

**THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE
FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER**

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

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TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION: BEYOND HISTORY

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MARCIA BEAUCHAMP: This session is looking more at practical resources for helping all of us understand more about what teaching about religion would look like in its various incarnations in the public schools. We talked a little bit about the role of religion in the context of history and opportunities for changes there yesterday, and today we have a panel of folks who are going to talk to us about teaching about religion outside of the history curriculum.

We have three wonderful people with us. I'm going to introduce them now to you, and then they will, one at a time, present to you their expertise in these various areas.

Kathy Brownback, who is to my left, is an instructor at Phillips Exeter Academy, and she has taught there for 15 years. She has also been in the dean's office, so Kathy has a broad perspective on education from different places in the process. She is going to talk to us today about a course she's offered three times. It looks at the role of religion in the context of teaching about ecology, which is an interesting way to think about how to include more religion in the content of the curriculum.

To her right is Eric Holmes, who is with us from Utah. He's an elementary school principal in Utah and has been involved with the Utah Three Rs project since its inception and is the vice chair of that project now. Eric has traveled for the First Amendment Center all over the country, doing workshops for teachers on the role of religion in the curriculum. He has extensive experience both as an educator in the classroom and as a teacher educator. He's going to talk to us a little bit about the role of education in the elementary school classroom, which was a topic that came up yesterday.

Last but not least, we have Amanda Hughes, who is here with us from the Ackland Museum and its Five Faiths Project at the University of North Carolina. She is the assistant director of that absolutely wonderful program for bringing teachers and their students into the museum to learn more about the role of religion through the study of art. She will be sharing with us a multimedia presentation on that project.

Before we begin, I wanted to take a moment to say that there are a variety of really wonderful resources out there. We haven't talked very much about this because we have been focusing on the philosophical questions about how to include more religion in the curriculum, but there are some wonderful resources, some of which we have on display out at the table outside. The series *Religion in American Life*, which is being published, as we heard from Jon Butler, still one volume shy of the full 17 volumes, by Oxford University Press, looks at the role of religion in American history from a variety of perspectives. I'm sure most of you have had a chance to look at those volumes, but if you haven't, please do take a look, because they are probably the most useful and

wonderful resource for classroom teachers and for secondary school students that have come along in the history of education in this country.

The other resource that I had hoped to be able to show to you during this time period is a CD-ROM called *On Common Ground*, produced by The Pluralism Project at Harvard University [<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/>]. That project sent graduate student researchers back to their home communities to research the presence of religious traditions other than Christianity and Judaism; in other words, to map the religious diversity across this nation. It is an incredibly useful tool for all levels of education, all the way to postgraduate research, because it helps people see how truly diverse this country is, not just on the coasts, with which most of us are familiar, but also across the country. It also gives classroom teachers an opportunity to share religion from the inside with students, which is something that Warren and Charles talk about in the book that all of you got a copy of, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*. The CD allows students in the classroom to hear, for example, Muslim women talk about wearing a veil, or to hear Sikh individuals talk about their commitment to their faith. It's a wonderful resource. You can find out more about it at the Pluralism Project's Web site [<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/>] or order it through Columbia University Press' Web site [<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/catalog/data/023112/0231126646.HTM>].

So, without further ado, I would like to have you welcome with me Kathy Brownback to the podium.

KATHY BROWNBACK: Thanks, Marcia. I just want to clarify a little bit to start out. The course that I teach is not solely religion in ecology, it's actually a course that is called, "The Ethics of the Marketplace." It's about that course that I'm going to talk today.

My colleagues sometimes ask me how I can teach a class about something that doesn't exist, which is ethics of the marketplace. Although I have joked with them about that, my serious reply is that ethics in the marketplace had better exist, or we're not going to survive. Marcia has asked me to describe this elective, which is one of 18 courses that we offer each term to high school students. The particular class that I teach is for 11th and 12th graders, and it attracts a mix of students. Some are just trying to figure all the angles before they go into business. Others have heard that there are some interesting readings about the world that they live in. Others don't want to hear anything about that but need a religion credit. They don't want to hear anything about the Gospel, or the Bhagavad Gita or anything about any one wrestling with an angel or anything remotely close to that; they just want to get their religion credit out of the way. Then there are some who realize there are few topics that will affect them more directly in the long run.

The course begins with the first three chapters of Tom Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Although it was published in 2000, before 9/11, before the demise of the dot-com world, and before the recent wave of corporate scandals, it is still useful for a couple of reasons. It explains to kids the massive interconnectedness on a global scale that has occurred in the last 10 or 15 years; the phenomenon that they have all heard of as

globalization. As you know if you read one of Friedman's books or his regular foreign affairs column in *The New York Times*, he writes in a breezy, anecdotal style that covers a lot of territory in a fairly brief period.

The second reason I like to use this book is that the title chapter develops the two metaphors that he uses throughout the book, and we use them throughout the class. The "Lexus" is comes from the Toyota factory in Japan; it's the name he gives to the forces of technological advancement in factories, offices and people's lives around the world. The "olive tree" represents that part of us that finds a grounding in something older, more rooted, more connected, usually to the natural or cultural world. Friedman sees that the choices before us revolve, not around the triumph of one or the other – the Lexus or the olive tree – but the balancing of the two. As we know, the Lexus, the force of technological innovation, can lead to dehumanization of the worst sort. The olive tree, on the other hand, can also lead to a narrowed focus on one way of life, one tradition, one fairly limited view of the world that often carries with it various hierarchies and definitions of how we should all behave. To balance the energy and dynamism of the one, the Lexus, with the respect for community and tradition of the other, the olive tree, is the task that he puts before us.

The third reason that I like to use the book is that he devotes a lot of time to describing the environmental crisis and its significance for any shaping of a future world. Students are often surprised by this, as it suggests that the state of the environment is as important a subject as missiles, throw weights and fiber-optic capacity. It saddens me that at this stage of the game this is still so surprising to so many of our students, but nevertheless, it has consistently been the case that they are surprised to see the environment elevated to this level. To me, it's the number one topic to be considered in the ethics of the marketplace. So, for all these reasons, the book is a good place to start.

