

SPEAKING TRUTH

The Impact of World Religions on Leadership for Social Change

A Curriculum for Middle and High School Teachers

Summer Institute 2016 “Teaching and Experiencing World Religions”

Georgetown University



Overview

1. How does the FFC Speaking Truth curriculum work?
2. Why use the FFC Speaking Truth curriculum?
3. How can this curriculum help your students develop their own visions of social change?
4. How can you adapt this curriculum to the unique needs of you and your students?

1.

How does the FFC
Speaking Truth curriculum work?

This curriculum seeks to teach world religions in a dynamic way – by linking it to current global change

It does this by focusing on leaders who have been influenced by various world faiths



John Lewis



Malala Yousafzai



Thich Nhat Hanh



Mario Gonzalez



Muhammad Yunus



Ruth Messinger



Berta Caceres



Chico Mendes



Wangari Maathai



Daniel Barenboim



Joan Baez



Pete Seeger

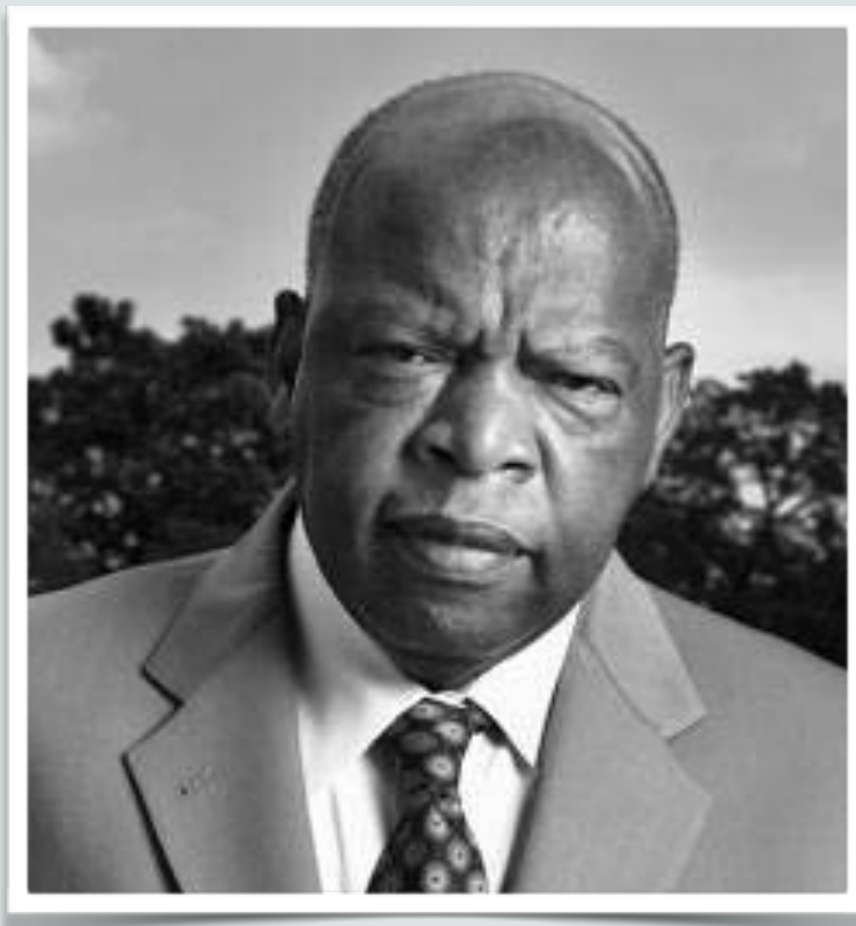


Hamada Ben Amor

The FFC curriculum modules follow a standard format – focusing on three factors common to such visionary leaders for change in our world

- The **role models** that initially inspired each of these visionary leaders to see the need for special social changes;
- The “**watershed moments**” in the lives of these visionary leaders that eventually triggered their efforts to seek social change;
- The “**faith perspective**” of these visionary leaders that gave them the strength to persist seeking transformative social change against all odds.

Factor #1: How “role models” influenced visionary change leaders – both at an early age and later in life

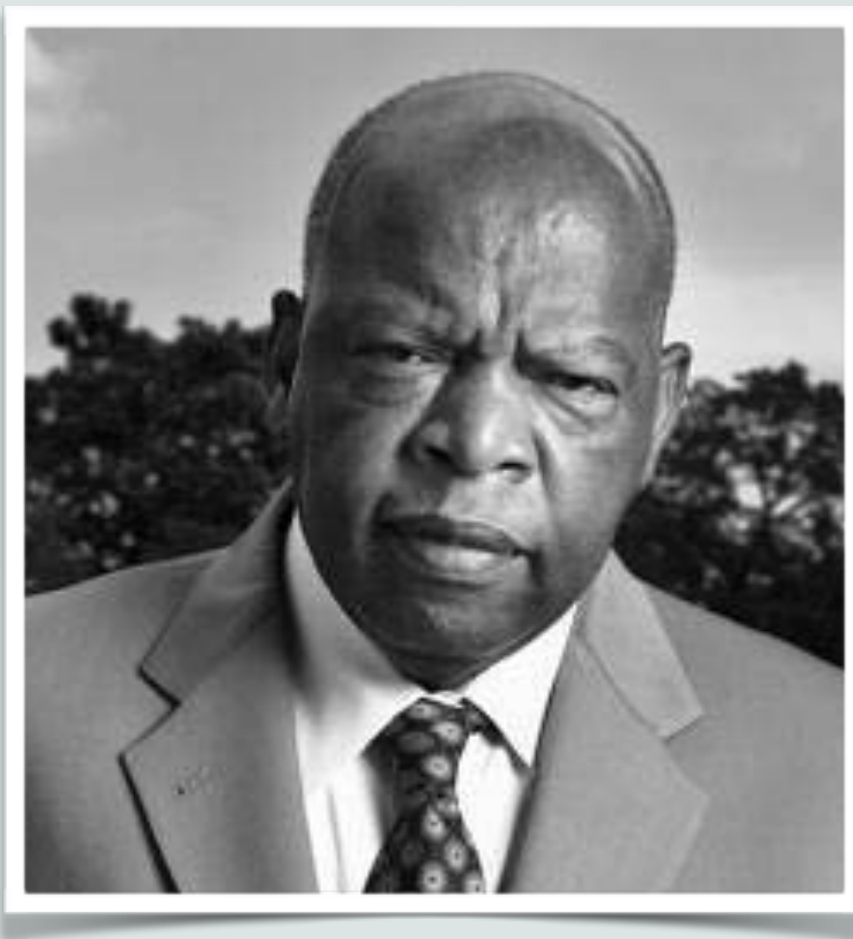


“And then on a Sunday morning in 1955, I was listening to the radio, tuned to WRMA out of Montgomery, as always, when on the air came a sermon by a voice I’d never heard before, a young minister from Atlanta...

I listened as this man spoke about how it wasn’t enough for black people to only be concerned about getting to the promised land in the hereafter... He said we needed to be concerned with the gates of schools that were closed to black people and the doors of stores that refused to hire or serve us. His message was one of love and the Gospel but he was applying those principles to now, to today.”

