



# Popcorn Peacemaking

**Popcorn Peacemaking is a program being developed by the peaceCENTER that uses popular, readily available videos to explore the history and principles of peace and justice. It is intended for adult and young adult (high school age) audiences.**

Each study guide for the series consists of a brief historical or contextual overview, an explanation of why the film was selected, recommended excerpts for showing and several suggested discussion questions.

We have tried to select videos that are suitable for all audiences. However, one of the contradictions of nonviolence is that it is often practiced in violent situations. Many of the videos have an R Rating. In all cases, the teacher or discussion leader should watch the entire film and decide on its suitability for the intended audience.

If time permits, it is ideal to show the entire film to the group. However, given that most videos are at least two hours long and time is needed for reflection and discussion, the peaceCENTER has selected excerpts from the videos. When time is short, these excerpts can be shown in lieu of airing the entire video and the whole film can be shown at a more convenient time, or participants can be encouraged to borrow, rent or buy the video for later viewing with family or friends. The times of the excerpts are approximate. If there is only time to show one excerpt the "best choice" is usually marked

with an eyeglass icon 

If the entire film is not shown to the group, the discussion leader should introduce the clip with a few sentences that put it in context.

In addition to the specific discussion questions, there is also a general question and answer format for discussing movies.

Most of these films can be rented from video rental stores, or can be checked out of the local library. Most of the videos are available for check out from the peaceCENTER library (call 210/224-HOPE to arrange for pickup) and many can be purchased at the peaceCENTER online bookstore, in association with Amazon.com ([www.salsa.net/peace/amazon](http://www.salsa.net/peace/amazon)).

This project will be under constant development, so if you have any suggestions, please forward them to the peaceCENTER at the address below. E-Mail comments and suggestions can be sent to [suives@texas.net](mailto:suives@texas.net).



# Popcorn Peacemaking

## Question Format for Movie Conversations

This format was developed in order to “spiral” a conversation down to a deeper level and to explore what a movie might have to say to us as individuals and as a society.

The format begins with questions that everybody can answer - the facilitator should make sure that everyone gets at *least* one response in at the objective level, this makes it easier for participants to choose to participate at the “harder” question levels.

All of the questions listed are suggestions - once you get the idea of the kind of question that belongs in each category you can make up your own. Ask questions only for as long as you want that part of the conversation to last - you don’t have to ask *all* the questions!

It is suggested that the facilitator watch the movie first, walk through the process/sample questions and then create your list of possible questions for each level.

When facilitating the conversation, when you feel like the group is ready to move on to a deeper level in the conversation you ask a deeper question and skip the rest of the questions you have at that level.

### **Objective**

*(What do you remember?)*

What words do you remember, sounds, music...?

What scene is still playing in your head?

Who were the main characters - their names/relationships?

### **Reflective**

*(What happened?)*

Were you surprised at anything the characters said, did...?

At what point did the audience/you laugh? Why?

Did you find yourself looking around to see if anyone was crying? When?

How did this movie make you feel? Frustrated, angry, elated... Why?

### **Interpretive**

*(What was this movie all about?)*

What was the creator of the movie trying to say? or What did the movie say?

Is there a bigger story behind the movie?

Why do you think the creator made the movie?

What questions were raised for you?

What social/political/psychological statement was made?

Have you seen anything like this happen in your life?

### **Decisional**

*(What relevance does this movie have to my life?)*

Who did you identify with? Why?

Is it relevant/true/happening today? Why..?

Is this an issue that you, personally, would like to see something done about? What could be done?

Has the issue been addressed in other places or times?

If you were going to begin to exert your influence to change things, what would you do? What could you do?



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## Films

☺ **Amazing Grace and Chuck (1987)**

After taking a tour of a nuclear silo, Chuck decides to quit playing little league until nuclear weapons are disarmed.

**Angel and the Badman (1947)**

A wounded gunslinger is nursed by a Quaker family. When he falls in love with their daughter he has to decide whether to forsake his violent life. John Wayne.

**Amistad (1997)**

Fact-based story of the 1839 revolt by Africans on the slave ship Amistad and their subsequent trial when they are taken on American soil.

**Animal Farm (1955 and 1999)**

George Orwell's classic satire on Stalinism, with the animals taking over their farm by means of a revolutionary coup, but then discovering that although all animals are supposed to be equal, some are more equal than others. Animated, but not for young children.

**The Apostle (1997)**

A womanizing Pentecostal minister who is forced to leave his Texas home (and church) after committing a violent act. Fascinating study of a wayward man's journey to understand his life, and the many people who help him find his way.

☺ **Babe (1995)**

Babe is a little pig who doesn't quite know his place in the world and learns that a pig can be anything that he wants to be.

**Billy Elliott (2000)**

A talented young boy becomes torn between his unexpected love of dance and the disintegration of his family.

**Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace (2000)**

About the struggles and martyrdom of a Lutheran pastor during WWII.