At the end of this section, I ask students to write a paper about what the olive tree metaphor means to them. These papers are usually really interesting. It's immediately clear that, for some students, there really is no olive tree. To help them get started, I sometimes suggest they consider who they are when the electricity is turned off. This is helpful to some kids, and it throws others even deeper into confusion, because it's clear that they have very little they can rely on in this regard. Nevertheless, even if they flounder around a bit, the question is a good one, and it's a subject that we return to a lot in the rest of the discussions in the class.

After this introduction to Friedman's work, we turn to a chapter from the recent report of the International Forum on Globalization, of which John Cavanaugh and Jerry Mander were the co-chairs. The chapter I use is called, "A Critique of Corporate Globalization," and it focuses on the key ingredients of globalization that have been considered problematic: hyper-growth, resource extraction, export-driven economies, homogenization of cultures, levels of debt in developing countries, the role of the IMF and the World Bank, and the privatization of public services such as water and public land. Although Friedman has touched on some of this, the report states the negatives much more directly, and its authors do not see globalization as inevitable in the way that

Friedman does. There is also a section on the limits of the GNP/GDP as a measure of well-being and alternative forms of economic and social measurements that could be more helpful.

At about this time, we step back and ask why we're talking about all of this in a religion class. We discuss ethics in general and what it means to be ethical, considering the long run as well as the short run, the public good as well as the private good, the land ethic that was first proposed by Aldo Leopold back in 1948. We ask who are the various stakeholders and we talk about other understandings of ethics. I try to stress that there are businesspeople and corporations that try to be ethical and that those interested in being ethical don't have to retire to a cave somewhere or spend the rest of their lives in graduate school. I would have to say that not all my students are so motivated at this stage of their lives. The real task in ethics is to find the vision and the courage to ask these questions in whatever paths they undertake. This thread, then, begins to run through the discussions that follow for the rest of the term.

We then continue on with the environmental issue more directly. I use, as a further introduction to this subject, several chapters from Paul Hawken's, Amory Lovins' and Hunter Lovins' book, called *Natural Capitalism*. I find this a useful text because it presents the really difficult aspects of our environmental crisis with a can-do attitude about the ability of business to make environmentally constructive decisions that also make economic sense. While some of their writing is a bit rosy about these prospects, it is at least not as frightening as one truly unrealistically can be on this subject; and I find it helpful to present the bad news in the context of the good. Kids get really interested in the ideas of hypercars, a hydrogen economy derived from renewable resources, and there are many, many other technological possibilities that are described in detail in this book.

They also read a chapter from a book called *Mid-Course Correction* by Ray Anderson, who runs a huge international flooring company in Atlanta. Under his leadership, the company is trying to make a more environmentally friendly product that can be recycled and reused, and therefore it doesn't end up back in landfills. I like to use him because he is the CEO of this company, and he does give a different sense to kids of what it means to be a CEO. He says in the book, "When we first examined the entire supply chain comprehensively, we found that in 1995 the technologies of our factories and suppliers together extracted from the earth and processed 1.2 billion pounds of material so that we could produce \$802 million worth of products. That's 1.2 billion pounds of materials per year from Earth's stored natural capital."

He goes on to describe how much of that natural capital, mostly oil, coal and natural gas, goes to produce energy to make carpet, how much is in other materials needed to make carpet, and how much of that product will be back in the earth in the form of unusable landfill within about 10 years. He said that the calculation, when he first heard it, made him want to throw up, and he asked an unusual CEO question: This cannot go on indefinitely, can it? We talk about this as the kind of question that a good CEO should be asking, but usually the focus is elsewhere.

This company is out in front in trying to redesign production and delivery processes with the environment in mind. Considering natural capital, or the natural resources out of which most wealth is created, we make the analogy to a private school spending its endowment principal rather than the interest, and students pretty quickly see that we are in a society with a lack of respect for the sustainability of natural resources. It's a big question that hangs out there over the kids' heads as they begin to process the fact that we are really in a predicament, and business needs to take a huge share of responsibility for it. Although my reading of Anderson suggests that his own motivation is, to some considerable extent, religious, in his eyes, neither the religious community, nor the government, nor education can play nearly as significant a role as the enlightened corporation.

We also read a couple of really interesting pieces that I found on the web at the Ayn Rand Institute [<http://www.aynrand.org/>], with titles such as "Conservation Versus the American Dream" [<http://www.aynrand.org/medialink/conservationvsamerica.shtml>]. These lay out, in very clear language, the economic assumptions about progress that have gotten us to our present situation, and they lead to an interesting discussion about the American dream and how environmental concerns fit into it. It's a good exercise to hear the anti-environmental voice raised so stridently on behalf of our inalienable right to fossil fuel, and the faith that when it runs out, we will find something else, but their views clearly underlie most of the choices that we have made so far.

The students read a chapter from *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser's book about what goes into the making and selling of fast food. The chapter I choose is called, "Why do Fries Taste Good?" which is about the growing of potatoes in Idaho, the rise of corporate farming, and also the phenomenon of taste and flavoring, which seems at the moment to come largely out of factories along the New Jersey Turnpike.

They read an essay by Wendell Berry called "The Pleasures of Eating," which identifies a consumer that he calls the industrial eater, who has little idea of where food comes from or how it arrived in the market or what is in it, and encourages us to pay more attention to these questions in order to take control of our own lives.

We also see a PBS *American Masters* video about Alice Waters, the person who started the gourmet restaurant called Chez Panisse in Berkeley and was one of the first to hold out for locally grown, high-quality organic produce. The depiction of a really good fresh strawberry on that film as compared to what is usually available in our supermarkets, at least up in New Hampshire, is striking, as is her work with generations of children in local schools.

We then watch a *Frontline* video called "The Merchants of Cool," which details the way kids are the focus of market research today. When I first showed it, I expected the kids would be more jaded about this video than they were; they were stunned by it. We spent a lot of time talking about it, and I ended up using it in two philosophy classes as well, under the "Free Will and Determinism" topic. It really describes just how far the focus group idea has gone in trying to determine what kids consider cool and how to then

sell it back to them, and the enormous profits to be made from this process by companies that they all know and recognize.

