THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE
FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

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PREPARING TEACHERS TO TAKE RELIGION SERIOUSLY

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FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER

PANELISTS:
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DIANE MOORE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY
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SUMMARY: CHARLES HAYNES AND MELISSA ROGERS

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CHARLES HAYNES: We will end this session promptly, and then, for those of you who can join us for the wrap up, Melissa and I are going to give you an opportunity to have a town hall meeting discussing what you heard and what you think about what you heard. In some ways, it's always unfortunate to leave something so substantial to the end. We have so little time, but since so many other topics got so little time, I don't feel too guilty about giving this one little time. (Laughter.) Everybody has been treated equally badly in this conference. (Laughter.) The next time we plan one of these, Melissa and I are going to rethink lots of things; we kept saying, "Well, we have to include this, we have to include that."

But before we get to that, we have a wonderful panel to talk about these deeply important questions that have come up for two days: How do we prepare teachers? How do we certify them? Should we certify teachers in this area? What would that look like?

Judith Lessow-Hurley is a professor of elementary education at San Jose State University in California. We've worked together for a long time in the California Three Rs project. In teacher education, to find a teacher educator committed to dealing with these issues is fairly rare, unfortunately, and Judith has been one of those people who has thought about this and worked on this over the years.

Sitting next to her is Axel Ramirez, who is an award-winning teacher, but right now he is a professor at Utah Valley State College [http://www.uvsc.edu/]. This is a recent job for him; he was in the classroom for 13 years. He brings a lot of expertise, because he was also involved in our Utah Three Rs project; I know him from that.

Sitting next to him is Diane Moore, who directs a very interesting and important Program in Religion and Secondary Education at Harvard Divinity School [http://www.hds.harvard.edu/prse/], and she also teaches at Phillips Academy Andover [http://www.andover.edu/]. I was fortunate to be there at the beginning of that program at Harvard, and Marcia is a graduate of it. It has been a very influential program for us, and a good model.

And finally, Sam Swofford is sitting there on the end. We're very fortunate that Sam would come from California to join us, because he is the executive director of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [http://www.ctc.ca.gov/] and that is a very deeply important question for this conference. He is a former superintendent of schools and a university professor, and at one time – we won't ask how many years ago – was in the classroom as an elementary school teacher.

I'm going to start right in with you, Judith, because I think California, in some ways, has blazed some trails here. The California standards in the social studies are fairly generous to religion, especially compared to others. In your view, as a teacher educator, looking at the landscape of teacher education in your state, are teachers prepared to tackle the things you've heard about in this conference? Where do you think California is in teacher preparation on the issues that we have touched on in terms of religion?

JUDITH LESSOW-HURLEY: Charles, the short answer to the first question is no, but you asked me a follow-up question. I hate being unusual in teacher education in that I tackle these kinds of issues and topics. I'll take a post-modern attack and start with my own personal story. I backed into this, because I found my own traditions demeaned in a public school setting and my own child hurt. I remember at the beginning of this meeting, somebody asked, "What's the cost if we get this wrong?" I kept thinking, "The cost is a child." In each case, that's the real cost.

I started teaching about this very tentatively. I wrote a unit in my foundations class about Halloween and discovered that it was a very interesting topic to delve into. Then I heard about the Religious Liberty Institute and I wrote an impassioned application to them. I said, "I know this institute is for K-12 teachers, and I'm not at this point a K-12 teacher, but I really need to know about these things, and I prepare K-12 teachers, so you can think of me geometrically, a multiplying factor, if you will; I'll go out and try to carry the word."

It's now many years later, and in preparation to come here, I sent an e-mail to all of my colleagues on the teacher preparation faculty and said, "Tell me what you're doing around these issues," and I got two responses. I visited classes of the faculty who responded to me, and they're both very well intentioned and feel that they have a commitment to the issues that we've discussed. But in each case, I ran into – and I imagine I would run into them in my own teaching, if I looked hard enough – errors of commission and errors of omission.

I think I heard in your laughter earlier today what we all know, that colleges of education have a certain sort of attitude about how teacher educators really don't have very much to teach, and if we'd get out of the way, public schools would be perfect. I think that within that hierarchy, people who teach foundations are even seen as somehow more expendable.

