

# Discussion Guide

Written and Edited by Teachers College, Columbia University

# → PRAY ← THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL



A FILM BY  
**ABIGAIL E. DISNEY**  
AND  
**GINI RETICKER**



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DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# Pray The Devil Back to Hell

*Pray the Devil Back to Hell* is rich with learning opportunities for students in many different settings, including high schools, colleges, religious groups and community organizations. This guide provides instructors with resources to use the film to explore a wide variety of themes. For further information, please consult our website at [www.praythedevilbacktohell.com](http://www.praythedevilbacktohell.com).

THEME 1

## Women as Peacemakers

**Essential Question:** What role can women play in promoting peace worldwide?

**Overview:** The story of the role played by the women of Liberia in helping forge a peaceful resolution of their nation's civil war might have been lost without the documentation provided by *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. Yet it is clear that throughout history similar women's movements have played a critical role in promoting peace, from those who founded the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in the wake of World War I, to the contributions of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in helping broker a sustainable peace agreement for their country, to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who led the movement for human rights in Argentina. The film raises the important question of why women are often excluded from official peace-making initiatives — and why, when they are able to influence negotiations, their contributions are often ignored by official chroniclers. The film can serve as a gateway to discussion of the critical role women can play in promoting peace in regional and international conflicts. Indeed, educators may wish to push the boundaries of these themes even further and delve into the broader issues of why women have so often been excluded from the historical record in general and into the significant — if often uncharted — roles they have played in all aspects of history.

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More information about the film can be downloaded at <http://www.praythedevilbacktohell.com>

### Discussion Questions:

- Is peace “feminine”? Is war “masculine”?
- What do women bring to the peace table? Do they bring something different from men, and, if so, why?
- Why have women been under-represented in the peace-making process in most historical settings?
- Who writes history? Why was the role played by the women of Liberia in the peace process largely ignored by mainstream chroniclers of the events?
- How did the women in the film use their bodies and sexuality as tools in the peace-making process?
- What were the specific demands of the women in the film, from both the Taylor government and the warlords? Did these demands represent only the interests of women? Why or why not?
- What are the implications of the success of the Liberian women’s movement for peace-making in other parts of the world?
- Is there violence in your community? What forms does such violence take? Is all violence physical? Does the absence of war imply there is no violence? What are the best ways to help build lasting, sustained peace in your own community? What lessons from the film might be applicable to your local situation?
- What are some of the ways women in wealthy nations can come together to support and empower women in poor nations to fight violence in their communities, and to enhance the recognition of their fundamental human rights in those places? Is it possible to do so in ways that are not ethnocentric and that truly empower women?

### Suggested Activities:

- Create a class museum with exhibits on the 12 women who have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. You may ask students to consider why such a small percentage of these and other prestigious awards have been given to women.
- Compare the role of the women in the film in Liberia’s peace-making process to the role played by women in settling other violent disputes. A summary of such efforts can be found online at “The Vital Role of Women in Peace Building” (see below).

- Ask students to research the roles of women in traditional West African societies, emphasizing the ethnic groups indigenous to Liberia (see Theme 2 for a list of these groups). Then, have students compare the actions of the women in the film to these traditional roles. In what ways do the women’s actions build on traditional roles? In what ways do they challenge tradition?
- Ask students to analyze the rationale for and specific provisions of United Nations Resolution 1325 (see below), adopted in 2000. This resolution calls on member nations to include women in peace initiatives. Why would this be important?
- Ask students to propose an “implementation plan” for Resolution 1325, either in Liberia or in a broader context. In what specific ways might women become more involved in peace-building processes?
- Ask students to compare the tactics of the women in the film to those used in Aristophanes’ ancient drama *Lysistrata*, in which the women of Greece use their sexuality to try to bring an end to the Peloponnesian Wars. Do women use different tactics to wage peace than men might use? If so, why might this be the case?
- View the film and read the biographies of the main women depicted in it, available at [www.praythedevilbacktohell.com](http://www.praythedevilbacktohell.com). Ask students to select one of the women and create an artistic depiction of her contribution to peace in Liberia, in the form of a poem, letter, drawing, etc.
- Ask students to prepare research reports on Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who became the first female elected head of state of any African nation in 2006. What hurdles did she have to overcome to be elected?
- More advanced students may wish to research the work of anthropologist Mary H. Moran, who has written extensively about Liberian women.

