



# RIGHTS SITES NEWS

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

A Publication of The Advocates for Human Rights

## Human Rights Education

The Advocates' educational programming is designed to introduce international human rights and responsibilities to K-12 students. It uses the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to help students understand and appreciate common human values, to encourage them to apply international standards to their own lives, and to support positive student action to remedy human rights violations in their own communities.

## The Rights of Refugees

*"We came because for four years there was a war in our country. One day, I came home and our house was on fire." ~ Suvada Tahirovic*



Refugees are people who are fleeing their own country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Refugees have special international rights, such as protection from being returned to their country of origin while it is still unsafe for them to be there. These rights are laid out in treaties that protect refugees.

Refugees need this special protection internationally because they are not protected by their own governments and may have fled without even basic items, such as identification, food, and money. In addition to needing special protection, refugees also face unique challenges, such as survival, coping with distressing earlier experiences, and establishing a new life.

These challenges certainly apply to resettled refugees in the classroom context, where students' experiences of instability and trauma may affect their academic learning and their relationships with other students. Teachers can use Human Rights Education (HRE) to help students understand refugees worldwide and in their own classrooms. With resources related to isolation, parent involvement, student needs, real refugee stories, and more, this issue of *Rights Sites News* is dedicated to helping teachers inform themselves and students about refugees to create a welcoming classroom. □

### In This Issue:

Featured Curriculum: Energy of a Nation	1
Lesson: A Time to Flee	2-3
Refugee Lesson Plans	3
Books and Films: Learning Refugee Stories	4
Featured Simulations of the Refugee Experience	5
What You Can Do to Support Refugee Students	6
Featured Article: Involving Refugee Parents in their Children's Education	7
5th Grade Writing Contest on Immigration	7
Grants Opportunity: American Immigration Council	7
Human Rights Calendar	8

## FEATURED CURRICULUM: ENERGY OF A NATION

**Energy of a Nation: Immigrants in America** is a comprehensive guide to teaching students about refugees and immigrants in the United States. It provides important fundamental concepts, such as definitions of key terms; informational background summaries; admission categories and processes; and statistics and trends of refugees and immigrants over time. This teaching guide elevates students' basic understandings and expands their perspectives through critical context, such as: root causes of migration; the complex realities of removal through the courts; push and pull factors that cause people to move; the special case of refugees and asylum seekers; the human rights of refugees and migrants; local and national U.S. policy considerations; and service learning opportunities to create a welcoming environment. Grades 8-12, with lessons for younger elementary and middle school learners. To download a free copy, please visit [www.energyofanation.org](http://www.energyofanation.org).



A Teaching Guide on Immigration and Human Rights  
[www.energyofanation.org](http://www.energyofanation.org)

## Lesson: Refugee Role-Play

**Source:** *Energy of a Nation: Immigrants in America* Curriculum, by The Advocates for Human Rights

### Teacher Tips

To adapt this lesson for younger audiences, be sure to emphasize that this is a fictional exercise, and that the state has not actually been invaded. Also, do not use role-play cards, but rather have students write down what they would bring in pairs or independently, and then put them in families to agree on a set number of items.

This activity may be difficult or emotional for students with traumatic personal refugee experiences. If you have students who may be reluctant to participate, select a different activity or offer an alternative.

**Grades:** 4-12

**Goal:** Understand the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers through a human rights perspective.

### Objectives:

- Students will learn the definition of “refugee” and related key terms.
- Students will learn more about what it means to be a refugee, particularly the flight phase of the refugee experience.
- Students will empathize with some of the challenges refugees face as they leave their home country.

**Time Frame:** 1-2 class periods

**Materials:** Refugee role-play cards, available for download online at [www.energyofanation.org/education\\_immigration.html](http://www.energyofanation.org/education_immigration.html) (Lesson 6, pp. 115-117)

**Background:** Go over the definition of “refugee” if the students are not already familiar with it. Discuss a few different reasons people flee their home countries and seek safety elsewhere.

### Procedure:

**1. Prepare.** Print out and cut refugee role-play card identities from Handout 4 of Lesson 6 in *Energy of a Nation* (one per student). Each family group has a different number of family members, so try to choose family groups such that every student can have a card and each family can have all of its members. If you have more students than cards, duplicate one or more of the family groups until there are enough cards for everyone.