My own students would like to know, What am I going to do tomorrow? And I understand their urgent need to figure out what to do with 20 or 30 very small people. But I want to back them up and say, "Let's think about your philosophy of education, and let's think about who the kids are, and let's think even one step further back – who you are – before you go in there." I would argue, listening to our conversation over the last two days, that we didn't really dwell on the specifics of methods. We spent an awful lot of time talking about issues of philosophy and positionality and context, and that's really what has to happen in a good foundations class. I think you can learn an awful lot about teaching in the classroom in collaboration and conversation with a good mentor teacher, but you have to be prepared before you do that to know what kinds of questions to ask.

So I think the foundations classes are one place we would really address these issues, and also in the social studies methods classes; I'll leave that to people who know more about social studies methods than I do. In the foundations, we emphasize diversity and multi-culturalism, and I am amazed to find that people define culture in the absence

of any reference to religion whatsoever. It's absolutely startling to me, and I've tried in my own teaching to think about culture in a more expanded way.

It's impossible to consider creating a classroom environment which is, for example, reflective of and responsive to the needs of Mexican-American children and never mention la Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. How do you go through the holiday season and not talk about the Day of the Dead, a very big holiday in the San Jose Latino community? And with all due respect to people who would have it otherwise, are you really going to teach that in April? How do you address those kinds of issues? And before you address those kinds of issues, you have to think about your unspoken, unarticulated, unexplored assumptions about the spiritual dimension of human life. You have to think about who you are when you walk in there, before you say, "Hey, Halloween? That's just when we go around the block and get candy." Over and over I hear the attitude expressed that, "I'm Heinz-57, monocultural, mainstream" which is very dismissive of people's spiritually informed worldviews.

I don't think we've reached a point in teacher preparation where we've addressed all those issues. A lot of what we do is governed by state regulation, and I'll let Dr. Swofford speak to that. A lot of it is governed by available rooms on the third floor – (laughter) – a lot of it is governed by turf wars and, put more gently, by people's own areas of expertise. We all teach what we know, and not too many teacher educators are prepared to address these issues.

So I don't think we're where we ought to be yet.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Judith.

Axel, I'm going to turn to you next and ask something similar about Utah. Utah has called formally, in terms of the textbook commission years ago and other initiatives, for more teaching about religion. It seems to be a widely accepted notion that we need to do more – for various reasons and agendas, but nevertheless, it's there.

Now that you've moved from the classroom to a school of education, have you seen any evidence that this is taken seriously in the schools of education, in teacher preparation? And what does that look like?

AXEL RAMIREZ: No, I haven't seen that as I've tried to find out a little bit more about teacher education in this area. I realized that it's just not being done. There are a lot of reasons for this, but the main problem is that teachers don't really want it. I bring it up, and a lot of times the teachers haven't thought about religion as being part of a culture, and so we start with that discussion. Another one of the problems comes from the fact that the kids are growing up without exposure to a lot of different faiths, even a lot of different political ideas, and so we have to examine where we are with that, at least where I teach – you know, someone earlier talked about being in a very Republican area. I think I am in the most Republican area in the United States. I think I can back that up. (Laughter.) What makes it even more interesting is that teachers came out of a school

system that was predominantly one faith and one culture, but even if they go back to the very school where they came from, they are now going into a very different environment, and they don't know how to do that.

However, I think in Utah we do have a lot of things going for us. We have state legislators and school administrators and even superintendents who have heard about the Three Rs project – rights, responsibility and respect. We have school principals who, at least in the area where I teach, and actually throughout a lot of Utah, are familiar with a lot of these terms. So as teachers are coming out of my program with this idea about teaching about religion, they know they're going to go someplace where they're not going to be doing this brand-new thing, and they're all scared, and they're all alone. At the same time, they really aren't ready for it.

I'll just take some time to talk about how I feel that this can be strengthened. The biggest thing I would say is it needs to be strengthened system wide. I'm preparing elementary teachers right now, but I used to be a junior high teacher. A lot of teachers teach the way they've been taught, and that's what it comes down to. I would love to say that in teacher education we have this incredible influence, and we take away everything that they've come into our classroom with, but I have about 26 hours of time to teach content, K-12, and I have them for about 36 hours to teach them social studies methods, and I'm just not going to get it done. So I'm trying to ask people to think about, if we start infusing this teaching about religion throughout K-12, and the teachers are going to go back to teaching the way they were taught, hopefully this will be part of it. I'm new to the college, and I'm finding out what territorialism is – (laughter) – at the college level, but I would put in a plea that teachers of content in language arts and in the social studies, at the college level also, need to be modeling this.