### Suggested Resources:

#### Books:

- African Women and Peace Support Group, *Liberian Women Peacemakers: Fighting for the Right to Be Seen, Heard, and Counted* (2004, Africa World Press)
- Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women’s Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women’s Rights* (1993, Syracuse University Press)

## “A Bizarre And Brutal Conflict”

**Essential Question:** How did a country that appeared stable and prosperous become engulfed in horrifying violence?

**Overview:** Modern Liberia — the word itself means “land of freedom”— is a puzzle with no simple explanations. Founded in 1847 by former American slaves who had returned to Africa, the Republic of Liberia escaped the imperial rule that took hold of virtually the entire continent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet even these settlers did not consider themselves part of the native population and formed a society based on American norms and customs. They named their capital city Monrovia after James Monroe and enacted a Constitution based on that of the United States. They considered themselves “Americo-Liberians,” as distinct from the ninety-five percent of the population made up of various indigenous ethnic groups — including the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo, and Mende. While many historians believe that the seeds of inequality and discord were steadily growing under the surface, the country gave the appearance of relative stability until 1980, when Samuel K. Doe led a military coup overthrowing the Americo-Liberian led government that had ruled since the nation’s inception. The coup led to a bloody civil war — called “a bizarre and brutal conflict” by author John-Peter Pham. Liberia’s first civil war, which lasted from 1989-1996, was complicated by the involvement of several factions from neighboring nations, ethnic tensions, and competition for control of the country’s vast natural resources, including diamonds, rubber and timber. In 1996, the war ended when forces led by Americo-Liberian Charles Taylor established control. But any peace was short-lived, as a second civil war — the one depicted in *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* — broke out in 1999 and lasted four horrific years. The two civil wars claimed more than 200,000 lives, accounted for massive human rights violations, and destroyed the nation’s infrastructure and economic institutions. Since a 2003 peace agreement that sent Taylor into exile into Nigeria, Liberia has begun the difficult work of reconciliation and rebuilding under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who took office in early 2006.

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *What They Do, Why it Matters* (2007, Lynne Rienner Publishers)

Cambridge Women’s Peace Collective, *My Country Is the Whole World: An Anthology of Women’s Work on Peace and War* (1984, Unwin Hyman)

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa’s First Woman President* (2009, Harper)

Mary H. Moran, *Civilized Women: Gender and Prestige in Southeastern Liberia* (1990, Cornell University Press)

Betty Reardon, *Education For a Culture of Peace in a Gender Perspective* (2001, UNESCO)

### Videos:

*Iron Ladies of Liberia* (2007, Directed by Daniel Junge)

### Online Resources:

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-Building* [Progress of the World’s Women 2002, Vol. 1] (2002, United Nations Development Fund for Women)  
[http://www.unifem.org/resources/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=17](http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=17)

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom  
<http://www.wilpf.int.ch/>

Peace Women  
<http://www.peacewomen.org/wpsindex.html>

Women Waging Peace Network  
[http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/82\\_women\\_waging\\_peace\\_network.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/82_women_waging_peace_network.cfm)

Peace People  
<http://www.peacepeople.com/>

Nobel Women’s Initiative  
<http://nobelwomensinitiative.opendemocracy.net/about/>

Women Building Peace  
<http://www.womenaction.org/global/peacebuilding.html>

Women for International Peace and Arbitration  
<http://www.wipa.org/>

United Nations Resolution 1325  
[http://www.womenwarpeace.org/1325\\_toolbox](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/1325_toolbox)

“The Vital Role of Women in Peace Building,” Hunt Alternatives Fund  
[http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm)

### Discussion Questions:

- How was Liberia's early history different from that of most African nations?
- Was the general stability and prosperity of Liberia from its inception until the 1980s an illusion? What were some of the underlying tensions and injustices that ultimately led to civil war? Does the adage, "if you want peace work for justice" apply to the case of modern Liberia?
- What natural resources are most abundant in Liberia's economy? How has the struggle for control of resources contributed to instability in the past several decades? Can you identify other countries in Africa or elsewhere in the world in which struggles for resources have led to conflict?
- To what extent has conflict between Americo-Liberians and indigenous peoples contributed to political instability and violence in Liberia in recent years? In what way have ethnic tensions in Liberia been exploited by the different factions that have vied for power since the 1980s?
- What factors led to the 1980 coup that brought Samuel K. Doe to power? What kind of ruler was Doe?
- How would you characterize the rule of Charles Taylor?
- Why did Taylor ultimately agree to leave Liberia? Why is he currently on trial for war crimes?
- What role did other African nations play both in expanding the fighting in the two civil wars, and ultimately in brokering a peace deal among the different factions?
- What challenges does Liberia face as it attempts to rebuild from two civil wars?
- What is the appropriate role of international justice institutions? Who are legitimate stakeholders at the peace table, particularly if none of the warring factions represent the aspirations of the people?
- Charles Taylor was one of the first sitting heads of state to be indicted by an international tribunal. Did this indictment prolong or shorten the war in Liberia? How might the lessons of Liberia apply to the case of Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, who was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court in March, 2009?