– Representative John Lewis ⁷

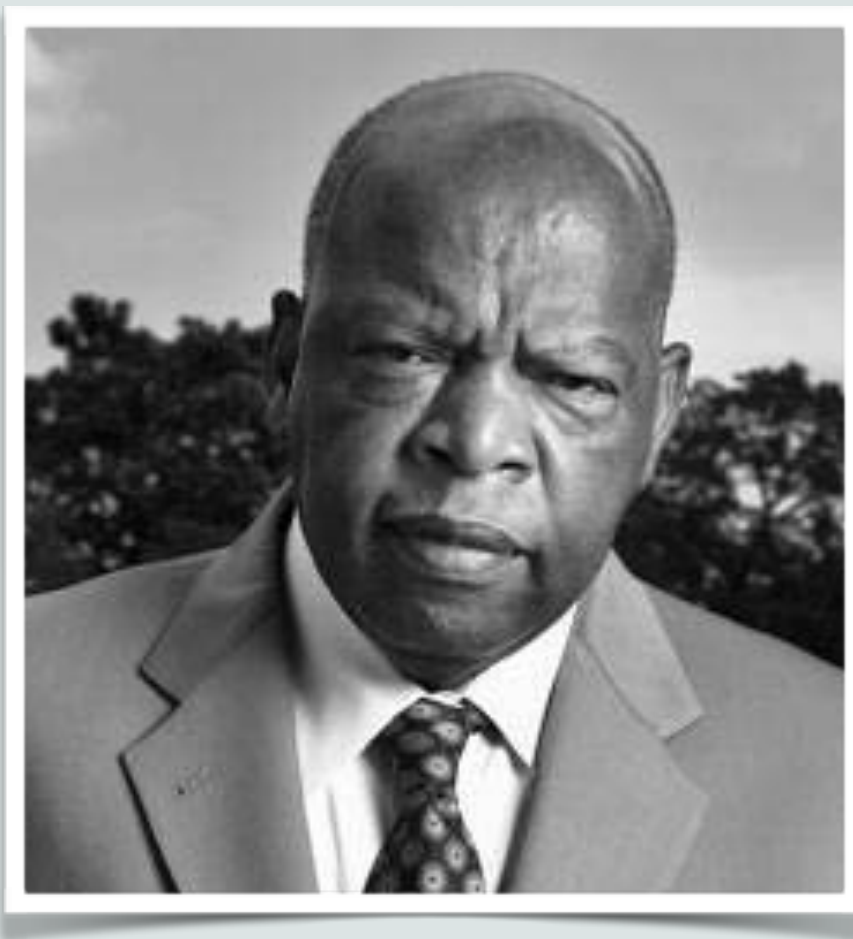
Factor #2: How “watershed moments” occurred in their lives – often at an early age – and gave them a new vision to change what looked like an impossible situation



“Dr. King’s message hit me like a bolt of lightning. I felt like he was preaching directly to me. I went to the library on Monday to find out everything I could about this man. At the time I could only find one newspaper article. But 1955 was a watershed year... Lines had been drawn. Blood was beginning to spill.”

– Representative John Lewis

Factor #3: How their faith tradition gave them a vision of change and the strength to resist great opposition



“Dr. King’s example showed me that it was possible to do more as a minister than what I had witnessed in my one church.

I was inspired.”

– Representative John Lewis

Each module is supplemented by materials that make it interesting to high school students



Of Love and Reconciliation: A Pilgrimage to Alabama

Documentary film produced by FFC award winner Melissa Mergner
(<https://vimeo.com/79448759>)

The curriculum modules provide a window into how world religions inspired these leaders to action



John Lewis

**Music and
Activism**



Malala Yousafzai

**Girls'
Education**



Thich Nhat Hanh

**Mindfulness and
Leadership**



Mario Gonzalez

**Seven Generations
Leadership Model**



Muhammad Yunus

**Microloans and
Economic Justice**



Ruth Messinger

**Living on \$2/Day
Challenge**

The curriculum modules provide a window into how world religions inspired these leaders to action

Music, Peace-Building and Social Justice



Daniel Barenboim



Joan Baez



Pete Seeger



Hamada Ben Amor

Innovative Grassroots Environmental Projects in Developing Countries



Berta Caceres



Chico Mendes



Wangari Maathai

2.

Why use the FFC
Speaking Truth curriculum?

This curriculum has been accepted by the National Council for Social Studies for workshop participants



Workshop presenter
June Murray-Crawford,
Hudson High School



The **Speaking Truth** curriculum was selected as a workshop topic from over 1300 proposals submitted to the National Council for Social Studies for its 2014 annual conference in Boston.

The curriculum has benefitted from two decades of work between the Fund for the Future and Georgetown University – working on programs to stimulate visionary youth leadership



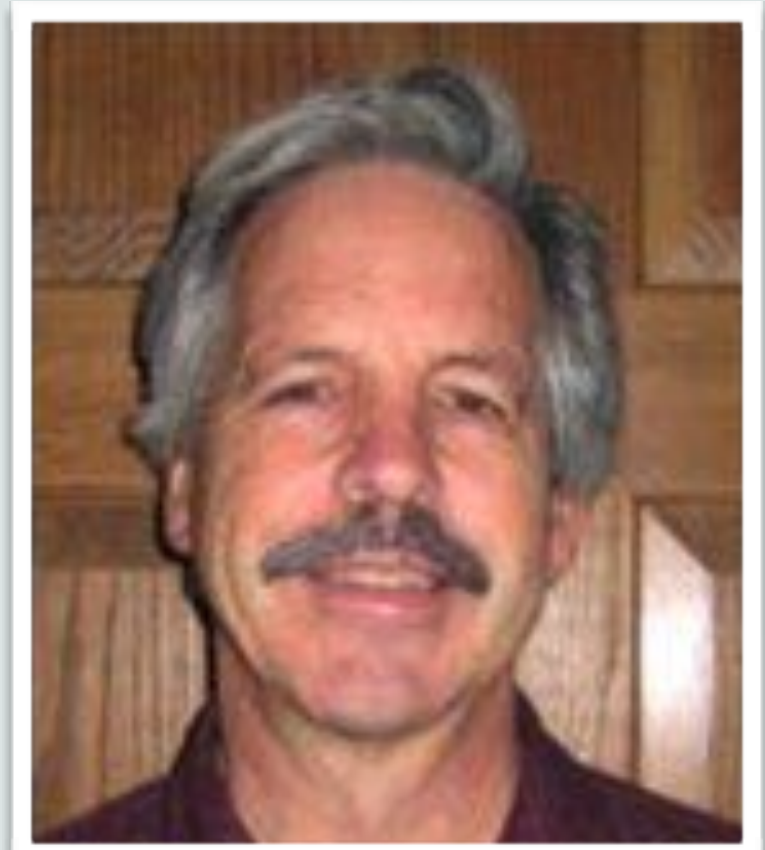
The curriculum has also benefitted from visionary high school teachers who have worked with youth on innovative courses dealing with world religions and social studies



