



Activities and notes for teachers linked with the HMD 2007 DVD 'The Dignity of Difference'.

This free film can be requested by contacting the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust on 0845 838 1883 or enquiries@hmd.org.uk

Notes

The 2007 theme, The Dignity of Difference, is supported by our new DVD, of the same title.

The film can be used as a stimulus for discussion and creative activities with secondary school students and post 16 groups. A synopsis and suggestions for follow up work appear below but teachers and lecturers are advised to view the entire film and become familiar with each section before selecting suitable extracts to develop with their students. Please remember that students should not be expected to work through all the questions. One suggestion is to work through chapters one to three together, then divide into groups and ask each group to work through an individual story. Then bring the groups together again to raise issues highlighted in the final section (chapter nine) Groups could choose discussion questions or activities or both. Please note that some topics take longer to discuss than others and therefore some stories have fewer questions than others.

The Dignity of Difference; a synopsis.

Chapter One

The film opens with a series of questions on how we feel and act in different situations. We are reminded, in words and images, of the different groups of people who suffered under Nazi oppression.

Chapter Two

The voice of the Chief Rabbi suggests that those who were and those who are victims of hate crime and injustice cannot fight alone.

Chapter Three

We are asked whether the end of the Holocaust signified the end of hatred, whether lessons from the Holocaust have been learned and whether modern human beings are able to respect difference.

A list appears. We read name after name. All these people and more suffered because they were marked out as different. We are asked to focus on five names.

Individual narratives are presented by actors, who remind us that the people in the stories all suffered because they were seen to be different.

Chapter Four

A Rwandan survivor tells the story of Leo Baeck

Chapter Five

A woman, who witnessed sectarian strife in Belfast, outlines the plight of Muslims and the fate of the Mostar bridge.

Chapter Six.

A straight teenager explains how he feels when he thinks of the Nazi treatment of gays and the continued suffering of Albert Christle.

Chapter Seven

Through the story of Robert , a disabled child and his Jehovah's Witness family, a museum curator draws attention to Nazi policy on the disabled.

Chapter Eight

A Holocaust survivor relates Zara's story and asks when we think her suffering took place. The answer is a few months ago, in Darfur, The Sudan.

Chapter Nine

A field of light is created and we are left to focus our thoughts on the words dignity, respect and the phrase equality and I will be free.

Possible group discussions leading from

Chapter One

Discussion

- 1 We were asked a series of questions as the film opened. What was your initial response to each one?

- 2 Was your response different after listening to the stories?

Note that the questions asked aloud were not all exactly the same questions as those written on the opening and closing hands? What were the main differences and how important do you think they are/are not?

- 3 If a person answered yes to all the questions what advice would you give them?
If a person answered no to all the questions what advice might they need?

Activities

- 1 Gesture and personal feeling.
Words are powerful but body language gesture and facial expressions also express human feelings. In the film we saw open and closed hands. Look at your own hands and think about the different feelings they can express. Without speaking or making physical contact with anyone, use your hands to show
Friendship
Praise
Hatred
Fear
Welcome
- 2 Examine photographs from archive collections, in your history books or newspapers. Look closely at the hands you see in the pictures. What messages do they give about personal feeling?

Chapters Two and Three

Discussion

"Jews cannot fight anti-Semitism alone.
Muslims cannot fight Islamophobia alone.
Lesbians and Gays cannot fight homophobia alone."

- 1 Why do you think it is difficult for victims of prejudice to challenge those who make unfair judgements about them? Try to give reasons for your answer.

- 2 If “the victim cannot cure the crime and the hated cannot cure the hate” suggest actions which could be taken by other people either to support victims of hate crime or to try to prevent such crimes taking place.
- 3 Personal names are very important to us. In some traditions a name is the first gift a child is given. In others there are special naming ceremonies. Some parents take many months deciding what name to give to their child. When we meet each other for the first time we exchange names. Some religious believers take a new name at an important point in their lives. Our name identifies us and becomes part of us from the time we are born to the time we die.
 - The Nazis took individual names away and replaced them with numbers. What purpose do you think was behind this action?

Activities

- 1 Design a poster or a story board for a TV campaign which aims to encourage everyone to speak out for people who are not being respected.
- 2 Imagine you could write a computer programme or an instruction manual to help individuals challenge prejudice. Write the first three instructions e.g. Greet those you meet with a smile of welcome, next...