**2. Set up.** Pass out an identity card to each student. Shuffle the cards so that students are not sitting near their family members if possible. Before beginning the activity, tell students that they will now be acting out the refugee experience. Remind them that though it may seem funny to imagine their state being invaded, this scenario has happened to many people who have suffered very real and serious consequences as a result. They should approach the role-play with those people in mind. Read the following scenario out loud and replace the parenthetical items with names and places relevant to your state:

“Citizens of [Neighboring State], wanting more land for their people, have invaded [Your State]. Entering the state through the city of [Border City], the people of [Neighboring State] have now taken control of the Capitol Building in [Capitol City] and the police and National Guard throughout the state. There are snipers in the capitol buildings and [Major Shopping Center or Stadium] has been blown up. All interstate highways have been closed. The people of [Neighboring State] have taken over the main stadium and are using it as a staging ground for their troops. You have heard rumors that the invaders are going to be going door to door, and unless you can prove that you were born in [Neighboring State], you will be arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. Fighting has begun in [Capitol City] and is spreading into the suburbs and rural towns across the state. You can hear the fighting from your house. Mobs of people from [Neighboring State] are roaming the streets and have set fire to your neighbor’s house. You realize that you must flee [Your State] tonight. You have two hours to pack your belongings. Because all of the roads are blocked, you must head toward a refugee camp in [Other Bordering State/s].”

**3. Imagine.** Tell the students to write down ten items that they would bring with them based on their identity, without talking to anyone else. Give them two minutes to decide. Time them and give a warning after a minute and a half has passed. They should write clearly so their list can be shared with others.



**4. Convene the family groups.** Ask students to form small groups with everyone from their assigned family. These small family units must now decide together what they can take with them. Each person can only carry three things. All the items recommended from individual lists must be considered, but with the interest of the family in mind. Each person should construct a list of the three items he or she can carry. The group must take into consideration any elderly, sick, or very young people in the group who cannot carry items. The groups should meet for 5-10 minutes. Time students and give them a warning when a minute remains. Do not let the groups use more than 10 minutes to make a decision; tell them they must leave now with whatever they have chosen at this point.

**5. Decide a route.** Once the time limit has passed, tell the families they now have to decide whether they will flee by foot, escape by boat, or find some other means of transportation. They need to think about where they will sleep, find food, etc. There are refugee camps in the surrounding states where they can stay.

**6. Present and discuss.** Come back together and have each group present their plan. Where did they decide to go? How will they get there? What did they decide to take and why? After each group has presented, discuss the following questions as a class:

#### Questions for Discussion

- ? Did you choose items based on what you thought you would need to survive or what would help you remember your life back home?
- ? Do you think you could realistically carry all of the items you chose?
- ? Who had the most say in the decision-making process? Why was that?
- ? How did you feel about what was happening?

**7. (Optional) Continue.** Carry out steps 7-14 as laid out in the *Energy of a Nation* curriculum (available for free at [www.energyofanation.org/education\\_immigration.html](http://www.energyofanation.org/education_immigration.html)). These extended activities offer insights into experiences at refugee camps and starting over in a new country.



Grades K-4

- **Connections with Carly:** Based on the short video “Carly” (available online or on DVD), these lessons teach students what it means to be a refugee and how refugees are treated. [www.unrefugees.org/site/c.lf1QKSOWFqG/b.4803793/k.89B4/Lesson\\_Plans.htm](http://www.unrefugees.org/site/c.lf1QKSOWFqG/b.4803793/k.89B4/Lesson_Plans.htm)

Grades 3-5

- **Refugees: Finding a Place** (Learning to Give) This lesson helps students empathize with refugees and plan a student-driven service project. [learningtogive.org/lessons/unit359/](http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit359/)
- **Refugee Children (UNHCR)** Students will learn the stories of a real refugee to help them think about basic rights. [www.unhcr.org/4582bfb62.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4582bfb62.html)

