

Discussion Guide

*Living Library*  
*Volume One*

global  
oneness  
project

# Contents

About the Films	5
About the Guide	7
<b>Living Library Volume One (Disc 1)</b>	
Celeritas	9
Yukon Kings	10
Barrio de Paz	10
Laugh Clown Laugh	11
The People's Grocery	12
Silent Crescendo	13
A Thousand Suns	14
<b>Living Library Volume One (Disc 2)</b>	
Path of Freedom	17
Karma Kitchen	18
Not Just a Piece of Cloth	18
Ubuntu	19
A Game for Life	20
The Ocean Inside	21
What Would It Look Like?	21

# About the Films

We believe stories are a powerful way to connect us to our greater human potential and can help us rethink our relationship to the world.

The 14 films on this dvd set make up a Living Library of global stories, exploring the threads that connect culture, ecology and beauty.

# About the Guide

This guide is intended to provide opportunities for deeper engagement with the themes on our Living Library Volume One DVD.

Join educators worldwide already sharing our films in their classrooms and learning environments. These films, discussion questions, and suggested actions provide useful tools for lively conversations.

This guide can help by providing:

- Suggested discussion questions that relate to the films' main themes
- Action ideas

Ultimately, we hope this guide will plant some seeds of new thought and, importantly, new action. Given the scope of the challenges we face as an earth community it will certainly take each of us — doing whatever we can locally — to make the necessary changes we need globally.

# Disc 1

## **CELERITAS**

*Country: Global / Running time: 4:10*

*Filmed over the course of three years across four continents, time-lapse film Celeritas explores our relationship to nature and the modern world.*

### Discussion Questions

- *Celeritas* is a Latin word which means “swiftness” or “speed”. Why do you think the filmmakers chose this title?
- Do you think technology can destroy our relationship with nature?
- How does your pace of life compare to your grandparents when they were your age?
- Can you imagine your life without modern technology? What does it look like?
- The film shows us scenes in nature, city life, and the stars. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to transition from each of these places?

## **YUKON KINGS**

*Country: Alaska, USA / Running time: 7:09*

*Set in the remote Alaskan Yukon Delta, Yukon Kings follows Yup'ik fisherman Ray Waska as he teaches his grandkids how to fish during the summer salmon run. With environmental and cultural forces threatening their subsistence way of life, Ray holds onto the hope that his grandsons will one day pass on the traditional knowledge to their children.*

### Discussion Questions

- Ray Waska has passed the knowledge of fishing to his grandchildren. Why do you think this is important to him?
- The Yukon Delta is one of the largest river deltas in the world, roughly the size of the U.S. state of Oregon. Most residents, including Ray and his family live a subsistence lifestyle of hunting, fishing, and gathering. What would happen if these resources weren't available?
- Think of a place in nature you know well. How have you witnessed this place change over time?
- What kind of fish do you eat and where does it come from? How are they caught? Are they farmed or from the wild?
- Ray and his family are Yup'ik, a group of native, or indigenous peoples living in Emmonak, Alaska. What can indigenous peoples teach us about strengthening our relationships to the places we live?

### **BARRIO DE PAZ**

*Country: Ecuador / Running time: 17:00*

*A 9-minute version of the film is also available on our website*

*In Barrio de Paz, (Peace Town), we meet gang town youth who band together not to commit crimes, but to provide services to their struggling community.*

*Nelsa Libertad Curbelo Cora initiated this non-violent youth movement in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and in this film explains how she helps youth channel their need for unity, structure, and love into the power to participate in society.*

### Discussion Questions

- What do you think Nelsa means when she suggests that street gangs act as 'mirrors of society'?

- Nelsa has found that gang members who commit violent crimes often do so in order to feel present, as if to say, "I am here." Have you ever broken rules or misbehaved as a way of feeling alive, present, or "here"?
- The opposite of violence isn't non-violence, suggests Nelsa. Rather, it's empowerment. When you have felt powerless or felt like your voice wasn't heard, what did you do about it?
- Nelsa identifies many types of power, but says the most important power comes from the inside, which she calls the power of service. What does the power of service mean to you?
- At the end of the film, Nelsa says "Love is the greatest power...only love has the deep creative power to transform lives, change cities and the whole world." What does this mean to you?

### **LAUGH CLOWN LAUGH**

*Country: Germany / Running time: 7:43*

*This film offers a portrait of Berlin based clown Reinhard "Filou" Horstkotte. The role of the clown, for Reinhard, is not just to entertain, but also to explore the whole human being including all the contradictions. For him, there is truly more to being a clown than laughter.*

### Discussion Questions

- What does a clown symbolize to you?
- In the film, Reinhard expresses himself through spontaneity. What happens when one is spontaneous?

- What do you think Reinhard means when he says the clown is the ‘whole human being’?
- “The clown contained the freedom to overcome the seriousness of my surroundings,” says Reinhard. What do you think he means by ‘freedom’?
- Clowns, or ‘fools’, have appeared as characters in numerous works of literature as well as popular films, including Bottom in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Dory in *Finding Nemo*. How does a clown invite us to discover the ‘fool’ within ourselves?
- What does Reinhard mean when he says the clown has a “poetic side”?

