

ABOUT THIS CURRICULUM

This curriculum introduces general human rights issues through the stories of some remarkable people working in the field, and urges students to become personally involved in the protection of human rights.

Human rights refer to violations as defined by international law. It is important that students have a clear idea about what is a human rights violation under the rule of law.

So what does *Speak Truth to Power* mean? Does it mean speaking truth to those in power or does it mean that speaking truth has power? The answer depends on how you and your students engage with this curriculum and the actions taken as a result. In reality, when truth is informed by sound learning it has power and those who are informed understand their obligation to speak truth to those in power.

This curriculum provides an overview of human rights and social justice issues in the United States and around the world. Using the Toolkit for Action, your students and the broader public will have the resources needed to address issues at the local, national and global levels.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

Article 26: Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Teaching human rights is a fundamental and necessary part of learning for all people. Human rights education is multi-disciplinary in nature and aligns with many concepts and objectives in both national and state educational requirements. In this resource, teachers will find lessons that fall within social studies and language arts. In addition, components such as the timeline, defender narratives and the play can be integrated into the creative arts, geography and statistics, to name a few additional subject areas.

While the learning objectives are clear, it is also important to recognize that *Speak Truth to Power* and human rights education emphasize a pedagogy that encourages both theory and practice. The lessons are framed to provide opportunities for students to submit their own ideas and make their own judgments about the world around them. The focus on practice is also addressed in relation to taking action and becoming a defender.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

Human rights education (HRE) is most successful if the following areas of the educational system are in place. NYSUT's commitment to the advancement and strengthening of these core components provides the foundation for learning and change at all levels.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

HRE strives toward an environment where human rights are practiced and lived in the daily life of the whole school community. In addition to cognitive learning, HRE includes social and emotional development for students and teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

HRE requires a holistic approach to teaching and learning that reflects human rights values. Curriculum content and objectives are human rights-based, methodologies are democratic and participatory and all materials and textbooks are consistent with human rights values.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(pre and in service education/training)

Education and professional development must foster educators' knowledge about, commitment to and motivation for human rights.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Effectiveness is contingent upon a consistent implementation strategy that includes budgeting, coordination, coherence, monitoring and accountability.

EDUCATION POLICIES

Advancing legislation that includes human rights in plans of action, curricula, pre and in-service education, training, assessment and accountability will provide the political grounding for a human rights-based educational system.

DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK

Human Rights Education seeks to improve a student's understanding, attitude and behavior toward human rights.

ELEMENTARY LEVEL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

In pre-kindergarten through Grade 3, human rights learning focuses on respect for self, parents, teachers, and others. In Grades 4–6 the focus moves to social responsibility, citizenship, distinguishing wants and needs from rights. For Grades 7 and 8, the focus shifts to introducing and enhancing specific human rights. At the high school level, Grades 9–12, the focus expands to include human rights as universal standards, integration of human rights into personal awareness, and behavior.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE

- Explore the development of protected human rights from a historical perspective as well as present-day declarations, conventions and covenants and the continuing evolution of human rights knowledge, the various challenges to the full enjoyment of human rights, and the factors that contribute to human rights abuse.
- Develop critical understanding of real life situations, questioning the barriers and structures that prevent the full enjoyment of rights and freedoms.

CHANGE ATTITUDES

- Reflect on values such as justice, equality and fairness
- Move toward an understanding among and between different groups.
- Recognize the struggles of others as fellow human beings seeking to meet basic needs and respond to human rights violations.

CHANGE BEHAVIORS

- Inspire people to integrate human rights principles into their individual lives and social institutions
- Challenge and enable people to demand, support and defend human rights as a tool for sustainable social change

INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS INTO YOUR CURRICULUM AND METHODOLOGIES

Speak Truth to Power advances human rights learning through personal narratives, through the spoken word, through image and through lessons and activities. This section will provide examples of how educators can integrate *Speak Truth to Power* into their teaching as a complement to the lessons provided. In addition, this section will present a range of methodologies that teachers may use independent of the included lesson plans.