**Born on the Fourth of July (1989)**

The biography of Ron Kovic. Paralyzed in the Vietnam war, he becomes an anti-war and pro-human rights political activist after feeling betrayed by the country he fought

In the Peace and Justice Library

☺ Especially suitable for young children

**Bound for Glory (1975)**

Biography of legendary folk singer Woody Guthrie, the Depression-era vagabond whose working class music affected generations.

**Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1973)**

Story of St. Francis of Assisi.

☺ **A Bug's Life (1998)**

A misfit ant, looking for warriors to save his colony from grasshoppers, recruits a group of bugs that turn out to be an inept circus troupe.

☺ **Chicken Run (2000)**

Our plucky heroines face a lifetime of hard labor laying for the farmers, and if their performance is not up to par they quite literally face the chop. Ginger, making her way to the top of the pecking order attempts jailbreak after farcical jailbreak, but success is less than forthcoming.

**Chinatown (1974) (R)**

L. A private eye led into a complex, volatile case by femme fatale, but also has an interesting side plot about water rights.

**Cry Freedom (1987)**

A white newspaper editor befriends South African Black political activist Steve Biko.

**Cry, the Beloved Country (1995)**

The lives of a black, country priest and a white wealthy landowner in South Africa in the 1940's. Themes of religion, politics, faith, healing, mercy and justice.

**Dances with Wolves (1990)**





About an idealistic young Civil War soldier who makes friends with a Sioux Indian tribe and, becomes one of them.

**Dead Poets Society (1989)**





Robin Williams is a charismatic English teacher at a staid New England prep school in 1959, whose infectious love of poetry--and insistence that each boy "seize the day" and make the most of life--inspires his impressionable students, not always in the right direction.

**Dead Man Walking (R) (1995)**

Based on the book by Sr. Helen Prejean, examines the issue of capital punishment from a humanitarian perspective, and urges thoughtful reflection on the justifications for legally ending a human life.

- Death and the Maiden (R) (1994)**  
A political activist is convinced that her guest is a man who once tortured her.
-  **Digging to China (1998)**  
A small girl befriends a retarded man.
- Dr. Strangelove (1964)**  
At the height of the cold war, a black comedy about the arms race and nuclear holocaust.
- Entertaining Angels - The Dorothy Day Story (1996)**  
Dorothy Day's spiritual evolution from a journalist and suffragette in Greenwich Village to her conversion to Roman Catholicism and her devotion to helping the poor.
- Erin Brockovich (2000) (R)**  
An unemployed single mother becomes a legal assistant and almost single-handedly brings down a California power company accused of polluting a city's water supply.
- Eva Peron (1996) (R)**  
An Argentinian-made film of the life of Eva Peron.
- A Farewell to Arms (1932)**  
Hemingway's WWI love story also analyses Lt. Henry's feelings on war and the purpose of fighting.
- The Fisher King (1991) (R)**  
A radio DJ, suicidally despondent because of a horrible mistake he made, finds redemption in helping a deranged homeless man who was a victim of it.
-  **Fly Away Home (1996)**  
A father and daughter decide to attempt to lead a flock of orphaned Canada Geese south by air.
- Forrest Gump (1994)**  
Unlikely story of a slow-witted but good-hearted man somehow at the center of the pivotal events of the 20th century.
-  **Freedom Song (2000)**  
A fictionalized account of the civil rights movement.
- Gandhi (1982)**  
Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor Oscars. Sweeping account of the life and times of Mohandas K. Gandhi.
- Gentleman's Agreement (1947)**  
A reporter pretends to be Jewish in order to cover a story on anti-Semitism, and personally discovers the true depths of bigotry and hatred.
- The Green Mile (1999)**  
The story about the lives of guards on death row leading up to the execution of a wrongly accused man who has the power of faith healing.
- Harlan County War (1982)**  
A Kentucky woman whose mine-worker husband is nearly killed in a cave-in, and whose father is slowly dying of black lung disease, joins the picket lines for a long, violent strike.
- Heat Wave (R) (1990)**  
An African-American messenger working for the LA. Times plays a key role in winning the newspaper a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the 1965 Watts riots.
- The Hiding Place (1975)**  
Corrie Ten Boom, a middle-aged Dutch watchmaker's daughter, became a heroine of the Resistance and aids Jews in WWII.
- The Hurricane (1999)**  
The story of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, a boxer wrongly imprisoned for murder, and the people who aided in his fight to prove his innocence.
- I Will Fight No More Forever (1975)**  
A chronicle of the war between the United States Army and the Nez Perce, Chief Joseph.
- Inherit the Wind (1960)**  
Based on a real-life case in 1925, two great lawyers argue the case for and against a science teacher accused of the crime of teaching evolution.
-  **The Iron Giant (1999)**  
A boy makes friends with an innocent alien giant robot that a paranoid government agent wants to destroy.
- It's the Rage (1999)**  
Handguns figure in the intertwining lives of nine people.
- Jakob the Liar (1999)**  
Without ever really owning a radio, Jakob begins to falsely create stories to please the ghetto. By doing this, Jakob lifts the morale of the ghetto but also places the entire population in danger from the German army.
- Joan of Arc (1948, 1999)**  
A young girl receives a vision that drives her to rid France of its oppressors.
- Jonah, Who will be 25 in the Year 2000 (1976)**  
Literate, engaging comedy about eight individuals affected by the political events of the late '60s in France.
- Judgment at Nuremberg (1961)**  
American judges try Nazi war criminals.
- To Kill a Mockingbird (1962)**  
Powerfully resonant film in its advocacy of tolerance, justice, integrity, and loving, responsible parenthood.