June Murray-Crawford
Hudson
High School

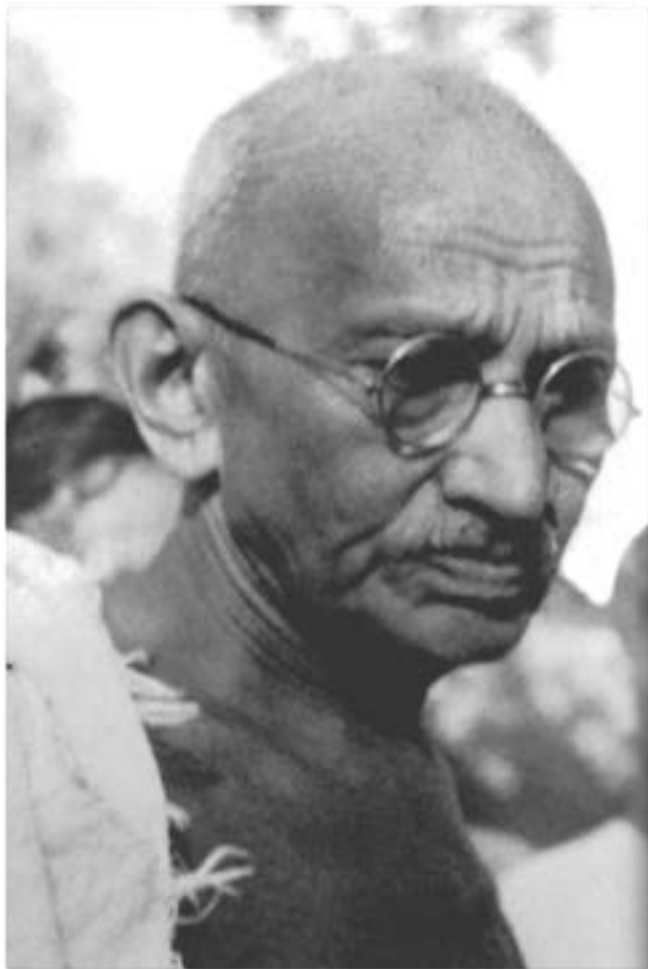


Lansing Freeman
Montgomery Blair
High School

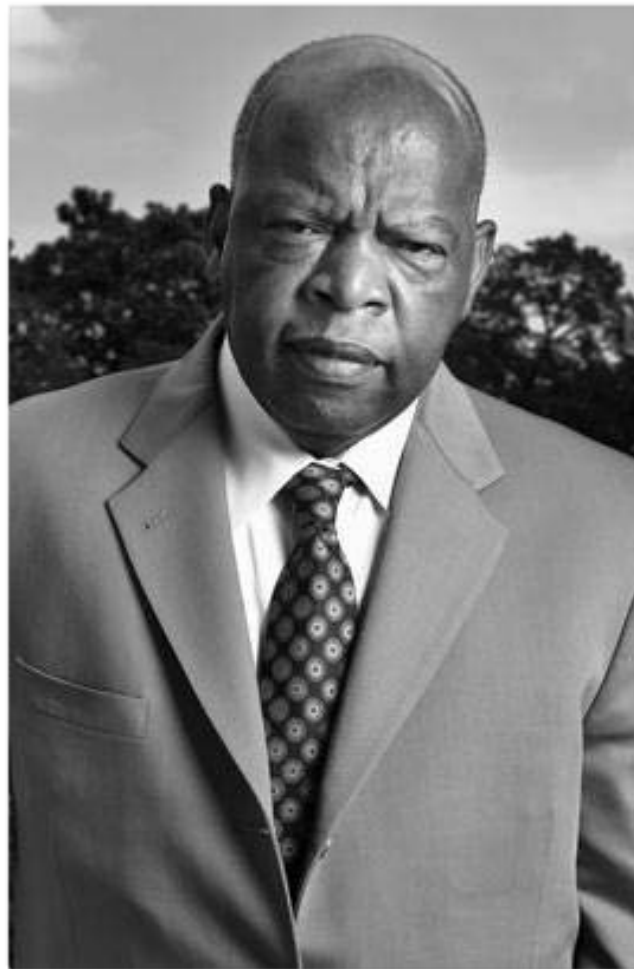


David Weeks
Glenelg Country
School

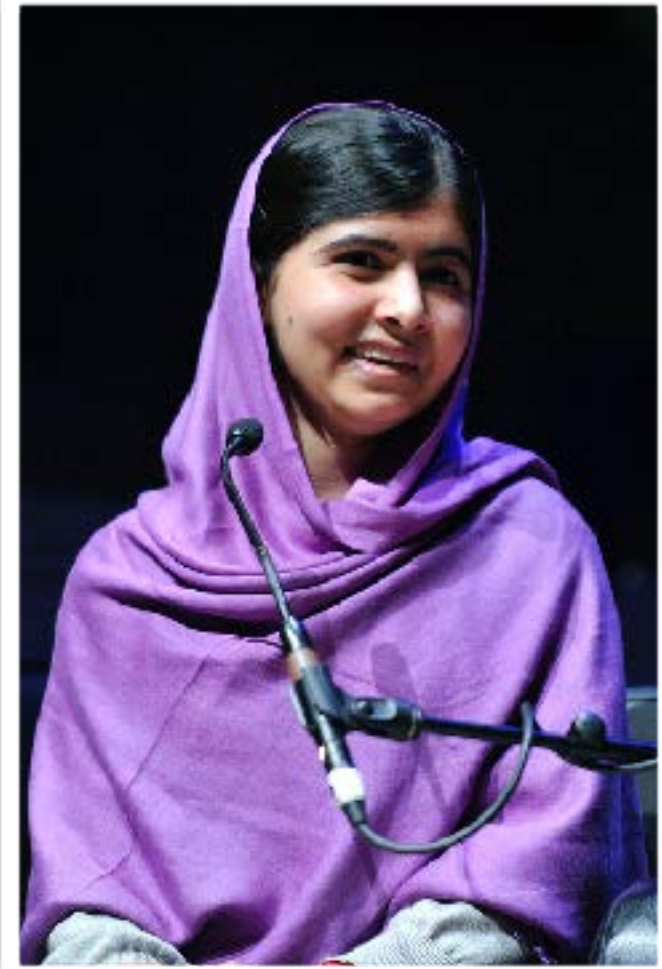
The proof is also in the pudding: high school youth have been particularly motivated by examining the lives of visionary agents of change



**Mahatma
Ghandi**



**Representative
John Lewis**



**Malala
Yousafzai**

High school students have been intrigued at how the change of perspective of these visionary leaders had direct links to their own faith traditions

Here are just a few examples:

**“The Female Potential”,
Interfaith Works’
Clothing Center**



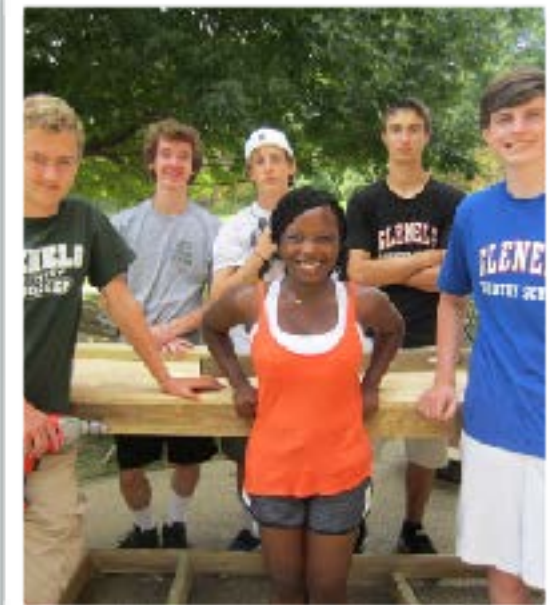
Rachel Solomon
Rockville High School
Now attending
St. Mary’s College