We then read a chapter of a book called *The Overspent American* by Juliet Schor, which explains the debt that many consumers have taken on in an effort to keep up with the lifestyles that many of us would now like to have, and how those standards have changed in just a decade or two. David Loy points out that in 1994, according to *Advertising Age*, we spent \$147 billion on advertising in one year, far more than we spent on higher education.

Nevertheless, since our kids, at least at Exeter, are still very much interested in capitalism as a way to get rich and have a lot of things and retire early, the other main section of the course is on income distribution. We start with an article that Princeton economist Paul Krugman wrote in an October issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, which is called “For Richer.” It’s surprising to students to see that the vast majority of income growth has gone to the top 100th percentile in our country, and that for the rest, the growth has been much slower, if at all. In fact, in most cases, the increase in family incomes over 30 years is attributable mainly to women entering the workforce. It’s important for kids to know that many of us, even here in the United States, do not benefit much from the growth in the GDP and other measures of overall economic progress, and that the gap between the rich and poor is back to where it was before the New Deal.

We then read several articles on the topics of corporate accounting fraud, explaining, among other things, the manipulation of balance sheets to accomplish great things with revenue, the influence of executive stock options, executive salaries relative to lower-level employees, and so on. Even as I speak, students in the class are writing a reflection piece on a recent Harvard Business Review article that’s called “What’s a Business For?” which asks questions about corporate social responsibility and the current direction of many companies and their executives.

We close with Barbara Ehrenreich’s recent book, *Nickel and Dimed*, which is her story of how she took three different placements in low-wage jobs around the country and her efforts to survive, unsuccessfully, on \$6 or \$7 a day. The book is funny in places and the kids really enjoy reading it, but it’s a real eye-opener for them, about people whose lives they have rarely thought twice about. They can clearly see what it feels like to have one’s labor devalued to the status of the cheapest possible commodity.

David Loy, whom I mentioned earlier, is a Buddhist economist who lives in Japan. In an article entitled “The Religion of the Market,” Loy describes the way in which the market has become our faith, complete with the local shopping malls, the temple of salvation, and the idea that consumption leads to freedom, or, failing that, to happiness. The \$147 billion that we spend annually on advertising can only be seen as the proselytizing needed to keep the faithful coming.

He makes the interesting point that, “The great sensitivity to social justice in the Semitic religions, for whom sin is a moral failure of will, needs to be supplemented by

the emphasis that Asian enlightenment traditions place upon seeing through and dispelling delusion. Ignorance is a failure to understand.” Moreover, he says, “I suspect that the former, that is the Semitic traditions, without the latter, the Asian enlightenment traditions, are doomed to be ineffective in our cynical age.” He goes on: “In Buddhism, to cite the example of my own religion, the insatiable desires of the ego-self are the source of the frustration and the lack of peace that we experience in our daily lives. As we have consciously or unconsciously turned away from the religious understanding of the world, we have come to pursue these worldly goals with a religious zeal all the greater, because they can never really be fulfilled. The solution to the environmental catastrophe that has already begun, and to the social deterioration we are already suffering from, will occur when we redirect this repressed spiritual urge back onto its true path.” That’s David Loy.

I have a colleague and friend who sometimes remarks that she hopes to save religion from the overriding influences of this culture and the many often-justified critiques that are heaped against it. My own concern is a bit different. Like her, I am acutely aware of the failings of traditional religions and the ways they have been used to manipulate people, but I can probably say that I would shed buckets of tears for some of the hymns, but I would not be upset if some of the stories of religion themselves were to disappear. I would shed buckets of tears for our lives, without any greater awareness or reverence for the sacred than the local shopping mall. We are the ones who need to be saved.

In “The Merchants of Cool,” a teenager tells a focus group that she likes Sprite, because from the latest marketing campaign she knows “Sprite understands me.” (Laughter.) Some students immediately laughed when we watch this video and others were a little slower than I thought to get the irony. The path I feel I am sometimes walking is to encourage a critical eye toward market religion without causing humiliation.

As I mentioned, this is not a class in which the kids want to talk about religion anyway, so I try to include the subject with a light hand, usually by talking about ethics and underlying questions about fairness, and about the nature and limits of greed. Many understandings of traditional religion do not in the least challenge the religion of the market, and I have no interest in adding my own proselytizing to that which they already experience so directly via advertising. I try not to land too heavily on any particular alternative in this class; I just try to highlight the questions about what is missing in our lives as individuals and as communities.

My hope is that the kids will begin to be free to ask the deeper questions that don’t ring any cash registers, and are therefore profoundly uninteresting to the market, but that lead back to the sense of what is truly sacred in our lives. Unearthing the olive tree, and talking about what threatens it, is a place to start.

(Applause.)

MS. BEAUCHAMP: Thank you, Kathy, very much. We have about five minutes that we could field questions for Kathy specifically before we move on. Any questions or comments are welcome. Right back here on the right hand side.

JAY LAMB: Hello, my name is Jay Lamb, and I teach courses in religion, philosophy and world history. Next year, I'm starting a course in globalization, taking AP government and sort of massaging it the way I want it. We're reading *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* over the summer, but this is new to me. I have been taking notes on your insights on how to use the book. I want to express my admiration for what you have done in putting together the kinds of materials that you have; it's a very extensive list. The only real question I have is, Is it possible to get a copy of your syllabus? (Laughter.)

MS. BROWNBACK: No, it's tightly guarded. It's a secret. (Laughter.) I'm keeping it for myself. No, it's available on my Web site and there are copies out on the table.

MS. BEAUCHAMP: Anyone else? Yes?

LARRY WITHAM: Larry Witham, independent writer. Can a student who came from a more conservative religious tradition, who will go through school with the notion that there is a revealed truth – “my parents taught it to me, and that's what I'm going to stick with” – feel comfortable in your course?