SAMPLE LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

The STTP education guide includes lessons, activities and discussion questions for each defender. To design your own lessons, consider the following: How does the issue or concept align with learning standards? What do your students know about the issue? Is it relevant to them and easily understood? Have you prepared your students to engage with this topic? Have you thought through your follow-up plans?

METHODOLOGIES

Human rights learning uses participatory and interactive approaches to engage students. To determine the best methodology for your students, consider the content and how a certain approach might frame the issue. Will a role-play on child labor provide a lens for your students or will it allow them too much distance so that the impact is lost? You know your students, and as your understanding and comfort with more difficult issues develops, your ability to utilize a range of methodologies will become richer and more meaningful for both you and your students.

It is important to note that many human rights issues are difficult to understand and are far removed from most students' daily lives. The line between exposing and shocking, developing empathy and sympathy, or creating real opportunities to take action or promoting more symbolic events is tricky. *Speak Truth to Power* and NYSUT will work with you through a variety of mediums to support this important work.

TEACHING METHODS

Before starting any class activity, establish ground rules that all of the students contribute and agree to.

ROLE-PLAY:

A role-play is a mini-drama performed by the students. Improvisation brings circumstances and events to life. Role-plays improve understanding of a situation and encourage empathy.

TIPS:

- Allow students to stop the action when they have questions or if they want to change the direction of the role-play.

- Leave plenty of time at the end of the role-play to review and reinforce the purpose of the activity and the learning objectives.
- Leave time for reflection.
- If the role-play did not work as planned, ask the students how it could have been improved or changed.
- Because role-plays imitate real-life situations or events, they may raise questions for which there are no simple answers. Be comfortable with that and work with the students to find their own understanding and answers.
- Understand and respect the feelings and social structure of your class and use role-plays with a high level of sensitivity.

BRAINSTORMING:

Brainstorming encourages creativity and generates a lot of ideas quickly. It can be used for solving problems or answering questions.

TIPS:

- Decide on a specific issue you want to address and frame it with a question.
- Ask students to contribute ideas – they can do this individually, in pairs or small groups prior to reporting to the whole group.
- Allow for a free flow of ideas; ask students not to censor their ideas.
- Welcome all ideas, but students should not repeat ideas already mentioned or comment on other ideas until the end.
- Everyone should contribute, but allow students to contribute when they are ready, not in a structured form.
- Ask for clarity if necessary.
- Write all new ideas and stop when the ideas are running out.

QUESTIONING:

In developing questions to explore and understand human rights issues, design questions that are open-ended and encourage participation and analysis.

TIPS:

- Scaffold your questions in order to move your students from lower to higher-level thinking and analysis. In doing this, you build confidence in your students and gradually increase their understanding of complex issues.
- Types of questions to utilize: Hypothetical, speculating, encouraging/supporting, opinion seeking, probing, clarifying/summarizing, and identifying agreement.

DRAWING:

Drawing develops observation skills, imagination, and empathy for people in the picture. Drawings are useful when teaching human rights because the work can be exhibited in the classroom and school as a base for reflection and further discussion to communicate human rights values and issues.

TIP:

Art is personal and should be respected and honored.

PICTURES AND PHOTOGRAPHS:

Pictures and photographs can be an effective tool for teaching students that while we may be looking at the same thing, we see or understand it differently.

TIP:

Pictures and photographs capture a moment in time and students should think about the role of photojournalists in reporting and documenting human rights issues.

MEDIA: ALL MEDIUMS

Media is an essential component of a democratic society. However, particularly with the Internet, objective reporting or even knowing what is reporting and what is opinion should be clarified.

INTERVIEWS:

Speak Truth to Power is grounded in the interviews with the defenders. Interviews provide a first-hand and personal research and learning opportunity. Interviews also provide an opportunity to share what the students are learning with the school and surrounding community.

TIP:

Spend time with each student and their questions. Depending on the issue and the interviewee, use the time to teach not only about question-writing process but issues of sensitivity, relevance, and the responsibility of receiving personal information.

WORD ASSOCIATION:

Word association is a great way to introduce a topic in order to gauge your students' understanding. Use the end of the lesson to find out how much the students learned.

TIP:

Create a list that spans the scope of the issue.