I was a secondary teacher, and when I was put into an eighth grade classroom my very first year, I was teaching based on the content that I received as a junior in high school in my AP class. Because I passed my AP class, I then went into upper division history classes, so I didn't have to take the survey classes. I took great things in modern political thought, and the age of Jackson, and wonderful things, but I hadn't studied those Pilgrims since I couldn't remember when. Yet I had to go teach the Pilgrims and the Puritans.

Unless it's done system wide, we are going to have some problems. But again, I think in Utah, because we have a lot of the infrastructure in place, teachers who will come out with this kind of training will have a support system out there, and that's of incredible importance.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Axel.

Diane, as I said, heads up a program at Harvard, and I am proud of the fact that 30 years ago, when I came out of college and went to divinity school, and decided not to go into ministry but into teaching, I had the question, "How can I take my religious studies background and go into teaching in a public school? How am I going to get certified?

What courses do I need?" Krister Stendahl, the dean of the Divinity School at the time, and I cooked up this idea of having a joint program in which you could be at the Divinity School and also take courses at the Ed School, and you could be certified. Lo and behold, the program has survived and grown, and now Diane Moore heads it up at Harvard. As I said, Marcia came through it, and then I immediately hired her when I heard she'd gone through that program – (laughter) – because I knew she would be a kindred spirit.

Diane, this is unusual, to say the least. I don't think there is anything like it anywhere else. I know you all have had internal conversations about its importance and its future. Is what you are doing something that you would say right now in the country is something we should look at as a model that others should think about? Is it peculiar to the Harvard Divinity School [http://www.hds.harvard.edu/] setting and your relationship with the Graduate School of Education [http://www.gse.harvard.edu/]? How would you characterize the program in terms of what we all could learn from it right now?

DIANE MOORE: Sure, it is a unique program, and we're celebrating our 30th year, as Charles mentioned.

In terms of whether it's a model program, I think there are some things that we're doing that I think would be helpful in other contexts. Another part of my work is to work with Marcia and Bruce Grelle and others in the American Academy of Religion Task Force on Teaching Religion in the Schools [http://www.aarweb.org/about/board/ristf/default.asp] . One of our initiatives through that task force, actually, is to try to bring together scholars of religious studies and schools of education on the same campus, and to help them start to communicate with one another about how we can share resources and how colleges and schools of education can build upon and draw from the research and scholarship of the scholars of religious studies.

I want to speak in a moment about the nature of what we specifically do at Harvard. But I guess I want to preface that by saying that I think the underlying issue in this entire debate is thinking about what the purpose of education itself is. We try to do that at Harvard in our program and we've touched upon that here throughout the conference. I can't emphasize that enough from my perspective, as a director of this program, as a teacher educator, as well as a teacher in the classroom.

I'm going to return to Warren's good work about the foundations of a liberal education. In the context of a democracy, public education needs to be educating people for civic participation, and the only way we can justify what we do in that way is to look at the nature of democracy itself, and is to look at pluralism as an essential feature of that. That has to be the foundation upon which we engage in any form of education. We have to train teachers to be able to think about that and think about their work in the classroom from that perspective, and train teachers to be skilled in addressing diversity – deep diversity, real diversity – in the classroom, and how we can evoke that diversity toward

civic conversation. If we're not engaging our deepest differences in the classroom – and I'm not speaking only about religion now – if we're not modeling the nature of how we do that in a responsible, informed and civil way, if we don't do it in the classroom, they're certainly not getting it in the larger culture.

We're seeing that, I fear, duplicated in relationship to how we are addressing our larger differences in the culture now. I'm finding, in my own teaching and in my own experience culturally, that we're moving farther away from addressing the heart of what really are our deepest differences in a civil way. We're moving farther away from that and moving more into polemic, more into absolutism in a way that's very frightening to me as a citizen and as an educator.

What we're trying to do at Harvard is specifically to train teachers within the context of that sort of method, so there's a larger question here about the nature of our teacher education program that we really emphasize. In a sense, we emphasize content as secondary because teachers, if they are well trained, can learn content, and they should always be learning content. But the nature of how we do what we do is essential to what we need to be focusing on in teacher education programs.