MS. BROWNBACK: That's an issue I struggle with in some other classes; it's not so much a concern in this class. I do have a number of students who are very conservative politically and economically, and they enter into the discussion. There are kids who will read the Ayn Rand Institute and say, “This is what I believe”; that's where they are. I don't try to teach, as far as religion goes, any specific religion; although my own understanding is that these questions are very much in line with the main teachings of many of the world traditions.

The kids who tend to get more irate about some of the things we see are the kids who are more politically conservative than religiously conservative. In fact, some religiously conservative kids are also somewhat skeptical about consumer culture and raise their own questions about it. They're not liable to be as concerned about certain assumptions as other kids, who really don't want to be perfectly candid. Most of us don't want to talk about limits; we want to talk about the future and progress. That's why I try to use a book like *Natural Capitalism*, which is really about possibilities of our not just having to go back to a hunting and gathering society, but to really be able to move forward, in many of the ways that we all want to, without destroying the environment as we go. Otherwise, it may sound as if we're saying, “Sorry, I know that you have all been taught that the future sounds like a good thing, but it's not going to happen,” which is a very difficult kind of message for a kid. They have been subject to countless hours of advertising telling them what the good life is going to be, and if you begin to talk about the problems that are potential, or inevitable, in continued growth along the lines that we have been practicing, they begin to get quite frustrated. That tends to be the tension. So,

it's not so much along religious grounds specifically as it is along political grounds. We do have some good, very heated debates in the class, as you can imagine. (Chuckles.)

MS. BEAUCHAMP: Let's see, Bruce and then Linda.

BRUCE GRELE: Bruce Grelle, California State University at Chico. I want to congratulate you on what sounds like a terrific course, and I'm definitely going to pick up a copy of the syllabus. I teach a somewhat similar course called "Cross-Cultural Environmental Ethics," and I try to achieve some of the same kinds of questioning that it sounds like you try to do.

I just wanted to share a couple of resources that I have found useful as well. One is a video that's funny, it's tongue-in-cheek, but it really raises some of these questions in a non-threatening but challenging way. (Laughter.) It's called *Affluenza*, I'm sure many of you have seen it, it's run on PBS; and it has a sequel called *Escape from Affluenza*. It works very well in the classroom, especially the first one.

A second video, "Consuming Images," from the series *The Public Mind* produced by Bill Moyers and run on PBS some years back, is somewhat dated now but it still has excerpts that are very useful. Think about the double meaning of that title, "Consuming Images." It also looks at the power of advertising in our world and the manipulation of desire.

MS. BEAUCHAMP: All right, great. Thank you. And then Linda, over here.

LINDA MCKAY: Linda McKay, U.S. Department of Education. Number one, I love your course, too, so I'm definitely going to get the syllabus. But I'm thinking that you would have students whose parents, especially the primary wage earner for the family, would probably fall into some of those categories you are talking about, and I find that definitely something that we deal with in public schools. Have you have had that questioning, "Hey, wait a minute, that's what my dad or my mom does, so it's okay." Or have you had more of, "Gosh, that's what my parents do." Has that come up at all?

MS. BROWNBACK: What my parents do as far as being –

MS. MCKAY: -- in the corporate world, not thinking of the community, the dollar is the number one thing and not looking at the environment in more of a community sense of responsibility.

MS. BROWNBACK: Right. It's more about the students' own aspirations, that they tend to feel threatened, rather than so much about their parents. I often have a lot of alumni visiting, and at Exeter, there are a lot of alumni who are very involved in corporate kinds of things, and a lot of parents who are. I'm fully aware that Exeter is a nonprofit institution; it is supported by the largess of people who have made their money in the market. There's no way around that other than to state the contradiction. I can't in

the least pretend that I sit up in New Hampshire and exist in some olive tree of the mind that is not caught up fully in this matter.

I try to talk about it as something that we're all in together, and I'm sure there are people who would say that I am much too cautious, even in the ways I present it. I try to talk about it not as a matter of the good guys versus the bad guys, probably because it's very hard to figure out who the bad guys are. We're all very enmeshed in it. I try to raise it more as a set of questions for all of us and for kids, in thinking about what they're going to do with their lives. They don't have to retreat from the world, they don't have to foreswear the business world, but they need to be trying to ask these questions in whatever ways they can.

Some people find this is a very amusing contradiction, but I have had a trustee come to the class who is recently retired from Goldman Sachs, and he talked about what it's like to be in the midst of this world, while also having all of the same questions on another side of his mind, and how you put those together. I have not found a way, really, to be a very confident purist on this; I just don't think that, because of his work at Goldman Sachs and all their efforts on mergers and acquisitions, somehow he's the problem. I don't see it that clearly, and I'm sure there are those of you who do and who think that I'm being more generous to some people than I should be, but I truly see it as a question that we all are way more enmeshed in than we even realize.

MS. BEAUCHAMP: Thank you, Kathy, so much. We really appreciate your presentation. I think we're probably going to have to have Kathy and Eric move off the stage because Amanda's presentation will use the screen behind us. She is going to eventually move over to the microphone and the computer over there, at the side of the stage, to do her multimedia presentation. So please welcome Amanda.

AMANDA HUGHES: Thanks. I want to spend a few minutes just talking about the project and then also walk over and show you the Web site, so I'm sorry for the relocation of everyone.

The Ackland Art Museum is an academic unit of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As such, the museum is committed to functioning in a unique way in that it is committed to serving educationally both in the university, in the community at large and with public and private school students, grades K through 12. The Ackland is a small museum: We have 15,000 works, 10,000 of which are on paper. However, we also have what some will say is the premier collection of Asian art in the Southeast, and more will say is the premier collection in the state of North Carolina. It kind of depends on who you ask.

Seven years ago, the Ackland began to notice a tremendous shift in the demographics of young people who were coming to the museum for single and multiple visits from K through 12 classrooms, and what we saw was consistent with what was happening nationwide. I want to remind you and assure you that the diversity that is happening across the country is, in fact, present in North Carolina; and not merely

because of the presence of three universities in this Triangle area, but uniformly across the state, and there is very good documentation to support this. So we were seeing young people coming into the museum who were ethnically diverse, came from different religious backgrounds, and began to question what role museums in general, and the Ackland in specific, might play in creating a venue for interfaith dialogue, learning and conversation. Teaching not only about historical practices of faith traditions, but living, present in our own community practices.