RE-PRESENTING INFORMATION:

One of the best ways to understand and internalize information is to take it in and then present it in a different format. For example, after learning about child labor, challenge students to determine the best way to educate others about the issue.

TIPS:

- Work with the students to identify a primary source of information related to the issue.
- Provide students with a range of methods to introduce and/or educate others about the issue. Encourage students to think outside of the box in choosing their approach.
- Allow students space to bring in new information, with their reasoning for why it is important.

Additional methods include: Projects, small group discussion and class discussions.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

Teachers should consider the following strategies when adapting instruction for diverse learners:

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- When beginning the lesson, ask frequent questions and provide clarifying statements.
- Use concept maps and graphics. Consider how these can be modified or if the information can be used.
- Assign students to work in heterogeneous groups, using cooperative learning when appropriate.
- The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) will provide information on the need for specific modifications.
- Create scaffold reading with supports for decoding and vocabulary.
- Provide alternate means of presenting information, such as written, oral and visual.
- Evaluate the accessibility of electronic devices (computer, LCD panels) and other alternate means for note taking.
- Break down instructional units into smaller steps.
- Teach students learning strategies, tools and techniques used to understand and learn new materials—simple learning strategies such as note-taking, making a chart, asking questions, making an outline, re-reading and highlighting key words or concepts.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- Identify vocabulary words that may be difficult for students and pre-teach new vocabulary in context. Write simple, brief definitions.
- Use visuals and graphic organizers to visually represent the main idea.
- Summarize text using controlled vocabulary and simplified sentence structures.
- Provide the opportunity for students to partner with English-proficient speakers. Arrange the classroom for small-group and paired learning.
- Use think-alouds to help students understand the step-by-step thinking process in finding solutions.

USING FILM IN THE CLASSROOM

Films are an excellent supplement to the classroom, but it is important to remember that many of your students are not used to using films as class texts. Below are some suggestions to get your student to think critically about films and to start engaging class discussions.

- View the film prior to showing it to your class. You should know if the clip uses language or images that will require pre-viewing prep with your students and/or their parents.
- Let your students know that they should use the film as they would any other class reading. To do this, two points seem to help:
 - Nothing in film is there by chance or accident: EVERYTHING in the film was chosen for some specific effect, even the smallest, seemingly insignificant prop.
 - Film is a language complete with its own standard 'grammar.' Camera angles, lighting, mise-en-scene, shot-reverse-shot (SRS), framing, composition, editing, pans, tracking shots, fade-ins, space, dissolves, and many more are all part of the film's grammar. This visual narration creates meaning to viewers and is similar to written conventions.
- Next, provide students with a set of questions or present the selected lesson specific to the film to start the discussion. Remember to consider what your desired response is to the film.
- After your class discussion of the film, summarize the main points. This is often necessary because students can have trouble integrating films into course material. Films can be a very effective classroom tool, but teachers must consider how they will use and integrate the film's material. Films should supplement class, not substitute for it.

FURTHER LEARNING:

TIMELINE

The timeline included in this resource highlights key events, moments or advancements of human rights treaties. To extend your students' learning on specific issues, social movements, regional or international bodies, have your students research the specific topic and then place it on the human rights timeline.

Discussion questions related to the timeline and extended learning:

- 1 What was familiar to you? What was new? What surprised you?
- 2 What do you think was left off of the timeline and why?
- 3 What did you notice in relation to the evolution of human rights as laid out in the timeline?
- 4 When was the issue you are researching first mentioned in human rights?
- 5 When do you think it should have been mentioned and why?
- 6 What does the future of human rights look like? What treaties or events would you like to see happen in the next 10 years?



CHRONOLOGY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

C. 2100 B.C.

In Iraq, the Laws of Hammurabi, the first written legal code, vows to "make justice reign in the kingdom, to destroy the wicked and violent, to enlighten the country and promote the good of the people."

C. 570 B.C.

The Charter of Cyrus is drawn up by King Cyrus the Great of Persia (now Iran) for the people of his kingdom, recognizing rights to liberty, security, freedom of movement, the right to own property, and some economic and social rights.

1215

Bowing to populist pressure, King John of England signs the Magna Carta, which establishes limits on arbitrary power and rights to due process.

