THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE

FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

LUNCHEON PROGRAM: TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION POST 9/11

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E.J. DIONNE, JR.: Bill Galston, the political philosopher, once said that the hardest choices are usually between one good and another, not between good and evil. I think in this area we are dealing, at least in principle, with goods that can be compatible with each other. (That is, despite Jennifer Norton's excellent point about her children and Christmas trees, reminding us never to take a school job in the district where your children go to school; that's perhaps the most practical lesson that we will draw from the meeting today.)

On the one hand, we recognize the importance of understanding the meaning of religious liberty in a pluralistic democracy and the need to teach mutual respect. That means respecting the rights of religious minorities, not only in the nation as a whole, but in individual communities and schools and even classrooms. I always think it's worth remembering that in a society such as ours, groups that find themselves in a majority in one place may find themselves in the minority in another place. So a majority that's standing up for the rights of minorities where the majority dominates is actually standing up for its own group in some other part of the nation.

But we also know that teaching distorts reality if it ignores the importance of religious commitments in institutions, in history or in contemporary life, or if it ignores the importance of religious commitments in the lives of tens of millions of Americans and literally billions of people around the world.

Although Charles was absolutely right in talking about the difficulty of creativity in this area, in principle, at least, the goals are not incompatible, and after 9/11 it's impossible to ignore these issues. It should have been impossible long before, but it is now impossible to ignore the importance of faith to history and to political action. And that is what this excellent discussion this afternoon is going to be about.

I am lucky; I can stop right there and say that our speaker and our distinguished panelists will solve all of these dilemmas for us, and they will do it in less than two hours. What I'm going to do is introduce our distinguished speaker, and then, in order to give them a little more time to eat and listen in comfort, we'll bring up the panel, and I will introduce them afterward. There are some fascinating facts I learned about them at lunch, which I will share with you, and we have an opportunity for particular spiritual enlightenment in the course of the panel this afternoon.

I won't go on, because you have all the bios in your packet, but I want to say that Warren Nord is Director of the Program in the Humanities and Human Values [http://adventuresinideas.unc.edu/] and has taught in the Department of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill [http://www.unc.edu/depts/phildept/phil.htm], since 1979. He is the author of 30 articles and book chapters. And he is the author of *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma*. It's a comprehensive study of historical, philosophical, constitutional and pedagogical issues, i.e., all of the issues relating to religion in secondary and higher education. And he co-authored, with our friend Charles Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the*

Curriculum: A Guidebook for Educators. Our distinguished teacher showed that guidebook to her students after she took down the Christmas trees and it still didn't do any good, but it's very, very persuasive. It's a great pleasure to introduce Warren Nord. Thank you so much for coming up here to be with us today.

WARREN NORD: Thank you E. J., I feel right at home here. (…)

As important as the tragic events of 9/11 have been, there is a danger in letting them set the agenda for thinking about the role of religion in public education. I have twice looked at the treatment of religion in world history textbooks, in the late '80s and then again in the mid-'90s. The general pattern was this: As each of the great world religions made its entrance on the world stage, about three pages would be devoted to its origins, basic teachings and early development. Then it would largely disappear from the story. In the case of Islam, it lay dormant in the text for a millennium, only to reemerge with a bang, with Islamic fundamentalism in the Iran hostage crisis in the 1970s. I suppose this is what Jon Butler last night called jack-in-the-box history.

I think it would be unfortunate if 9/11 and terrorism were to provide the context for telling students far more about Islam. Having said that, it may be that 9/11 can serve as a kind of wake-up call alerting us to a range of issues that we should have been addressing all along. Religion continues to be a powerful force in the world, not least in matters of war and peace, but certainly not only in matters of war and peace.

I must say, however, that we've hit the snooze button so many times when it comes to religion in the curriculum that I'm a little skeptical about ever awakening to the true importance of taking it seriously. All right, with this brief caveat, let me say something about four issues related to 9/11 and then turn to I think a more fundamental question.

First, there is the question of religion, war and violence. Charles Kimball begins his recent book, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, by writing, "It is somewhat trite, but nevertheless sadly true, to say that more wars have been waged, more people killed and these days more evil perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional force in human history." I'm not sure that's true, but it might be. In any case, what's at issue isn't simply Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, but a long and unhappy history, one that continues to the present day, regarding religion as a cause of intolerance, anti-Semitism, oppression, and violence.

At the same time, it seems to me that insights into goodness and justice have historically been the foundational or governing insights of religions. If religions have justified violence, it is also true that religions have spoken prophetically against war and violence, and using the resources of their traditions, theologians have crafted moral boundaries around the use of violence in wartime. I'm thinking in particular of just war theory. It's important to notice the widespread opposition of theologians and religious leaders to the war in Iraq and America's new national security policy with its justification of preventative wars.

So my first brief point is this: religions continue to play a formidable role in matters of war and peace. Students need to understand this, but of course we shouldn't have needed 9/11 to remind us of it.

Two. We should not need 9/11 to tell us how important it is to understand Islam. It is striking that the multicultural movement, which has been so powerful in public education, has virtually ignored religion, but religion often is more important in defining people's identities and values than are race, class and gender. Islam is the world's second largest and fastest-growing religion. It shapes the lives and values of more than a billion of the world's people. And yet a recent Pew Research Center survey [http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=387] found that only 38 percent of Americans claim to know something about Islam. And my guess is that some of them don't, in fact, know what they think they know.

Sadly, teachers aren't much prepared by their educations to help out. This is particularly regrettable because it appears that there may be a major controversy about how to teach about Islam in the schools. The American Textbook Council [http://www.historytextbooks.org/] recently attacked textbook publishers for presenting an unduly favorable image of Islam in world history texts. James Dobson and Dr. Laura have even called for parents to remove their children from California schools to avoid indoctrination into Islam. I expect Shabbir may want to say something about all of this in his comments. I've already mentioned that the world history texts I reviewed a few years ago mentioned contemporary Islam only in the context of war and fundamentalism, hardly a fair portrayal. What might it mean to do it right? Well, there's a topic for a session. I might note we went through a similar kind of dispute regarding American history standards only a few years ago. How favorable or unfavorable or how critical should we be when we teach about American history? It remains to be seen if Congress will again intervene, this time to tell us how to teach about Islam.

Three. In the aftermath of 9/11 there has been a good deal of soul-searching regarding why they – the terrorists, the Muslims and the rest of the world – hate us so much. Some feel that even to ask this question shifts the blame for 9/11 from the terrorists to us. Still, it is short-sighted not to think about why the United States is at least sometimes hated. We are, it is often said, the richest and most powerful nation in the history of the world, the new world empire. Arrogance almost always trails in the wake of power, as does envy among those less powerful, but there's a more basic question.

It's sometimes said that if there is to be peace, there must first be justice. For those who have eyes to see, the world is saturated by suffering, inequality and injustice. We cannot rely on America's national interest or global capitalism to orient us in thinking about this problem. Religious traditions can be powerful counter-cultural forces, however. All religious traditions have placed special emphasis on compassion and the duty to help the poor and the oppressed. While there are religious movements that equate spiritual salvation with worldly wealth, the religious mainstream is deeply wary of the effects of wealth and consumerism on our lives and policies. The current pope is only

one of many religious leaders who have pressed the case for addressing the needs of the Third World. After millennia of inattention, theologians have, over the last several decades, turned their attention to the environment and questions of sustainability and justice.