The reason the Harvard program is an unusual program and the reason it's not easily replicated in other contexts – although I do believe there are elements of it that can be, and I'll talk about those in a moment – is that in our program, students come and they apply to the Divinity School to one of two master degree programs. Once they're admitted into those master degree programs, then they apply also, separately, to our program to be admitted, to also then utilize their electives to frame an entire course of study that's integrated, to then also pursue teacher certification across the board. We're actually qualified to certify teachers in all areas of secondary education. Primarily, though, we certify in the humanities, in the social sciences, in languages, and also now in the natural sciences. We've got three very exciting applicants coming through who will be joining us in the Fall who want to teach biology. Biology and religion – we're going to face it directly.

They come through our program and then they are certified in those areas with Massachusetts' certification, which is valid in 48 states, so it's close to a universal equivalent to a licensure in those areas, with the special expertise being able to teach about the academic study of religion within their fields of expertise. They come out with the content and the ability to think about the nature of how you integrate religion across the curriculum by virtue of the combination of their masters work at the Divinity School and then also through our program. Our program is not easily duplicated in that regard, but I do think it can be duplicated in schools of education in combination with religious studies. I do think that is a way we can think about this as a model.

Again, I just can't emphasize enough the nature, beyond the content, of what we're trying to do there. We are focused on asking, How do we train teachers to be able to address these really complicated issues of our deepest differences that arise out of the best of what America is, which is our diversity? How do we really allow all voices to be

heard without moving into a simplistic relativism? I think that we can do that. We do it through our program. I think we do it pretty well. We can always do it better, but I do think it's possible.

That aside, I want to say two things, about two initiatives that I think will be of interest to many of you, that we are preparing to launch. We're preparing to move on this after getting some pretty major foundation money. We've got the dean of the Divinity School behind this. It will be a major initiative through the Divinity School; it's called the Program in Religion and Secondary Education.

Two initiatives: One, we are going to formulate a working group with an advisory board to develop frameworks in the study of religion. We are not interested – and this is a matter of some debate, but I'll tell about if from my perspective – we're not interested in having states adopt these frameworks. We don't want AP exams in religious studies. We're not interested in having that become an absolute discipline, but we are interested in establishing some competency standards about what it means to teach about the study of religion. There are no competency standards that are articulated across the board now, and we find that quite troubling, because what passes in the name of the study of religion in training across the board is so deeply varied, and we have no central documents that we can turn to, that we can share, to do this work in a consistent way.

Those frameworks will be in two different bodies. One will be frameworks for religious studies itself, as a separate interdisciplinary endeavor in itself. Religious studies by nature is interdisciplinary. The second set of frameworks will be to look at religion across the curriculum in Texas, California and Massachusetts and to call out from their frameworks in English and social sciences, primarily, with some attention to art and the natural sciences in a secondary way, not a primary way. This initial initiative is to then call out the religious themes in there or to address where there should be religious themes if there are not, and then to pull out frameworks and to establish frameworks of religion across the curriculum. We've got a very developed understanding of this. We're thinking about it to develop these ideas, to have an advisory board consider them. Teachers will be very much involved in this. We'll have teachers then test these initiatives and come back to report.

The second initiative is to start a summer institute for the study of religion at Harvard, and we are hoping to launch that in the summer of 2004. It will be one week – probably two, perhaps three, maybe four if there's enough interest – where we'll have particular topics. We'll have scholars of religious studies. We'll have two teacher educators, two master teachers, also, on the faculty. These institutes will be geared toward middle and secondary school teachers and middle and secondary school teacher educators, so that we are also training teacher educators in these questions, in both content and method, about how you can do this effectively.

Those are things we are trying to promote, and eager to do, through partnerships with other organizations – the AAR [http://www.aarweb.org], the Religious Studies and Secondary Schools Organization [http://www.rsiss.net/]. Carol Eliot, who is here, is part

of that and on the board of that. It's a wonderful grassroots organization of primarily independent school religious studies teachers, because religious studies isn't primarily in the public school. It's a good group. So we're in conversation with them and a host of others that we're developing these ideas with.

I hope that in three or four or five years' time, we won't be the only program of its kind. Our idea is to reproduce ourselves – (chuckles) – so cloning is what we're after here. (Laughter.)