**“Hands On”,
Youth Dinners With
Shelter Residents**



Veronica Ferris
Washington
International School
Now working with the
Peace Corp in Namibia

**Produce Stand at the
Food Bank Gardens in
Howard County, MD**



Lanre Faderin
Glenelg Country School
Molecular Genetics,
University of Maryland and
a patient care volunteer at
Children’s National Hospital

One other side benefit: these students have found that spiritual wisdom from these faith traditions provided practical insights into how constructive change can occur in the world

The FFC Youth Leadership Grant Program has supported student projects around the world

United States

Haiti

Ecuador

Mali

Nigeria

Ghana

Sudan

Kenya

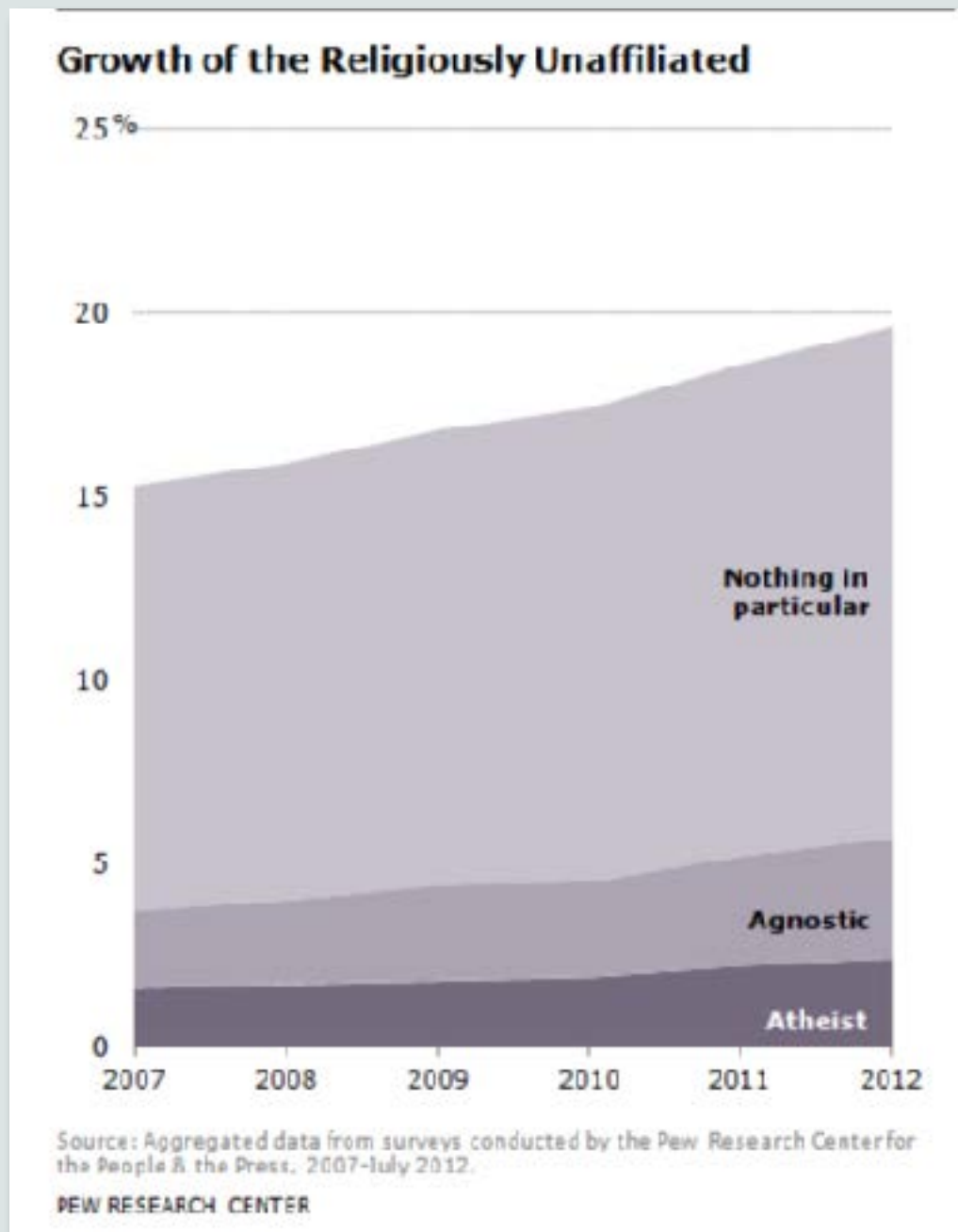
Pakistan

Kashmir

India

Korea

This type of curriculum therefore has important educational value – particularly in light of the diminishing understanding of world faith traditions among young people



“The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public – and a third of adults under 30 – are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.

This large and growing group of Americans is less religious than the public at large on many conventional measures, including frequency of attendance at religious services and the degree of importance they attach to religion in their lives.”

– 2012 Pew Research Center Study
www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/

3.

How can this curriculum help
your students develop their
own visions of social change?

Teachers and high school students in FFC programs have started innovative justice and transformative change projects around the world after finding inspiration in faith traditions



The screenshot shows the website for the Fund for the Future of Our Children (FFC). The header features a logo with a blue circle containing a crescent moon and stars, with the letters 'F F C' below it. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'Fund for the Future of Our Children' in a large, serif font, followed by the tagline '...that our children may be peacemakers' in a smaller, italicized font. A stylized sunburst icon is positioned to the right of the tagline. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Home, Grants, Visionary Leaders, Speaking Truth, FFC News, Emerging Writers, Awards, Gallery, About, and Contact. The 'Visionary Leaders' link is highlighted. Below the navigation bar is a section titled 'About the Program' with links to FAQ, 2014 Leadership Grants, and Past Leadership Grants. The main content area contains three paragraphs of text. The first paragraph states that the program is possible through the collaboration of Campus Ministry at Georgetown University. The second paragraph describes the Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest and how it motivated FFC to invest in high school students. The third paragraph explains the Youth Leadership Grants program. To the right of the text is a photograph of a group of diverse children and a woman, likely a teacher or mentor, smiling and posing together in a classroom setting.

Fund for the Future of Our Children
...that our children may be peacemakers

Home Grants **Visionary Leaders** Speaking Truth FFC News Emerging Writers Awards Gallery About Contact

About the Program FAQ 2014 Leadership Grants Past Leadership Grants

This program, along with the Children of Abraham Awards Ceremonies, is possible through the generous collaboration of **Campus Ministry at Georgetown University**.