We became very interested in the notion that it was worthwhile to attend to this, and, in fact, the decision to attend to it has done some remarkable things in the museum that are notable for the museum culture people, perhaps, more than you as educators. What I will mention is this: it is a rare thing for a project like the Five Faiths Project to fuel collections, for example, and yet, our recognition of the change in the demographics did, in fact, fuel our curator's decisions about what objects to purchase, to acquire or to otherwise borrow in long-term loans in order for us to more fairly represent the faith traditions of our local community and of the nation.

The Ackland's Five Faiths Project looks at five traditions principally, although not exclusively, and it is collection-driven. We are sensitive to the fact that what we are looking at is object-based teaching. We are looking at Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam through the objects in our multicultural collection, hoping that, by doing so, we create a model for multicultural collections and their curators and educators nationwide.

Marcia mentioned that our goal, or one of our intentions, was to bring people into the Ackland. Over the course of this time, we have come to realize that that is not, in fact, our goal. Our goal is to raise-up the appropriateness of object-based education in religious arenas. When you are teaching about religion in a public school classroom, it is our conviction that objects can be an invaluable tool.

I say that for a number of reasons. First off, objects introduce to young people, long before they can articulate this, primary source material. They are looking at the real deal, and because it is the real deal, it has presence that is undeniable, authority that is undeniable, and a history that is undeniable. Now, a fourth grader may not be able to articulate any of that back to me, but nevertheless, the object stands to represent something very important.

In addition, the objects can withstand, in our experience, much more serious and lengthy inquiry and investigation than, perhaps, is reasonable to expect of a human being. So you can sit with an object and ask it a series of questions that you might not be able to ask a person: Why does the 15th century Thai Buddha head have such big ears? Why are the eyes on that Buddha head not quite closed? Why are there snail shells on his head? Why a bulge? Why a flame? Why such a sort of weird look on his face? These kinds of questions open up core traditional beliefs of Buddhism, and the same is true for other traditions as well.

Objects also invite us to consider original context, to remember that our discussion has been relocated and therefore we are, in fact, talking about religion rather than teaching religion. The object is no longer in a sacred context. It has been moved into a secular context, and that gives us a very visible and tangible, a palpable, a salient way to think about it. It is no longer in a temple; it is no longer in a chapel. It's in a museum gallery, and the museum itself models the presence of these objects standing in relationship to one another, more often than not, since splendid isolation is not the general way objects are displayed in museums currently. They stand in relationship to one another, mirroring, I believe, for us and for students, the possibility of a pluralistic culture, standing side by side. One room may be dedicated to one tradition or one civilization, but right next door is another, and that, it seems to me, is an important lesson for young people in public K through 12 education, where they are increasingly expected to participate civilly in a classroom in which diversity is absolutely present. The museum models that.

Art objects can, as primary source material, represent diversity within the tradition as well as across traditions. When we bring a group of students, for example, into the Asian gallery, we can look at several Buddhas and how each of the images of the Buddha is distinct and different because, as St. Carthage said, "Different is the condition of each one and different is the condition of each place." As we look at these works of art, we are able to acknowledge difference.

We're also able, through the works of art, through multiple pieces of art, to introduce the notion of continuity and change within the tradition over time. Are there Buddhas like this in North Carolina today? Could we see one? Where would we look? How has ritual practice been affected by Americanization? What is happening to communities? Each object invites a kind of inquiry that has been very fruitful.

But I want to be very clear here that one of the great fallacies of museum culture is that objects can speak for themselves. In fact, they can't, unless they have a video component or an audio component plugged in, and we have a few of those at the Ackland. They do speak for themselves in some way, but a 15th century Thai Buddha head cannot; nor can a 15th century altar piece speak for itself. Who are those people? How do you know that it's St. Lucy, St. Catherine, John the Baptist, St. Sebastian? How would anyone know?

The Ackland has tried to make an honest assessment of who is, in fact, speaking about these art objects, and how we can honestly attribute that. I don't know if it has occurred to you to ask: Who wrote that label, by whose authority, by what scholarship? We began to ask those kinds of questions: Who has the right to interpret this work of art? Does the viewer or the child using this object have the right to know?

Our decision was that if we could make transparent this voice, these many voices, and include more than one interpretive voice, the object and the use of the object, is enhanced. So, while it is generally curators and art historians who write that text, we wanted to include other voices. We wanted to include scholars of religious studies who

have a very different perspective. We wanted to be sure to include faith leaders in writing interpretive texts for our labels. We wanted to include lay and ordained members, for a lack of better terminology, from traditions, and we wanted to include voices from people of no faith, as we have been talking about, whose worldview allows them to interpret the work quite differently, and that is legitimate. We wanted to be sure that we had adult voices and children's voices.

In the process of the last seven years, one of the things we have done is engage artists-in-residents. Wendy Ewald, a MacArthur fellow and documentary photographer, came and put Polaroid cameras into the hands of 70 children between the ages of seven and 12 from five local religious communities. She taught them how to use these cameras – which are not as simple to use as your average point-and-shoot Polaroid. She retained the negatives from those, and what we ended up with was this vision of faith from people who are shorter than I am and younger. That is now a touring exhibition for the Ackland.

We also brought in a professional storyteller, Louise Omoto Kessel, who worked for a year with members of local faith communities, the university community and a broad range of the community at large. Over the course of a year, there were a total of about 45 people volunteering enormous amounts of time to learn the collection and to learn to tell stories. We recorded those stories onto CDs, so you can stand in front of a particular object in the Ackland now and listen to a living faith practitioner tell a story that relates to that object in some way.

We incorporated multiple voices, and my suggestion to you would be this: There are applications. We have developed some resource materials that are being tested by public and private educators in North Carolina and nationwide. The CDs are available. There are posters around somewhere, all of which I would love to promote and do an info commercial for, but that's not what I'm here to do.