### **THE PEOPLE’S GROCERY**

*Country: USA / Running time: 8:58*

*The People’s Grocery helps residents build healthy connections to food, the land and each other. Co-founder and Executive Director, Brahm Ahmadi, speaks of our nation’s co-modification of food resources and some of the important steps we can take to restore food justice and rebuild the fabric of our communities.*

#### Discussion Questions

- Brahm says that the community of West Oakland contains approximately 30,000 residents and that there is no grocery store, yet there are 53 liquor stores. How do you think this affects the well being of those living there?
- Do you think it’s important to know where your food comes from? Why?
- What makes a community resilient?
- “Food is a critical component to everyone’s lives. It is simultaneously intimate and universal,” says Brahm Ahmadi in the film. What do you think he means by this?

- What do you think Brahm means by ‘food justice’?
- Many residents, says Brahm, rely on heavily processed foods and don’t have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. How does fresh food improve our diets?
- Think about your food purchasing habits. Are there any you are willing to change? Which ones?

### **SILENT CRESCENDO**

*Country: USA / Running time: 3:57*

*An intimate portrait of ex-Yugoslavian émigré artist Slobodan Dan Paich, Silent Crescendo follows his daily ritual of creating simple drawings with tea and ink.*

#### Discussion Questions

- “I discovered working with tea almost by accident,” says Slobodan. Have you ever discovered something valuable by accident?
- “I just allow myself a little space, a little moment,” Slobodan says. What do you think he means?
- Based on personal experience, what is your definition of art?
- What response do you have to his drawings?
- “There is a deep internal intelligence, some nonverbal narrative which nourishes us, which has its own natural wellspring.” What do you think he means by this?
- “Originality is totally irrelevant,” says Slobodan about his drawings in the film. Do you think originality is important in creating art? Why or why not?

## A THOUSAND SUNS

Country: Global / Running time: 27:27

An in-depth discussion guide of A Thousand Suns, including detailed discussion questions, the history of the Gamo people and culture, quotations from the film, and actions to support sustainable agriculture is available on our [Education Page](#).

*A Thousand Suns tells the story of the Gamo Highlands of the African Rift Valley and the unique worldview held by the people of the region. This isolated area has remained remarkably intact both biologically and culturally. It is one of the most densely populated rural regions of Africa yet its people have been farming sustainably for 10,000 years. Shot in Ethiopia, New York, and Kenya, the film explores the modern world's untenable sense of separation from and superiority over nature and how the interconnected worldview of the Gamo people is fundamental in achieving long-term sustainability, both in the region and beyond.*

### Discussion Questions

- What do you think has made the Gamo culture sustainable for over 10,000 years?
- In what ways does being 'closer to the land' contribute to the Gamo culture?
- In the film, Achim Steiner suggests that nature has developed strategies for coping with crisis over millions of years and that we have much to learn from nature. What are some of nature's strategies?
- How might the ancient and modern worlds work together to develop more sustainable practices?
- "Here we know that sacred forests protect water," said Abera Ogato, a Gamoan Elder in the film. Do you think there is a place in the modern world for believing that the earth is sacred?

- How does indigenous wisdom understand the concept of sharing and ownership?
- "It is not permitted among Gamoans to take out whatever one likes from the ground. There is a limit. You are taking grasses, which you need. You don't destroy others. You are taking trees for your consumption. Not to destroy others. You want to pass a resource on for the coming generation," says Gamoan elder Kapo Kansa. How can this attitude lead to a peaceful community?



# Disc 2

## **PATH OF FREEDOM**

*Country: USA / Running time: 9:40*

*This film is recommended for mature audiences*

*In the harsh environment of a Rhode Island men's prison, a group of fifty inmates are transforming their lives through the practice of meditation. Path of Freedom follows former inmate Fleet Maull as he visits prison to share his strategies for surviving on the inside. The film offers a rare glimpse into the inner lives of men reaching for forgiveness, inner peace and freedom behind bars.*

### Discussion Questions

- How do you think going to prison affects an individual emotionally?
- Fleet Maull teaches the group that taking responsibility is called “owning my own situation.” Was there a moment in your life where you avoided conflict? What decisions did you need to make?
- What are some ways to learn from those with whom you disagree with?
- “A lot of times what lands people in prison and what brings them back is a lack of good problem solving skills good communication skills,” says Fleet in the film. What are some of the specific skills do you think he is referring to?
- In the film, Fleet says, “I think we have a co-creative relationship with our life...[even though] we can't control other people; we don't control life.” Do you agree with him?
- One prisoner said, “Freedom before I came here was just another word.” What does freedom look like in your life? Are there different types of freedom?
- “Meditation has brought a new perspective in the way that it gave me a tool to really look inside myself and change the way I am,” said one prisoner in the film. What do you think about this?