The remarkable initiative displayed by participants in the **Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest** motivated FFC to invest in both the particular projects they have undertaken and also their personal development as our future leaders. These high school students have researched the Abrahamic religious traditions, investigating topics like peace, leadership, and social justice, and used that knowledge to propose a creative project to benefit their community, their nation, or the world. Our leadership program is modeled after the highly successful micro-loan program for private businesses in developing countries started by Muhammad Yunus, the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Youth Leadership Grants are presented to 10th and 11th grade students on the basis of the creativity, relevance, and viability of their proposed projects. We have found that the grant awards have far-reaching effects for these students, who have found themselves engaging with both family and community in new ways as they bring their chosen cause to the attention of concerned individuals.



One high school student, Nike Awotunde, received an FFC grant to raise money for the improvement of the science lab at the Oyan Grammar School in Western Nigeria



“I have made a significant amount of progress concerning the Oyan Grammar School Lab Project, and I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to impact other young lives. I feel blessed that I came into contact with this organization because if it weren't for FFC, I would have had no way to raise money for the chemistry lab, let alone even start it.”

– FFC Grant Recipient Nike Awotunde

Through their FFC project, a group of six students from Hudson High School has raised \$4700 to help build schools in southern Sudan



After studying about the Sudan in their World Cultures Latin America/Africa (WCLAA) class, students were motivated to take action. They were inspired by the role education played in the lives of Sudanese refugees and in particular the life of Emmanuel Jal. Energized by the lyrics of Jal's music, students organized a "pay per view" assembly and raised over \$1400 for his organization, Gua Africa. The funds will be used to build schools in southern Sudan....

To date Schools for Sudan has sponsored a fundraising night at a local restaurant, maintained "Jars for Jal", an initiative to collect spare change developed in partnership with the school cafeteria, been featured on local radio and in the Metrowest Daily. The initial \$1400 total has grown to \$4700.

Student Rishabh Khatri's FFC project raised money to fund medical clinics in earthquake-ravaged Haiti



Rishabh started the Health for Haiti campaign and sold blue and red wristbands to raise \$1,100 in response to the January 2010 earthquake and resulting life-threatening health issues. Rishabh was able to sell the bands at 4 area schools with the assistance of other interested students.

The money raised from the sale of the wristbands went to the building of a new health clinic in Camp Coq, Haiti and renovating a school. Rishabh and other students organized an “International Food Night and Glenelg’s Got Talent” event with donated cuisine and raised over \$10,000.

Kikanae Punyua's FFC project raised money to build a school and health clinic in his native Kenya – and returned home to persuade his community to stop female circumcisions



Kikanae has raised close to \$5,000 for his foundation, has achieved tax-exempt status, has increased participation in his efforts, and was given land by his tribe to build a school/library. Grant and matching grant funds have been used for the materials for a health clinic to be built. The balance of funds will be for the general construction of the health clinic, beginning with the foundation.

Kikanae was able to return to Kenya over the 2012 summer to address his community on the impacts of female circumcision, and he was able to persuade them to stop the practice. During his visit, Kikanae also emphasized the importance of education for girls.

These high school students have gone on to college and beyond – continuing their early visionary projects



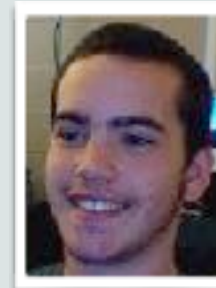
Kikanae Punyua
Women's Health and Equality
(Masai tribe, Kenya)



Diana Jeang
Refugee Resettlement
(Emory University)



Ibrahim Anyars Salih
Poverty Relief (Vocational workshop for orphans, Kumasi, Ghana)



Jonathan Kesten
Corruption (Working with Wildlife Law Enforcement in Cameroon)



Shayna Solomon
Spirituality & Social Justice
(Oxford University)



Rishabh Khatri
Disaster Relief
(Haiti, New Orleans, India)



Melissa Mergner
Peace Building
(Korean Unification)