- ☑ **Kundun (1997)**  
 True story of the 14th Dalai Lama and his exile from Tibet. About how to be nonviolent when your culture celebrates violence.
- ☑ **Lean on Me (1989)**  
 The story of “Crazy Joe” Clark, the real-life baseball bat, bullhorn toting high school principal from New Jersey who whips his students into shape by bolstering and bullying them.
- ☑ **Le Chambon: La Colline Aux Mille Enfants (1997)**  
 Based on the true story of a French village, which under the guidance of its Protestant pastor saved more than 5,000 Jewish children from the Nazis.
- ☑ **Little Buddha (1993)**  
 A Tibetan monk hears that an American boy may be the reincarnation of an important lama, Siddhartha, the Indian prince who renounced worldly pleasures and religious extremism to find the Middle Way of Buddhist truth.
- ☑ **Local Hero (1983)**  
 An American oil company sends a man to Scotland to buy up an entire village where they want to build a refinery.
- ☑ **The Long Walk Home (1991)**  
 A story set against the backdrop of the emerging civil rights movement and the Montgomery Bus Boycott of the 1950s South.
- ☑ **Magnolia (1999)**  
 A mosaic of misery, with an array of characters-ranging from a dying man and his angelic male nurse to a precocious kid pressured to perform on a TV game show-who must deal with anger, guilt, isolation, the sins of the fathers, and ultimately, forgiveness, on an almost Biblical level.
- ☑ **Malcolm X (1992)**  
 Faithful and moving adaptation of the Autobiography of Malcolm X.
- ☑ **A Map of the World (1999)**  
 After an accident on her property involving a friend's child, the town turns against her and Alice finds herself fighting charges of child abuse.
- ☑ **Matewan (1987)**  
 A labor union organizer comes to an embattled mining community brutally and violently dominated and harassed by the mining company.
- ☑ **The Matrix (1999)**  
 A computer hacker learns from mysterious rebels about the true nature of his reality and his role in the war against the controllers of it.
- ☑ **A Merry War (1997)**  
 aka “Keep the Aspidistra Flying,” based on the essay by George Orwell. Comedy-satire about an advertising man who is captivated by the concept of offering his life to “art.”
- ☑ **Milagro Beanfield War (R) (1988)**  
 Rural New Mexico community organizes to fight a ruthless and corrupt developer.
- ☑ ☺ **Miracle at Midnight (1998)**  
 A Danish family are front-runners in a clandestine operation to transport over 7,000 Jews to neutral Sweden, while averting Nazi arrest.
- ☑ **Misérables, Les (1998)**  
 A thief, redeemed by the power of love and forgiveness, has his past life exposed. With Liam Neeson.
- ☑ **The Mission (1986)**  
 About two Jesuit missionaries in 18th Century Brazil, western imperialism and conflicting styles in striving for noble goals.
- ☑ **Mississippi Burning (R) (1988)**  
 Fictionalized account of the murder of three young civil rights workers who were part of a 1964 voter registration drive in Mississippi.
- ☑ **The Molly McGuires (1970)**  
 In 1876 in Pennsylvania, a secret group of Irish emigrant miners, fights against the cruelty of the mining company with sabotage and murder.
- ☑ **My Son the Fanatic (R) (1997)**  
 Taxi driver Parvez (Om Puri) can't understand why his son has turned to Muslim fundamentalism, calling the Western world of their corner of London corrupt and driven by sex.
- ☑ ☺ **No More Baths (1998)**  
 Children use nonviolent protest to keep an old man from being evicted to make room for an upscale housing development.
- ☑ **Noriega: God's Favorite (2000)**  
 Account of the streetwise thug who brutalized his countrymen as the military ruler of Panama in the 1980s.
- ☑ **O Brother, Where Art Thou? (1992)**  
 Nicks the plot line of Homer's *Odyssey* for a comic picaresque saga about three cons on the run in 1930s Mississippi.
- ☑ **Of Mice and Men (1992)**  
 Two drifters, one a gentle but slow giant, try to make money working the fields during the Depression so they can fulfill their dreams.
- ☑ **Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored (1996)**  
 A narrator tells the story of his childhood years in a tightly knit Afro-American community in the deep south under racial segregation.