Or perhaps write a recipe book for human understanding e.g. Take one portion of kindness, add the ability to listen etc.
- 4 Focus on the list of names. Research the giving of names in different traditions and examine the different ceremonies and customs linked with name giving. Then note all the times you can think of when our names are important e.g. on our passports, when we apply to be placed on the electoral roll (voters’ register) when we take examinations, when we marry or form a civil partnership. How many are on your list? Try to explain why it might be difficult to live and work in modern society without a name.

- 5 In the film we see a list. All the people named here have suffered, at the hands of others, because they were seen to be different.

We hear the stories of five people but we acknowledge the suffering all who have faced prejudice, including those whose names we will never know.

Create a remembrance poem for those whose names have been written out of history, those who have become nameless. Begin with the words

When your names were known-----
and finish with
-----and not forgotten.

Each member of the group adds a sentence in turn. Type them into a computer or write them on a large sheet of paper. Then rearrange the sentences and turn them into a performance poem which the group could perform. You may use each sentence more than once. Experiment with different voices, sometimes together, sometimes a single voice and present your poem as a tribute to those who suffered.

Here is an example

When your names were known
And you were loved,
You had friends who cared.
You breathed the air, laughed and smiled.
Happy citizens.

But some thought you did not fit,
Singled you out for harsh treatment,
Took away your names,
Buried you deep.
Hidden away
Lost in time forever.

But we who live today as
Happy Citizens
Know when your names were known
That you were loved.
We write these lines, for all of you to be remembered
And not forgotten.

Chapter Four

Leo Baeck's story

Discussion

- 1 How individuals view their identity shapes their lives. Identity tells people who they are and where they feel they belong. A personal identity could be described as the way you see yourself. Leo Baeck was committed to being both a German and a Jew. Once Nazi policy towards the Jews began to take hold it was not just his Jewishness under threat but his whole identity. Many people in modern society identify themselves with more than one group. Talk about the different groups or activities which shape your life.
- 2 "This is a story which means a lot to me." The speaker survived the genocide in Rwanda. Why do you think he found Leo's story and his strong belief in a joint identity so compelling?
- 3 Why do you think Leo refused the chance to escape?
- 4 Leo is described as "selfless". What qualities would a person need for you to describe them as selfless? Does this word mean the same thing to all members of your group?

Activities.

1. Think about your own life and what has made you the person you are today. Write down three things which, you believe, have helped to form your personal identity.
2. Imagine a class reunion in ten years time. The person sitting beside you today has become famous and you are interviewing him/her for your local newspaper. You want to tell your readers what shaped this person's identity and what influenced their early life. Think about the person today and note three things about them, which you think are important. Next draft the first three questions you would ask them in ten years time. Show the person your questions and discover what they think their answers would be, then compare your notes with theirs. Are they the same or different?

Chapter Five

The story of the bridge at Mostar

Discussion

- 1 The person telling this story lived through a period of political and religious struggle in Belfast. Why does she find the story of Muslims struggling to protect a bridge so compelling?
- 2 What do you think the speaker means when she speaks of the bridge as a "symbol"? Of what might it be a symbol?
- 3 How far is it possible to re-write history? If it is possible, would it be right? Try to give reasons for your answers.

Activities

- 1 Use the internet or old newspapers to find out more about what happened to the Muslims of Mostar and what the rest of the world community did or did not do to help them.
- 2 "Muslims cannot fight Islamophobia alone." Write a letter suitable to send to an M.P. or a local councillor, explaining what you think might be done to prevent people being targeted because of their beliefs.

Chapter Six

Albert Christle's story

Discussion

- 1 Lesbian and Gay people suffered much due to Nazi policy. Albert was sent down for being gay. We heard how the Nazis treated gay people harshly. Albert, spent the rest of his life encouraging others to recognise what had happened to members of the gay and lesbian community during the Nazi era. Discuss how actually recognising atrocity involves doing more than simply stating that something horrible happened?

- 2 Today many believe that it is important for society to be more honest and open about past injustices, discrimination and hate crime. In South Africa Desmond Tutu speaks about and works for truth and reconciliation, believing that if people talk about what happened in the past it may help to prevent similar atrocities in the future. If you had to select three areas for future work in truth and reconciliation what would they be and why has your group chosen them?