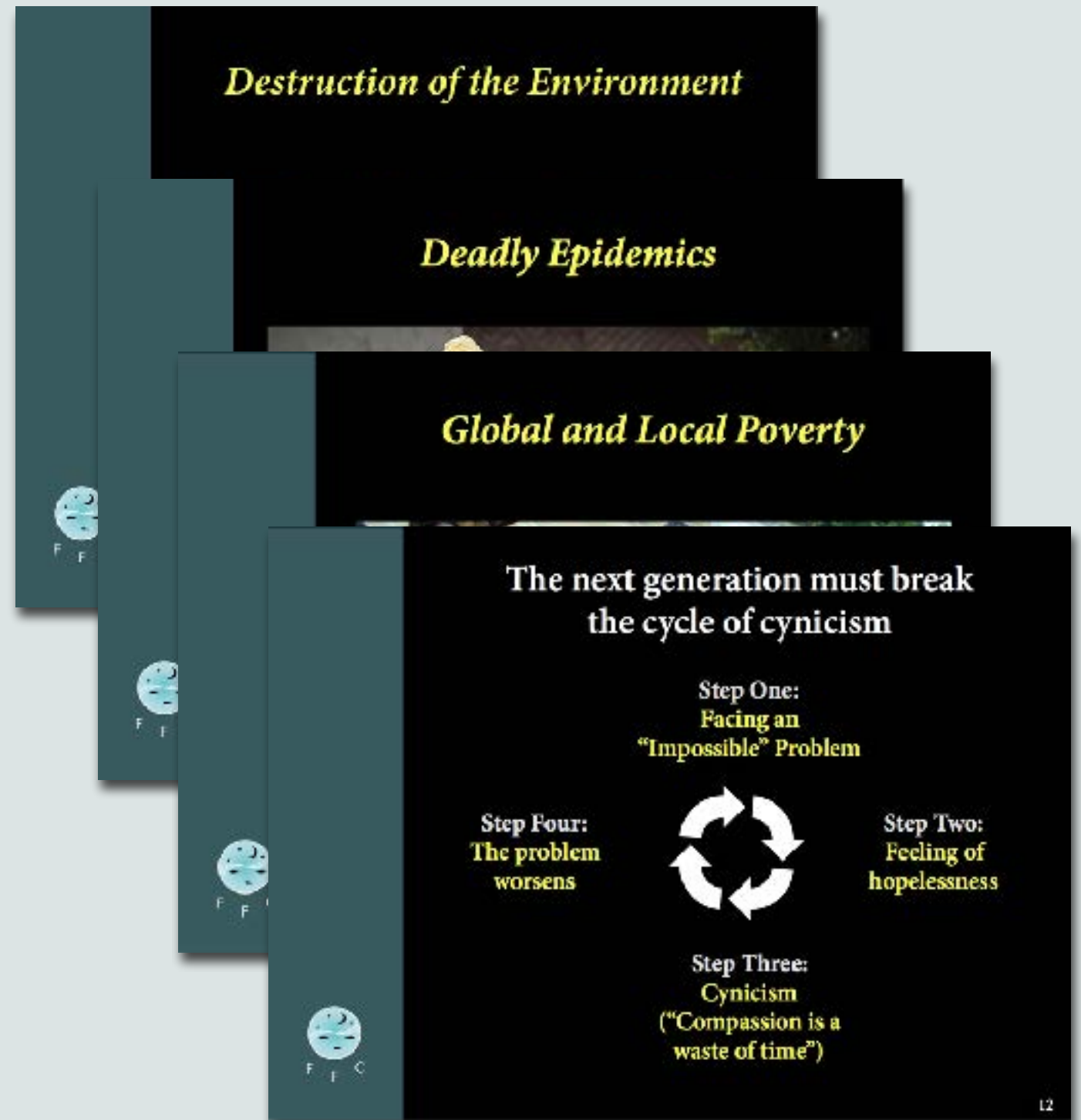
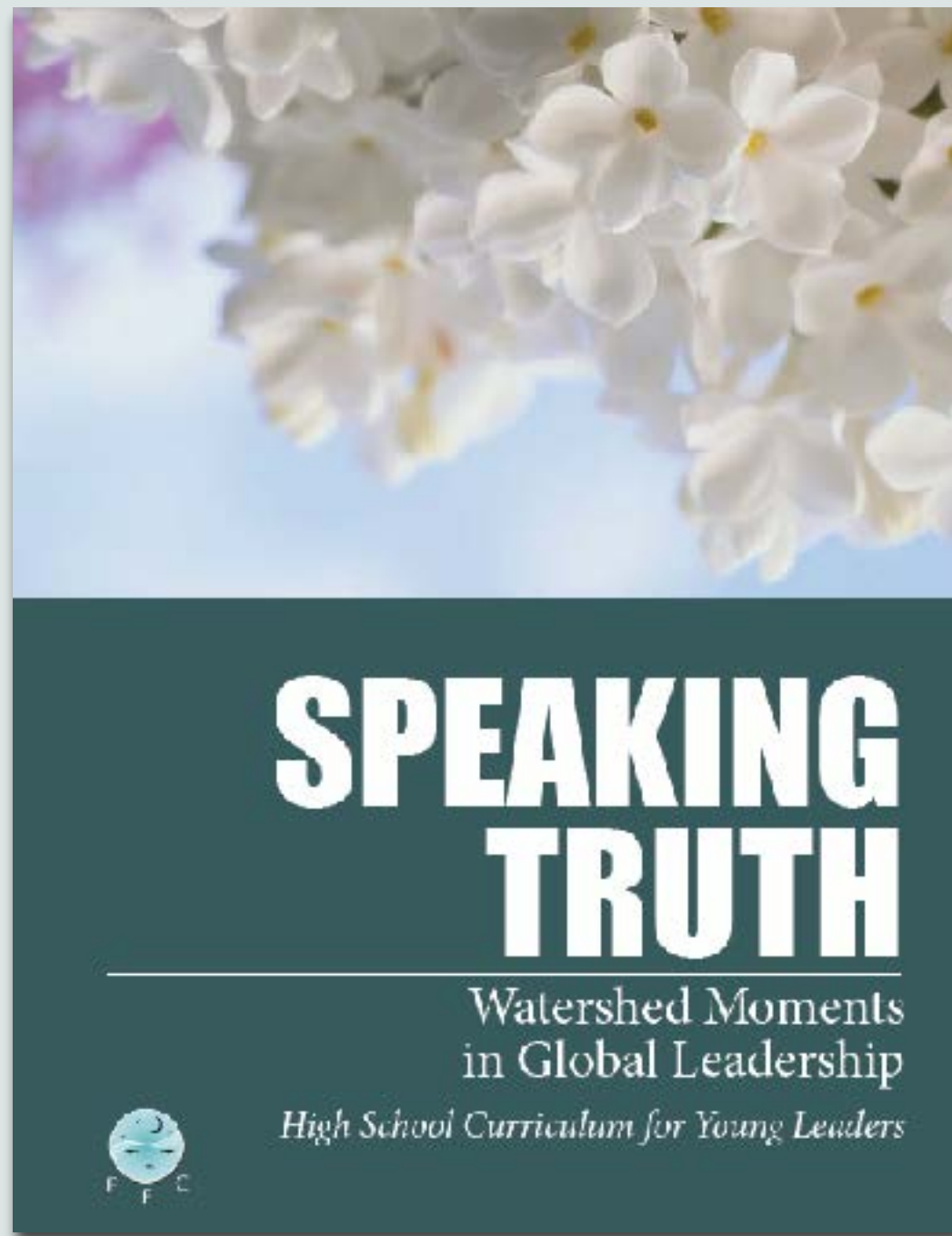


Veronica Ferris
Peace Corp, Namibia

4.

How can you adapt this curriculum to the unique needs of you and your students?

The curriculum modules contain far more than just biographies – they invite students to examine and address social justice issues through faith in action