If we are to be reflective, rather than defensive, we might take the current occasion to question some of the dominant values of our culture, drawing on our religious traditions to help us think more deeply about morality, justice and the international order.

Four. Since 9/11, the word "evil" has been found in large, black letters on the covers of every major news magazine in America at least once. In his last State of the Union address [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html], President Bush asked rhetorically, If the tortures that Saddam Hussein has inflicted on his people aren't evil, what is? He had a point. Talk about evil is a bit tricky, however. For a long time we have shied away from talk about good and evil in education. Many educators and most intellectuals live in what the Columbia literary critic Andrew Delbanco calls "a culture of irony" in which claims about evil are at best old-fashioned, oftentimes embarrassing, and the word evil is often best put in quotation marks.

Yet there is evil in the world. One of the reasons evil and goodness are problems is that we aspire to scientific respectability, and science has trouble with moral judgments. We are much more comfortable talking about sickness and social pathology than we are about wickedness and evil. Talk of evil comes more naturally within religious territory. There is, of course, a tendency within religions to divide the world up rather quickly, some would say too quickly, into the children of light and the children of darkness, or the saved and the damned. That is what Robert Bellah calls "moral splitting." But religions also provide rich resources for thinking about good and evil and the moral dimension of life. It may well be that we need to think more than we do in terms of evil, guilt, sin, wickedness. It may also be that students should learn something of grace, mercy, self-sacrifice, stewardship and love – all values that do not appear in most character education programs.

Having started with a kind of bill of particulars, what I would like to do now is move to basic principles. Charles and Melissa this morning talked about the civic and the constitutional frameworks for thinking about the roles of religion and education. I would like to talk about the educational framework, or, more particularly, about liberal education. And my argument is that a good liberal education requires a careful and sustained study of religion, including all of the particular issues that I've just mentioned and then some. Needless to say, different accounts of liberal education are in circulation. I don't have time to defend or even explain my own conceptions, so I'm just going to jump in.

First, to my way of thinking, a liberal education is a broad education. A liberal education precludes indoctrination. It's not narrow or specialized or merely vocational. It introduces students to the major ways in which humankind makes sense of the world. Of course some of those ways of making sense of the world are religious. In this regard,

public education is noticeably illiberal. True, we all agree that we cannot understand history without understanding something of religion, and some space is carved out of history textbooks for this purpose – those three pages per religion that I mentioned earlier. Need I say that three pages aren't enough to make sense of any religion?

My larger point, however, is that it's not good enough to talk about religion only in the context of history. In spite of a century of social science, rumors of the impending death of religion have proven premature. Religion continues to be a live option for most people in the world, and if the majority of intellectuals are a pretty secular lot, there continues to be a respectable minority who draw on religion both in making sense of the world and in living their lives. Indeed, religion continues to shape a good deal of our thinking about war and peace, politics and justice, good and evil, morality and sexuality, physical nature and human nature. And yet we leave religious voices out of the curricular discussion of all of these subjects, or almost all of them. I'll not mince words: This is a scandal. Why? For a number of reasons, but for me, the big reason is because it's illiberal. We shouldn't need 9/11 to tell us that it's important for students to understand Islam in not only the world's history, but as a shaping force for how people now understand various aspects of their lives and the world.

Second, a liberal education takes other peoples and cultures and religions seriously by enabling students to understand them as they understand themselves, not as we might understand them given our preconceptions and our values. It enables students to get inside their hearts and minds. This is, in part, a matter of intellectual honesty. I remember a widely-used world history textbook that claimed that the holy book of the ancient Hebrews was called the Old Testament. Well, wrong. It was the Tanak, or the Torah, or the Hebrew scriptures, but not the Old Testament. That's the holy book of Christians. This is particularly important because so long as we filter other cultures and religions through our lenses, we won't acquire the perspective to think critically about our own assumptions.

Education isn't just about having the truth, it's about learning how to think critically about the world. I don't think things have changed much since John Stuart Mill, who said, "This 99 out of 100 of what are called educated men" – and we would add women – "have never thrown themselves into the mental position of people who think differently from them, and consequently they do not in any proper sense of the word know the doctrines which they themselves profane."

We don't understand Judaism if we filter it through Christian preconceptions. We don't understand Christianity if we filter it through the conceptual nets of modern social scientists. We only take other cultures and traditions seriously when we are able to bracket our own assumptions and think and feel and imagine ourselves into the minds of people and cultures different from us.

The idea of taking other people and cultures seriously on their own terms is also a moral notion. It accords them respect. It also makes it difficult to dehumanize them. Much of the evil done in history is made possible because cultures have dehumanized

their enemies. The English novelist Ian McEwan wrote of the 9/11 hijackers, "If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it's the beginning of morality. The hijackers used fanatical certainty, misplaced religious faith, and dehumanizing hatred to purge themselves of the human instinct for empathy."

It's worth noting here that the Pew survey that I mentioned earlier showed that the more people knew about Islam, the more likely they were to see similarities between Islam and their own religious traditions. No doubt we'll also discover important differences as we learn more about traditions other than our own. Still, there is reason to believe that the similarities among the great religions are much greater than the differences, and this makes empathy much easier and inhumanity and evil much more difficult.

It's not easy to get inside another religious tradition. To the extent possible, we should use primary sources, allowing people to speak for themselves. We should use literature and art that address our imaginations. And we must devote enough time and effort to have some chance of succeeding. Three pages in a history textbook won't do it. Imagine if we tried to teach economics or physics with three pages in a history textbook.

My own view is that all high school students should be required to take a year-long course in religious studies. Needless to say, this reform is not imminent. There is not time enough in the school day, we are told. One might wonder why college-bound students should be required to take 12 years of mathematics and no religious studies rather than 11 years of mathematics and one year of religious studies. This seems to me a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the conventional educational wisdom.

It's also an answer to the question that's come up several times and will come up many more times, and that is the difficulty of doing it right. It is very difficult to do it right, and I think a part of the answer to doing it right is having religious studies become a certifiable field in K-12 education, at least for high school courses, just as it is in universities. Charles mentioned this morning that after the *Schempp* decision, that was viewed as a kind of green light for public universities to develop departments of religious studies; and about 40 percent of public universities do have such departments. I think part of the answer to the dilemma that we have to face – there's not enough time, teachers aren't capable of doing it – is developing a certifiable field of religious studies and having educationally and constitutionally sound religion courses; but, as I said, this reform is not imminent.

Third: Liberal education doesn't just ride the surface of life. Just as it has breadth, so should it have depth, existential depth. A good liberal education will address those deep questions of good and evil, of suffering and flourishing, of meaning and morality that are inescapable simply because we're human. Indeed, what could be more important than this? One of the reasons that the absence of religious voices in the

curriculum is so scandalous is that religions have traditionally asked and answered these questions. As our culture has become increasingly materialistic, so has education. The old idea of a classical education grounded in the humanities long ago gave way to utilitarian education grounded in science, technology and those basic skills that fuel our economic system. The deeper problem, however, is that the academic disciplines have been shaped by philosophical commitments that keep them from asking and answering the kinds of existential questions that a good liberal education should address. Talk of evil, or of goodness, is problematic, for example, within the framework of modern economic theory.