Grades 6-8

- **Refugees: Real People, Real Stories, Real Life** (Learning to Give) This lesson incorporates various media to expose students to the experiences of refugees worldwide. <http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit405/>
- **Refugees in Today’s Society** (Learning to Give) This lesson places the refugee experience in the context of human rights, philanthropy, and the common good. [learningtogive.org/lessons/unit407/](http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit407/)
- **The Status and Rights of Refugees** (Amnesty USA) Students will put themselves in the position of refugees and then discuss the rights refugees need. [www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/the\\_refugee\\_rights.pdf](http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/the_refugee_rights.pdf)
- **From Phnom Penh to San Francisco** (Learning to Give) Accompanying a video, this lesson follows a refugee student back to his country of origin. [uw.kqed.org/edresources/plans/mosaic-imm-phnompenh.pdf?trackurl=true](http://uw.kqed.org/edresources/plans/mosaic-imm-phnompenh.pdf?trackurl=true)

Grades 9-12

- **Helping Refugees** (Learning to Give) Students will learn about the role of UNHCR and produce a symposium on its work. [learningtogive.org/lessons/unit360/](http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit360/)
- **Refugees and Human Rights** (Learning to Give) This lesson helps students understand the experience of refugees and its relationship to human rights. [learningtogive.org/lessons/unit402/](http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit402/)

## BOOKS AND FILMS: LEARNING REFUGEE STORIES

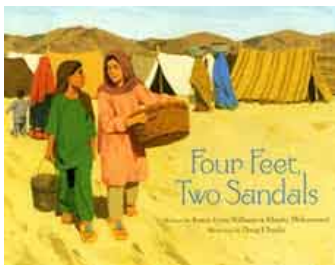
Ages 4+

### Four Feet, Two Sandals

Karen Lynn Williams,  
Khadra Mohammed,  
David Chayka

When relief workers bring clothing to the refugee camp, everyone scrambles to grab whatever they can.

Lina is thrilled to find a sandal that fits perfectly, until she sees another girl has the matching shoe. But soon Lina and Feroza meet, each wearing one sandal. Together they solve the problem of having four feet and two sandals.

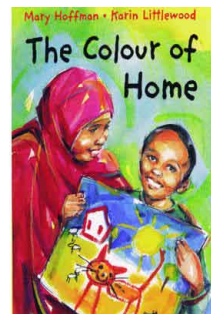
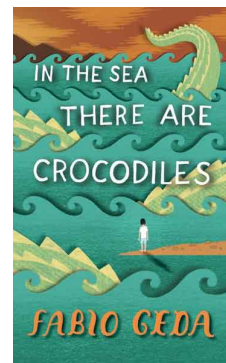


Ages 10+

### In the Sea there are Crocodiles

Fabio Geda

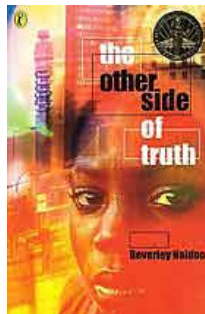
In early 2002, Enaiatollah Akbari's village fell prey to the Taliban. His mother, fearing for his life, led him across the border. So began Enaiat's remarkable and often punishing five-year ordeal—trekking across bitterly cold mountains, riding the suffocating false bottom of a truck, steering an inflatable raft in violent waters—to seek political asylum in Italy, all before he turned fifteen.



### The Color of Home

Mary Hoffman

When a young Somali boy named Hassan moves to America, he finds it difficult to get used to the new culture and language. After a difficult day at school, he finds his voice with an art assignment that gives him the chance to paint pictures of his home, both in Somalia and in America.



Ages 12+

### The Other Side of Truth

Beverly Naidoo

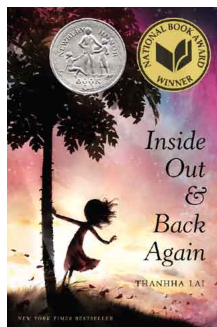
After 12-year-old Sade's mother is killed in Nigeria, she and her brother must flee to England. When they arrive, they have trouble finding their uncle and navigating the foreign government system designed to help them. The book speaks to Sade's flashbacks, letters from her father, trouble with school gangs, and the difficulties of living as a refugee.