1648

The Treaty of Westphalia, Germany, an early international legal treaty, establishes equality of rights between Catholics and Protestants.

Human rights are the rights a person has simply because she or he is a human being. Human rights are held by all persons equally, universally, and forever. Human rights are inalienable: you cannot lose these rights any more than you can cease being a human being. Human rights are indivisible: you cannot be denied a right because it is “less important” or “non-essential.” Human rights are interdependent: all human rights are part of a complementary framework. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Another definition of human rights is those basic standards without which people cannot live with dignity. To violate someone's human rights is to treat that person as though she or he were not a human being. To advocate human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected. In claiming these human rights, everyone also accepts the responsibility not to infringe on the rights of others and to support those whose rights are abused or denied.

Human rights are both inspirational and practical. Human rights principles hold up the vision of a free, just, and peaceful world and set minimum standards for how individuals and institutions everywhere should treat people. Human rights also empower people with a framework for action when those minimum standards are not met, for people still have human rights, even if the laws or those in power do not recognize or protect them.

We experience our human rights every day when we worship according to our beliefs, or choose not to worship at all; when we debate and criticize government policies; when we join a trade union; or when we travel to other parts of the country or overseas. Although we usually take these actions for granted, people both here in our country and in other countries do not enjoy all these liberties equally. Human rights violations occur when a parent abuses a child; when a family is homeless; when a school provides inadequate education; when women are paid less than men; or when one person steals from another. Human rights are an everyday issue.

ABBREVIATED VERSION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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|-------------|--|-------------|--|
| Article 1: | Right to Equality | Article 17: | Right to Own Property |
| Article 2: | Freedom from Discrimination | Article 18: | Freedom of Belief and Religion |
| Article 3: | Right to Life, Liberty, and Personal Security | Article 19: | Freedom of Opinion and Information |
| Article 4: | Freedom from Slavery | Article 20: | Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association |
| Article 5: | Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment | Article 21: | Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections |
| Article 6: | Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law | Article 22: | Right to Social Security |
| Article 7: | Right to Equality before the Law | Article 23: | Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions |
| Article 8: | Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal | Article 24: | Right to Rest and Leisure |
| Article 9: | Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile | Article 25: | Right to Adequate Living Standard |
| Article 10: | Right to Fair Public Hearing | Article 26: | Right to Education |
| Article 11: | Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty | Article 27: | Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of Community |
| Article 12: | Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, and Correspondence | Article 28: | Right to a Social Order that Articulates this Document |
| Article 13: | Right to Free Movement in and out of the Country | Article 29: | Right to fulfill Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development |
| Article 14: | Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution | Article 30: | Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the above Rights |
| Article 15: | Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change It | | |
| Article 16: | Right to Marriage and Family | | |

1679

The Habeas Corpus Act in Britain gives anyone who is detained the right to a fair trial within a certain amount of time.

1689

Britain's Bill of Rights upholds the supremacy of Parliament over the King, and provides freedom of speech, the right to bail, freedom from torture, free elections, and trials by jury.

1776

The U.S. Declaration of Independence declares, “all men are created equal” and establishes North America's independence from the British Empire.

1789

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens is established when the French monarchy is overthrown by its people.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

SIMPLIFIED VERSION

ARTICLE 1

All human beings are born free and equal. You are worth the same, and have the same rights as anyone else. You are born with the ability to think and to know right from wrong, and should act toward others in a spirit of friendliness.

ARTICLE 2

Everyone should have all the rights and freedoms in this statement, no matter what race, sex, or color he or she may be. It shouldn't matter where you were born, what language you speak, what religion you are, what political opinions you have, or whether you're rich or poor. Everyone should have all of the rights in this statement.

ARTICLE 3

Everyone has the right to live, to be free, and to feel safe.

ARTICLE 4

No one should be held in slavery for any reason. The buying and selling of human beings should be prevented at all times.

ARTICLE 5

No one shall be put through torture, or any other treatment or punishment that is cruel, or makes him or her feel less than human.

ARTICLE 6

Everyone has the right to be accepted everywhere as a person, according to law.

ARTICLE 7

You have the right to be treated equally by the law, and to have the same protection under the law as anyone else. Everyone should have protection from being treated in ways that go against this document, and from having anyone cause others to go against the rights in this document.