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Diane.

Sam, clearly from what you've been hearing these days and what you know through your work with the California Three Rs project, doing any of this takes a lot of preparation, and Diane mentioned the question of certification, of standards in this field.

There are people around the country who have religious studies backgrounds who go for certification, and they're told those courses don't count, you have to make a special case for it. It's tough to get recognized if you have this background.

From your perspective in California and your national perspective, where do you think we are in certification on these issues, and what are some of the things that you would say are the barriers and the possibilities for trying finally to address this in teacher certification?

SAM SWOFFORD: Thank you, Charles. I think you'll be feeling much better knowing that I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you. (Laughter.) Rest assured.

I'd first like to commend you and Warren for your wonderful work, and Marcia, I've been a student of your writings and the conversations that have transpired over time. I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues, Jennifer and Bruce and Kim from California who eloquently spoke to many of the issues that are facing California educators, as did Judith, from the preparation side. They are aware of the challenges, and quite frankly, they are more enormous now, I think, than people want to admit. I also have to credit my friend, Susan Mogul, who is my Plato's gadfly, from time to time on the issue of separation of church and state.

I'm a policy wonk. I'm a person who, as you know, serves at the pleasure of the governor in the state of California. This is my second governor, and the focus in California has been education. This year it went to budget deficit. So we have an economic impact within the state now that's going to have some bearing on this.

I need to mention, as part of this discussion, No Child Left Behind [http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov/], because that is a major issue which I think has not been brought to the table and will have a direct impact on California as well as other states across this country.

Let me just mention a little bit about the commission. The commission is the oldest independent standards board in the country. It was founded over 30 years ago. It's one-stop shopping for licensing, essentially. The primary focus is issuing licenses, about 300,000 a year. The other aspect is to accredit the university and college programs in all professional educator arenas. That's about 84 institutions in the state of California. We also have the responsibility of testing for subject matter competence as well as basic skills; that is a primary function as well. And the last one, which no one likes to talk about, is educator misconduct, and that involves about 9,000 cases we review a year. So the enormity of the work of the commission in a variety of areas bears upon the need to assure the public that we have highly competent and characterly fit individuals before our students.

Having said that, as you know, the State Board of Education, which is separate and apart from the commission, adopted academic content standards for K-12, and you made reference, I believe, yesterday to the fact that embedded in those standards are issues of religion and the influence on society. What happened in California – which I think other states are doing as well, but we have already started the process and concluded it – was to align what is expected of teachers in their preparation programs to be comparable with what students need to know. It's fully informing teachers about what the expectations are for students in the K-12 environment, and the teachers are prepared at our institutions for that particular purpose.

I'm going to say that the standards movement also is a very constrictive one. It is not something that opens doors. It tends to close doors. And the innovation of our professors at the universities and colleges is somewhat halted by some of these standards. We have tried to write our standards so there is flexibility in them, so you can talk about religious issues, you can talk about the impact on our students and on society. It's still very much in the forefront of our thinking.

With No Child Left Behind, it has changed a major area for us. In California, you can be certified through an approved program – in other words, you've taken courses that would meet our standards for baccalaureate degree, and by the way, religious studies is one of them. The difference is that if you have not taken enough math or English or science, you're going to have to take a test to demonstrate your proficiencies in those particular areas. So we do accept baccalaureate degrees with a religious studies emphasis, but with No Child Left Behind, it's all testing now. The highly qualified teacher will have to pass a competency exam in subject matter, so I was interested in the discussion at lunch today. The focus is not on inclusion of religion in science courses; it really isn't, and as much as we would wish that might be a possibility, for many of you in this room, it's not going to happen.

The program approval process in California has been effective, and I'll tell you why it's very effective. In the four-year undergraduate program, our agency approves whether or not you are meeting the standards for education. So if you are a biology major in the biology department, the standards we set have to be incorporated in your

biology program, in your physics program, in your English program. This is one of the hooks, if you will, that our commission has had on higher ed. As you know, there's an anti-higher-ed animus at the federal level and, in many ways, at the state level. They believe that undergraduates are not being prepared in subject areas to the extent that they are proficient enough to teach students, and there is a strong animus against teacher preparation programs.

