people there, nor do we equate our lifestyles with their well-being. The following activity, which includes a moving song by Sweet Honey in the Rock (a political and spiritual women's vocal group which has been active and inspirational for many years), is meant to get students to make connections between themselves and others they will never see. The song, entitled "Are My Hands Clean?", traces the path our clothing takes to arrive in stores in this country. Cotton from El Salvador, oil for polyester from Venezuela, the sewing of the clothes in Haiti, etc., and each stage is marked by unsafe working conditions and poor wages. [The song is from Sweet Honey in the Rock's album *Live at Carnegie Hall* (Flying High Records, Inc. 1988), and can be borrowed from the Concern America office.]

- (1) Ask the students to check the tags on each others shirts. Using a world map, plot the origins of their clothes. Discuss.
- (2) Hand out copies of the lyrics and play the song "Are My Hands Clean?" by Sweet Honey in the Rock. Define unfamiliar terms/unfamiliar references.
- (3) Have the students think about the song and write on the question: "Are My Hands Clean?" The resulting discussion should lead to the need to find out more, and hopefully, to act. Also, visit the following websites for more related information: [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org), [www.usleap.org](http://www.usleap.org), [www.nosweatshop.com](http://www.nosweatshop.com).

(from *With Eyes to See*, April, 2001, *Structural Transformation*)

## It's a Small World

3-12

Have the students write a description of what they have done today, including a list of the objects with which they had contact (clothing, food, car, bus, etc.). Next, have the students determine where the objects came from. Use this information as a springboard for any number of activities based on our dependence on the rest of the world. (from *With Eyes to See*, December 2000, *Interdependence*)



# RECOMMENDED

## RESOURCES

1. Singer-songwriter **Raffi** has been entertaining young children and families for years. Many of his songs are silly and for play, but he also sings about peace, understanding, and global awareness. Raffi recently wrote "Where We All Belong" to benefit the Earth Charter, "Turn This World Around" about Nelson Mandela and children, and a "Song for the Dalia Lama." Check out these titles for younger grades!

2. Every culture has **stories**, many of which are readily available in books and online. One great resource is storyteller Aaron Shep's website [www.aaronshep.com](http://www.aaronshep.com) where you can find stories and reader's theater scripts from around the world, many of which have themes of conflict resolution and peace. Also try Margaret Read MacDonald's book *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About*.

3. A group with many resources for teachers is Educators for Social Responsibility. Of note are their lesson plans on Current Events, Understanding War, Stopping Discrimination, and Analyzing 9/11. Each theme is accompanied by various lessons and supporting material. Visit them at [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org).

## 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, Honduras, Colombia, Guinea, and Mozambique.

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

- \* The St. Nicholas Project
- \* Walk Out of Poverty
- \* Infusion Method 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.

"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding."  
Albert Einstein

"When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others"  
Peace Pilgrim

**Thanks for Making Concern America's Walk Out of Poverty a Great Success!** On April 3 this year, 400 walkers joined Concern America on a 5 mile walk to raise money for and awareness about our brothers and sisters in material poverty around the world. More than \$35,000 in pledges were collected, making this the most successful walk to date. Thanks to everyone who walked, volunteered, and pledged their support.

**Brown Vs. Board of Education Turns 50!** On May 17, 1954, the momentous Supreme Court decision known as Brown Vs. Board of Education officially ended "separate but equal" education in this country. The promise of Brown is still unfulfilled in many areas today as segregated education continues, but the impact it has had on education and civil rights in this country is enormous. Incorporate Brown into your classroom and hold a birthday party on May 17 celebrating the important day.