### Suggested Activities:

- Ask students to create an illustrated timeline of key events in Liberian history.
- Have students research the early history of Liberia, tracing the journey of the former American slaves back to Africa. What were some of the issues they faced? How close to the indigenous African population did they feel when they arrived? How did their experience in the United States impact the lives they led and the society they created in Liberia?
- Working in small teams, have students prepare presentations on the key Presidents in Liberian history, including William V.S. Tubman (1944-71), William R. Tolbert, Jr. (1971-1980), Samuel K. Doe (1980-90), Charles Taylor (1997-2003), and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (2006-Present).
- Ask students to complete the WebQuest activity on the Colonization of Liberia from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, available online at [www.inmotionaame.org/education/lesson.cfm?migration=4&id=4\\_003LP](http://www.inmotionaame.org/education/lesson.cfm?migration=4&id=4_003LP).
- Have students do comparative research on the civil wars in Liberia and in other African nations, such as Sudan, Angola, Somalia, Chad, Congo, and others.
- Assign students to follow one of the Liberian newspaper websites (see below) for a month and write a report summarizing the major issues and themes in the paper's coverage.
- Former President Charles Taylor faces war crime charges (primarily stemming from his involvement in the conflict in neighboring Sierra Leone) brought by the United Nations-appointed Special Court for Sierra Leone. Ask students to keep a journal following progress of the trial as it moves forward. Information about the trial can be found online at [www.sc-sl.org/CASES/CharlesTaylor/tabid/107/Default.aspx](http://www.sc-sl.org/CASES/CharlesTaylor/tabid/107/Default.aspx).
- Ask students to research the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" (also known as "R2P") in international justice, including the process that led to the United Nations' adoption of Resolution 1674, passed in 2006 (see below).

### Suggested Resources:

#### Books:

Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (Updated Edition, 2006, NYU Press)

## The Impact of War on Women and Children

**Essential Question:** How do wars and violent conflicts affect women and children?

**Overview:** United Nations Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, notes that “civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements.” War affects women in numerous ways, from dislocation, to lack of access to health care, to increased responsibility for their families and forced assumption of men’s traditional roles while their husbands and sons are fighting. *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* documents the devastating effects of Liberia’s second civil war on its women, who became victims of rape and sexual violence on a mass scale. Numerous studies have shown that rape has become commonplace in modern conflicts, particularly among combatants in poor countries who may lack advanced weaponry and instead use sexual violence as a deliberate tactic of control and humiliation. In 2008, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1820, characterizing sexual violence as a tool of war and demanding its immediate cessation. Women are also increasingly being asked or forced to bear arms as combatants in these conflicts; in the Liberian conflict, some women even took up arms to protect themselves against sexual violence. Instructors may also wish to ask students to explore a variety of related themes, such as the specific roles women play in combat, the use of women as sexual slaves by armed forces, whether or not the specific needs of women combatants are addressed when countries disarm, and the ongoing problem of sexual violence within military institutions, which has been a significant problem in the United States armed forces. The film also chronicles the alarming tactic of the abduction and use of children as armed soldiers in the conflict. While these trends are not limited to the Liberian conflict, the film offers an entry point from which students can explore the particular impact of violent conflict on segments of the population whose voices are often muted in coverage of such conflicts.

Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (1999, Polity Press)  
 Jeremy Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From “Paternalism” to State Collapse* (2005, Carolina Academic Press)

J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (1987, Indiana University Press)

Mary Moran, *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy* (2008, University of Pennsylvania Press)

Ayodeji Olukoju, *Culture and Customs of Liberia* (2006, Greenwood Press)

John-Peter Pham, *Liberia: Portrait of a Failed State* (2004, Reed Press)

Catherine Reef, *This Our Dark Country: The American Settlers of Liberia* (2002, Clarion Books)

### Videos:

*Liberia: An Uncivil War* (2004, Directed by Jonathan Stack)

*The Reckoning: The Epic Story of the Battle for the International Criminal Court* (2009, Directed by Pamela Yates)

### Online Resources:

Country Profile of Liberia by the BBC

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/1043500.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1043500.stm)

CIA World Factbook – Liberia

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/li.html>

U.S. State Department Profile of Liberia

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

The Daily Observer (Daily Liberian Newspaper)

<http://www.liberianobserver.com/>

The Heritage (Weekly Liberian Newspaper)

<http://www.heritage.com.lr/index.php?sub=14>

Amnesty International Liberia Resources

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/liberia>

International Center for Transitional Justice

<http://www.ictj.org/en/>

Priscilla Hayner, *Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice*

(Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, November, 2007)

[www.ictj.org/static/Africa/Liberia/HaynerLiberia1207.eng.pdf](http://www.ictj.org/static/Africa/Liberia/HaynerLiberia1207.eng.pdf)

United Nations Resolution 1674 (Responsibility to Protect)

<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/e529762bfa456f8852571610045ebef!OpenDocument>

### Discussion Questions:

- Are women and children affected differently by war than men? Why are they particularly vulnerable in times of war?
- Why has brutalization of women become so commonplace in modern conflicts? Is there a correlation between wars fueled by disputes over resources and violence against women? If so, why?
- What conditions of modern warfare have led to the increase in the recruitment of child soldiers?
- In the film, how does the use of child soldiers affect the women's involvement in the peace campaign?
- What are the physical and psychological effects of becoming a child soldier on a child's development?
- What are the physical and psychological effects of war in general on women? On women who are sexually assaulted during wartime?
- Who should be held accountable for human rights violations against women and children in times of war?
- If you were a mother in a country at war, how would you react if your child were recruited to fight? At what age is it acceptable to expect young people to fight in wars?
- If you were a teenager in a country at war, how would you feel if you were expected to fight?

### Suggested Activities:

- Ask students to research the specific ways in which women are affected by war, such as dislocation, lack of access to education, health care, and government services, increased economic responsibility, forced conscription, etc.
- Download and teach the Lesson Plan about Liberian child soldiers from the website of the PBS news program, *NewsHour*, available at [www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/childsoldiers\\_12-22.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/childsoldiers_12-22.html).
- Using the film *If Hope Were Enough* (see below) as a starting point, ask students to research the history of international law concerning the systematic rape of women in wartime, including the adoption of UN Resolution 1820 in June, 2008. (The film chronicles the efforts of women to empower the International Criminal Court to address vio-

lence against women.)

- Ask students to read one of the accounts of a child soldier's experiences in the books and websites listed below. You may also wish to have them view the flash animation on child soldiers produced by Amnesty International, available online at [www.amnestyusa.org/children/child-soldiers/flash-animation-on-child-soldiers/page.do?id=1021181](http://www.amnestyusa.org/children/child-soldiers/flash-animation-on-child-soldiers/page.do?id=1021181), and download the same organization's Child Soldiers Photo Exhibit, at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/children/child-soldiers/photo-exhibit/page.do?id=1181009>. Then, ask the students to write a letter to the child involved, detailing the student's reaction to what s/he has read.
- Ask students to research the history and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (available online at [www.un.org/events/humanrights/2007/udhr.shtml](http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/2007/udhr.shtml)). Ask them to identify what specific violations of the rights of women and children are depicted in the film.
- Ask students to research the complex relationship between armed conflict and the rise of the sex-trafficking trade. In what countries has sex-trafficking become prevalent in the aftermath of civil war and armed conflict? Why might such a relationship exist?

### Suggested Resources:

#### Books:

- Amnesty International, *Lives Blown Apart: Crimes Against Women in Times of Conflict* (2005)
- Kelly Dawn Askin, *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals* (1997, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers)
- Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (2008, Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (2009, Beacon Press)
- Nicole A. Dombrowski (Ed.), *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent* (2004, Routledge)
- Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (2000, University of California Press)
- Alcinda Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa* (2006, University of Pennsylvania Press)
- Uzodinma Iweala, *Beasts of No Nation: A Novel* (2006, Harper Perennial)
- Charles London, *One Day the Soldiers Came: Voices of Children in War* (2007, Harper Perennial)