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Overview

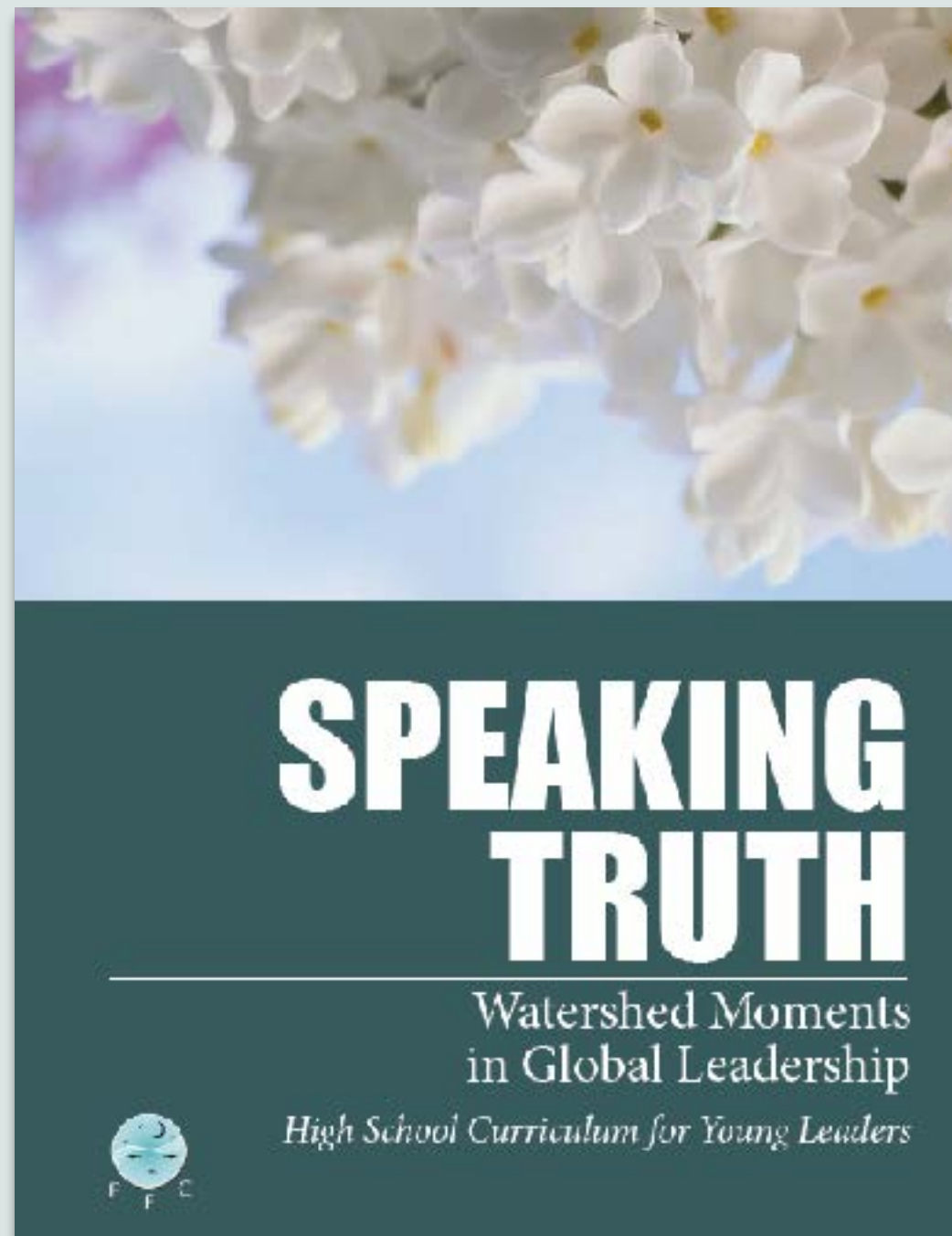
How It Works

Why Use It

Student Impact

Use Flexibility

There is an initial base module with a number of lessons which initiate conversation about faith-based activism



Students will capture their interpretation of the meanings of the words Faith, Doubt, Purpose, Values, the Present.

In addition to exploring these words through writing, students will spend a week photographing their lives capturing the manifestation of these words in their day to day experiences.

Journaling from the Soul

Content Objectives

Students will create personal narratives related to each prompt.

Students will document their journaling with photos.

Synopsis of Lesson

Begin class with a writing prompt written on the board and a 10-15 minute free write. Students will share their pieces with each other. At the end of the unit students will select their favorite pieces and create a class journal/video/document.

Faith

"The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays." – Søren Kierkegaard

What do you have faith in and why?

Doubt

"Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith." – Paul Tillich

What things do I believe in that I cannot see?

Purpose

"He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." – Friedrich Nietzsche


If there were only three things I could do in my life, what would they be?

Values

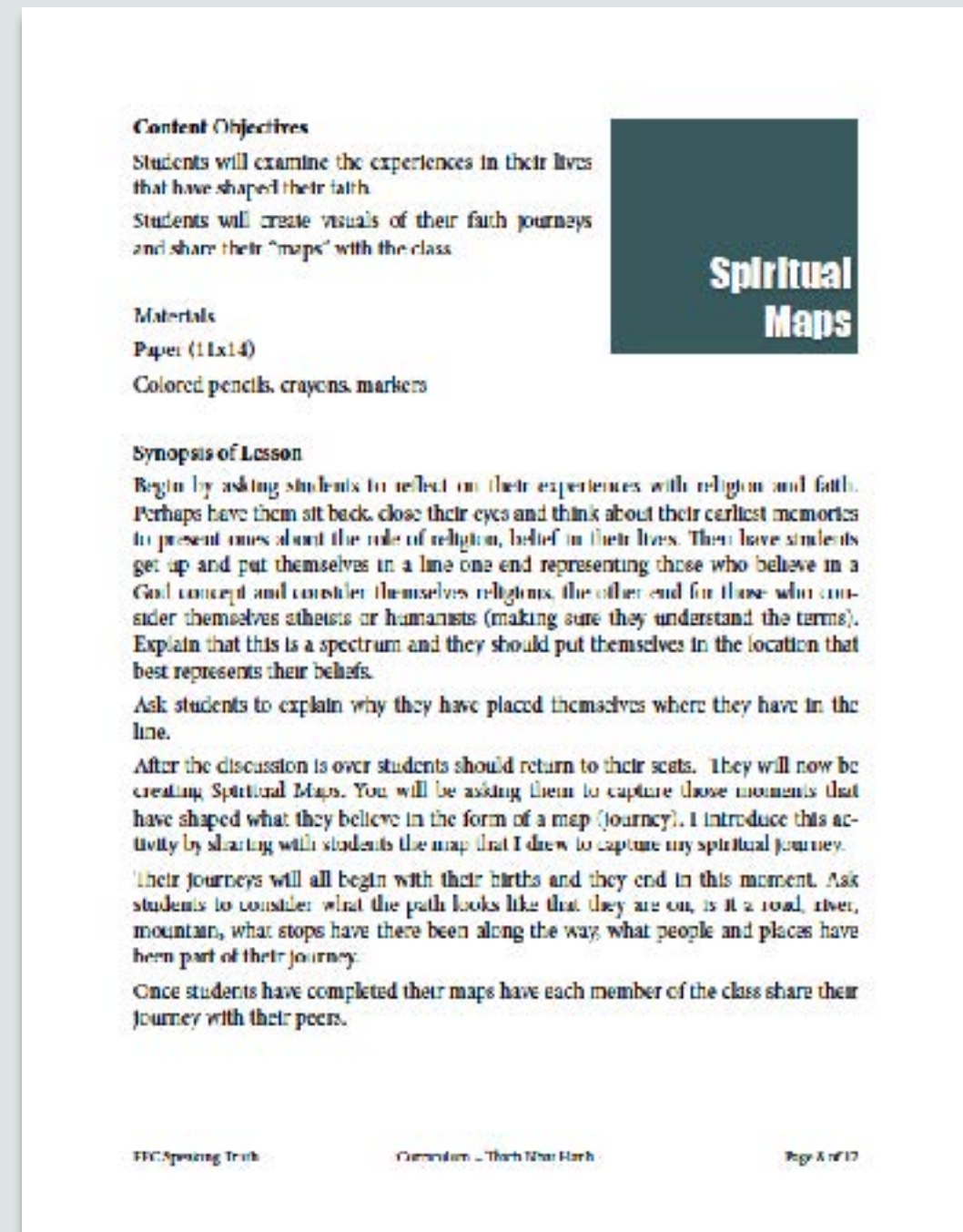
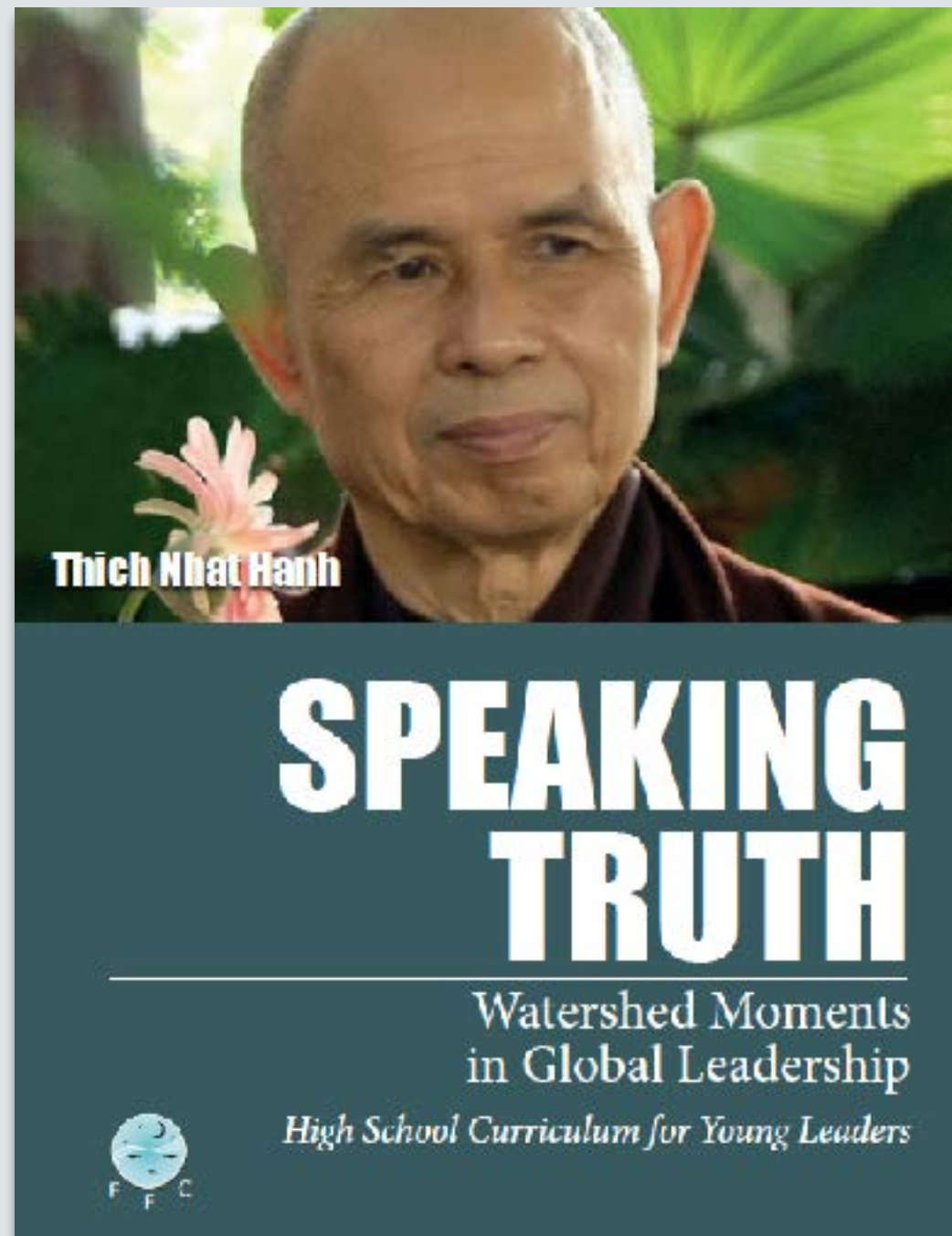
"Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny."