ARTICLE 8

If your rights under the law are violated, you should have the right to fair and skillful judges who will see that justice is done.

ARTICLE 9

No one shall be arrested, held in jail, or thrown and kept out of her or his own country for no good reason.

ARTICLE 10

You have the same right as anyone else to a fair and public hearing by courts that will be open-minded and free to make their own decisions if you are ever accused of breaking the law, or if you have to go to court for some other reason.

ARTICLE 11

- 1 If you are blamed for a crime, you have the right to be thought of as innocent until you are proven guilty, according to the law, in a fair and public trial where you have the basic things you need to defend yourself.
- 2 No one shall be punished for anything that was not illegal when it happened. Nor can anyone be given a greater punishment than the one that applied when the crime was committed.

ARTICLE 12

No one has the right to butt in to your privacy, home, or mail, or attack your honesty and self-respect for no good reason. Everyone has the right to have the law protect him or her against all such meddling or attacks.

ARTICLE 13

- 1 Within any country you have the right to go and live where you want.
- 2 You have the right to leave any country, including your own, and return to it when you want.

ARTICLE 14

- 1 Everyone has the right to seek shelter from harassment in another country.
- 2 This right does not apply in cases where the person has done something against the law that has nothing to do with politics, or when she or he has done something that is against what the United Nations is all about.

ARTICLE 15

- 1 You have a right to a nationality.
- 2 No one shall be denied their nationality or the right to change their nationality.

ARTICLE 16

- 1 Grown men and women have the right to marry and start a family, without anyone trying to stop them or make it hard because of their race, country, or religion. Both partners have equal rights in getting married, during the marriage, and if and when they decide to end it.
- 2 A marriage shall take place only with the agreement of the couple.
- 3 The family is the basic part of society, and should be protected by it.

ARTICLE 17

- 1 Everyone has the right to have belongings that they can keep alone, or share with other people.
- 2 No one has the right to take your things away from you for no good reason.

ARTICLE 18

You have the right to believe the things you want to believe, to have ideas about right and wrong, and to believe in any religion you want. This includes the right to change your religion if you want, and to practice it without anybody interfering.

1791

The American Bill of Rights and Constitution list basic civil and political rights of citizens including freedom of speech and rule of law.

1864

The Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Armies in the Field (First Geneva Convention), an international treaty of the International Committee of the Red Cross, protects war wounded and sick, and gives immunity to hospital staff and the Red Cross.

1899–1907

The Hague Conventions are drafted, establishing international humanitarian laws for the treatment of civilians, prisoners of war, and war wounded.

1919

The Treaty of Versailles establishes both the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization to improve working conditions and promote social justice.

ARTICLE 19

You have the right to tell people how you feel about things without being told that you have to keep quiet. You have the right to read the newspaper or listen to the radio without someone trying to stop you, no matter where you live. Finally, you have the right to print your opinions in a newspaper or magazine, and send them anywhere without having someone try to stop you.

ARTICLE 20

- 1 You have the right to gather peacefully with people, and to be with anyone you want.
- 2 No one can force you to join or belong to any group.

ARTICLE 21

- 1 You have the right to be part of your government by being in it, or choosing the people who are in fair elections.
- 2 Everyone has the right to serve her or his country in some way.
- 3 The first job of any government is to do what its people want it to do. This means you have the right to have elections every so often, where each person's vote counts the same, and where everyone's vote is his or her own business.

ARTICLE 22

Everyone, as a person on this planet, has the right to have her or his basic needs met, and should have whatever it takes to live with pride, and become the person he or she wants to be. Every country or group of countries should do everything they possibly can to make this happen.

ARTICLE 23

- 1 You have the right to work and to choose your job, to have fair and

- safe working conditions, and to be protected against not having work.
- 2 You have the right to the same pay as anyone else who does the same work, without anyone playing favorites.
- 3 You have the right to decent pay so that you and your family can get by with pride. That means that if you don't get paid enough to do that, you should get other kinds of help.
- 4 You have the right to form or be part of a union that will serve and protect your interests.