## **KARMA KITCHEN**

Country: USA / Running time: 2:49

*Founder and volunteer Nipun Mehta explains how the opportunity to pay-it-forward for the next person opens our innate compassion and builds true community.*

### Discussion Questions

- What does 'pay it forward' mean to you?
- Nipun Mehta explains how the opportunity to 'pay it forward' for the next person opens our innate compassion and builds true community. What is a way you could try this in your life or in your community?
- What is the value of something that doesn't have a price?
- Have you participated in a service project in your community? If so, what did you learn about being a volunteer?
- People come to Karma Kitchen not just for an individual meal, but also for a shared experience. What is valuable about a 'shared experience'?

## **NOT JUST A PIECE OF CLOTH**

Country: India / Running time: 7:06

*Not one strip of cloth is wasted at Goonj, a volunteer-run urban recycling center in New Delhi, founded by Anshu Gupta. In this film, Anshu shows how Goonj recycles garments to provide clothes, schoolbags, sanitary napkins and other amenities for India's poor. He offers a heartfelt appeal for all of us to be mindful of the unused clothing taking space in our closet right now, and to recognize what a treasure it could be for someone in need.*

### Discussion Questions

- Anshu Gupta describes how every piece of cloth can be reused to become a new product. How might this way of thinking, if applied in your life, affect the way you consume and discard products?
- Do you have a piece of clothing in your closet that you haven't worn in a year? Why?
- How can the act of reusing materials change our consumer perspective?
- Gandhi said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." How can being of service help you to 'find yourself'?

## **UBUNTU**

Country: South Africa / Running time: 8:15

*"I am because you are," is the deep meaning of Ubuntu, a traditional African philosophy recognizing the shared essence within humanity and life. In this film we travel in South Africa, visiting Dorah Lebelo and the Greenhouse Project, Credo Mutwa, the great Zulu traditional healer and teacher, and the former Deputy Minister of Health, Nozizwa Madlala-Routledge, to learn more about this fundamental understanding of life and its ramifications on how we treat each other, the earth, and ourselves.*

### Discussion Questions

- Ubuntu means "I am because you are...I must do to other people what I want other people to do to me." What are some ways to live this?
- "Ubuntu is compassion brought into colorful practice," says healer Credo Mutwa in the film. What do you think he means by this?

- What happens when we give more than we take?
- Do you live in such a way that considers your neighbor? If so, where did you learn this?

### **A GAME FOR LIFE**

*Country: South Africa / Running time: 17:18*

*Nolusindiso “Titie” Plaatje knows that soccer can help kids “stay away from things that could destroy their lives” because that’s just what it did for her. In A Game for Life, we are taken to the soccer fields in the poor neighborhood of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, where provincial soccer star, “Titie,” works with an innovative soccer program to educate local youth about HIV and AIDS prevention.*

#### Discussion Questions

- Nolusindiso “Titie” Plaatje uses soccer as a powerful tool for social change. What issues in your community could be addressed through team sports? How might sport be used as a tool for social change?
- “There are certain principles in my life that are based on my soccer,” says Titie. What principles do you think she is referring to?
- Titie said, “It is always important to share things with other people. And to know you can do something to help the next person – do it with all your heart and do not expect to get a reward for it.” How can you apply this awareness in your own life?
- Sometimes it’s easier to see our differences rather than our commonalities. How might an empathic understanding of our differences affect the way we live?

### **THE OCEAN INSIDE**

*Country: USA / Running time: 2:22*

*The Ocean Inside is a meditation of surfing and the ocean, filmed off the coast of West Marin, California.*

#### Discussion Questions

- Have you experienced fear or exhilaration in nature?
- Some surfers say the grandeur of the ocean makes them feel humble. Why do you think they would experience this?
- Is the ocean mysterious to you? Why or why not?
- All of the water on land reaches the ocean. What are some ways to protect the ocean in your community?

### **WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?**

*Country: Global / Running time: 24:45*

*This film asks us to reflect on the state of the world and ourselves, and to listen more closely to what is being asked of us at this time of global transformation.*

#### Discussion Questions

- “I’d love to think the planet is undergoing a spiritual evolution, but I don’t see any signs of it,” says Tibetan Buddhist nun Tenzin Palmo. What kind of signs do you think she is referring to?
- Palestinian peace worker Sami Awad believes “It is very protective to remain in the narrative.” Do you think it is necessary to challenge the narratives, or stories, we live by? What is the role of narrative? What narrative do you live by?

- How does a person respect diversity?
- “How many people live in a world where their world no longer matters because they don’t have money?” asks Orland Bishop in the film. How does money influence your daily choices?
- Why do people respond to conflict with violence?
- “How do I have to be in order for you to be free?” asks Orland Bishop in the film. What do you think he means by this?
- “Human beings have within them the capacity to both make peace and make war,” says former African Deputy Minister of Health Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge in the film. She says if we look within ourselves to find what makes us human, to live and find freedom, it is possible to find solutions for peace. Do you agree?

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