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Mini Curriculum Unit: Three Lessons on Human Rights

All lessons are intended for 90-minute class periods with high school students aged 15 and older.

During this time of great national and global conflict, it is particularly important for students to know their rights and learn to respect the rights of others. These lessons can serve as an entry point for students to develop an awareness of human rights instruments and to reflect on human rights issues. By emphasizing that we are all human beings with inalienable rights, the critical consciousness of students can be raised to help combat xenophobia, which will lead to more compassionate school environments and, ultimately, society as a whole.

As schools are reflections of society, they can serve as models for their greater communities and society at large. Implementing and modeling a human rights framework within schools has the potential to build solidarity and create truly cooperative and supportive communities.

Lesson 1: What are Human Rights?

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to describe the concept of human rights.
2. Students will become familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.
3. Students will be able to articulate why human rights are important.

Ask students the question “what are human rights?”. Discuss as a class for about 10 minutes.

Ask students what they think people need in order to be healthy and happy.

Show Ted Ed video about Human Rights (about 5 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDgIVseTkuE>

Read the UDHR aloud as a class. Go around the room with each student reading an article, in his/her own language if possible.

UDHR: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

With their neighbor, students choose articles which they find particularly significant and explain why they are important. Share with whole class.

Summarize the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>

And the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

Discuss with students. If time permits, share other human rights documents, such as

Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CMW.aspx>

Share “Rights Around the World” handout (*attached*) with students. In their pairs, have them analyze seven of the situations and relate each one to specific UDHR articles.

Homework: Find an example of a human rights (or violation thereof) story in the news. Read the story, write a summary and reflection. Print story and bring to next class.

Rights Around the World

1. A person in South Africa registers to vote.
2. The Chinese government punishes a couple for having a second child.
3. The government of Turkey burns down villages of Kurds – an ethnic minority of southeast Turkey – and forces them to move to new towns.
4. A Brazilian child is denied a school education because the family can’t afford to pay for books.
5. The Burmese military overthrows a democratically elected government.
6. A criminal in El Salvador is held in jail for months without being charged with any crime.
7. A fourteen-year-old girl in Burma is sold by her impoverished family to a house of prostitution where she must work until she earns enough to repay the money given her parents.
8. Garment workers in Sri Lanka are forced to work long hours in poorly lit shops and to wait months to be paid.
9. A Native American asserts her right to collect eagle feathers for a religious ceremony.
10. People fleeing armed violence in Haiti are refused admission to the US as refugees.

11. A man with a disability is sentenced to death in the US for a crime he committed when he was 14.
12. The government kills advocates for democracy in China during a peaceful demonstration.
13. Women in Afghanistan are not allowed to attend school or hold jobs.
14. During World War II, Japanese-Americans are forced from their homes and held in concentration camps in the US.
15. Students in Germany read in the newspaper about politics in their country and human rights in other countries.
16. During elections the government of Croatia allows only government candidates to appear prominently in the state-run media.
17. Activists in Guatemala start a cooperative to provide food and education for homeless children.
18. Children in Pakistan are forced to work in carpet factories for little pay and long hours; they cannot go to school.
19. The city council removes books from the public library that it considers immoral or unpatriotic.
20. Native peoples of Nicaragua establish a university to maintain their cultural traditions and better the education of their people.
21. Parents in the area of Chernobyl, whose children have birth defects resulting from a nuclear accident, demand information from the Russian government.
22. Students in Europe and North America boycott soccer balls made by child laborers and write letters to Pakistan and India to end this abuse.
23. Native Americans are forced to attend boarding schools where they are forbidden to speak their tribal languages.
24. Workers in Poland demand the right to form a union.
25. A terrorist from Ireland bombs a public restaurant in England.
26. Ethnic Ogoni people in Nigeria protest the mining of oil in their traditional homeland.
27. A woman in Iran is beaten for not covering her face in public, an illegal act.
28. Australian aborigines regain land taken by the government and are allowed to make official their names for traditional landmarks.

29. Palestinians demonstrate for statehood.
30. A teacher insults a student for answering a question incorrectly.
31. In Saudi Arabia the hand of a thief is cut off, a punishment endorsed by religious teachings.
32. Students in the Philippines form clubs to debate current political policies.

Source: Patrick Manson, Human Rights Educators' Network, Amnesty International USA.
Retrieved from
<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-3/Activity9-handout.htm>

Lesson 2: Human Rights Violations

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to describe examples of human rights violations, both locally and globally.
2. Students will refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in reference to human rights violations.
3. Students will be able to articulate their views on specific human rights violations.

Review human rights from previous lesson. Ask students if they think human rights are respected around the world. Ask them to cite examples. Discuss for about 15 minutes.

In small groups, have students share their news story findings.
Then share with whole class.

Provide examples of human rights violations locally and globally. In pairs or small groups, students should examine case studies (*chosen by the teacher based on relevance to school community*), and share them with the class. Students should identify which of the UDHR articles are violated in their respective case studies.

Local examples include hunger, homelessness, human trafficking, police brutality, xenophobic violence, etc.

Global examples may include Israel-Palestine, mining/exploitation of resources, female genital mutilation, honor killings, access to education, poverty, human trafficking, etc.

Homework: Choose one local and one global case study, and write a 1-page written reflection on each one describing which human rights issues are involved and are being violated. Also, describe how your life is similar to and/or different from those presented in the case studies.

Lesson 3: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to name individuals and organizations that have worked and are currently working to promote and protect human rights.
2. Students will be able to describe the work being done by these individuals and organizations.
3. Students will work together to develop a campaign to raise awareness of a human rights issue.

Review some of the human rights issues discussed in Lesson 2.

Talk about the work organizations or individuals are doing (or have done) to address these issues. *These should be chosen based on relevance to school community and student interest.*

Examples of organizations include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNICEF, Save the Children, The International Rescue Committee and the World Health Organization.

If possible, bring in a speaker from a local organization working on a particular human rights issue, or schedule a visit to a local organization.

In groups of 4 or 5, students should choose a human rights issue and create a poster to display or fliers to distribute in the school in order to raise awareness of the issue.

Each group should focus on a different issue.

Posters/fliers should be presented to the class and then be prominently displayed.

Extension: Students will propose an action plan for working toward the resolution of a particular human rights violation.

Homework: Paper and presentation.

Option 1: Choose a human rights issue and discuss violations and possible solutions relating to this issue.

Option 2: Choose a human rights activist, and describe the work he or she did/does in promoting and protecting human rights.