ARTICLE 24

Everyone has the right to rest and relaxation, which includes limiting the number of hours he or she has to work, and allowing for holidays with pay once in a while.

ARTICLE 25

You have the right to have what you need to live a decent life, including food, clothes, a home, and medical care for you and your family. You have the right to get help from society if you're sick or unable to work, if you're older or a widow, or if you're in any other kind of situation that keeps you from working through no fault of your own.

ARTICLE 26

- 1 Everyone has the right to an education. It should be free of charge, and should be required for all, at least in the early years. Later education for jobs and college has to be there for anyone who wants it and is able to do it.
- 2 The idea of education is to help people become the best they can be. It should teach them to respect and understand each other, and to be kind to everyone, no matter who they are or where they are from. Education should

help to promote the activities of the United Nations in an effort to create a peaceful world.

ARTICLE 27

- 1 You have the right to join in and be part of the world of art, music, and books. You have the right to enjoy the arts, and to share in the advantages that come from new discoveries in the sciences.
- 2 You have the right to get the credit and any profit that comes from something that you have written, made, or discovered.

ARTICLE 28

Everyone has the right to the kind of world where their rights and freedoms, such as the ones in this statement, are respected and made to happen.

ARTICLE 29

- 1 You have a responsibility to the place you live and the people around you—we all do. Only by watching out for each other can we each become our individual best.
- 2 In order to be free, there have to be laws and limits that respect everyone's rights, meet our sense of right and wrong, and keep the peace in a world where we all play an active part.
- 3 Nobody should use her or his freedom to go against what the United Nations is all about.

ARTICLE 30

There is nothing in this statement that says that anybody has the right to do anything that would weaken or take away these rights.

1941

The Allies proclaim "four freedoms" as their objective: freedom of speech and worship, and freedom from want and from fear. The Allies repeat that commitment in the 1941 Atlantic Charter.

1942

UN War Crimes Commission established international war crimes trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo that took place after World War II.

1945

UN Charter sets forth United Nations' goals, functions, and responsibilities.

1947

The partition of India displaced up to 12.5 million people in the former British Indian Empire, with estimates of loss of life varying from several hundred thousand to a million.

1948

Chinese Laogai (forced labor camps) system built. Estimated 50 million have been sent to *laogai* camps.

A SHORT HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The belief that everyone, by virtue of his or her humanity, is entitled to certain human rights is fairly new. Its roots, however, lie in earlier tradition and teachings of many cultures. It took the catalyst of World War II to propel human rights onto the global stage and into the global conscience.

Throughout much of history, people acquired rights and responsibilities through their membership in a group—a family, indigenous nation, religion, class, community, or state. Most societies have had traditions similar to the “golden rule” of “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The Hindu Vedas, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, the Bible, the Qur’an (Koran), and the Analects of Confucius are five of the oldest written sources that address questions of people’s duties, rights, and responsibilities. In addition, the Inca and Aztec codes of conduct and justice and an Iroquois Constitution were Native American sources that existed well before the eighteenth century. In fact, all societies, whether in oral or written tradition, have had systems of propriety and justice as well as ways of tending to the health and welfare of their members.

PRECURSORS OF TWENTIETH CENTURY HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS

Documents asserting individual rights, such as the Magna Carta (1215), the English Bill of Rights (1689), the French Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizens (1789), and the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights (1791), are the written antecedents to many of today’s human rights documents. Yet many of these documents, when originally translated into policy, excluded women, people of color, and members of certain social, religious, economic, and political groups. Nevertheless, oppressed people throughout the world have drawn on the principles these documents express, to support revolutions that assert the right to self-determination or to protect individual rights.

Contemporary international human rights law and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) have important historical antecedents. Efforts in the nineteenth century to prohibit the slave trade and to limit the horrors of war are prime examples. In 1919, countries established the International Labor Organization (ILO) to oversee treaties protecting workers with respect to their rights, including their health and safety. Concern over the protection of certain minority groups was raised by the League of Nations at the end of the First World War. However, this organization for international peace and cooperation, created by the victorious European allies, never achieved its goals. The League floundered because the

United States refused to join and because the League failed to prevent Japan’s invasion of China and Manchuria (1931) and Italy’s attack on Ethiopia (1935). It finally died with the onset of World War II (1939).