And since economics is not on the agenda for our conference, I thought I would say just a few words about economics. So how do we teach economics? Well I've already mentioned the relevance and importance of religion to understanding questions of social justice. In addition to scriptural texts in all the world's religions, there is a vast 20th century literature on economics, justice and moral theology. Of course none of this is mentioned in high school economics textbooks. In fact, if we combine all of the references in the 10 economics texts I have reviewed over the last decade they would add up to two pages out of 4,400 altogether, and all of the references – all of the references – are to premodern times. Religion doesn't figure into the national economic standards at all. Moreover, the high school texts and national standards say little if anything about the problems of greatest concern within religions traditions: poverty, consumer culture, justice, the Third World, human dignity, the meaningfulness of work.

The problem isn't just that the texts ignore religion, however. A part of the problem is what they do teach. Neoclassical economic theory. According to the texts and the standards, economics is a science, people are essentially self-interested utility-maximizers, the economic realm is one of competition for scarce resources, values are personal preferences and value judgments are matters of cost-benefit analysis. Of course no religious tradition accepts this understanding of human nature, society and values. Needless to say, the text gives students no sense that what they are learning might be religiously controversial. And the national economic standards make it a matter of principle that students be kept in the dark about alternatives to neoclassical theory. As the editors put it in their introduction, "Only the neoclassical model of economic behavior should be taught, or we run the risk of confusing both teachers and students." So much for critical thinking. And so much for good and evil, justice and injustice, suffering and flourishing. The texts and the standards flatten economics of all existential depth.

Of course public education can't ground moral claims in religious tradition or authority. I'm not arguing for that. I am suggesting that students should learn how good and evil are understood in different religious traditions, and what the implications might be for how we make sense of the world of economics and history and morality and sexuality and psychology and nature.

Fourth and finally: It's not enough simply to introduce students to the various alternatives. A liberal education must be a conversation. According to the Delphic Oracle, Socrates was the wisest of all the Greeks. Why? Socrates' own answer was that

he knew how much he didn't know. In a sense, education begins with Socrates. Before him, the truth was passed down through tradition or delivered by oracle or revelation. With Socrates education became a matter of discussion and arguments. A liberal education, as I understand it, initiates students into an ongoing conversation about how we make sense of the world and how we live our lives. One is educated by conversing not just with one's teacher and other students, but even more importantly, with writers and artists and scholars, with people in the cultures one studies, many living, many dead.

As we practice it, however, education is essentially a sequence of monologues, not a conversation. It's what I call serial socialization. In economics courses, students are trained to think like neoclassical economists. In science courses students are trained to think like scientists. In history courses students are trained to think like secular historians. I use the word "trained" advisedly. Students are trained when they are taught one way of making sense of the world and given no critical perspective on the basic assumptions that shape other ways of thinking nor are they exposed to other ways of thinking.

To be educated requires that we have at least a little critical distance on our own assumptions. To be educated about economics requires that students learn something about various secular and religious ways of thinking about human nature, justice, good and evil in the economic domain of life. This must be done as part of a conversation among economists, of course, but also moral philosophers and theologians. Similarly, war is too important to leave to the generals. To be well educated about war and peace we must also listen to politicians and statesmen, of course, but also to moral philosophers and theologians. This is a part of the answer, I think, to Marvin Berkowitz's questions about critical thinking.

Critical thinking isn't just something individual students do. We think critically when we are initiated into this conversation that's going on in our history and in our culture. The conversation is a conversation among economists and theologians and philosophers and scientists and writers and artists. We can't simply teach each of those ways of approaching the world individually and never try to make connections or recognize tensions and conflicts. Education must become much more a conversation than, as I said, a sequence of monologues.

Unless we construct a curriculum in which religious voices are part of the ongoing conversations about war and peace, justice and injustice, morality and sexuality, psychology and nature, suffering and flourishing, education will continue to be profoundly illiberal. My small hope is that reflecting on 9/11 we may see more clearly what we should have seen all along. That sometimes for evil, but often – more often – for good, religion continues to be a tremendously important part of our lives; so important, in fact, that we should take it seriously in our schools. Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: We have a wonderful panel who will respond to Professor Nord and answer other questions. I also want to say that I'm going to bring the audience in very early on in this discussion. If I could call up Marjorie Green of the Anti-Defamation

League [http://www.adl.org/adl.asp] , Joe Loconte of the Heritage Foundation [http://www.heritage.org], Shabbir Mansuri of the Council on Islamic Education [http://www.cie.org/], Mary Ellen Sikes of the Institute for Humanist Studies [http://humanistst udies.org/], and Meera Viswanathan, whose name, by the way, means lord of the universe in Sanskrit, so you must respect her, and we are hoping she will raise us to a higher level of enlightenment.

Instead of going through the long and distinguished biographies, I think I will turn to our panelists in alphabetical order, unless somebody is desperate to jump out of it, with Marjorie making some comments and responding to Professor Nord's really excellent talk. Please.

MARJORIE GREEN: Thank you, I'm happy to begin. I was particularly entranced by Warren's comments about critical distance as part of what has been thought of as a liberal education. I'd like to link that with perhaps its opposite, critical proximity. I was startled, when I was a high school student, to discover a connection between one of two disciplines I was studying; a history teacher referred to a period of time that I was studying in an English text, and I thought that there was some crossover.

With that, I'll make a *mea culpa*, appropriately here perhaps, that Warren used the terminology of the multicultural movement ignoring religion. I think of my own professional lives in the ADL: one as a part of the Jewish defense movement, in terms of making sure that there is a place in the public schools for Jewish students and Jewish teachers to live with some degree of comfort; and another working very closely on the development of A World of Difference [http://www.adl.org/ctboh/awod%5Finstitute.asp], our anti-bias program in which we are talking to teachers about creating a groundwork for discussing sensitive issues in terms of promoting understanding and ending the dehumanization of the other. In that, we have traditionally looked at issues of race and sexual orientation and ageism and gender and ignored religion. I say this with some degree of sudden awareness that this has been off our plate so unexpectedly, and in terms of making a commitment to interlace it, because it is so crucial. With that I'll stop at this moment.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Joe.

JOE LOCONTE: Professor Nord, I really appreciate the talk. It was terrific. You raised so many good themes, and the one I want to take a minute on here is the idea of liberal education taking various cultures seriously, taking the difference seriously that exist within cultures and religious worldviews and all. Especially since September 11th, in commentary on both the left and the right, there's been a tendency not to take the differences seriously, to overgeneralize, to not really pay attention to what the worldviews are that are being represented. So, one of the things I appreciate about what you did here is you gave us a cultural context for where we are in this debate, what's happened culturally at the highest intellectual academic levels and how religion is regarded. That is really important, because it helps explain some of the statements we've heard in the last 18 months.

Let me just give a couple of examples on why ideas have consequences and why they really do matter. When Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times* retired a year ago after being a columnist there for 40 years, there was an interview with him about some of the big lessons he'd learned in his post at *The New York Times*, the most prestigious newspaper in the country, if not the world. Perhaps not. But what were the big lessons he'd learned? Part of the answer he gave was that he'd learned that certainty, meaning religious certainty, is the enemy of decency and morality, and all those people who think they are right, like Osama bin Laden and John Ashcroft —

Now, whatever you think of John Ashcroft, that kind of moral equation of Osama bin Laden and the attorney general, something's wrong there. Somebody's moral compass is spinning wildly. Right? And the idea that religious certainty itself is the enemy of decency and morality, well, something's happened at the level of our cultural elite. Something's happened to change the perspective that a previous generation of cultural elite have had about the relationship of religious belief to civil society and to democracy. You did a great job suggesting some of the reasons why we've had this shift. It is critical to keep that in mind in this whole discussion.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Joe. And Shabbir Mansuri.