The current administration thinks, based on my discussion with the secretary of Education and members of staff (I was over meeting with congressional folks yesterday afternoon), we don't need teacher preparation. We just give you a test and you become a teacher. Now that's the national front being imposed on states through No Child Left Behind. Many states receive substantial dollars for Title I. This all began with Title II, the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of several years ago. The intent was to compare test scores of teachers throughout the country and then embarrass the institutions who had lower scores. It did not work.

The missing component in all this is – and this is where I think I heard it yesterday and I really appreciate the teachers' perspective – What does it mean to a kid in a classroom? When you create test data and you look at all the standards and the embedded requirements in these standards, how does that correlate to student achievement and student performance in a variety of ways?

George Miller and Mr. Bingaman, who were the congressional representatives who authored Title II, could not get to the point of comparing the test scores of students with the teacher. The linkage wasn't there. They couldn't get it through the NEA and through other unions throughout the United States. So they backed off of that issue and they just focused on holding higher ed accountable.

So I guess what I'm trying to point out to you is it's very difficult in this environment to include other issues within the content areas that are not very specific to those subjects, and that's what teachers will be tested on in order to meet the highly qualified definition. By the way, California has not yet established our definition, and we have been embarrassed a couple of times by Secretary Paige and the media. I had to write an article for *The New York Times* correcting that, because it's a political environment. As you know, 55 votes from California went to Al Gore, not to George Bush, so California sometimes is looked at as the "left coast," not the West Coast. So there's a geographical problem here.

But you have to look at those issues when you're dealing with public policy. What are the sensitive areas? And trying to get something through the federal government at this point in time is very tricky because they look at those issues, not just whether this is educationally sound for kids.

I leave you with that.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Sam. And that's such an upbeat, positive… I'm glad after two days we finally get the good news – you know what I'm saying? (Laughter.) I've been waiting for two days to hear the good news.

Okay, I have no questions. I know you don't. Let's go home. (Laughter.) No. It's good to have a reality check here at the end, and that's exactly why this panel is so important. I wanted each person on this panel to make a lengthy statement about where they're coming from, because coming here at the end, we really need to hear, in some depth, how these key people see where we are, I think, so that we do know what we're facing and what we're dealing with as we address the variety of issues in the conference. So I very much appreciate that.

We have a little time in this last part of this session, and I want your questions to any of these or all of them about what you've heard and what you think are the challenges in teacher preparation and credentialing. So let's start with Jennifer, a teacher – that's a good place to start.

JENNIFER NORTON: Jennifer Norton, Argonaut High School [http://www.teachnet.k12.ca.us/ACUSD/Argonaut.htm].

I kept pretty quiet for two days, and honestly I have to say this experience has been a little bit surreal. In some ways I feel like a small child in a room where all the adults are talking about you as if you weren't there. (Laughter.)

I'm glad we ended with this panel, because I think we need to, on some level, come out of the clouds and get it back down to why we're all here, which is talking about public education. I have a lot of things to say, but there are two fundamental things we're talking about that are kind of parallel here. One is the content-driven issues of religion in education, what we're charged to teach that has to do exactly with religion. For me, and I think I said this the first day, it keeps coming through in a thread. But I think the bigger issue, the more controversial issue, is where the religious beliefs of our students intersect with our lives as teachers, our jobs as teachers, all the other things that we teach, and I have some concerns about how teachers are viewed.

Really, we can get the content. Most teachers are willing and able and motivated to get the content. We are also very motivated not to offend the consciences of our students, but that is the area where we are least prepared to walk into a classroom and deal with these issues, because no one has given us a legal foundation. My teacher training only happened about 12 or 13 years ago, and I was never, ever given a copy of the standards to which I was supposed to teach, which I'm sure has been addressed in the intervening 13 years. At no point was I ever prepared for the legal frameworks of my job as a teacher. No one ever mentioned the Establishment Clause. I knew nothing about any of those issues, and of course, as a social studies teacher, I was immediately blindsided. My very first six weeks of teaching I came up against issues related to this.

For me, the whole Three Rs project was a godsend.

MR. HAYNES: So to speak. (Laughter.)

MS. NORTON: Yeah, so to speak. (Chuckles.) It was! (Laughter.) It really helped me.

I have to say, all of this really becomes a lot of mental gymnastics unless something is done down at the ground level with teachers. I went immediately back to my district. I feel fortunate; however, I think any other teacher that was in my position would have done the same thing and jumped at the opportunities that were handed to me by Charles and Buzz and the Three Rs project.