THE BIRTH OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The idea of human rights emerged stronger after World War II. The extermination by Nazi Germany of over six million Jews, Sinti and Romani (gypsies), homosexuals, and persons with disabilities horrified the world. Trials were held in Nuremberg and Tokyo after World War II, and officials from the defeated countries were punished for committing war crimes, “crimes against peace,” and “crimes against humanity.”

Governments then committed themselves to establishing the United Nations, with the primary goal of bolstering international peace and preventing conflict. People wanted to ensure that never again would anyone be unjustly denied life, freedom, food, shelter, or nationality. The essence of these emerging human rights principles was captured in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s 1941 State of the Union Address when he spoke of a world founded on four essential freedoms: freedom of speech and religion and freedom from want and fear. The calls came from across the globe for human rights standards to protect citizens from abuses by their governments, standards against which nations could be held accountable for the treatment of those living within their borders. These voices played a critical role in the establishment of the United Nations Charter in 1945—the initial document of the UN setting forth its goals, functions, and responsibilities.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Member states of the United Nations pledged to promote respect for the human rights of all. To advance this goal, the UN established a Commission on Human Rights and charged it with the task of drafting a document spelling out the meaning of the fundamental rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Charter. The Commission, guided by Eleanor Roosevelt’s forceful leadership, captured the world’s attention. On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the fifty-six members of the United Nations. The vote was unanimous, although eight nations chose to abstain.

The UDHR, commonly referred to as the International Magna Carta, extended the revolution in international law ushered in by the United Nations Charter—namely, that how a government treats its own citizens was now a matter of legitimate international concern, and not simply a domestic issue. It claims that all rights are interdependent and indivisible.

1948

Apartheid system of legal racial segregation enforced in South Africa.

1960

Last of the Soviet Gulags close, but political dissidents continue to be imprisoned until the Gorbachev era.

1966

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are ratified by the United Nations. Along with the UDHR, they complete the International Bill of Human Rights.

1969

The adoption of the American Convention on Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica, which incorporates human rights standards for Latin American countries.

1971

The widespread violation of human rights in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) where an estimated 200,000 to 3 million civilians were killed and millions fled to India.

Its preamble eloquently asserts that: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world."

The influence of the UDHR has been substantial. Its principles have been incorporated into the constitutions of most of the more than 185 nations now in the UN. Although a declaration is not a legally binding document, the Universal Declaration has achieved the status of customary international law because people regard it "as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations."

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COVENANTS

With the goal of establishing mechanisms for enforcing the UDHR, the UN Commission on Human Rights proceeded to draft two treaties in 1966: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its optional Protocol, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Together with the Universal Declaration, they are commonly referred to as the International Bill of Human Rights. The ICCPR focuses on such issues as the right to life, freedom of speech, religion, and voting. The ICESCR focuses on such issues as food, education, health, and shelter. Both covenants trumpet the extension of rights to all persons and prohibit discrimination.

As of 2010, over 160 nations have ratified these covenants.

SUBSEQUENT HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS

In addition to the covenants in the International Bill of Human Rights, the United Nations has adopted more than twenty principal treaties further elaborating human rights. These include conventions to prevent and prohibit specific abuses like torture and genocide, and to protect especially vulnerable populations, such as refugees (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1950), women (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979), and children (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

In Europe, the Americas, and Africa, regional documents for the protection and promotion of human rights extend the International Bill of Human Rights. For example, African states have created their own Charter of Human and People's Rights (1981), and Muslim states have created the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990). The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America in the last twenty years have powerfully demonstrated a surge in demand for respect of human rights. Popular movements in China, Korea, and other Asian nations reveal a similar commitment to these principles.

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Globally the champions of human rights have most often been citizens, not government officials. In particular, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played an important role in focusing the international community on human rights issues. For example, NGO activities surrounding the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, drew unprecedented attention to serious violations of the human rights of women. NGOs such as Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs, Human Rights Watch, The Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights, Human Rights First, the Laogai Research Foundation, the Taiwanese Association for Human Rights, and the Foundation for Human Rights monitor the actions of governments and pressure them to act according to human rights principles.