Ages 8+

### Inside Out and Back Again

Thanhha Lai

Her whole life, 10-year-old Hà has only known Saigon. But now the Vietnam War has reached her home. Hà and her family are forced to flee on a ship headed toward hope. In America, Hà discovers the foreign world of Alabama: the coldness of its strangers, the dullness of its food, the strange shape of its landscape, and the strength of her family.

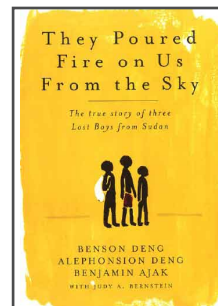


Ages 14+

### They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky

Benjamin Ajak, Benson Deng, Alephonsian Deng, Judy Bernstein

They were all under the age of seven when they were driven from a war-ravaged country. In this deceptively understated memoir, three lost boys from Sudan recall in their own words their harrowing journey to safety.



### God Grew Tired of Us

[www.godgrewtiredofus.com](http://www.godgrewtiredofus.com)

Winner of both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, *God Grew Tired of Us* explores the indomitable spirit of three "Lost Boys" from the Sudan who leave their homeland, triumph over seemingly insurmountable adversities, and move to America, where they build active and fulfilling new lives but remain deeply committed to helping the friends and family they have left behind. Grades 9+, 89 min.

National Geographic/New Market Films



### Becoming American

[www.newday.com/films/Becoming\\_American.html](http://www.newday.com/films/Becoming_American.html)

Hang Sou and his family, preliterate tribal farmers, await resettlement in a refugee camp in Thailand after fleeing their war-consumed native Laos. *Becoming American* records their odyssey as they travel to and resettle in the United States. As they face nine months of intense culture shock, prejudice, and gradual adaptation to their new home in Seattle, the family provides a rare insight into refugee resettlement and cultural diversity issues. Study Guide available. Grades 8+, 45 min.

New Day Films



## FEATURED SIMULATIONS OF THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

### My Life as a Refugee

<http://mylifeasarefugee.org/>

The idea of ending up a refugee is very difficult for many students to imagine; however, conflicts around the world leave people homeless, separated from their families, and fleeing for their lives every day. To help raise awareness of their plight and help us understand what it is like to be in such a terrible situation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has created an app in which players become one of the displaced. Though it does not run from the web, if you have access to tablets as a teaching resource, this app could help you teach your students about refugees. Called

*My Life as a Refugee*, the app asks you to pick a character and then, following the backstory of why he or she ends up in such dire circumstances, face a series of tough decisions and chance events in a true-to-life quest to try to reach safety, reunite with loved ones, and rebuild his or her life. The game features three stories whose characters are separated from their families while fleeing persecution or armed conflict.

### Against All Odds

[www.playagainstallodds.com/](http://www.playagainstallodds.com/)

This game from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) simulates the experience of being a refugee, forcing the player to make decisions to escape and then survive in a new country. *Against All Odds* presents a wide variety of challenges facing refugees, from escaping past guards while fleeing home to finding a place to sleep in a border country to experiencing stereotypes in public after resettlement. The game has three stages, each of which has four challenges. Some of these are difficult to win, and any player is likely to make several mistakes before successfully escaping and establishing a new life. Players can restart at the beginning of the failed challenge, and most are quick to complete.



### A Refugee Camp on the Web

[www.doctorswithoutborders.org/events/refugeecamp/guide/](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/events/refugeecamp/guide/)

This guide from Doctors Without Borders takes players on a virtual tour of a refugee camp and talks through various concerns and risks for refugees. It's comparatively low-tech multimedia, but driven by text and simpler images. It combines refugee stories, maps, statistics, facts, photographs, and illustrations to give an overview of many basic survival and human rights concerns refugees have to consider when they flee, and how those needs are often met in refugee camps. The refugee camp experience is the emphasis of this simulation, which does not discuss long-term resettlement at length. However, it serves as an effective introduction to refugee camps and a reminder of the basic needs of those who flee, or a resource for students interested in a particular aspect of the refugee camp experience.