SHABBIR MANSURI: I'm very impressed with the explanation that Dr. Nord gave us, number one, about what's happening out there. If I may, I'd like to respond from the perspective of my engagement with the public school system as a concerned parent and as a student of the educational system.

I began my own journey towards establishing an institute to engage the American educational system when my daughter read me her social studies textbook. And based on what I have seen in the last 13 years in my work, and also in 10 years of studying the education system, I see the answers and the suggestions that Dr. Nord has provided in connection to what could take place in our classrooms. For example, in the last few weeks I've given workshops for about 150 teachers-in-training; they are the new generation of teachers. I am comparing their questions to those of teachers I've worked with in the past six or seven years, all elite teachers, and I'm able to see the difference between those who have had access to other groups of people, because they are young. These new teachers are in their early- to mid-20s, and because of their own experiences of dealing with people of different nationalities, religions and traditions, their whole mindset is different from the older generation. That's one issue I wanted to reflect on.

Number two, I found that the different questions teachers asked in my workshops in the early days of thinking about 9/11 versus the questions they asked during the Iraq situation suggest different ways they were understanding certain issues. In the early days after 9/11 the question on the table was "Why do they hate us?" They had a very difficult time going beyond that. More recently, though, their questions suggest that they see that it's not as simple as somebody loving or hating us. It's very complex. And that wasn't there. That's one thing I found.

I'm also interested in today's discussion for the implications it could have on the international level, in the work I'm doing with educators around the world. In my last trip, I went to six different nations in the last few months, and I sat down with educators from Pakistan and from Arab countries.

But I do agree with you, with what you have laid out regarding the fact that it's not very simple and regarding how we are addressing this issue in our classrooms.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Mary Ellen Sikes.

MARY ELLEN SIKES: Thank you. I was especially gratified to hear Professor Nord talk about the concept of a liberal education, because this is something that humanists and other non-religious people in the United States and all over the world have been arguing about for years, and are in favor of. This morning I was listening to Melissa and others on the panel talk about the concept of pain and agony, and coming up with these very difficult questions, and trying to formulate answers together that respect the worldviews of everybody in the room and everybody in our country. And I don't think there's anything messier than inviting a non-religious person to a symposium about teaching about religion in public schools, and I'll try not to disappoint here.

I think if I try to get into too much in my first address here I will go over my time and deny the other speakers their opportunity, so I'll just throw out a couple teasers for you. The first is this. I've worked in the humanist movement for quite a few years as both a volunteer and now as an employee, and in no 24-hour period more than the one that we've just gone through have I become more convinced of the need for religious and non-religious people to speak more to one another in opportunities like this. I was approached last night and today with many questions about the nature of non-belief in American society, our relationship to public education, our attitudes, our public policy concerns. Obviously we have not been successful in getting our message out. We want people to know that we don't take over the public schools, there aren't enough of us to do that even if we wanted to. We support a neutral public school system that gives kids as much information as possible about the kinds of cultures that shape our society. That must include our culture. And I'll talk more about that in a little while. We also want people to know that secular humanism and other forms of non-religion in the United States and abroad are ethical life-stances. They are not about doing what you will at any time for your own purposes. There's a lot of misunderstanding about that. So I appreciate this opportunity.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Meera Viswanathan.

MEERA VISWANATHAN: It's a great pleasure to be here. Though I have to say I am a little perplexed as to why I have been invited. I am a rather peripheral figure. I neither work in public education, nor do I work in elementary or secondary private education directly. I don't teach religion, and I'm not in public policy or the law. I am a humble professor of comparative literature, but it strikes me that perhaps my role here is

to underscore the marginal, the interstitial. And I think of my identity in this country as being in some ways a marginal identity. First as an immigrant, I remember growing up in Los Angeles in the early '60s filling out interminable surveys, and when they asked what race were you – white, black (they said "colored" then), Asian (and Asian was defined as Chinese or Japanese) or other – I, of course, would check "other." When we got to religion, of course, I would be "other." And so I grew up filling very much the role of "another." And as I grew up in Los Angeles, and evolved as Los Angeles might have been at the time, I felt very much that being Hindu was something that I kept at home and not necessarily advanced publicly.

The irony of our times is that in private, elite universities in this country it is the margins that now have center space. I will mention one short anecdote. My husband runs a boarding school in western Massachusetts. I became concerned a few years back that many of the children, having left home at the age of 13 or 14, found themselves in a boarding school environment which nominally encouraged them in their spiritual practices that they brought with them from home, as well as trying to teach them about other things in the world today. Strangely enough, the environment is one in which students felt discouraged from practicing, and so many students were at a loss about how to reconcile this, or they felt that need for support. And so I brought a group together, and someone said to me, "You know, Meera, thank God you're Hindu." And I said, "Why is that?" They said, "Can you imagine that this would have worked had you been a Christian? An evangelical Christian?" And so it strikes me as peculiar that when I was a child I could not speak because I was Hindu, and now I – E.J., you talk about the majority speaking for the minority – now I feel that in certain contexts it is the minority that can speak for the rights of the majority as well. So we live in complicated, unusual times.

I just want to add a bit to a couple of things that interested me in your very comprehensive talk, Warren. One has to do with this issue of liberal education and critical thinking, which I think I share. I want to talk later a little bit about a comparitist perspective as a way to deal with what I'm going to identify as a kind of shift in registers. In your talk I was fascinated that at one point you talked about religions of the world, the need to embrace and to think about them, and then you shifted to the good and evil register. And the question of how we define evil is something that you touched on, and I think it's a very important question. Is evil simply a really awful thing? A superlatively awful thing? Or does it have sacral overtone? And how do we move between that?

I'm interested that even in the Freedom Forum [http://www.freedomforum.org], upstairs, if you looked at the wonderful background prop, did you notice the sort of pseudo-Mercator map projection? I was very sensitive and I noticed that we have two Western Europes, the United States in the middle panel, and on the right-hand side, we have Alaska and Hawaii on the other center panel. We've got the Middle East prominently registered. Large Iceland, Greenland, Scandinavia. But I must say there was no South Asia. I don't know if anyone noticed, but it was completely elided, and so it interests me that we send signals. I'm not attaching great importance to this; I just noticed this. But I do think in the process of teaching, that self-consciousness is

necessary when we use terms like good and evil, when we have these maps, when we think about what we're really saying.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Later this afternoon Charles will offer a defense of his maps. We're going to add it to the program. Thank you very much. Professor, I ask you to respond to those comments. And I'd like to throw a question on the table. I'm sure somehow Joe misquoted my friend Tony Lewis on that perfect metaphor between Osama bin Laden and John Ashcroft, but put that whole metaphor aside.

MR. LOCONTE: I wish I had.

MR. DIONNE: The issue of certainty and uncertainty is actually a very interesting question that goes to the heart of this discussion. It's not only certainty and uncertainty, it's also competing concepts of certainty, it's science versus faith. I think your idea that ignoring religion is illiberal is dead right, yet that issue becomes much more complicated when one introduces concepts such as science, such as certainty versus uncertainty. I'd love you to comment on that and on what you've just heard, then I'm going to open it up to the audience, although I have a few questions I'll intersperse.