- 3 When the war ended “many people did not care enough about gays to get rid of Nazi homophobic laws”. Even after liberation members of the Gay community found it impossible to return to ordinary life. In a society that was slow to repeal unfair laws many lesbian and gay people found it easier to return to the closet i.e. pretend that they were not Gay. In 1970 Albert took his own life. The narrator calls this Albert’s “last defeat.” What battle was Albert fighting? In what ways and why are lesbian and gay people still involved in Albert’s campaign today?

Activities

- 1 Use the internet or a library to research a past event where people have been treated unfairly because society saw them as different. Find out when and how society changed or whether it still needs to change to put an end to this injustice.

- 2 Use the information you have found to create a statement of recognition and resolve for modern society. E.g. We acknowledge that in-----and we promise that now and in the future we will work to-----

Chapter Seven

Robert Wagemann’s story

Discussion

- 1 Robert’s family was instructed to take him for a physical examination. We heard how Doctors and Nurses were putting Nazi policy into practice. Many people find it impossible to understand how professional, medical people could become involved in the Nazi programme of systematic euthanasia. Discuss the role of medical staff in modern society. Decide whether there are some things medically trained people should

never do and some things they should always do. You will need to present a reason behind each action chosen.

- 2 Robert was disabled and a member of a Jehovah's Witness family. He was therefore a member of two groups targeted by Nazi policy and in effect excluded from society twice. Although society has changed, there may be obstacles or barriers within a school or college setting that might, even if unintentional, exclude Robert from certain activities within the life of a school. Decide what these barriers might be. Your group will be asked to explain what the barriers are and what could be done to remove them.

Activities

- 1 Imagine you work as part of the design team within a building company. Devise a plan for a new Youth Club, which will be open to all young people in your community. Produce a large scale version of your design and a marketing brochure, which you could use to persuade a Local Authority to adopt your design. Make a list of rules for the new youth club which should ensure that all young people are made to feel welcome.
- 2 Imagine you are the Head of a Medical School. You are about to welcome new first year students to their medical training course. Improvise or write a welcoming speech, which sets out what will be expected of them as Doctors.
- 3 Use the net to find out which groups speak on disability rights and from their websites make notes on which issues still cause disabled people to feel excluded. Note especially the issues which appear more than once and whether you think society is doing anything about them.

Chapter Eight

Zara's Story

Discussion

- 1 The woman who tells Zara's story speaks as a survivor of the Holocaust, suggest reasons behind the importance she places on the retelling of Zara's story.

- 2 Was the group surprised to hear that what Zara's suffering took place only a few months ago? In what ways is Zara's plight linked with Holocaust Memorial Day?
- 3 Zara escaped from her village with her one year old son. The rest of her family did not survive. Suggest some of the difficulties both Zara and her son might face as he grows up in a new country.
- 4 Zara and her son will need many things to help them rebuild their lives. In times of crisis ordinary people are often quick to provide for immediate need e.g. food and clothing as a response to physical need. What other needs might refugees from genocide have? After discussion identify three which your group agrees are basic human needs when a person has lost everything through the cruelty of others.

Activities

- 1 Locate The Sudan on a world map and identify Darfur. Use the Unicef Website to find out what is happening there at the moment. What practical ideas, for helping people like Zara, do UNICEF present to people in the UK?
- 2 Find out what your own community is doing or suggest things it could do to help refugees like Zara and her son recover, if it is ever possible to recover, from their experience.
- 3 Make a list of all the essential things you think Zara and her young son might need in the next few months, as they attempt to rebuild their lives. Work in pairs and compare your ideas. Are your lists the same? Are some items on the list easier to provide than others?

Concluding chapter; **the field of lights.**

This is a symbolic section on responses to the Holocaust linked with present and future action. Groups will react to it in a variety of ways. We hope that the poem, together with the visual images and the emphasis on freedom, equality, dignity and difference will encourage young people to focus on their own responses to the

questions raised both in the film and in the HMD theme for the year i.e. The Dignity of Difference. Some may want to talk about the issues; others may prefer a moment of silence. Only those who know the group will be in a position to decide which is the most appropriate.