We brought them to our district. Every single teacher in our entire district got to hear Charles and Buzz for two days. We had public forums. I've done teacher training; teachers eagerly, eagerly take in this information. It just has to be given to them, they have to be given an opportunity to hear it and assimilate it, and it really isn't so much about the content. Learning about world religions is wonderful, and I appreciate all the information that I've gotten on that, but it's these other issues that I think are the fundamental ones that need to be addressed in teacher preparation.

MR. HAYNES: Anyone on the panel want to comment on that? Jennifer is making a more modest proposal, but maybe a more manageable one. Can we do better on the front of preparing people on the legal framework, the constitutional framework? Sam, do you want to comment?

MR. SWOFFORD: I know people from California will keep me honest. This is the good part about being here.

The comment is very important. I think part of this discussion needs to include what needs to happen at the undergraduate level, what needs to happen at the pre-service level and what happens at the in-service level, because of what is meaningful at those particular junctures.

California, years ago, when I was in a test district, when I was a superintendent, had the New Teacher Project, which became the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program [http://www.btsa.ca.gov/]. Essentially, that program is a two-year induction model where you have an individual assigned to you. It's a structured environment to help teachers during their first two years. It also helps for retention, particularly when you're in areas where we have bilingual education and you need extra assistance. But those types of activities, of knowing when they occur – this information, this knowledge, the way to deliver, how to have interventions and who do you go to for interventions – is really a key part of that induction process, and states are coming further with that. I was in the state of Virginia several years ago, and they adopted our standards, in fact, from California. It's very important, I think, to look at where these things occur in the preparing and in the in-servicing of teachers.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Sam. Diane.

MS. MOORE: I absolutely support what you said, because my experience as a teacher and with teachers is that they're remarkable in finding the content, but it's the diceier issues in the classroom that are harder. Issues like, what do you do when an English student writes about how hell doesn't exist, right? What do you do with that? There are legal questions which absolutely need to be addressed, and then I think there's the shared experiences. What does it mean for teachers and professionals, as public intellectuals, to come together to share their experiences, to have them be the experts in ongoing teacher training, to have opportunities for teachers to come together? We train teachers in a community on some level, we get them into the classroom, and then depending on where they are, they often hardly have any other opportunity to talk to other teachers because their days are too full. The situation at the end of the school year doesn't allow for it, doesn't promote a kind of shared experience around teachers sharing their expertise with one another. So it's the whatever-happens-behind-the-closed-door model, which is a terrible model for everyone.

So this notion that we don't give teachers the credibility that they deserve and that we don't recognize their expertise is one that's really fundamental in terms of teacher education. In terms of this conversation, we need to represent that in a different way to give them the credibility they need, to give them resources and to help them be the experts on these questions.

MR. HAYNES: Judith, you wanted to comment on this.

MS. LESSOW-HURLEY: First, I'd like to share with you, Jennifer, that for years, until it was really in tatters, I would go to class with a t-shirt that looked quite ordinary on the front, but when I turned around to write on the board, it had the Establishment Clause on the back. And if I could ever find another one, I'd be very happy to –

MR. HAYNES: We have plenty of those.

MS. LESSOW-HURLEY: You have plenty of those? Good. (Laughter.) I'd like the green one – (laughter) –

MR. HAYNES: Okay.

MS. LESSOW-HURLEY: and a blue one. I think it's important for teachers to have some understanding of the legalities, but I'm also very concerned with the sensitivities. That came to me when I was recruited by the Jewish community to do some work with high school students around the December dilemma. I had cases for the kids to process. High school students are remarkably energetic compared to college students. It's true. There are no holds barred. They have a lot of ideas, and they're not ashamed to share them, so they were leaping out of their seats, and they were going to sue everybody. "I'm going to go all the way to the Supreme Court."

So I said, “Let’s look at this from a different point of view, because you might retain counsel and you might make it all the way to the Supreme Court, but on the ground what you want to do is to be comfortable in your classroom, and your teacher probably would like you to be comfortable as well. So let’s think about some strategies for how you can approach your teacher and say, ‘I’m not comfortable with this and this is why.’”

That got me thinking about what we do in our classes around multi-cultural education. We have lots of standards about diversity, and there’s no way for me, in what remains of the time or anything close, to describe what diversity looks like in California, and everyone would like to address diversity.