MR. NORD: We're going to get into the question of science tomorrow, and I'm on the panel, so I guess I should hold most of my comments for then. But part of the answer is the idea of "teaching the controversies," to cite another literary critic, Gerald Graff, who, I think, used that phrase. Where we disagree is whether or not truth can be known in some absolute way, the extent to which we should be skeptical, whether there is such a thing as truth at all. At some point in education it's important for students to understand our disagreements about these very different philosophical ways of making sense of the world. That's obviously nothing you do in elementary school, or probably even in middle school, but when we disagree – as we do over good and evil, over certainty and uncertainty, over faith and reason – we should make sure that students have some understanding of how those differences work out. And we need to do this with enough depth to make sense of the different positions, and that, from my point of view, clearly means including religious voices in that discussion. I think the problem comes when schools feel that they need to teach what the truth is.

Happily, there are some things that we agree about. We all agree that it's important to be honest. We all agree that it's important to be on time. We all agree about certain aspects of American history, and I think we pretty much all agree that the American constitutional tradition has been a wise experiment, flawed though it might be, but still a wise and good experiment in human history. And we shouldn't shirk from teaching what we take to be the truth, when we shirk from teaching what we believe to be good and right, when there is broad agreement. But when there is a great deal of disagreement, then I think we need to teach the controversies. At least, again, perhaps holding off on some of those controversies until students are old enough and mature enough to appreciate them, but when they are to teach the controversy.

I don't know that there's anything any of the panelists said that I feel the need to respond to except to thank them for their comments and say "Hear, hear."

MR. DIONNE: I'd like to ask Professor Viswanathan one question. In an e-mail exchange we had, you made a very interesting point that many in the West, especially those in the United States, see the attacks of 9/11 as the outcome of religious fanaticism within Islam. And, as you said, while some excoriate what they perceive to be an evil creed, others say they must study more about Islam. But you also made the point that significantly among people in the Middle East, as well as in Asia, as attested to by media reports, the attack is often seen in political terms within the context of the Middle East as a whole, rather than in a religious context. As you might say in one of your exams, "Please explain."

MS. VISWANATHAN: It fascinates me that even the panel that's been set up assumes that 9/11 is principally about religious difference, and yet when we think back to, for example, the televised reports of people cheering about the attacks, they were not saying, "Down with Christians." They were not burning crosses. What they were saying was, "Down with Americans." And they were burning the American flag. That's interesting to me, the asymmetry of that, that we're seeing this as an outcome of Islam while they're seeing it as a kind of hegemonic, American counteroffensive.

Even though I think we do need to teach pluralistically more about religion, I am hesitant suddenly to view events purely through this terministic screen, as Kenneth Burke would call it, or what you were talking about, the conceptual net. If we learned something from the events of the last few years, it's to, as you were saying, imagine how others see us. And I think that it's very dangerous for us simply to take away from 9/11 – even though I think we do need to know more about Islam – the idea that, "This is automatically an outcome of Islam."

MR. DIONNE: Yeah. Mr. Mansuri, do you have anything to say about that, as well as how this has been taught within your community.

MR. MANSURI: Let me, if I may, use one particular example in response to the question you asked Meera. When talking about the demonstrations we consider anti-American, I use a photo of demonstrations in Pakistan in my workshop. I ask the teachers, What do you think of this demonstration? Would you consider it an anti-American demonstration? Everybody would say yes. Then I say, Look at this picture very carefully; among the people demonstrating in the picture are some young kids. Can you see what they're wearing,? One of the boys is wearing jeans, and his shirt has the name of some university in the United States. This person is wearing our clothes. Most possibly the person left his house after watching American television programs, and while on the way to the demonstration he stopped by at KFC and had our food, washed it down with Coke, stopped by Baskin Robbins and had ice cream.

Here is a man who has accepted our food, our culture, our clothes, and then he goes to a demonstration. What is he demonstrating against? He has accepted our values

in some ways, our cultural values, if you will, and the freedom that we have here in this country. Then he asks this country whose values he's accepted to live up to our ideals, to fight human rights violations in Kashmir and the like. That's what the demonstration's all about. There are U.S. policies that affect that area, and the demonstration is not so much against us as it is about our not living up to the ideal.

In most cases, we don't go through an in-depth analysis of what is happening on the ground there when people are taking issue with us and fighting with us in some way. We simply assume that the issue is what the media is bringing to our attention, what is considered the CNN factor, and that is miseducating us, misrepresenting us and our understanding of the issues out there.

I just wanted to make a comment about that. I think we need to be very careful as we are looking at the world out there and thinking that this is all about religion. It is not about religion in many cases. In some cases it is about religion.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I want to go back to Joe and Mary Ellen, but first somebody in the audience. I want to urge anybody who wants to join in to do so. Maybe we can collect a few questions at once to throw to the panel.

AUGUST BULLOCK: August Bullock from Prince William County schools[http://www.pwcounty.org/common/education.htm]. I am a practitioner, one of those who can implement what we are talking about today. Apparently public schools have not taken religion seriously, that's the assumption of this conference. Could you tell us where there are private schools that maybe do what you say that we're not doing? Are there any institutions, private ones, that are closer to what we are talking about today? Maybe we could look at what they're doing. But be sure they are comprehensive private schools that have to deal with the same variables that we as public educators have to deal with.

MYNGA FUTRELL: I come from the California. My name is Mynga Futrell. I'm with Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in Teaching About Religion [http://www.teachingaboutreligion.org/AboutThisSite/oabitar.htm]. And the business is civic inclusion, and I'm really pleased with the spectrum on the panel because I think that's a nice example of civic inclusion. I wanted to speak to Professor Viswanathan about what you noted was on the wall downstairs. I also noted what was on the wall, because when I think about the United States, I look at the spectrum of religions, and then I notice, if we could imagine, that about two of those squares up there were blocked out and we couldn't see them. They were dark. When we go back downstairs they are dark. And they're dark for the reason that we don't really talk about them. We're caught in a linguistic problem here. If we're going to talk civic inclusion and, to quote Dr. Nord, if we're going to teach liberally and broadly, that means inclusively. The more one knows the more one sees similarities. And students can't be kept in the dark about alternatives. And I would like to speak to the issue of those two dark squares up there. That's the non-religion word. Those people have a liberty of conscience. They have views on evil, on morality and so forth. And I think that we cannot, just as we cannot see Hinduism

through the lens of Christianity so well, we cannot see the non-religious through the lens of religion. So I am kind of struck by the question, How do we get over this language problem?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. This conference is going to cost Charles $1 million in redecoration costs. That lady over there.

SUSAN MOGULL: Susan Mogull, I am with the California Three-R's Project, but became involved in this really as a Jewish parent, and you did mention, Warren, anti-Semitism. I must say the greatest shock to me after 9/11 was the more apparent anti-Semitism that has come out in the world, particularly in the Middle East and Europe, but also in this country, which came to me as something of a shock. But I think that one problem we really have in trying to teach about world religions is that special relationship between Judaism and Christianity. How do we really explain the hatred against Jews that has existed for centuries and centuries, and put it in a religious context that can be talked about among Christians and Jews? It's a very difficult thing, and it still exists and it just keeps resurging, and I'd like to just put that out for the whole conference. This is something that we really have difficulty dealing with and I'd like to know how we can do it.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Anybody that wants to jump in on those three very good questions? One on the private schools, Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance, we could do several conferences around each word, and then the third question on anti-semitism. Professor Nord could start if he wants but anyone else can jump in.

MS. VISWANATHAN: Maybe I'll just respond to that question about the dark squares. By the way, South America is nowhere to be seen; we have North and Central, but no South.

MR. DIONNE: $1,250,000 and rising.