- One True Thing (1998)**  
A career woman reassesses her parents' lives after she is forced to care for her cancer-stricken mother.
-  **Pay it Forward (2000)**  
A young boy attempts to make the world a better place.
- Romeo and Juliet (1999)**  
Shakespeare's tragic tale about two young lovers and their warring families
- Romero (1989)**  
Vivid biography of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, who stood up for social justice and nonviolence.
- Rosewood (1997) (R)**  
Fact-based story of two neighboring Florida towns, circa 1922-23, and the festering racism that threatens to explode into violence and destroy a law-abiding Black community.
- Sadat (1989)**  
A real-life, flawed, human who overcame a whole world of prejudice, somehow, in order to help change our world.
- Salt of the Earth (1954)**  
Based on an actual strike against the Empire Zinc Mine in New Mexico, the film deals with the prejudice against the Mexican-American workers, who struck to attain wage parity with Anglo workers in other mines and to be treated with dignity by the bosses.
- Schindler's List (R) (1993)**  
Steven Spielberg's masterpiece about Catholic war profiteer Oskar Schindler, who risked his life and went bankrupt to save more than 1,000 Jews from certain death in concentration camps.
- Serving in Silence (1995)**  
The true story of a decorated officer's legal challenge to her involuntary discharge when she admitted she was homosexual.
- Seven Years in Tibet (1995)**  
An Australian mountaineer/adventurer is selfish and arrogant--until he learns humility in Tibet.
- Shadowlands (1993)**  
British writer C. S. Lewis comfortable if rigid life as an Oxford don in the 1950s is shaken by his meeting with a forthright American poet, Joy Gresham.
- The Shawshank Redemption (1994)**  
Straight-arrow banker Robbins is railroaded for a double murder and sent to prison for life in the late 1940s.
- Skokie (1981)**  
How a town became embroiled in a bitter controversy while trying to prevent street demonstrations by neo-Nazis in 1977.
-  **Souder (1972)**  
A family of Black sharecroppers in Louisiana in 1933, face a serious family crisis when the husband and father is convicted of a petty crime and sent to a prison camp.
- Testament (1983)**  
Story of one family's attempt to survive in the aftermath of a nuclear war.
- Twentyfour Seven (1997)**  
An idealistic 1980s burnout tries to encourage the aimless, angry young men in his working-class English town by setting up a boxing club.
- Wag the Dog (1997)**  
Before elections, a spin-doctor and a Hollywood producer join efforts to fabricate a war in order to cover-up a presidential sex scandal.
-  **The War (1994)**  
A Vietnam veteran in 1970s Mississippi attempts to teach his kids tolerance and peaceful ways when they're being bullied.
- The Winslow Boy (1948)**  
In pre-WW1 England, a youngster is expelled from a naval academy over a petty theft, but his parents raise a political furor by demanding a trial.
- Went to Coney Island on a Mission from God . . . be Back by Five (1998)**  
Two 30-something friends go to Coney Island to look for a childhood buddy who is reported to be mentally ill and living under the boardwalk.
- Winstanley (1974)**  
About Gerrard Winstanley and the counter-culture Diggers in the mid 1600s.
- Witness (1985)**  
A young Amish boy is sole witness to a murder; policeman goes into hiding in Amish country to protect him until the trial.
-  **The Wizard of Oz (1939)**  
Dorothy Gale is swept away to a magical land in a tornado and embarks on a quest to see the Wizard who can help her return home.



## Mississippi Burning (1988)

Runtime: 128 minutes

Rating R

### The film:

Set in the same year that Martin Luther King received his Nobel Peace Prize, the film is a fictionalized account of a true story, the murder of black activist James Chaney and white colleagues Andrew Goodman and Mickey Schwerner, three young civil rights workers who were part of a voter registration drive in Mississippi.

### Historical Background:

Civil Rights workers Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, both white New Yorkers, went to Philadelphia, Mississippi in 1964 as volunteers with CORE, the Congress on Racial Equality, to aid in the registration of African-American voters as part of the Mississippi "Freedom Summer" Project. They and fellow volunteer James Chaney, an African American from Mississippi, disappeared on the evening of June 21. The FBI recovered their bodies, which had been buried in an earthen dam, 44 days later. The case was solved by paying a \$30,000 bribe to a Klan informant. The Neshoba County deputy sheriff and 16 others, all Ku Klux Klan members, were indicted for the crime; seven were convicted. This was a crucial turning point in the civil rights struggle which led up to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

### About the rating:

The R rating is for racist and crude language and for violence (shootings, beatings, lynching, burning, torture.)

### Why this film was selected:

It is hard for people who did not live through the 1960s to believe that such hatred, violence and racism existed in this country less than 40 years ago. Some critics have complained that the film depicts the action as being led by crusading white law-enforcement personnel on behalf of a herd of meek, passive, helpless blacks, and it has also been criticized for glorifying violent FBI tactics at the expense of the nonviolence advocated by Dr. King. Despite its flaws, *Mississippi Burning* starkly brings home the horror of the South in 1964.