— Mahatma Gandhi

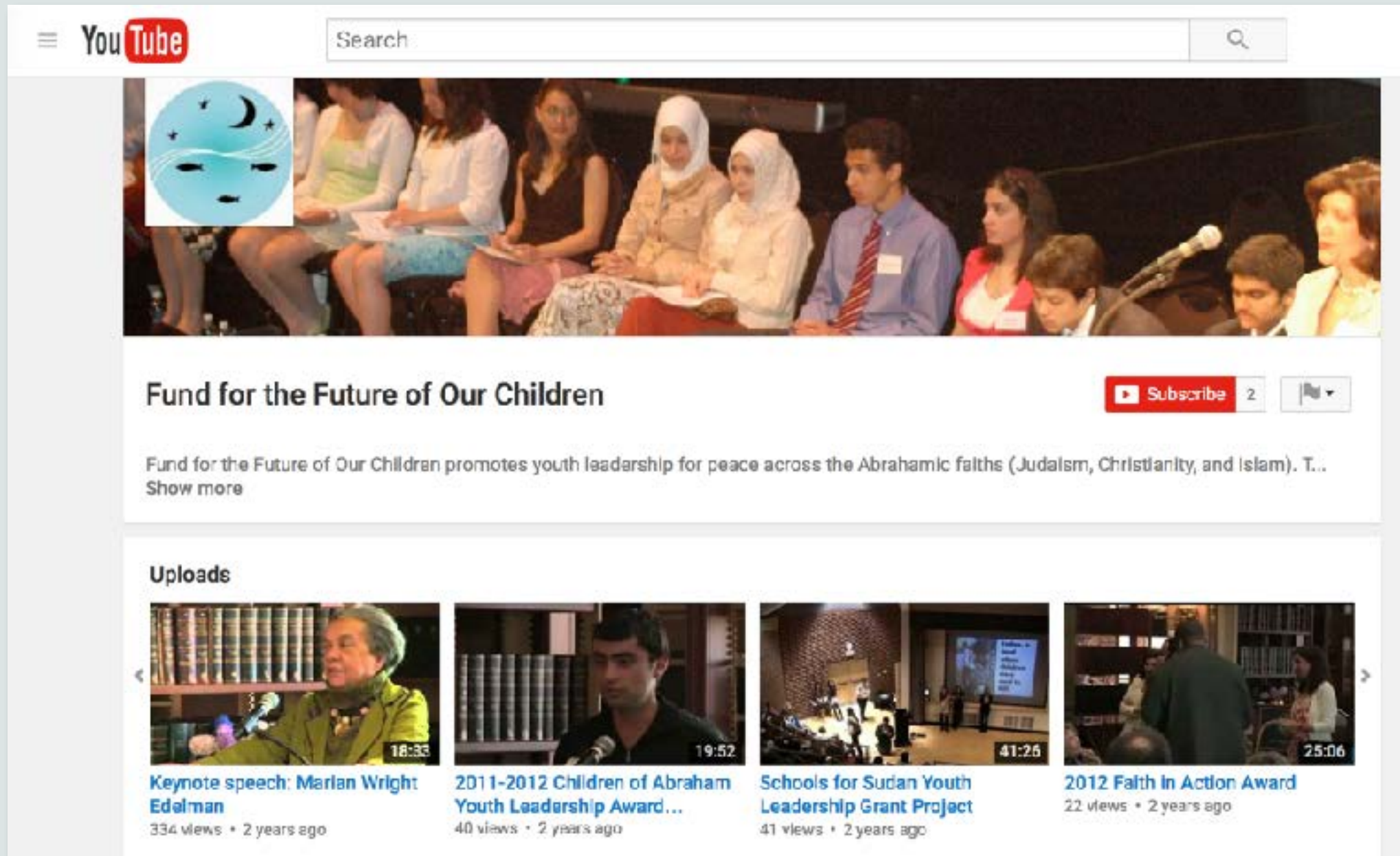
List the 5-7 values most important to you. Then ask yourself, if these are my values, am I honoring them? If the answer is yes great, if there is room for improvement, what could you change so that you were living more in alignment with what you value.



Each individual curriculum module – selected by you and your students – contains a series of lesson plans and questions unique to that visionary leader



There is also an FFC YouTube channel for downloading additional materials



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLnvgfyiq9Q0v76CJZ5MbPg>

The individual curriculum modules can be downloaded through the FFC website



<http://www.futureofchildren.net/speaking-truth>