MS. VISWANATHAN: Your question is about this problem of language and understanding. We understand the world often through language, through the concepts that language affords us. And how do we understand that thing for which we have no language to describe? But this is the central problem of cognition, right? How do we know that which is unfamiliar to us? And yet children learn. And we develop concepts, I would argue, through a kind of comparatist model; that is, we look at something we don't understand and say it's like what we already know. And then we begin to elaborate and enumerate those difference until we're able to come up with a new genre, a new category of understanding.

And so it seems to me one of the most interesting things, I thought, that happened on this panel – when Mr. Mansuri was speaking, did you notice the subject noun that he used when he talked about "we"? Right? That "we" was a very interesting "we"; it went back and forth. It was "we," "we Americans." It was "we Muslims." It was "we in Pakistan." And what I would argue is that he was suggesting that kind of multiple,

comparatist identity. I began by talking about my own peripherality, my marginality. But I think what it affords me is the ability to think as an American, a naturalized American, as an immigrant, as a Hindu, as a professor of Japanese, as someone who works with secondary students as well as university students. And it seems to me in some ways isn't that what we're really trying to teach our students? Not a kind of monolithic identity, you are this, and you are that. But rather to suggest the imbrications, and I would argue that comparative is not just comparative between religions.

That's what I was trying to suggest with 9/11: It's not just that we insert religion into history courses, into little slots that are predetermined; it's the way in which history and culture and religion and economics work together. We cannot understand etiology any other way than through this sort of interrelated quality. That's what I would like to teach students, in an age appropriate manner, and ourselves as well: How to understand this world in a more complex and interesting way.

MR. DIONNE: You know, humility is one of the marks of the divine, if I can make a theological statement. You keep coming back to your marginality. Could I bring in Joe and Mary Ellen at this point? I'm especially interested in the question about how you do this right. But I invite you to discuss any other comments that were made.

MR. LOCONTE: Let me take that question. It's a great question. I had a conversation a couple of years ago with Paul Vallas, who then was the superintendent of Chicago public schools. He is a liberal Democrat in Chicago, and he was making all these changes in the Chicago public school system. He told me after a couple of hours there, touring around the school and what not, that he was modeling his reforms on what he thought was best in Catholic parochial education in the city of Chicago. He'd engaged in a lot of partnerships with congregations there in the city to work with at-risk kids; that was his particular concern. But the more he got involved with those Catholic parochial schools, he thought, "I'm going to model a lot of my reforms on what's happening in the Catholic parochial schools." And he ticked off four or five distinctive qualities they had: an atmosphere of discipline, they're rooted in the community, connected to congregations, and the big one he talked about there was academic excellence. He thought they had very high standards. And I thought this is fascinating that this guy who is a – in some ways – he's a secular educator, Chicago public school system, and he thinks that Catholic parochial school model is a pretty good model for reforming the Chicago system. So that's one partial answer to the question.

MR. DIONNE: But also, specifically, I think we're dealing with how religion or religious studies, whatever one wants to call this thing, is dealt with in the schools directly. I think that was what the question went to. Does anyone have a thought on that? I speak with sympathy, Joe; I spent a lot of years in Catholic schools.

MS. SIKES: I'll jump in without actually offering a good answer to that question. As was expressed this morning, unless the administrative levels of education are getting involved in each state, I don't think there is going to be enough support to do that. And I think that's what you're expressing: You're not sure how to use the

vocabulary; you're not sure about the teaching materials; you're not sure how to relate to children on this topic. It can be very uncomfortable, as was brought up this morning. It can even be dangerous.

I wanted to get into the vocabulary issue, though, because that might help a little bit with that dilemma and with the way people are thinking about this. Religion is such a broadly used term; we use it without thinking. We all think we know what we mean by the word religion. I'm not sure that we really do. And I'm not sure I can offer you any kind of definitive solution to that problem, but I can tell you that 15 percent of the population in the United States doesn't have a religion. That's according to the City University of New York ARIS survey [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/key_findings.htm], and that that was the third largest group in the survey and the fastest growing.

So if we're going to give kids an accurate picture of this connection that we want them to make to the universe around them and the people that they interact with on a daily basis and their ethics and a sense of ultimate concern, we need to find a word or expression for that. And the expression I would offer would be "worldview." Not everyone has a religion, but everyone does have a worldview. Some people have a religious worldview, some people have an explicitly non-religious worldview, and there was a word coined in the *Atlantic Monthly* just recently, some have what this author was calling an "apatheistic" worldview, people who frankly just don't care. They're not interested. Some of them are theistic and some are nontheist, but the truth is that they really didn't have a very strong interest in pursuing religious questions. And that is their right in a pluralistic society. And they may be perfectly wonderful, ethical neighbors for us. They just don't focus on those issues. So if we could perhaps begin to explore the idea of expanding the vocabulary, a worldview applies to everybody.

MR. DIONNE: Could I ask you a quick question on that? Since I came across that word, I've thought that a Pew Forum conference on apatheism would be wonderful, except no one would want to come. (Laughter.) But the question is this: If we were to follow Professor Nord's rule about the need for, say, a year of religious studies, would it be your view that such a course would be required to teach, if you will, non-religious worldviews? What would you view as fair or constitutional or intellectually honest in that regard?

MS. SIKES: I would argue that to remain constitutional it would have to include non-religious worldviews. I would also argue something that you may not have thought of, which is that to teach about religion, you cannot avoid talking about heresy, apostasy, dissent, those who have left the fold for various reasons, the concept of rejection of religion or a choice not to accept religion at all ever is something that is made within a similar framework to embrace a religion. And I don't think you can separate the two. I think if you intend to offer a liberal education about religious culture, you must talk about these other topics.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Marjorie wanted to come in and then Professor Nord.

MS. GREEN: I'm picking up on Susan's reference earlier to what has been termed the oldest hatred, the sometimes inexplicable anti-Semitism that exists. If we're talking about a 9/11 world in which religion or religious motivation may trigger unspeakable acts, and then we go back into the schools, let me confirm that our findings are that global anti-Semitism has increased in the last two years. What is particularly strange and inexplicable has been that the old Christian canards and stereotypes of Jews have filtered into the Middle East in a way that seems – you're seeing cartoons in Egyptian newspapers that could have come out of Hitler's Germany. It is really very strange.

But that brings us back into what Professor Nord talked about earlier: the teaching of religion in the public schools, and if it is done as it has been done since it has been reintroduced, from the perspective – from the filter of the outsider, rather than the authentic voice of the religious group themselves, you really have a problem. And you mentioned very appropriately the question of the Old Testament in the beginning in 1989, when the textbooks were beginning to just talk about religions again. And to hear about the God of the Hebrews with a small G, and then you moved into the first century and you had the repetition of the Deicide charges that have been renounced by the church back in the textbooks, and you wonder why there may not be an increase of anti-Semitism in the schoolyards.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Professor Nord. And we still have to help out our friend here, who wants to do something in his school district.

MR. NORD: The complexity of the task is daunting. When we stop to ask what would go into a yearlong religious studies course, which 99 percent of schools aren't prepared to offer, it's a really tricky question. There are courses in comparative religions, which usually focus on the great world religions in their classical forms, and oftentimes don't include the kind of contemporary ways in which religious folks within different traditions try and make sense of the world. So oftentimes they don't measure up very well. And there are Bible courses here and there, but that's not what I'm asking for.