### Recommended excerpts for showing:

#### 1. Bombing of black churches.

(minute 35:00 to 44:00 -- 9 minutes)

(Begin with the FBI agents wading across the swamp) After finding the abandoned car of the three missing civil rights workers, the FBI calls in reinforcements to search the swamps for their bodies. In retaliation, the Ku Klux Klan burns several black churches. A young boy speaks at a meeting at a firebombed church and explains that they are crusading for respect and dignity. Several white citizens, including the Sheriff, maintain that it is all a hoax.

#### 2. KKK invades black church, media

**interviews.** (minute 53:30 to 60:00 - 6.5 minutes)

(Begin with the church service) A black church service is in progress; the KKK interrupts it and beats up several of the worshippers, including a young boy identified as a troublemaker. Followed by interviews with the media where most white citizens express feelings that blacks are subhuman.

#### 3. House burning, trial:

(minute 117:05 to 123:00 - 6 minutes)

(Begin with the boy in the chicken coop) The KKK burns a house and a young boy, tending his chickens, is a witness. A friend convinces him to help the FBI. He identifies the perpetrators, who go to trial and are let off with a suspended sentence by a sympathetic judge.

### Suggested discussion questions:

1. Guided by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other practitioners of nonviolence, the African-American people in the South did not meet violence with more violence. What is the difference between being nonviolent and being meek and passive? What do you think might have happened if the black people in Mississippi had started burning down white churches, or lynching white people?
2. People died and suffered countless hardships and indignities to gain African-Americans in the South the right to vote. Yet in the 1998 elections, less than 30% of the eligible voters in Mississippi cast their ballots (compared to just under 40% nationwide and only 27% in Texas.) Was it worth it? Why are civil rights, including voting, important?
3. What things have changed for the better in civil rights since 1964? What things have stayed the same? Have some things become worse?
4. Have you ever spoke out for something you believed in, even when other people got angry with you? What did it feel like? Looking back on your own experience, would you have done anything differently?

For more information: **peaceCENTER**, 1443 S. St. Mary's, San Antonio, TX 78210  
(210) 224-HOPE [www.salsa.net/peace/popcorn](http://www.salsa.net/peace/popcorn)



**Gandhi (1982)**  
Runtime: 188 minutes  
Rating PG

### **The film:**

Biography of Mohandas Gandhi, who developed and introduced the doctrine of nonviolent resistance to the colonized people of India and who ultimately gained the nation its independence. Directed by Richard Attenborough and starring Ben Kingsley as Gandhi. Eight Oscars.

### **Historical Background:**

True story based on the life of Mohandas Gandhi. The form of nonviolence practiced by Gandhi is called Satyagraha, a combination of satya (truth-love) and agraha (firmness/force). It is the “the vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one’s self.” Satyagraha is peaceful. Opponents must be converted by a demonstration of purity, humility, and honesty. They are to be converted — not annihilated. Violence, Gandhi said, creates bitterness in the victim, and brutality in the attacker. Satyagraha assumes there is a constant dialogue between the opponents with a view to ultimate reconciliation. Insults, threats, and propaganda only serve to obstruct the goal.

### **About the rating:**

Although rated PG, some of the episodes where the Indians clash with the British may be disturbing.

### **Why this film was selected:**

Gandhi is a masterpiece, a loving tribute to a saintly man. It has been criticized for this very reason - making a saint of Gandhi. Critics also have complained that it elevates his role in Indian independence at the expense of others, particularly Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

### **Recommended excerpt for showing:**

Gandhi is the best movie available to learn and teach nonviolence. Despite its three-hour length, it is well worth trying to show the entire film. If time is short, the following excerpt is recommended:

#### **☞ Salt March.**

(tape 2, minute 10:30 - 25:20 - 15 minutes)

(Begin with the British uttering the word *Salt*) The British learn that Gandhi plans to march to the sea and make salt, in defiance of British law, which controls and taxes salt production. They decide to ignore him. In talking to a journalist, Gandhi explains that the purpose of civil disobedience is to provoke a reaction and they will provoke until the British react. Hundreds of thousands of Indians begin making and selling their own salt in open defiance. The British arrest thousands of Indians. Gandhi

declares his intention to lead a peaceful takeover of a salt works and is arrested on the eve of the action. The British brutally club the Indians as they nonviolently and relentlessly attempt to enter the salt works. A journalist reports that the naked brutality displayed by the British guaranteed Indian victory.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Would nonviolence as practiced by Gandhi have any affect upon a dictator like Hitler, Saddam Hussein or Slobadan Milosivic? Why or why not?
2. Satyagraha maintains that opponents must be converted by demonstrations of purity, honesty and humility. Can you think of ways that this could be used in your own life to diffuse potentially violent situations?
3. Gandhi called his autobiography “The Story of My Experiments with Truth.” What do you think he meant by this?
4. What role did the media play in Gandhi’s version of nonviolence? Would his actions had the same effect 50 years before, when there were no newsreels or radio broadcasts?
5. During the salt march the Indians broke the British law against making salt. What is the difference between civil disobedience and ordinary law breaking?
6. Gandhi lived a live of great simplicity, dressing in a loincloth, eating little, living communally and sharing the common chores (such as toilet cleaning.) Why do you think he lived this way? Are nonviolence and simple living in some way linked?

