

Films for Exploring Peace and Justice Themes

Many youth and adult groups have discovered the value of films for education and outreach. Films may be shown singly or as part of a series. One group organized a "Tuesday Evenings at the Movies" series, served popcorn, and had a great time. Most of these films have short segments that can be used to teach specific peace and justice insights or skills, and can encourage folks to see the rest of the film. Below are films that we've found to be especially effective. (Well-known stars and directors are in parentheses.)

- All the President's Men**, young reporters, step-by-step, uncover the Watergate conspiracy (Dustin Hoffmann, Robert Redford, Jason Robards)
- Beyond Rangoon**, grieving young American woman is transformed by the heroic human rights efforts of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma (Patricia Arquette)
- Cry Freedom**, a journalist's friendship with Steven Biko, the South African nonviolent hero (Denzel Washington, Kevin Kline; dir. by Attenborough)
- Dave**, an average guy hired to impersonate the president wants to do good in this wise comedy (Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Ben Kingsley)
- Dead Man Walking**, illuminating story of a nun's work with a killer on death row (Susan Sarandan, Oscar; Sean Penn; dir. by Tim Robbins)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Agent of Grace and D. B.: Memories & Perspectives**, heroic Lutheran youth leader, pastor, and theologian in Nazi Germany
- Children of a Lesser God**, moving story of a teacher for deaf woman (Marlee Matlin, Oscar, William Hurt)
- A Class Divided**, eye-opening, insightful exploration of discrimination among children.
- A Force More Powerful**, six superbly produced half-hour stories of nonviolence in action around the world are perfect for youth group or adult forum discussion (narrated by Ben Kingsley)
- Gandhi**, gripping story of the pioneering genius of nonviolent action in South Africa and India (Ben Kingsley, Oscar; dir. by Richard Attenborough)
- Grand Canyon**, dramatic, humorous exploration of love, race, and the meaning of life (Kevin Kline, Danny Glover, Steve Martin, Mary McDonnell)
- A Long Walk Home**, this story of the Birmingham bus boycott is filled with moving and insightful moments (Whoopy Goldberg, Sissy Spacek)
- Matewan**, this powerful story of a coal miners' strike in West Virginia has both heart and humor (James Earl Jones, dir. by John Sayles)
- Missing**, wife and father pursue the truth of a young journalist missing during the bloody US-backed coup in Chile (Sissy Spacek, Jack Lemon, Oscar)
- Norma Rae**, moving story of a young woman's efforts to win better working conditions in textile plant in the South (Sally Field, Oscar)
- Northern Lights**, rich chronicle of Swedish farmers in the Dakotas in the early twentieth century
- Romero**, heartfelt struggle for human rights by the courageous archbishop of El Salvador (Raul Julia)
- Shindler's List**, one man's struggle to save the lives of 1000 Jews during the holocaust (Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, Ralph Fines; dir. Steven Spielberg, Academy Award for best picture)
- Silkwood**, a young worker's efforts to expose the dangers at an Oklahoma nuclear plant where she is employed (Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell, Cher)
- Under Fire**, journalists cover overthrow of dictator in Nicaragua (Gene Hackman, Nick Nolte)
- True Colors**, TV cameras follow two young men, one white, one black, to reveal prejudice (19 min)
- Wag the Dog**, satire of presidential aides who invent a war to try to ensure a president gets re-elected. (Dustin Hoffman, Robert DeNiro)
- Weapons of the Spirit**, story of the Le Chambon village in France that hid Jews from the Nazis
- Witness**, alternative perspectives on violence are explored through the story of an Amish boy who is witness to a murder (Harrison Ford)
- Witness to War**, former Air Force pilot becomes a doctor to serve in El Salvador's war zones (Academy Award for best documentary)
- Year of Living Dangerously**, romantic drama of an Australian reporter in war-torn Indonesia (Mel Gibson, Linda Hunt, Oscar, Sigourney Weaver)
- Z**, Greek peace movement leader is targeted by a terrorist group (Oscar for best foreign film)

Additional Feature Films

Here are a few feature films people have suggested adding to the list: **The Girl in the Café, The Constant Gardener, Amandla, Hotel Rwanda, The Quiet American, Good Night and Good Luck, Crash, Why We Fight, The Fog of War, Syriana, Control Room, Glory, Gallipoli**

Send your suggestions to pjrcbooks@hotmail.com with a few words about why you recommend the film.



Documentaries

Domestic Violence, Media Violence

Broken Vows, on domestic violence (www.FaithTrust.org)

Hear Their Cries, on child abuse (FaithTrust)

Love, All That And More on Teen Date Rape...(FaithTrust)

Beyond Blame: Media Violence (Center for Media Literacy)

Ethics

View from the Underside: The Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (video of popular one-man drama)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (130 min, excellent, mainly interviews)

Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace (90 min) feature film

The Table (video on a biblical approach to reconciliation and inclusion from the ELCA Mosaic series)

Foreign Policy

Landmines: Overcoming a Lethal Legacy; also Landmines:

One Step at a Time; and Landmines Survivors Stories,

War, with Gwyn Dyer (PBS), lots of terrific segments (esp 2-6, 7); has a superb companion volume (Crown, 1981)

The Good War and Those Who Refuse to Fight It (Bullfrog Films, 2000, 57 min)

Lessons from a Distant Road (Center for Global Education)

Nuclear Reduction & Disarmament Initiative: A Partnership for Peace (NRDI, 20 min)

Hunger and Development

If Esther's Dreams Could Fly on projects in Kenya to fight hunger and poverty (use the email or 800 number below)

Open Up a World of Possibilities: Nicaragua (DVD or video for up to 7 sessions; use email or 800 number below)

Crick! Crack! 16-minute video shows how animal projects funded by ELCA World Hunger make a difference in the lives of families in Haiti; good print resources.

Peace to this House, on Tanzania, response of youth (order any of the above from hunger@elca.org or by phone at 800-638-3522 ext. 2764)

Share the Joy (Church World Service) discussion starter

Offering of Letters videos (high quality annual videos on Bread for the World focus for the year, www.bread.org)

Middle East

Seeds of Peace, Israeli and Palest teens meet at a camp in Maine, take video cameras back to their homes; very powerful (longer film edited to 40 min. for "Nightline")

The Dividing Wall (high quality interviews and visuals of Israeli wall, accessible; Mennonite Central Committee)

Children of Abraham, journey of 22 Jewish Americans to Israel and Palestine (Compassionate Listening Project)

Nonviolence Movements

A Force More Powerful (2000, six superb half-hour segments on Gandhi, Denmark vs the Nazis, resisting Pinochet in Argentina, the Rise of Solidarity in Poland, South Africa anti-apartheid struggle, Nashville sit-ins)

Nonviolent Peaceforce in Sri Lanka (2004, 14 min)

75 Years of nonviolent Struggle (Fellowship of Reconciliation, www.forusa.org)

Where There is Hatred (Maryknoll Films) excellent

Eyes on the Prize (Blackside), well done series on the US civil rights movement with ten excellent segments

Unarmed Commitment on nonviolent accompaniment programs (Court Worthington Productions, 1994, 29 min) (see also feature films on Gandhi, Romero, etc.)

Racism, Anti Prejudice, Diversity

Color of Fear by Lee Mun Wah, men on a weekend retreat discuss racism, "best multi-cultural resource for mens study group"

True Colors (24 min., TV cameras follow two young men, one white, one black, to reveal prejudice)

Eyes on the Prize (Blackside), well done series on the US civil rights movement with ten excellent segments

Skin Deep (the fight against legislated racism, People's Century, 1999, 60 min.)