Even when we talk about getting inside a religious tradition, of course insiders disagree. Whose view gets to speak for the religious tradition? Of course the answer should be if people within a religious tradition disagree, somehow or another that disagreement needs to be reflected in the discussion, but there are so many disagreements, and how do you know about them and how to represent them? And one of the questions that always comes up is: There are so many different religions, how many of them can find their way into the discussion? These are extraordinarily difficult and daunting questions.

Then you throw in the fact that most teachers haven't been prepared by their educations to understand even much about their own religious tradition. And there's not

much at all in the textbooks and there aren't many other resources, although the series Jon Butler edited is a wonderful addition to a very small group of resource materials appropriate for use in high schools. Then you talk about the suspicion that exists and the fact that there's a lot of misunderstanding, constitutionally, about what you can and can't do. As I said, it can be daunting.

Part of the problem with the solution is that changes have to happen in so many different areas at once. We need better textbooks, we need better resource materials, we need much better teacher education, we need consciousness-raising, we need local school districts to develop school policies, and just making an improvement in one of those areas isn't going to solve the problem unless you can also make improvements in the other areas as well. Now I have no doubt that incremental improvements can be made. If you look at textbooks over the last decade or two, they've gotten better. I could say a little better, but a little better sometimes counts for a great deal when you start out from such a miserable level in the first place. But it really does require us working across all kinds of educational domains in order to make these changes work, and that's really a monumental task, but we fall so short of the ideal, I think we just can't help but to recognize that something has to be done.

MR. DIONNE: I want to give the audience one more round, so panelists who want to jump back in will have a chance. I wanted to ask one quick question: Is there any school system, school district, any state, that provides a model that is a substantial improvement on the past or that is doing this job pretty well? Is there any place you can point to? I don't mean to put you on the spot, but I'm just curious if any of you can give the educators in this room an idea of how they can apply what they picked up here?

CHARLES HAYNES: I think that there's a difference between doing well mentioning religion and taking religion seriously. I think there are any number of examples of where there has been improvement in including more about religion, and California is probably the leading example, so I would look at that. I don't think it's absolutely perfect, and it has a long way to go, and they are stuck with the same textbooks that everybody else is stuck with, for the most part. Nevertheless, I think the state standards in California on this issue, and the widespread in-service opportunities that, compared to other states, have been available in California— Perhaps Utah also should be looked at, because its teacher-educators have been involved in the conversation in a serious way, and so there is, I think, a possibility of long-term change in Utah's small state, a deep commitment to address this issue in the right way, with more in-service opportunities with each passing year. So because we worked a long time, Marsha and I and others, in these two states, perhaps we are a little bit myopic about it, but I do think that of all of the states that I can think of where we've been and worked, those two probably are furthest along in the mentioning category. And the serious category, I think, there's really not a good model yet.

But in terms of private schools and religious schools, is there a model? We have Peter Cobb in the room who has worked with hundreds of independent schools. Carol Shields here teaches religious studies at a very fine school in Washington, D.C. I would

say the short answer, and you all may have a better answer, the short answer is, no, if you look across the curriculum, in my opinion. Yes, if you look at religious studies. If you want to see how some good religious studies programs are operating, what a religious studies course might look like, I think there are any number of private and religious schools, and Peter could give you a list, that are doing a very good job, but Carol and other religious studies people will tell you that even they feel on the margins often in their school, in terms of being religious studies people and what counts for going to college and so forth. Does religious studies really count and so forth, so if you take private and even religious schools, is there a good across-the-curriculum model for teaching about religions fairly and accurately? I would say no. But if you look for good religious studies, I would say there are plenty of good examples.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Just on that point, my favorite course on my college transcript is called "Eschatology in Politics," and I must say it's been very relevant over the past 30 years.

I want one more round of questions. Why don't we start right there. Let's bring everybody in, and then we'll give the whole panel a chance to reply. That means they can skip the questions they don't want to answer; I think that's the best way to do it. Please.

RICHARD FOLTON: Hi. Richard Folton from the American Jewish Committee [http://www.ajc.org/]. I'm not an educator by training, so I don't know the right way to do this very difficult task, but I heard a couple of things earlier that really strike me as the wrong way to deal with the issue of teaching about religion in the schools. And that's an effort – a laudable effort – to make us appreciate the pluralistic nature of society and appreciate all the richness that all the different faiths represented on this panel bring to American society; when we do that, we have to remember not to sanitize the problems that religion brings us. I heard that tendency coming from a couple of people.

What am I talking about? The post-9/11 demonstrations, we are told, are ostensibly political, from the point of view abroad, whereas here we see it as a religious issue. The fact is, if one just takes the word of the attackers, if one takes the word of Osama bin Laden, he's invoking religion, invoking a war against the Jews and the Crusaders, by which he means Christians. Hatred of Jews and of Christians is being taught in madrassas, it's being taught in the Saudi Arabian schools; this has a religious base, and this is inextricably woven into the events of September 11th. This is religiously based hatred that is directed against America, against Jews, against Christians.

So, yes, we do need to wrestle with these things, I'm certainly not suggesting that bin Laden's vision of what Islam is is the appropriate vision of it, but that needs to be responded to. And what is not productive is for us to be told, as we attempt to wrestle with these things in the schools and in the whole society, that what's really going on here is some sort of issue over American policy as opposed to very dangerous things that are being taught as a particular vision of religion in a large part of the world.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you for that. We will get a reply to that. Over here. We'll get around to everybody, just put your hand back up when the time comes.

ERIK OWENS: I'm Erik Owens from the University of Chicago Divinity School [http://divinity.uchicago.edu/]. In the past few years there's been a big upsurge in patriotic expressions in the United States and a non-coincident focus on civic education, and I'm curious what Professor Nord and the panel would have to say about whether or not there is a distinction between making good people out of liberal education, and making good citizens.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. That's very good. By the way, he mentions University of Chicago Divinity School, I just want to say that I'm sure my friend Jean Bethke Elshtain, who is co-chair of the Forum, would really love this conversation and would have liked to be here today. This lady over here.

LINDA MCKAY: Linda McKay, U.S. Department of Education [http://www.ed.gov/]. I have a specific question for Mr. Mansuri. One of the things I've heard about is how one explains to students, after September 11th, that young people are willing to take their lives for their religious beliefs. I'd like to have some of your comments on how you've given some instruction to teachers on that issue.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. And then there were two over here, and then I'll have to shut it down so that you guys can move on to the next panel.

EMILE LESTER: Emile Lester, College of William and Mary [http://www.wm.edu/]. This question is for Professor Nord. The Protestant fundamentalist parents in the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case argued that these ideas which you talked about, getting inside of religion, other religions, and critically distancing yourself from your own religion, were not only problematic, but could actually risk the salvation of their children. And so my question to you would be, is a liberal education for everyone? And to go along with that, should we prioritize parents' rights, or, especially after the events of 9/11, does the increased need for tolerance mean that we have to make sure that liberal education is for everyone?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. That's a good question too.

BRAJENDRA SHARMA: This is Brajendra Sharma, one of the administrators with D.C. public schools [http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/home.html] locally here. Two issues. One is I've been in education for 30 years – elementary, middle, high, college – and I think religion and education is a very important issue. A few minutes ago my friend here, Mr. Kersey, asked me to pass the bread. I said "How about butter?" He said, "No butter." I think if you have to have education, you have to have religion. We are talking about character, we are talking about values. What are those character and values? Speakers here have talked about the existence of religion or the non-existence of

religion. I think that we have to look into that; there has to be religion, whether existence of it or non-existence of it.