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**Cry Freedom (1987)**  
Runtime: 157 minutes  
Rating PG

## The film:

A white newspaper editor (Kevin Kline) befriends South African Black political activist Steve Biko (Denzel Washington.) When Biko is beaten to death by the police, the editor writes a book exposing the government and has to escape the country with his family to get it published. Directed by David Attenborough.

## Historical Background:

In 1948 the white government of South Africa instituted *Apartheid*, laws to separate the races and maintain white supremacy. Black South Africans lost their citizenship, were assigned to remote "homelands" and had to carry demeaning passes. Steve Bantu Biko (1946-1976) founded the Black Consciousness Movement, based on his philosophy that political freedom could only be achieved if blacks stopped feeling inferior to whites. BCM came into its own in the mid 1970s, when many African National Congress (ANC) leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were in jail or exile. The government "banned" Biko in 1973, restricting his movements and preventing him from being quoted in public. In August, 1977 he was taken into police custody and died several days later. The South African government tried to cover it up. South Africa's first democratic election, held in 1994, resulted in a Government of National Unity (GNU) led by ANC leader Nelson Mandela. The five policemen involved in Biko's death have sought amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established to "enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation."

## About the rating:

Rated PG, there is some vulgar language. At the end of the film white police brutally fire into a peaceable demonstration of school children.

## Why this film was selected:

Cry Freedom has been criticized for telling the story of Black struggle against apartheid through the eyes of a white liberal editor. However, the scenes of life in South Africa under apartheid excellent. Black South Africans also felt slighted that an American actor was chosen to play the role of Biko.

## Recommended excerpts for showing:

### 1. First half of the film.

(minute 00:00 to 1:22:40 -- 1 hour 22 min.)

(End at conclusion of Biko's funeral) Show this much, if there is time; feel free to skip over the second half of the film, of the white editor's escape.

### 2. Tour of the Black Townships.

(minute 21:50 - 30:15 - 8.5 minutes)

(Begin with Biko getting prepared for the tour) Biko and some friends take the liberal editor on a tour of the Black townships, showing the effects of apartheid and discussing their approach to ending it.

### 3. Court Scene.

(minute 38:25 - 42:45 - 4.5 minutes)

(Begin with Biko in the dock) While testifying at a trial of a friend, Biko explains his philosophy to the judge and jury.

### 4. Biko's Funeral.

(minute 1:16:40 - 1:22:40 - 6 minutes)

(Begin with people assembling for funeral)

## Suggested discussion questions:

1. During the tour of the townships, Biko and his friends describe the current society as one where they are only "invited to the table" if they learn how to "play by the white master's rules." They envision a society where everyone participates equally in society on their own cultural terms. What would it look like if everyone had their own place at the table in this country, or in your school, workplace or place of worship?
2. Biko has been called "the greatest martyr to apartheid." What is a martyr? What other martyrs have you heard of? What role do they play in peace and justice?
3. The South African government "banned" Steve Biko, and did not let him speak or be quoted in public. In the U.S., where the constitution guarantees free speech, we have generally taken the view that public debate lets the truth emerge in a free interchange of ideas. Do you think people should be permitted to speak out against their government?
4. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in current-day South Africa has identified the policemen who murdered Steve Biko. If you were Mrs. Biko, could you forgive them? What does it mean to forgive and to reconcile yourself to past abuses so that people can live together in harmony?

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## **Judgment at Nuremberg (1961)**

Runtime: 186 minutes

Rating NR

### **The film:**

A panel of American judges conducts a trial of four German judges charged with crimes against humanity during the Nazi regime. All-star cast including Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Richard Widmark, Maximilian Schell, Marlene Dietrich, Judy Garland and a young William Shatner.

### **Historical Background:**

The Nuremberg Tribunals prosecuted three types of offenses: crimes against peace (waging aggressive war); war crimes (violations of the laws of war) and crimes against humanity (including genocide and operating slave labor camps). The former Nazis claimed that they were acting under orders and, since they had violated no written laws, they could not be punished. The Nuremberg judges rejected this on the basis that the actions of the defendants were so atrocious that it was obvious that they were criminal. Those prosecuted in the Nuremberg trials included doctors who had experimented on inmates and prisoners of war, judges who condemned innocent people to death or imprisonment, industrialists who profited from slave labor, and concentration camp administrators.

### **About the rating:**

Not rated. There is some horrifying historical footage from the concentration camps on the second tape.

### **Why this film was selected:**

Most of this film is talk, rather than action and some may find it boring but it is a brilliant discussion of personal responsibility. Made in 1961 when WWII was still a fresh memory, some of the subtle historical allusions may need explaining to a younger audience.