### Passages

[www.unhcr.org/473dcl1772.html](http://www.unhcr.org/473dcl1772.html)

This is an "offline" simulation game, published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, designed to create a better understanding of the difficulties experienced by refugees as they flee their homes and countries towards an uncertain future. It takes participants through ten modules over four hours or so, exploring situations and experiences of escape, separation, emergency supply, shelter, leaving the country, crossing borders, refugee camps, asylum application, local interactions, repatriation, and other issues. Participants are also challenged to adopt a more welcoming attitude towards refugees in their own countries and become motivated to undertake actions on behalf of refugees. Adaptable for different age groups.



## What You Can Do to Support Refugee Students

### Challenge your own assumptions

Meaningful change in the classroom must begin with the teacher. It is easy to harbor unchallenged assumptions about different ethnic groups, especially if they are newcomers to a community. There are a number of ways for teachers to uncover their own assumptions. First is to research the countries that their students come from. One good source is travel guides, which spell out the cultural differences in such things as time, naming, social interaction, and gender roles, often specifically for American travelers. Teachers can also find members of the community to talk about common cultural practices and serve as cultural interpreters in the event of communication problems. Finally, the students themselves can serve as cultural resources by sharing their background and information about their culture, country, or family.

### Determine a “welcome” process for your school

This will help refugee students and families feel welcome when they arrive, and ensure that everyone knows their role in assisting new students throughout the year. Be sure to include a process of assessment so teachers will have consistent information on newly enrolling refugee students. One option is to create a school ambassador program with trained peers to guide newly enrolled students through their first weeks of school.

### Encourage respect in the classroom

One of the most important things teachers can do to create a welcoming environment for immigrant students is to encourage their fellow students to treat them with respect, to build friendships across cultural boundaries, and to provide support for newcomers as they adjust to American society. Teachers can introduce information about the home countries of immigrant students, the immigration process, and being a refugee, if appropriate. Classroom activities can have students assuming the role of immigrants, refugees, or newcomers to increase empathy and understanding.

### Provide resource support for students and families

Develop a list of community resources, such as food and clothing shelves, health care centers, and adult ESL classes. Not all refugees need such support, but it is useful to have the information on hand to share at conferences or other events. Meet regularly with families; if they live in a concentrated area with a community center, you may want to hold the meetings in their neighborhood. Be sure to provide bilingual support, food, and childcare.

### Remember that students may be under a lot of stress

Even as students appear to adjust, they may be worrying about family members in their home country or about difficulties adjusting to the new culture and language. Look for signs of stress, and work with school social workers or counselors and the family to develop a plan to help students reduce anxiety. *Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools*, published by BRYCS, offers some excellent suggestions for helping students adjust.

### Integrate refugee and immigrant students’ voices into your lesson plans

This tactic is especially important for refugee students who may find it difficult to relate to unfamiliar cultural and historical issues. Teachers can adapt lessons to include examples from students’ home countries and cultures and ask students to contribute their own experiences to discussions. By showing that refugee students have valuable and relevant knowledge, teachers can improve their engagement and academic performance and help them build a strong, self-confident identity.

### Increase exposure to language

A well designed classroom can also help English language learners by providing them support as they learn a new language. Teachers can label common objects in multiple languages and post classroom schedules with pictures to help ELLs translate unfamiliar terms.

### Use a variety of teaching methods

Immigrant students benefit from teachers that follow standard good practices in the classroom, such as varying the way information is presented and analyzed. Students have different learning styles, and even an individual student may absorb information differently at different stages of the learning process. Immigrant students, who face the added complication of cultural differences and potential language limitations, are especially likely to need multiple modes for learning content. Mixing images or physical objects with academic prose can provide context and language cues, for instance, and focusing on small group work is a good way to encourage cooperative problem-solving.



## ARTICLE: INVOLVING REFUGEE PARENTS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

This fact sheet from Building Refugee Youth and Children's Services discusses some strategies for getting refugee parents involved in the educational experiences of their children. From considering varied cultural ideas of involvement to laying out practical ways around language barriers, the article helps schools and teachers understand the unique needs of refugee parents, all with the goal of involving refugee parents in their children's education to maximize refugee student success. Sections include culture, language, education level, logistics (such as transportation), and welcome. For the full article and fact sheet, please visit [www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs\\_spotspring2007-2.pdf](http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_spotspring2007-2.pdf).