What I want to do today is talk to you instead about practice, and how this use of art objects may be applicable in classrooms across the country with local museums, but also with the Web. I'm going to show you our Web site, and then I will wrap up by finishing up what we have got.

I want to apologize because I am, after all, a middle-aged woman, which makes me not the best Web surfer. (Laughter.) But I will show you a little bit. If you type in our address [<http://www.ackland.org/>], this is where you land. You can go straight to the Five Faiths Project [<http://www.ackland.org/fivefaiths/>], or you can come in other ways. If I'm your average visitor, and I just want to look at the Thai Buddha head, I can pop in from the last Web page (A Look at Buddhism), but I can also come in this way, through Religious and Sacred Art, from the Collections page. I can scroll down and see a great many different objects, and each of these, when I click on them, will have texts that help the objects speak, as it were, so I can walk through in any number of ways and look at the object.

Within the next year or so, you will be able to go through a program on the Ackland's Web site called Multi MIMSY and access any one of the 15,000 works with some contextual information.

I can also come in a number of other ways. I can look at the Intro page [http://www.ackland.org/fivefaiths/01_00_00.htm]. Or we can go to the Photographs page [http://www.ackland.org/fivefaiths/05_00_00.htm], where I want to show you Krishna in context, after I've clicked on Hinduism from the Photographs page. With certain browsers and plug-ins, from this screen I can go to who is Krishna and read a story and get better sense, using the works of art as illustrations for those stories. I can take a look at how objects are made, this being an example of a sacred text that guides the creation of images, tools, an early stage of a sculpture, how it begins, that sort of thing. But I can also go here into Perspectives and actually hear voices.

(Begin audio excerpt.)

In the Hindu religion we have a two different forms of God. One is called formless and the other is called form.

(End audio excerpt.)

MS. HUGHES: This goes on. It's quite a long piece that students can actually hear. In addition – let me do an index – we also get to hear the voices of children.

(Begin audio excerpt.)

CHILD: Puja is when you pray to the God, and they're like prayers that you sing, and you like put flowers on the God and garlands, and basically you pray to Him and – (inaudible) – into it.

(End audio excerpt.)

MS. HUGHES: So we were able to build a sort of prototype that would let us look at that. It really is with this multitude of voices that we can start to get clarity about what's needed and what it means to be using works of art in this way.

The last thing I would say is this: the Ackland is aware of the complications here, and deeply sensitive to the limits and potentials; there is great promise and there are pitfalls. We have made an effort, and continue to extend that effort, to bring in the brightest and the wisest voices, to assist us in this project, and we've begun to identify certain things that we otherwise would never have identified, looking for parallel practices, looking for ways to be respectful.

I'll give one example. We're in the process of removing honorifics from all our labels. As you may be aware, in art historical terms, one always refers to, for example, the *Virgin Mary* and *Jesus Christ*, and one does not generally refer to *Lord Ganesha* and

Lord Buddha. What the Ackland is doing is challenging the way curatorial files are maintained, so that on our labels now we speak of Jesus, Mary, Ganesh. When we talk about Hindu Gods and Goddesses, we capitalize. We're sensitive to the issues of neutrality and how complex they are.

We are a resource. We can talk some about that, and you're welcome to ask questions, but I wanted to give a sense of what the big picture was. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. BEAUCHAMP: In order to try to keep to our schedule, I think we can take maybe one, maybe two questions or comments. Way back there.

AUGUST WELLER: August Weller, from Prince William County Schools. With your Web site, do you have resource materials and/or training for public school teachers who can't come to your museum, so they can learn how to implement this in their classrooms?

MS. HUGHES: Yes, what I have up here is a test copy of our resource materials. We, like everyone, are having some funding trouble in terms of publication of the materials, but they are available, and we're looking at options, both in terms of hard publishing but also online publishing. In the materials, we've made available CDs with stories that you can use with your classroom. We've also got posters, which can be ordered, that have both visual and textual material, and slides of works of art.

I think probably the most valuable things in here are: one, our brief overviews of the current and historical practices and core beliefs of these five traditions that have been reviewed by scholars and faith leaders for their accuracy. They may not be the most in-depth – we're an art museum, when all is said and done – but they provide a framework, a place to begin. The second thing is viewing strategies. Certain things are typical of Hindu works, Islamic works and Christian pieces. You can be very quickly informed about what to look for and what questions to ask to raise awareness in educators about: Is this a desert aesthetic? Is this a jungle aesthetic? What's happening here? This can help teachers point students in the right direction, so that they're not just critical thinkers, they're critical viewers. They are learning to read works of art, which is something that faith practitioners teach their own people. We're teaching about that, about how one could read it, about how one can get information from them.

MS. BEAUCHAMP: That's a great resource for teachers. Thank you, Amanda, very much.

MS. HUGHES: You're welcome.

(Applause.)

MS. BEAUCHAMP: And now we'll hear from Eric Holmes, who I know has a lot to say about elementary school teaching about religion, and also about teacher preparation.

ERIC HOLMES: Both of those are amazing. I've got lots of ideas that I want to tap into, and I appreciate what was shared with us.

I'd like to talk about the idea of the elementary school, the elementary child, and what can and cannot be done with this age. Yesterday, a lot of questions came up about age appropriateness and so forth, and a lot of questions also came up about whether our teachers can do this. I would submit to you, if our teachers don't do it, I don't know who will. That goes for private school teachers and public school teachers, all of them, and I don't mean to say that there aren't other entities that are very important in this. In fact, parents are the primary educators, so they are the most important entity, and the church, synagogue, temple, the community are also very important. But when it comes to these more academic kinds of things, these areas that a church or a family do not necessarily look at, then it does rest with teachers.

I'd like to offer you three different ways that you can look at teaching about religion in elementary school. I'd like to give them conceptually, with a few concrete examples that will help solidify the ideas. These are things I've come to see over the years that teachers need to look at very carefully as they teach about these obviously very sensitive subjects.