### **Recommended excerpts for showing:**

#### **1. Concentration Camp footage.**

(2nd tape, minute 11:07 to 21:06 -- 10 min.)

(Start with "Your honor, I offer...") Prosecutor Col. Lawson puts the judges' actions into perspective then shows footage of the concentration camps.

#### **2. Herr Janning's defense.**

(2nd tape, minute 45:10 - 53:40 - 8.5 min.)

(Begin with "Herr Janning, you may proceed") Herr Janning admits guilt and describes the conditions in Germany that led to Nazism.

#### **3. Rolfe's condemnation of "collaborators".**

(2nd tape, minute 54:50 - 58:10 - 3.5 min.)

(Begin with "Your honor, it is my duty to defend..") The

defense attorney maintains that everyone is to blame for the Nazi atrocities.

#### **4. Judge Haywood's summation.**

(2nd tape, minute 1:10:25 - 1:19:45 - 8.5 min.)

(Begin with "This tribunal is now in session.")

### **Suggested discussion questions:**

1. Judges who refused to swear a loyalty oath and wear the swastika on their robes lost their jobs. Is it possible to work within an evil or corrupt system? Is there a point where that is no longer the honorable thing to do?
2. The defense attorney ultimately argued that everyone was guilty, from the Germans who voted Hitler into power, to American industrialists who profited from the Third Reich. What purpose was served by bringing to trial a few hundred of the top officials?
3. What kind of responsibility does each of us have for our own actions? Is "following orders" a legitimate excuse to do wrong? How do we decide what is right and wrong?
4. Judge Haywood said, "If these murderers were monsters, this event would have no more moral significance than an earthquake." What did he mean? Do you agree?
5. Herr Janning argued that the crisis in Germany made supposedly temporary measures that subverted justice seem necessary. Do you agree that civil liberties can be suspended for the good of the nation? How does this argument apply to the anticommunist McCarthy hearings in the 1950s?
6. How does this model differ from the "Truth and Reconciliation" model used in South Africa?

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## Romero (1989)

Runtime: 105 min.

Rating PG-13

### The film:

A biographical account of the last three years of Archbishop Oscar Adolfo Romero of El Salvador's life. Beginning just before his appointment to Archbishop in 1977 and ending just after his death in 1980, the film traces the events that transformed this scholarly moderate, chosen for his ability to compromise, into a nonviolent revolutionary martyr for the human rights of El Salvador's poor and oppressed.

### Historical Background:

El Salvador, the smallest but most densely populated country in Central America, was ruled by a cruel military dictators for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1970s, as the oppression worsened and poverty and human rights abuses increased, many began to raise their voices against the violence and repression. Some of these voices came from the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. Empowered by Liberation Theology, the belief that God sides with the poor and that Jesus is a prime model of both a spiritual and a political revolutionary, many priests began advocating for social reform and joining forces with poor and/or indigenous revolutionary groups. Bishop Romero was not among those voices until his dear friend, Father Rutilio Grande, was assassinated for his radical views and activities. From that point onward, Romero preached and worked for the rights of the poor and oppressed.

**About the rating:** PG-13 rating is for violence.

### Why this film was selected:

The U.S. has a long relationship with our southern neighbors in the Western Hemisphere, though little media attention is paid to their struggles. Learning about Latin American politics can help us understand the pain of oppression—oppression that U.S. foreign policy has played a part in—and the radical Liberation Theology that many contemporary U.S. theologians have drawn from in dealing with our own problems of poverty and human rights abuses. Primarily, however, it is important to learn about the peaceful, nonviolent movements that many Latin Americans were involved in, since U.S. media attention generally focuses on the violent “guerillas.” This film is a wonderful story of the power of love and nonviolence.

### Recommended excerpts for showing:

#### 1. Taking back the church, the power of the church

(minute 56:10-68:47 – 12 min. 47 sec.)

After releasing his friend, Father Osuna, from the prison where he was tortured, Romero goes to visit President-Elect General Carlos Humberto Romero to discuss the repression of the church. The clip proceeds to Aguilares (where Father Rutilio Grande ministered until his assassination) and we witness the occupation of the town and the church and Bishop Romero's courageous act of taking back the sanctuary.

#### 2. Events leading up to Romero's assassination

(minute 89:14-103:00 – 13 min. 46 sec.)

After Father Osuna is killed in prison, Bishop Romero visits Osuna's closest friend, Father Morantes. Morantes is now carrying a gun, and he and Romero discuss the use of violence to affect change. This clip includes a montage of speeches, events and pictures depicting the politics of the rich, Romero's ministry, pictures of the “Disappeared” political prisoners kidnapped and/or killed by the El Salvadoran government, and the plot to assassinate the Archbishop. The film ends shortly after his martyrdom.