## 5TH GRADE WRITING CONTEST ON IMMIGRATION



The Celebrate America Fifth Grade Creative Writing Contest, sponsored by the American Immigration Council, inspires educators to bring U.S. immigration history and lessons into their classrooms and gives fifth graders the opportunity to explore America as a nation of immigrants.

**ABOUT THE CONTEST:** 5th Grade writers use the theme "Why I am Glad America is a Nation of Immigrants" to discuss their personal immigration experiences, learn about and share family histories, or write about the broader questions of the challenges facing immigrants in a new land. Students enter their work in local contests, which are sponsored by chapters of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Each chapter forwards the local winning entry to the National Competition, where entries are reviewed by a distinguished panel that includes U.S. senators, award-winning authors, and noted journalists.

**HOW IT WORKS:** The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest kicks off in the fall or early winter (depending on the local contest rules) as volunteer attorneys from local AILA chapters visit teachers and classrooms. The attorneys give classroom presentations on immigration to inform students and teachers about the important role immigration plays in our society. The attorneys also explain contest details and get students excited about participating. To learn more, visit [www.communityeducationcenter.org/community/celebrate-america-creative-writing-contest](http://www.communityeducationcenter.org/community/celebrate-america-creative-writing-contest).

## GRANT OPPORTUNITY: AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL

The mission of the American Immigration Council is to "promote the benefit of immigrants to our nation," and the Council awards grants from \$100 to \$500 to help teachers and members of community organizations carry out this mission. Grants are awarded twice annually, and the next deadline is **October 28th, 2012!**

The Council considers classroom-based applications favorably, and this year, it is especially interested in grants involving any of the following elements:

- Innovative use of technology
- Underrepresented minorities
- Community outreach and partnerships
- Math and science
- Service-learning



More information on parameters and how to apply is available online at [www.communityeducationcenter.org/community-grants](http://www.communityeducationcenter.org/community-grants).



## SEPTEMBER

- 8 International Literacy Day - [www.un.org/Depts/dhl/literacy/](http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/literacy/)
- 15 International Day of Democracy - [www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/)
- 16 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer - [www.un.org/en/events/ozoneday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/ozoneday/)
- 21 Peace Day - [www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/)

## OCTOBER

- 1 International Day of Older Persons - [www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/)
- 2 International Day of Non-Violence - [www.un.org/en/events/nonviolenceday/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/events/nonviolenceday/index.shtml)
- 5 World Teachers' Day - [www.5oct.org/2011/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=300001&lang=en-GB](http://www.5oct.org/2011/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=300001&lang=en-GB)
- 16 World Food Day - [www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en/](http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en/)
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - [www.un.org/en/events/povertyday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/povertyday/)
- 19 World Humanitarian Day - [www.un.org/en/events/humanitarianday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/humanitarianday/)
- 30 Mix it Up at Lunch Day - [www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix](http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix)

## NOVEMBER

- 11-17 Geography Awareness Week - [education.nationalgeographic.com/education/gaweek/about/fm/?ar\\_a=3](http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/gaweek/about/fm/?ar_a=3)
- 12-17 Bullying Awareness Week - [www.bullyingawarenessweek.org](http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org)
- 16 International Day of Tolerance - [www.un.org/en/events/toleranceday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/toleranceday/)
- 20 Universal Children's Day - [www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/)
- 25 International Day for the Prevention of Violence against Women - [www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/)

*Rights Sites News* is published quarterly by the The Advocates for Human Rights to promote human rights education in the classroom and support teachers. We welcome suggestions and comments.

*Rights Sites News* Editor: Emily Farell

To sign up to receive this free quarterly newsletter and periodic e-mail updates about opportunities related to human rights education, please send your name and your e-mail address to: [efarell@advrights.org](mailto:efarell@advrights.org).

For free human rights educational materials and past editions of *Rights Sites News*, please visit the "For Educators" section of our website:

[www.DiscoverHumanRights.org](http://www.DiscoverHumanRights.org)



330 Second Avenue South, Suite 800  
Minneapolis, MN 55401