Then, tangentially, Mr. Mansuri talked about Pakistan. I was administrator in Southeast Washington, D.C., and many of my students – and when I was in Somalia many people there – wore large oversized shirts with prints from the United States of America, Nike and all that. It's not that they have accepted our values; it is not true. They use those clothes because they are cheaper.

Number two. He mentioned Kashmir, which was an inappropriate forum, because we are talking about religion, not politics; if it was a religious issue, Iran and Iraq would not have fought a war for close to 10 years, and Bangladesh would not have been separated. Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. That's a great collection of questions. Could I ask Meera to start and to, in particular, deal with Richard's question plus any of the other questions that are on the table.

MS. VISWANATHAN: Was that the question about the danger of sanitizing? I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

MR. DIONNE: If hatred of Jews and Christians is religiously based, shouldn't we take it seriously, if that's a fair brief summary.

MS. VISWANATHAN: Remember this morning, the question of what is the danger came up, and one of the pleasures of this particular forum is that we're all so amicable. And there's a shared sense of what we're after, but in fact these are dangerous issues, and I wasn't at all suggesting that we sanitize it or we denature it or we somehow say, "You see, we can just take it away and neatly put it here." No, I think that politics and religion are an interwoven issue. I think it's very messy. I think it's very volatile. And so, you are quite right that we need to keep that in mind. What I'm suggesting is the danger from our side, of just seeing it as a religious issue, excluding the political, because I think that's also a mistake. That was my point in talking about the way in which it's presented in American media versus what happens in some other foreign media. So that's one of the things I think we need to keep in mind.

I also think classrooms are risky places. And I think they ought to be. There's a reason why. Every teacher can attest to this: We all feel sick before we walk into the classroom. Right? Because one is uncertain about what will come. And there's a sense of trying to anticipate it. But I think that's also the excitement that's the process of education. So, yes, while at the first grade level you might not want to delve into these issues in their most provocative way, I think you have to talk about the problems. And I agree with you, I think there is inculcation of hatred of Americans. But what I'm trying to suggest is that religion is not something you can compartmentalize neatly and say it's just that problem. It's very much interwoven in cultural-historical issues.

MR. DIONNE: Why don't we just go up the line. Joe, if you could go next. I am particularly intrigued by the question about good people versus good citizens, the conflict that can exist between civic and religious values. If somebody wants to take that one up. But, Joe, go ahead.

MR. LOCONTE: A couple of thoughts that I hope will speak to some of these questions at least. It seems to me that so much of the rest of the world, not the rest of the world, but much of it, is struggling to manage its religious diversity. It seems to me that America has something to offer here in this regard, because you've got a nation, the world's most stable democracy, and it has to be one of the most religiously, ethnically diverse nations in the world, but it has maintained a level of civic peace and stability unrivalled. I don't think most of the students graduating from high school today know why. And that's a scandal.

Why is it that in a couple of months after September 11th President Bush was able to go to the U.N. – whatever you think about what happened there with Iraq and Afghanistan – he was able to go to the U.N. and, in issuing out this challenge, he made specific reference to a Pakistani Muslim who had lost his life in the World Trade Center trying to help his colleagues escape? It was a wonderful, honest gesture, an imploring of Americans to make sure we realize we're in this thing together as citizens. It's one of those acts of statesmanship that kind of gets lost in the ether. But there aren't that many countries in the world – there are some, but not many – where the nation's head under similar circumstances would take the time to do that. And that's not just a result of Bush's personal faith – I think it is – but it's also really a result of the culture here in America. That kind of spirit of tolerance, religious freedom, respect for human dignity, we're in this thing together. That's a product of institutions and traditions over time. And it's a scandal that most of the kids graduating high school today have no idea, they can't explain, the level of civic stability and peace despite our religious diversity, and that's the challenge.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Mary Ellen.

MS. SIKES: It's hard for me to disagree with that. I agree that students need to understand that it's our constitutional republic that provides these rights and that having the balance of the Establishment and the Free Exercise clauses in the First Amendment is what creates the religious diversity in this nation. It's unparalleled anywhere else.

In response to your remarks about the warts of religion, the problems that religion can bring and the temptation to sanitize for children, I think it's fairly clear that whatever we present to children in any setting needs to be age-appropriate. And I certainly wouldn't want to see elementary students discussing some of the very weighty issues that have been brought up today. But I do want to suggest that here in the United States we tend to think of ourselves in a very narcissistic way, and to think of terrorism as something that belongs to other countries and, you know, other religions that are present here in the United States but not in a particularly large percentage – right now, especially, we are using the word Muslim and terrorist as the same thing, as synonymous. We have

our own brand of terrorists here in the United States. We have the Christian Identity Movement, the Order, the Aryan Nation. They've been responsible for influencing almost all of the domestic terrorism that we've had here. They were behind a lot of the philosophy that was adopted by the people who blew up the Oklahoma City building. They've been behind all the clinic bombings. People who have adopted a lot of these ideas and then acted on their own, but were heavily influenced by this sort of Christian militia kind of movement.

Terrorism is not limited to one religion, and every religion is a continuum from its most rigid, literalist adherents to its most liberal. I think that's a very hard concept for us to grasp, let alone to pass along to children. We give them this idea that Christianity is this bulleted list of five things, and then Judaism is the same bulleted list without Jesus. (Laughter.) And then we move on to Muslim, and okay in Islam it's the same bulleted list but replace Jesus with Mohammed. This is just not reality. I think this is part of our challenge. It is a very complex topic. It's so complex I don't know that it can be done properly. It's something to talk about and something to work towards.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Shabbir.

MR. MANSURI: At my birth in India, my father had decided for me to come to the U.S. This decision provided the framework under which I was raised. My father did everything in his ability to prepare me for going to America. What he thought Americans would do, he would make me do. Americans drank coffee, so I drank coffee. He would tell me Americans don't play cricket, so you don't play cricket -which I did, by the way, behind his back. I wasn't allowed to spend much time out playing, because according to my father, Americans were only studious and hardworking and so I must be the same way.

I lived that way for the first 23 years of my life, studying America and the American system, in my own way, not as a scholar, but as someone who was struggling to understand what it was that he was asking me to do. And it was, in some respect, also through a religious framework that he was asking me to do certain things. Thus, I was given by my father two keys; one to the library and one to the masjid, which is where I spent much of my time reading and studying. Also, I was blessed with the opportunity to spend a lot of time at the feet of the elders so that I could learn from their wisdom.

Twenty-three years of my life, there was a man who forced me to do something although I didn't know why he was doing it. But he gave me two reasons for it, and I want to put that on the table, at least put in proper perspective where I am coming from. His argument with me was, When you go to that country, you will have freedom - not that I didn't have freedom in India, but freedom and access to information. This is something that I didn't quite understand, why he was saying what he was saying, but I obeyed him, as children do in India.

With every year that passed by in my youth studying American history, the people, and culture, I became more and more attached to American values. Finally, after

23 years of that the time came for me to go to America. Upon my departure from India, my father made me promise him something very strange. He asked me to buy a burial plot for myself. Of course, this surprised me because I wasn't thinking in the least about death so I asked him why. His answer to me was "So you know where you belong and so you know where you will be buried."

So then when I came here, I realized that it was the kind of upbringing I had that made me automatically feel at home, because I was asked to consider this country as mine, the values of this country as mine. My father, even though he was an uneducated man in the formal sense, had used the framework of Islam to try to make clear to me the values of America since the two share many similarities.

[end of audio]