Government officials who understand the human rights framework can also effect far-reaching change for freedom. Many world leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Michelle Bachelet Jeria, and Jimmy Carter, have taken strong stands for human rights. In other countries, leaders like

Eleanor Roosevelt, New York, 1949.



1973

The Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet carries out a military takeover that initiated massive disappearances, illegal detentions, torture and extrajudicial killings.

1975-1979

More than a million Cambodians were executed in the "killing fields" by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime.

1979

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is ratified by the United Nations.

1981

The Africa Charter of Human and People's Rights is unanimously approved.

1981

International Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ratified by the United Nations.



Signing of the United Nations Charter, San Francisco, USA, 1945.

Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Dag Hammarskjöld, Graça Machel, Wangari Maathai, and Vaclav Havel have brought about great changes under the banner of human rights.

THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Since 1948, the UDHR has served as the foundation for twenty major human rights conventions. Many human rights conventions have entered into force; some are still in the process of ratification. Others, such as a convention on the rights of indigenous peoples and a convention on environmental rights, are presently being drafted. As the needs of certain groups of people are recognized and defined, and as world events point to the need for awareness and action on specific human rights issues, international human rights law continually evolves in response. The ultimate goal is to protect and promote the basic human rights of every person, everywhere.

Although much progress has been made in the protection of human rights worldwide, the disturbing reality is that people who have killed, tortured, and raped on a massive scale are still likely to escape punishment.

After years of intense preparation, governments met in 1998 in Rome, Italy, to adopt the statute establishing a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC). In 2002, sixty states ratified the Rome Statute to officially implement the Court's function to prosecute the gravest global crimes. As of 2009, the Statue has been ratified by 109 states.

The ICC is a permanent judicial tribunal with a global jurisdiction to try individuals for the worst crimes in the world—genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

MODERN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The adoption of the UDHR in 1948 is thought to be the beginning of the modern human rights movement. The modern human rights movement has seen profound social changes: the women's rights movement gained more equality for women, such as the right to vote. The anti-apartheid movements in South Africa and across the world demonstrated the significance of "transnational activism," which contributed to the creation of democratic governance based on self-determination and equality.

Human rights is an idea whose time has come. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a call to freedom and justice for people throughout the world. Every day, governments that violate the rights of their citizens are challenged and called to task. Every day, human beings worldwide mobilize and confront injustice and inhumanity. Like drops of water falling on a rock, they wear down the forces of oppression and move the world closer to achieving the principles expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Source: Adapted from David Shiman, *Teaching Human Rights*, (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations Publications, University of Denver, 1993).

1984

International Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ratified by the United Nations.

1989

Tiananmen Square Massacre in China follows weeks of peaceful protests calling for political reform. Government troops fire on unarmed protesters, killing thousands.

1989

International Convention of the Rights of the Child ratified by the United Nations.

1990s

The signing of peace accords in Central America, ending decades of killings and enforced disappearances in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

BE A DEFENDER

Everyone can become a defender, whether you have one day or an entire academic year. Following are a few examples of how you might support your students in their effort to be a defender.

TIPS:

Have a strategy:

- Identify the problem to be addressed.
- Research the problem: why is this a problem, who can make the change you want, what solutions have been tried (some of this will have been covered in the lesson).
- What is the change you want to make happen?
- Define your action and be specific about whom you are targeting – who can make the change happen?
- How can you get others involved?
- How do you know the impact you have had?

I DAY:

If you have one day to take action, select an action that is simple and focused, such as letter writing or an information day in your school.

I WEEK:

If you have a week to take action, focus on an event or program that builds over the week from awareness to action.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Organize a week to change. Over the course of the week, begin by educating your target community on the issue and then provide a series of actions people can take.

I SEMESTER:

If you have a term to take action, focus on building out a program that integrates your classroom learning with a comprehensive, multi-layered project. Consider designing a human rights-based service learning project.

1991

Burmese democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi receives Nobel Peace Prize. She remains under house arrest despite repeated calls from the international community for her release.

1993

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia established.

1994

Estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus killed in Rwandan genocide.

1994

Apartheid system of racial segregation is dismantled in South Africa.

1994

November International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda established.