### Suggested discussion questions:

1. Liberation theology has been accused of being revolutionary and of stirring people to violence. Though many believers in the theology of liberation waged nonviolent conflict, it is true that many guerilla fighters throughout Latin America have used the Hebrew prophets and the radical teachings of Jesus to justify their violence. Can revolutionary violence meant to liberate the oppressed be justified? What nonviolent means can be used to liberate the poor?

2. The U.S. has been criticized for its role in Latin American politics. Bishop Romero wrote to the President to ask him to stop sending arms to the El Salvadoran military, as they were only used to kill the oppressed people of the country. What can and/or should the U.S. military/government/people do to help the oppressed peoples of the world?

3. The church and the Eucharist (communion) are powerful themes and symbols throughout the film. Archbishop Romero and the people of Aguilares showed great courage in taking back their sanctuary at the risk of being fired upon. How powerful/meaningful are communities of faith in the U.S.? What spaces/institutions are meaningful to you? What would be important enough to you and from where would you draw the kind of courage it would take to walk unarmed into a line of armed men?

4. Romero believes—like most liberation theologians—that the church is the people and that its role is to side with the oppressed and to work for liberation. (See *Matt. 5:1-12*, *Luke 1:52-53*, and *Luke 4:16-19*) Do you agree? What do you see as the mission of the church? How can it live out this mission?

Guide prepared by Jay McDivitt, peaceCENTER intern, Luther College

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**Erin Brockovich**  
(2000)

**Runtime: 132 min**

**Rating: R**

**The film:** Based on the true story of Erin Brockovich, a desperate out-of-work mother of three who convinces a lawyer to hire her and then stumbles upon a monumental law case against a huge corporation. Fueled by a desire to provide for her family and an ever-growing compassion for the unsuspecting victims of a grave social injustice, the unlikely Brockovich triumphs over the modern paradigms of social norms, etiquette, and professional qualifications.

### Historical Background:

In 1952, Pacific Gas & Electric opened its Hinkley Compressor Station as part of the pipeline system that brings southwest natural gas to PG&E's service area in route from California to Texas. At the same time, they began dumping million of gallons of wastewater from their cooling system into unlined ponds on the facility property. The cooling water contained hexavalent chromium (chromium 6), which subsequently contaminated both the ambient air and the local groundwater supply to a chromium 6 level 400 times the EPA's safety standard. By 1987, the residents of the high desert town of Hinkley, California, who had been breathing, ingesting, and absorbing the toxin for decades, developed a wide range of physical illnesses, including cancer, respiratory problems, and skin diseases. The investigation begun by Erin Brockovich led to the biggest settlement on record for a civil class action lawsuit..

**About the rating:** R rating is exclusively for language.

### Why this film was selected:

This film addresses two issues in American life: Big business and the American Dream. First — Big business, which has enjoyed a long, fruitful, and powerful life in America, often expresses a lack of compassion for both employees and customers. Second — the American dream — to be educated, employed, married with children, and in your own home — is just that, a dream. If all people can really count on is to be deceived by the individuals and companies claiming to help them, what hope is there? This film is a triumph of the human spirit — the story of one woman with no hope and no way who challenges the system. Her courage, determination, and compassion show us what is possible when human beings care for each other.

### Recommended excerpts for showing:

#### 1. The job interview

*(Opening scene: 3 minutes)*

Erin Brockovich, a provocatively dressed, attractive young woman interviews unsuccessfully for a job as a medical assistant.

#### 2. Begging for a job

*(Minute 10:00 - 16:00: 6 minutes)*

After several failed attempts to find work and several attempts to contact her former lawyer, Ed Masry, Erin takes matters into her own hands. She demands employment and asks for an advance on her salary.

#### 3. PG&E's First Offer

*(Minute 50:00-55:00: 5 minutes)*

After Masry faxes the first of his claims to the PG&E legal department, PG&E sends a lawyer to make an offer on the Jensen's property near the PG&E plant in Hinkley. The \$28 billion corporation offers the Jensen's \$250,000.

#### 4. PG&E's Second Offer

*(Minute 86:00-91:00: 5 minutes. Begin with clip of Jensen throwing rocks toward the PG&E plant.)*

The Jensens learn Donna's cancer is malignant. PG&E lawyers offer Hinkley residents \$20 million to settle out of court. Erin is enraged and tells them off.

### Suggested discussion questions:

1. What effect do dress and demeanor have on a person's ability to perform well on the job? What qualifies someone to do a job? Does society have any particular responsibility to single women raising a family?
2. In the film, PG&E headquarters in San Francisco makes decisions affecting company operations in Hinkley, California, more than 300 miles away. Speculate upon the size and nature of huge companies. How many levels of management do you suppose there are? Who deals with the money? Who deals with the customers? Who deals with local, state, and federal regulations? How might the organization of such a company breed a lack of concern for people — both employees of the company and customers?
3. Notice how preconceived notions based upon appearance and behavior affect the characters' attitudes and actions toward one another. Is this interpretation valid? How have you seen prejudices and preconceived ideas about people influence behavior?

Guide prepared by Laura Holck, peaceCENTER

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