First of all, there are two areas where religion comes up in the elementary classroom: the implicit and the explicit. There are those things that are planned for. There is the curriculum that is on the paper, the lesson plan as written down, the objectives are there, etc cetera, et cetera. That is the explicit curriculum. Then there are those things that are much more fun, the implicit, those things that aren't planned for; those things that come up and sometimes grab you by the throat and surprise you. You may be ready for them, you may not be ready for them, but teachers can deal with these issues. There is the planned and the unplanned.

The first concept I'd like to pass on to you that I think is very important for a teacher to have in mind at the elementary, and any, level is the concept of awareness in exposure. In the elementary schools, many times, that is what the curriculum is all about when it comes to religions, differences, cultures, et cetera. The teacher has a great responsibility and opportunity to provide awareness for certain things. Of course the question of age appropriateness comes in, so let me give you a few examples of how awareness may be provided.

In many core curriculums throughout the states, first of all, in kindergarten and first grade, you're going to talk about families. You're going to talk about family groups and, as kids maybe get a little bit older, you're going to talk about neighborhoods and communities. Are there differences in those neighborhoods and communities? Are there differences among families? There are natural ways of pointing those things out, if the

kids don't do it already, even as simple as what kind of churches may be in the neighborhood, or what kind of organizations or entities. You've got the fire station over here, you've got the police station over here and you've got a church or a temple over here. Pointing those things out to kids may be something they've never seen before or looked at in that way, or in fact they have looked at it, but they didn't realize that there was a difference there.

One of the things I like to do with older grades when it comes to awareness and exposure is talk about numbers. Even if you're in a very diverse school, children have a sphere of observation that's only so large, and they're contained in that sphere, and it's very hard for them to break out of it. So if you discuss the things that are very different outside their sphere, sometimes you open their eyes quite a bit. For instance, I'll put up 25 stick figures on the board, circle one of them and say, "This is the population of the world. The circled one is the American, and that's all there is." That's pretty amazing to kids sometimes, to realize, "Oh, that's it; that's all we are?" I don't mean to humble them or anything like that, but to give them perspective; to give them the idea that there are other people out there, there are other ways of seeing things, there are other ways of doing things.

I have an elementary background, so I can't teach or do something without making you do something. I apologize ahead of time, but would you all please stand up? Okay, I would like you to turn to the left and observe what you see. Okay. Now, would you please turn a half turn to the right? In other words, come all the way and look towards the window. Now observe what you see. Okay, you can sit down now. Are there differences in your perceptions? There is a huge difference between looking to your left and looking to your right. I do that with kids.

Many of you have seen the movie, *Dead Poets Society*. Remember when Robin Williams, the teacher, gets his kids to stand up on the desk? I did that before the movie came out. (Laughter.) Many other teachers I'm sure did too, but it was to show them perspective. I let kids stand up on their desk – of course, we have to go through some rules about how you're going to get up there and what you're going to do once you're up there – but the idea is for them to see what they will see standing on their desk as opposed to standing on the ground. In fact, I get them on the ground, flat on the ground, to see what the perspective is there.

You take those ideas and then you bring them back to a normal position, and you talk about some of the perspectives that are out there in this world. You can bring up a myriad of examples, whether it's an example from a Third World country or from a European country. It may or may not have to do with religion. We talked earlier in the character development session about universal things. To me, perspective is a universal item to be discussed and looked at, maybe not along the lines of character education, but it definitely relates in my opinion. So, awareness or exposure, perspective.

The third idea that I would submit to you that is very important in elementary grades and all grades is functionality. A teacher needs to look at what the function is of

what they're doing and how it relates to their children, to that day, to that lesson and so forth. If they're spoon-feeding them information that has no function, it's not going to make any difference. There must be application to it; there must be something for them to relate back to. Often this comes as what you will do in your own local or state history. Most elementary state cores suggest teaching the state history in fourth grade. Well, I have not found a state yet that doesn't have a very rich and detailed history of religion, ethnic groups, cultures, et cetera. There is not a boring state out there.

When you talk about functionality with kids, you want to bring it home to them so they have a reason to know about it. Some of the research that educators are looking at right now asks, Why do kids want to learn? And how do you get kids to learn? I think we all would suggest that at least one of those things is that kids have to have something to relate it back to.

That brings me to another point: age appropriateness. There are definite guidelines and rules for age appropriateness. There are definite controversies to stay away from, depending on the age of the student, but I would submit to you that sometimes the rules fall by the wayside. For instance, let me tell you a little experience of my morning of 9/11. My alarm clock radio went off at about 7:00 a.m., Mountain Time, where I am, and of course by then it was 9:00 a.m. here and things were happening. My radio is on an easy-listening station, because I want to wake up that way, and it doesn't have a lot of news or anything on it, but I wake up to my normal DJ talking about a plane that has flown into a building in New York City, and at this time we didn't know what was going on, and it was terrible.

Of course, as many of you can recall, that day caught like wildfire when it came to the news, and you probably found yourself listening to the radio, watching the TV, finding ways to watch the news that you don't normally do. Many of my children carpool to school, and, of course, their parents had their radios on as they went to school. Many of them came to kindergarten hearing this, knowing this, and of course it was a puzzle, where some pieces are there and some pieces aren't there, and all of us are wondering what in the world is going on.

I came to school that morning and there was a definite atmosphere. Part of it came within me and part of it was just there in the air. I had teachers who had their TVs on in their room before school and had their radios on, and all of a sudden these are decisions that we have to make: Do you keep the TV on? Do you turn it off? Do you turn your radios off? Do you talk about this in the classroom?

After things had settled just a little bit and the school day had started, knowing that this was very much a part of the day and most of my students were aware of it, I felt a need to visit classrooms, almost like a father figure. It was also interesting that I found myself patrolling my hallways that day. You just have a vigilance about you when your stewards are 500 young children. As I visited the classrooms and talked with them and tried to give them some sense of comfort, I said things like, "This is far away," and "There are people there to help," and "Things are being taken care of."