## Interfaith Bridge-Building

Faith J.H. McDonnell and Grace Akallo, *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children* (2007, Chosen)

P.W. Singer, *Children at War* (2006, University of California Press)

M. Waller, *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance* (2001, Routledge)

### Videos:

*Calling The Ghosts: A Story About Rape, Women and War* (1996, Directed by Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelincic)

*The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo* (2007, Directed by Lisa F. Jackson)

*If Hope Were Enough* (2000, Directed by Margaret Crehan; produced by the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice and WITNESS)

"War Against Women: The Use Of Rape As A Weapon In Congo's Civil War", Sixty Minutes (CBS), Aired August 14, 2008; Transcript available online at [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml)

### Online Resources:

"War Rape," Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War\\_rape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_rape)

"UN classifies rape a 'war tactic'", BBC Online, June 20, 2008

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7464462.stm>

David Rosen, "Rape as an Instrument of Total War," Counterpunch, April 4, 2008

<http://www.counterpunch.org/rosen04042008.html>

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

<http://www.child-soldiers.org/home>

War Child International Network – Child Soldiers Page

[http://www.warchild.org/links\\_resources/childsoldiers/childsoldiers.html#other](http://www.warchild.org/links_resources/childsoldiers/childsoldiers.html#other)

United Nations Resolution 1820

[www.undp.org/cpr/documents/gender/SCResolution1820.pdf](http://www.undp.org/cpr/documents/gender/SCResolution1820.pdf)

United States Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

<http://www.sapr.mil/HomePage.aspx?Topic=ResourcesReports&PageName=ReportLinks.htm>

Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2008 — Special Focus: In the Shadow of War

[www.planusa.org/docs/reports/becauseiamagirl2008.pdf](http://www.planusa.org/docs/reports/becauseiamagirl2008.pdf)

**Essential Question:** Can people of different faiths work together toward a common goal?

**Overview:** While conflict and disagreement among people of different faiths often dominate world headlines, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* details the success of an unlikely interfaith alliance between Muslim and Christian women in resolving the Liberian conflict. The example set in the film can initiate discussion among students of the possibility of interfaith dialogue and the many organizations currently working to improve interreligious communication, as well as specific examples of interfaith efforts to resolve conflicts worldwide.

### Discussion Questions:

- What role does religion play in the lives of the women depicted in the film?
- How important was interfaith cooperation between Muslim and Christian women to the success of the peace initiative in Liberia?
- What are some of the obstacles to interfaith work in peace-building?
- What specific steps did the women in the film take to find common ground? Did they, for example, alter their appearance in any way? How did they use prayer? Based on their example, can you imagine specific ways in which you or your religious group might work with people of other faiths toward a common goal?
- How does the cooperation among Muslim and Christian women in film run counter to the commonly-held perceptions of Muslim-Christian relations worldwide?
- Why does religion so often seem to provoke animosity and conflict rather than cooperation? Under what circumstances are religious groups most likely to work cooperatively toward a common goal?
- What examples from world history can you think of where different religious groups have worked together towards peace?
- Do religious groups have a moral responsibility to work toward peaceful solutions to violent conflict?
- Have you ever worked together with people whose faith was different from your own? How easy/difficult was it, and why?



- Most belief systems include a belief in charity or other assistance to the poor. How can different religious groups band together to address larger social problems, such as poverty?

## Nonviolent Resistance in Modern History

### Suggested Activities:

- Identify local interfaith organizations in your community and invite speakers to come and address your class/group about their work.
- Visit the Common Tables website (see below). Ask students to try and design a “common table” in their classroom or community, composed of members of different faiths, that can meet and discuss topics of importance.
- Ask students to identify world conflicts that might be solved by improved interfaith dialogue. Ask them to research the history of the conflict and design a “forum” in which members of the different religious groups can meet to discuss issues of importance.
- Identify an issue of local importance and ask students to design an interfaith project that will address this issue.
- Ask students to identify writings in various faiths that can make an important contribution to peace-making.

### Suggested Resources:

#### Books:

- David Little (Ed.), *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (2007, Cambridge University Press)
- Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounters in America* (2007, Rutgers University Press)
- David R. Smock (Ed.), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (2002, United States Institute of Peace)

#### Online Resources:

- Religions for Peace, <http://www.rfpusa.org>
- Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding  
<http://www.tanenbaum.org/>
- Center for Interfaith Relations  
<http://www.interfaithrelations.org/>
- Common Tables, <http://www.commontables.org/>
- Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions  
<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=7&sn=5>
- Family Promise, <http://www.familypromise.org/>

**Essential Question:** What role has nonviolent resistance played in promoting justice in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries?