Religion is a huge piece of the diversity that we encounter every day in the classrooms, and sometimes my students will say, Is this about political correctness? Well, it’s not about political correctness; it’s about personal correctness. It’s about being with somebody who is younger than you are and less powerful than you are and compelled to be where you are not necessarily compelled to be, and making it an okay place for them to be, to learn and to experience what’s going on.

So I ask my teachers, beyond the legalities, to think about what we can do to make our classrooms comfortable for all kinds of diversity. The difficulty – and I said this earlier – is that the religious dimension is not encapsulated in how we think about multi-cultural education. It’s very hard to get on multi-cultural education conference agendas if you talk about religion in the schools. The textbooks don’t have it. The one chapter I found in a textbook on multicultural education that deals with religion deals with it quite poorly. For example, it describes all the world’s great religious traditions, and under Buddhism, it says, “There is a fundamental negative attitude toward life.” (Laughter.)

And you know what’s amazing? On the way here, I stopped in the airport and there was one of those little $3 books of sayings of the Dalai Lama, and I thought, “Oh, cool,” so I picked it up and I opened it up, and quite by happenstance, on the page I opened it up to, the Dalai Lama said, “Buddhism is not about a fundamentally negative attitude towards life” – (laughter) – and I thought –

MR. HAYNES: He read this book.

MS. LESSOW-HURLEY: – if you can just run into this in the airport, you would think they would have done a little research. People have a right to their opinions, but they don’t have a right – what did Daniel Patrick Moynihan say? “You don’t have a right to your own facts.” (Laughter.)

So there’s a big hole here in terms of the resources and the capabilities to do what I think we need to do with this.

MR. HAYNES: Axel, I want to squeeze you in, the bell is going to ring in a minute.

MR. RAMIREZ: I'll hurry. There is a lot of room in teacher education for the things we've been talking about – multiculturalism, obviously. We also have to remember that things like respect and sensitivity can be incorporated into classroom management issues. Someone yesterday talked about empowering children. I know it's popular to say, "Let them create their own rules." Well, yes, give them some power to have a say. A lot of my training I got from Martha Ball in Utah – if you don't know Martha, you need to get to know Martha; Charles has trained her a lot. Putting out the Golden Rule for students, maybe that will be our classroom management procedure that we use in this classroom. I used that in my junior high classroom, and it worked wonders. When we had that mutual respect for each other, before we opened our mouths or before we enacted something, we were concerned about someone else in the classroom, how they might feel. So I think there is room in teacher education for that.

Judith has talked about foundations and its importance, and I couldn't agree more, that issue of coercion from teachers. I mentioned that I come from a very Republican area. I actually have also to mention that I am very Republican, and I am also of the majority faith. I carry a lot of weight with the students in my class because I say, "Because we are in the majority, both politically and religiously, we have to be extra sensitive to issues that we may not think in our own worldview." For example, just sitting in this conference, I almost have it memorized where we talked about "we respect the rights of all religions or none," but I had to stop and reflect on how much I really focus on those worldviews that are non-religious. Sometimes we have to think back and expose our students to that, and also remember that we're dealing with students who are, at least in my case, 20, 21 years of age, who in many ways, have not really solidified their own moral views and their own stance on religion.

So, anyway, there's a real importance in teacher education. We can do a lot, and it's really important. I mean, in foundations, the whole idea of what does it mean to really respect a student's conscience, and then also, we can combine that with what does it really mean to respect the laws that are out there concerning those things.

I had a recent experience unfortunately, where my special ed students (there was an IEP involved) the day after the IEP was involved, the teacher was there trying to nudge my kid into doing something that I disagreed with. That was a conscience issue. It was also a legal issue on top of that, and we'll have to discuss that, but you know, the power that teachers have to mold students, to influence them; that is such an all-powerful thing that we must examine these things in teacher education.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Axel. I know that there are other questions, but we're going to have to release the panel because some people have to catch an airplane and get all the way back to California.

I just want to say, as we do that, that Melissa and I, both, and Marcia, we are – and I know that most of you must feel this way, too. I mean, it's wonderful that people would come such a long distance, particularly people who have such responsibilities and important things going on in their lives, to help us think through these issues. So please join me in thanking this panel for their work.

(Applause.)