I want to give you a list of the questions I received that day. I didn't necessarily have the answers. When it comes to age appropriateness, sometimes it doesn't matter; sometimes things just happen. From a first grader: "What is happening?" From a second grader: "Why is this happening?" From a third grader: "Who are these people?" From a fourth grader: "Why are they doing this?" And from a fifth grader: "Mr. Holmes, is this the beginning of World War III?" Like I said, I didn't have the answers to those questions, except for whatever I could do to comfort those kids. Was it related to religion? Yes, indirectly, I think you could say it was related to religion. Those are the kinds of challenges teachers are facing. Those are the kinds of things that they really face everyday.

Since I became an administrator five years ago, I get much more upset, much more frustrated, much more angry with the parents than I do with the kids. What came up before, about the boy who got the new bike after dad rode around the neighborhood until he found a bike and got a new bike, that happens. What do you do when that situation crops up in your school or in your classroom? Those are things teachers are facing at a very young level. I was going to talk a little bit more about the challenges that teachers are facing, but I'll leave those alone for now.

What I would submit to you is that we've been doing this stuff for 10, 15 years as teachers, and we still have lots of questions. We have a handle on a few things, but this is a process, and that's what teachers need to realize: This is a process for them to go through as much as it is for their kids. We're always telling teachers, "Be lifelong learners." This is a lifelong learning thing: how to handle religion, how to handle character education, what to do with it in the classroom, and so forth. Those are as lifelong processes for teachers and adults as they are for kids.

When I keep that perspective, it makes things a little bit easier for me, and when I don't have some of the answers, I don't feel so bad. However, through study and working with Charles and Marsha and many, many other people, it's been great to get many of the answers, or at least ideas, and this has been a wonderful conference to hear your different points of view and the things you have to say.

I'd just like to finish by saying that it can be done in an elementary classroom. Obviously it has to be done carefully. I would submit that in every classroom it has to be done carefully. The primary strength that a teacher can put in place in this area, in the elementary classroom, is to know their students very well as individuals. If they do that, and the typical teacher cares a whole lot about their kids, they will find that they will be able to handle this subject a lot better as a calling, as was said earlier, than just a job. And I'll finish there.

(Applause.)

MS. BEAUCHAMP: We want to try to take at least one or two comments for Eric. Judith?

JUDITH LESSOW-HURLEY: I'm Judith Lessow-Hurley. I'm from San Jose State University, and I am involved with pre-service teacher preparation at the elementary level.

I appreciate your comments, Eric. I've experienced a level of frustration over the last two days because we've talked a lot about teaching about religion as an overt curriculum and the pitfalls that are inherent in that issue. We've gone over quite a few of those in the controversies, and I've developed a small level of confidence, because people are clearly talking about these things. There are curricula, communities have been brought in, there are consensuses of opinion, and in essence, when you are definitively, overtly teaching about religion, if you commit an error there might actually be somebody who could correct you.

My concern, particularly at the elementary level, is that there is an enormous amount that takes place at the covert level. Teaching about religion at the elementary level is dicey. That would be a subject for a whole presentation. Teaching is experiential. Little kids learn by doing, and when you are learning about something religious and doing something, you may in fact be doing something devotional, and that can get kind of complicated.

There are some gray areas there, but I'm more concerned with my pre-service teachers who don't have an articulated faith position. My pre-service teachers are very young. Many of them are self-described as Heinz 57. They are not necessarily religious, but they don't articulate a position or a worldview, as nonreligious, so they don't fall on the spectrum of religious to nonreligious, and they don't have a schema which includes what it might be like to be religious. They go into classrooms, but before they can know their students, I feel deeply that they have to know themselves. They often make tremendous errors of commission and insensitivity because they haven't really thought about what it is to have a worldview and a position.

So, for example, I got into this way back because my son was in a science classroom in seventh grade where the teacher said, "There are two minutes left to the bell. Extra credit for the kid who can tell us 10 things that we do at Christmas." My son came home and said, "I don't want to go back there, Mommy, because we don't do anything at Christmas, and I don't think I'm part of that 'we.'" He had come from a Hebrew day school. Some of my students wonder what kids do in a Hebrew day school on Halloween. I say, "Well, they do reading and writing, arithmetic." (Laughter.)

I think that one of the very, very big issues we're facing in elementary schools is the question of the hidden curriculum, the holiday-driven curriculum. I noticed at the very opening when Charles shared his two booklets, that he glossed over the holiday booklet. He said, "This one was really controversial," and then he didn't say a whole lot more about it. The curriculum in many public elementary schools is holiday driven. So, for example, you get the traditional questions about the December dilemma and Christmas. People say, well, we'll just throw something in there about Hanukkah. Then we've obliged this other group, this other faith tradition – and whether Judaism is a faith

or not is something I suppose we could discuss at some length – in the holiday season. My response to that is, “It ain’t my holiday season. I’m here to inform you my holiday season happens in the early Fall, on an entirely different calendar.”

So I have real concerns about what happens in the elementary school, not so much around the overt curriculum, the teaching about religion and the commissions that can take place in that context, but what’s happening at the level where we don’t see ourselves. What it is we are doing?

MS. BEAUCHAMP: Thank you, Judith. And Eric, would you like to make a response to that?

MR. HOLMES: I totally agree. The hidden curriculum idea is probably much more difficult to handle in the elementary schools than the overt curriculum.

I also heartily agree with the fact that teachers need to make a self-assessment, quite often. In other words, they can’t just do it and then that’s it for five or 10 years. No, those things are changing, especially in a profession that is so evolving and there’s so much going on. A teacher needs to take a look at themselves and analyze where they’re coming from, what their beliefs are, et cetera. I have found when teachers do that, they are actually more objective in the classroom, because they have figured out some of those issues that otherwise might catch them by surprise in the classroom. If they figure them out, they can step back, and when those come up in the classroom, they can handle them, because they’ve already handled them themselves, or at least they’ve tried to.

So I agree with lots of what you just said.

MS. BEAUCHAMP: I know we could spend a lot more time talking about this, but we’re already a bit over our time, so please join me in thanking our panelists. (Applause.) And we will proceed back downstairs to the dining room for the luncheon program and lunch. Thanks.