

# Teach Tolerance and Respect through a Song

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

The song travels from A to Z through fifty-six countries around the world. The video highlights folk dances from each country in sync with the verses. These are ‘snapshot impressions’ of our extraordinary human tapestry.

Together the *song and video* have a stunning impact on students, and audience, if you choose to make it into a performance.

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

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

Tolerance is learned by example *and* by instinct.

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

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

***We are human first.***

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

*We are human first.*

Then comes gender.

Then comes genetic heritage.

Then comes ethnicity determined BOTH by genetic and environmental influences.

But above all, *we are human first!*

That is where teaching tolerance begins. It begins with the question, what does it mean to be human?

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

When the children begin to talk about their impressions of the video montage, you hear how strange and exotic these different people and cultures are to ours. But then when you demonstrate to your students how our own customs and culture must seem strange to the people in the pictures, it gives a new perspective.

Something wonderful begins to happen: Instead of fear of ‘the otherness’ of humans with different skin color, language, culture and behaviour, there is wonder.

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

It applies to *all* relationships.

That is where teaching tolerance begins:

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

### **The Song – Home Planet Earth**

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

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

Racism is learned, **not** inherent. Bigotry is taught by example. It is **not** ‘human nature’! Prejudice and hatred are learned behaviors.

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

PAZ

