

# Cleaning the Lens of Our Thoughts

By Soraya Umewaka, documentary filmmaker

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From documentary 'I Am Happy'



# Challenging Preconceptions Through Films



From documentary 'I Am Happy'

Ability to distinguish between a scientific claim  
and a subjective/biased opinion





Teacher's understanding of bias, prejudice and discrimination and the limitations of rationality



# Trusting parent's judgment

Transition from being a dependent thinker to an independent thinker





# Questioning Authority

Teachers are not immune to propagating irrational thoughts



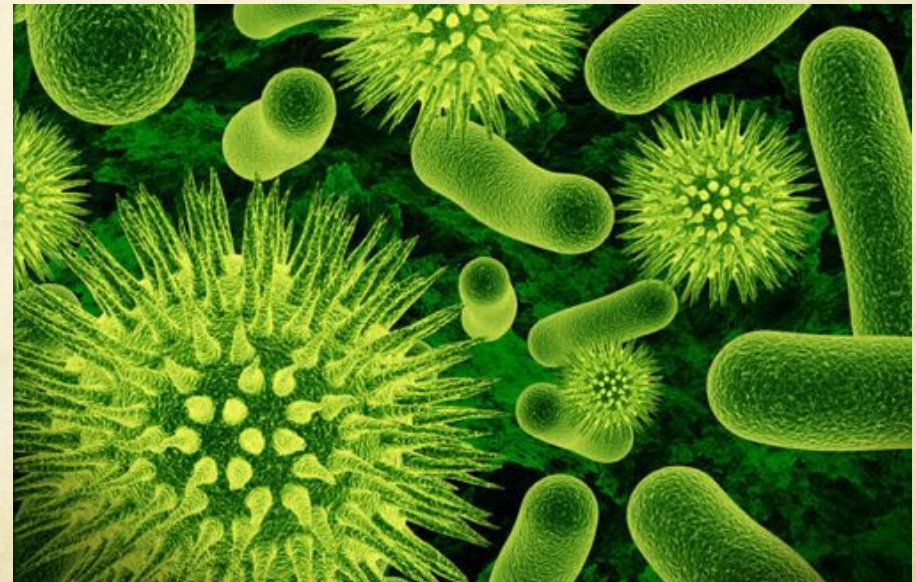
North Korea



- Can we encourage students to obtain knowledge while being aware of the limitations of rationality?
- Takes effort to be rational
- Guiding students' questions/discussions to find evidence that supports arguments



Photography by James Nachtwey



Bacteria



How easy it is to make statements that are not supported by facts/evidence

Can irrational beliefs harm people/societies?



# Being Critical of Social Divisions

“We are well within the grasp of being able to demonstrate that bigotry and prejudice has no scientific basis and it is purely bigotry and prejudice that are driving some of the divides that separate people of the world today.

I think if we can make it understood and clear that irrespective of our superficial features we are one people and we owe it to each other to respect each other as one species, one people with one origin we may get over some of the hurdles that the 21<sup>st</sup> century are offering us.” Richard Leakey (paleoanthropologist)





# “I Am Happy” (Rio, de Janeiro, Brazil)









# “Tomorrow We Will See” (Lebanon)









# بکرا من تننوف

Tomorrow We Will See

A documentary by Soraya Umewaka



# “A Class Divided” (blue eyes versus brown eyes)



Documentary by William Peters



# How discrimination affects child's personality and academic performance



“I watched what had been marvelous, cooperative, wonderful thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating little third graders in the space of fifteen minutes.” Jane Elliot

# Limitation of Perception

- When we see something, our eyes try to make sense of what we are seeing and we try to put together our sensory input in a meaningful manner.
- “Seeing is believing?”
- “Although vision seems to us as stable, complete and uninterrupted, the underlying mechanism is changeable, spotty, and broken.” Arne Dietrich, neuroscientist





# Limitations of Memory

- Memories constructed to fit our internal narrative.
- Memories can fuse together and change over time.
- We invent details to make them fill in the gaps.
- Inaccuracies of eye witnesses (contaminate each other's accounts bringing them in line with each other.)

(Steven Novella, neurologist)

# Beliefs

- Our brains are 'belief machines' motivated to believe.
- When prophecies fail the believers are strengthened in their belief.
- How many of our beliefs come from in-group loyalties, from our community, friends, parents?

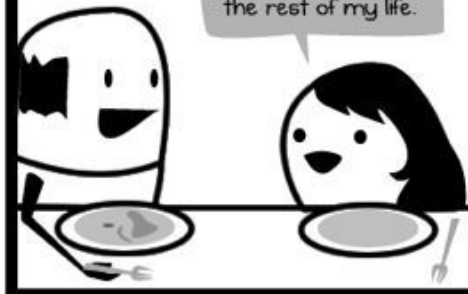


Did you choose your religion,  
or did someone else choose it for you?

Forcing dogma on a  
five year old

Did you know that an invisible  
bearded flying man created  
everything in the universe?  
Oceans, dinosaurs, black holes,  
people -- EVERYTHING!

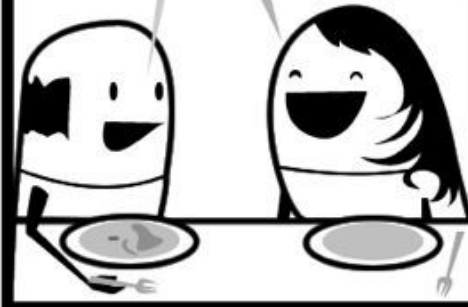
Okay Dad!  
I will believe this for  
the rest of my life.



Forcing dogma on a  
twenty-five year old

Did you know that dinosaurs  
are extinct because they  
couldn't fit on Noah's Ark?

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA  
Yeah and Jesus rode a velociraptor  
when he defeated Jehovah's army of  
demon tiger monkeys.



# How to examine the evidence in an age of misinformation

- Scams, superstitious beliefs, myths, false market claims, pseudoscience, wishful thinking
- Examine the premise and logic of the argument





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Linda Mraz, PA (lost 101 lbs.)\*

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- “If the child shows a natural talent for dance, movement, chanting, or even for roles showing anger, he should be left to perform them as he will. He should not be taught “This is good” or “This is bad.” If a child is admonished too much, he will lose heart; and if performance begins to be tiresome, he will eventually quit altogether.” Zeami (founder of Noh Theater)



