



Teach Tolerance through a Song

The song **Home Planet Earth** is a beautiful teaching tool. *Essential human values* can be explored and expressed using this simple, profound song and its video.

The song travels from A to Z through fifty six countries around the world. The video highlights folk dances from each country in sync with the verses. These are ‘snapshot impressions’ of our extraordinary human tapestry. Together the *song and video* have a stunning impact on students, and audience, if you choose to make it into a performance.

Teaching tolerance goes right to the heart of our humanity. It applies to everyone in every land. It is relevant and essential to our shared future, no matter what ethnic, historical or religious background. It is part of the beauty and challenge of being human.

Tolerance, by definition, is being open minded, forgiving, unprejudiced, just, fair minded, broad minded, considerate and understanding. It is a natural extension of the quality of *humanity* in a person or a people. Tolerance is learned by example *and* by instinct.

We live *now* in a time when the world has become a much smaller place. We can come to know and appreciate the human mosaic in ways that simply were not possible until recent times. More knowledge and experience of our brothers and sisters around the world is available to us now than ever before. *Ignorance is no longer an excuse, (nor an option).*

When we are exposed to the extraordinary diversity of human life on this planet, we can recognize *universal human qualities*. We can look into the eyes of nearly any child in any land and see the spark of hope and promise for the future; the love and warmth of kind; the sense of adventure and curiosity, fear and excitement for the unknown.... so many things *the same*.

We are human first.

Our differences are part of the natural theater of planetary life.

We are human first.

Then – we are female or male.

Then – we are our genetic heritage.

Then – we are our ethnicity determined BOTH by genetic and environmental influences.

But above all, *we are human first!*

That is where teaching tolerance begins.

When children see the images of the people dancing in **Home Planet Earth**, there is an immediate fascination. Clothing, language, gesture, facial expression, skin color, music, song, story, imagery, beliefs...are all part of the kaleidoscope of human experience and translation.

When the children begin to talk about their impressions of the video montage, you hear how strange and exotic these different people and cultures are to ours. But then when you demonstrate to your students how our customs and culture must seem strange to the people in the pictures, something wonderful begins to happen. *It opens a doorway in them.*

To realize – “I am to them as they are to me”, requires some introspection. It is a bridging sentiment and realization. It is the birth of *empathy*; inklings and twinklings of genuine *compassion!*

It applies to *all* relationships.

That is where teaching tolerance begins:

Recognizing what is the same between us as human beings whilst engendering a deep respect, fascination and compassion for our different backgrounds and expressions.

The Song – Home Planet Earth

“Whatever the color of your skin
Or the country of your birth
Every single human is a citizen
Of our home planet Earth”

Think what kind of world we could be part of if only the sanctity of human life, of all life were held by all in reverence; that our mutual citizenship ‘upon’ this Earth was honored as a universal grant and charter.

There are inherent, instinctive human values (pre-ordained by the fact of our existence). Racism is learned, **not** inherent. Bigotry is taught by example. It is **not** ‘human nature’! Prejudice and hatred are learned behaviors.

But children can learn otherwise! That is the responsibility, province and privilege of educators: To uphold the *inherent values* of our common humanity!

PAZ