



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Can people who worship differently find common ground?

Diana Eck

In This Episode...

Diana Eck, a professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, leads The Pluralism Project, a research center that explores and interprets the religious dimensions of immigration; the growth of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and Zoroastrian communities in the United States; and the issues of religious pluralism and American civil society. Nearly 25 years after Eboo cold-called her to discuss his idea for a new interfaith organization, they reflect on their shared commitment to pluralism.

Episode Guest: Diana Eck

Diana L. Eck is a scholar of religious studies who is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, as well as a former faculty dean of Lowell House and the Director of The Pluralism Project at Harvard. Eck received the National Humanities Award from President Clinton and the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1998, the Montana Governor's Humanities Award in 2003, and the Melcher Lifetime Achievement Award from the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2003. In 2005–06 she served as president of the American Academy of Religion.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- Eboo recounts how Diana encouraged him when he first set out to create a youth-focused interfaith organization. Who has been most encouraging of your dreams? Who in your life might need some encouragement in theirs?
- Eboo describes an event in one of Diana's books in which Diana is surprised that people are pouring yogurt over their gods, and they are equally surprised that she keeps her shoes on in church. What is something about your own tradition that you think others would find really surprising? What was something that you were surprised to learn about another tradition?
- Eboo says that the US is the most religiously diverse nation in the history of the world. Does this fact make you think differently about our country? If so, how?
- Diana remembers how other scholars invited her to work on a project about religious fundamentalism and its divisiveness, but she declined. Instead, she wanted to focus on how Americans were reaching out to their neighbors across lines of religious difference. Where have you seen Americans of different religions work together for the common good? How do you think our national story might change if we focused more on these sorts of stories?
- Eboo says that America is like a potluck. No one person is directing it, but everyone brings their best dish. What do you contribute to the American Potluck?