**Overview:** While many students may be familiar with the nonviolent protest movements led by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., they may be less familiar with similar movements that have advocated for social and political change — such as the Solidarity Movement in communist Poland, the Tiananmen Square protests in China, the recent protests of Buddhist monks in Burma, or the agricultural boycotts in the United States led by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. Study of the tactics of the women in the film can help students broaden their understanding of the theory and practice of nonviolent resistance in a variety of contexts.

### Discussion Questions:

- What is the theoretical basis of nonviolent resistance? Is nonviolence passive? Is there a difference between nonviolence and passivity?
- Why is nonviolent protest effective? Is it more or less effective than violent protest? Why? Why do groups find nonviolent protest so difficult to enact?
- What specific methods of nonviolent protest did the women in the film employ? Why were these successful?
- What are some specific historical examples of the successful use of nonviolent resistance? Under what circumstances are these movements most successful?
- Is there a connection between nonviolence and religious belief? Can nonviolence be practiced without a religious context?
- The story of the women in *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* has inspired a new website called Peace is Loud ([www.peaceisloud.org](http://www.peaceisloud.org)). Why do you think this name was chosen for the site?

### Suggested Activities:

- Download the list of 24 case studies of effective nonviolent protest in the 20<sup>th</sup> century compiled by the Albert Einstein Institution, available at <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizationsfb39.html>. Have students research one of the cases on the list and compare it to the action of the women in the film.
- In 1973, Gene Sharp published *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, a three-volume work that listed 198 methods of nonviolent action. Ask students to download the list, available at <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations103a.html>, and have them identify which tactics were used by women in the film. Ask them to analyze why these tactics were chosen, and why they were successful in the context of the Liberian peace struggle.
- Ask students to analyze Gandhi's famous quote about nonviolent resistance: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." Does this quote apply to what happens in the film? To other nonviolent protest movements you are aware of? If students were building a nonviolent resistance movement, how might the reactions Gandhi describes take shape in the specific context in which they would organize?
- Using the list of international nonviolent organizations identified in the Wikipedia articles (see below), ask teams of students to research each of the organizations and report to the class about the context in which the group is operating and the activities it has promoted.
- Download and complete the lesson plan on "Committing to Nonviolence," a compendium lesson to the film *Viva La Causa* (see below), from the Teaching Tolerance website, available at [www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?ar=974](http://www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?ar=974)
- Download and complete the three lessons on nonviolence provided by the educational organization Facing History and Ourselves. These lessons are pegged to the PBS series *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1985*. Lesson 1: The Philosophy of Nonviolence (available at [www.facinghistory.org/resources/lessons/eyes-prize-lesson-1-the-philosop](http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/lessons/eyes-prize-lesson-1-the-philosop)). Lesson 2: Six Steps for Nonviolent Social Change (available at [www.facinghistory.org/resources/lessons/eyes-prize-lesson-2-six-steps-no](http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/lessons/eyes-prize-lesson-2-six-steps-no)). Lesson 3: Tactics of Nonviolence (available at [www.facinghistory.org/resources/lessons/eyes-prize-lesson-3-tactics-nonv](http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/lessons/eyes-prize-lesson-3-tactics-nonv)).

### Suggested Resources:

#### Books:

- Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Non-Violent Conflict* (2001, Palgrave Macmillan)
- David Cortright, *Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism* (2006, Paradigm)
- Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (1993, University of California Press)
- Mark Kurlansky, *Nonviolence: 25 Lessons from the History of a Dangerous Idea* (2006, Modern Library)
- Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance* (2004, Praeger)
- Howard Zinn, *The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates of Peace* (2002, Beacon Press)

#### Videos:

- A Force More Powerful* (2002, Directed by Steve York)
- Gandhi* (1982, Directed by Richard Attenborough)
- Viva La Causa: The Story of Cesar Chavez and a Great Movement for Social Justice* (Teaching Tolerance)

#### Online Resources:

- International Center on Nonviolent Conflict  
<http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/>
- "Nonviolent Resistance," and "Nonviolence," Wikipedia  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent\\_resistance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_resistance)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolence>
- Peace is Loud  
[www.peaceisloud.org](http://www.peaceisloud.org)



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