LESSON 2

Human Rights Defined

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

~ Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
Goal
» Understand the definition of human rights.

Objectives
» Students will be able to define human rights in their own words.
» Students will know the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and be able to explain their importance.
» Students will understand how global inequality leads to the denial of human rights and the decision to immigrate.

Essential Question
» What are human rights and why are they important?

Key Skill
» Interpreting and comparing U.S. and internationally recognized rights (Activities 1 & 2).

Additional Resources
The handout in this lesson is an abbreviated version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A complete version of the UDHR can be found in Appendix G on page 320.

Materials
☑ Handout 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
☑ Handout 2: Selected U.S. Constitutional Amendments
☑ Handout 3: Human Rights Comparison
☑ Answer Key: Human Rights Comparison
☑ Handout 4: Global Inequality Map
☑ Paper, art supplies, magazines for collages
☑ Candy, paper money, or some other pretend currency

Time Frame
3 class periods

Vocabulary
_declaration
_dignity
_human rights
_inequality
_poverty
Lesson 2: Human Rights Defined

A T C I V I T Y 2 . 1

What Are Human Rights?

Procedure:

1. **Write.** Instruct students to copy the phrase “human rights” into their notebooks. Ask students to write their own definition of human rights. Next, have students work in pairs to discuss their definitions and use them to create a new, comprehensive definition.

2. **Define.** Write the question “What are human rights?” on the board. Have students share and compare their answers with the class. Offer the definition of human rights according to the United Nations:

“The principles of human rights were drawn up by human beings as a way of ensuring that the dignity of everyone is properly and equally respected, that is, to ensure that a human being will be able to fully develop and use human qualities such as intelligence, talent and conscience and satisfy his or her spiritual and other needs.”

The class should collectively decide on a definition to be used throughout this unit. Make sure that it covers the concepts contained in the UN definition. Post the class’s definition in a visible location.

3. **Brainstorm.** Once the class agrees on a definition of human rights, try to brainstorm as many different rights as possible, writing the answers on the board. Try to get the students to identify as many of the rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as possible (see Handout 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Use the following questions to prompt students if they get stuck:

- What rights do we protect in the United States in our Constitution and Bill of Rights? (possible answers: freedom of speech, religion, and assembly; right to a fair trial; freedom from arbitrary arrest)
- What is the minimum that people need to live in dignity? (possible answers: food, housing, health care, education)
- Think of famous movements in our country’s history - what kinds of things were they fighting for? (possible answers: freedom from slavery, non-discrimination, right to vote)

Give students a copy of Handout 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Explain that all of these rights are included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was written by representatives from countries all over the world, including the United States. The UDHR defines the basic rights that all people are entitled to, no matter who they are or what country they live in.

4. **Create.** Ask students to pick one article from the UDHR. They will be preparing a mini-presentation for the class on a poster board or large sheet of paper. For their presentation, students should:

- Rewrite the UDHR article they selected in their own words.
- Add a visual. Draw a picture, or cut out an image from a magazine or newspaper to represent that right.
- Give three examples of how this right is upheld or violated in their own community.
- State why they do or do not consider this right to be important or relevant to their life.

Teachers should prepare a sample article so that students can see what the finished product will look like. Students may choose to present their articles individually or you may want to group them according to the articles they have chosen. Keep and post the articles for others to see.

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Procedure:

1. **Explain.** Provide students with a brief background on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

   The creation of the UDHR can be traced to struggles to end slavery, genocide, discrimination, and government oppression. Atrocities during World War II showed that previous efforts to protect individual rights had not worked. Following the war, countries from around the world founded the United Nations to “maintain international peace and security.” As part of joining the UN, these countries promised to uphold human rights. Representatives of many different countries drafted the UDHR to spell out exactly what those basic human rights should be. The United States played a leading role in the process. After three years of work, the UDHR was adopted without opposition by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Currently, 192 countries are members of the UN and have promised to uphold the rights in the UDHR.

2. **Compare.** The UDHR lists the rights that all people around the world should have. In the United States, the Constitution and Bill of Rights describe and protect the human rights of all people in this country. The two documents have a similar purpose and protect some of the same rights, but there are many differences. Students will use Handout 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Handout 2: Selected U.S. Constitutional Amendments to fill in the chart on Handout 3: Human Rights Comparison. They will need to identify which rights are listed in the UDHR and which are listed in the U.S. Constitution. Students may also feel that some things which should be rights are not listed in either document – these can be added to the fourth column. An answer key is provided on page 40.

3. **Discuss.** As a large group, have students discuss their answers to the Human Rights Comparison chart.

   **Questions for Discussion**
   - Were there any rights included in either the Constitution or the UDHR that surprised you?
   - Would you add any rights to the Constitution? Would you add any to the UDHR? Which ones?
   - Are there any rights that you think do not belong in either the Constitution or the UDHR or both? Why?
   - How well do you think each document helps people live with dignity?

**Optional Extension**

**Dig deeper.** To provide your students with a more detailed explanation of human rights and the international human rights system, download The Advocates’ Human Rights Toolkit at http://discoverhumanrights.org/General_Human_Rights.html.

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Procedure:

1. **Set up.** This activity requires some preparation. Each student will receive units of currency — teachers can use candy, paper money, or some other kind of currency for the activity. The class will be divided into five groups of equal size and each group will receive currency to represent their share of the world’s income. The following table lists the amount of currency students in each group should get. This distribution is more generous than the actual distribution of income worldwide, meaning the poorest students are better off under this distribution than poor people actually are worldwide (in reality, the poorest students should be receiving less than 1 unit of currency).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>Country Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorest fifth of class</td>
<td>1 unit</td>
<td>Red countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle fifth of class</td>
<td>2 units</td>
<td>Orange countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle fifth of class</td>
<td>4 units</td>
<td>Yellow countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle fifth of class</td>
<td>8 units</td>
<td>Green countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top fifth of class</td>
<td>40 units</td>
<td>Blue countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

World income inequality is determined both by inequality between countries and within countries. However, inequality between countries is the largest contributor to world inequality, and thus will be the focus of this exercise. If students seem skeptical that all people in the United States are as wealthy as the exercise suggests, remind them that this is based on an average that includes all incomes. Moreover, even low-income Americans often have higher standards of living than many people in the poorest parts of the world. *Handout 4: Global Inequality Map* shows income distribution for countries around the world.

An easy way to distribute the currency is to create paper bags for each student; this is especially useful when using a bulky currency like candy.

2. **Distribute wealth.** Write the following items on the board: housing, health care, food, sanitation, elementary education, clothing, higher education, car, and TV/computer. Ask students which of the items are basic human rights (housing, health care, food, sanitation, education). Draw a circle around each of the human rights as they answer correctly.

   Hand out one currency bag to each student. After you have handed out the bags, explain to the students that the bags contain various amounts of currency, and its distribution is representative of wealth around the world. Let students know that the amount they possess affects their capacity to satisfy their basic needs such as housing, adequate food and nutrition, good health care, and education; and luxury items such as a car, TV, or computer. Let the students know that one unit of currency can buy one “need” on the board. Explain to the students that those in the room with eight or more units will have most of their needs and wants met, those with four units will have only their “basic needs” met, and those with two or less will have difficulty surviving due to disease, lack of education, malnutrition, or inadequate shelter.

3. **Form groups.** Have students form five groups based on how much currency they have (these groups should correspond to the table above). Either share with students or ask them to guess what parts of the world are represented in each income group. Give students *Handout 4: Global Inequality Map* so they can see how birthplace helps determine how much money they have. Explain that though all people are entitled to the same basic human rights, the realities of poverty and inequality mean that many people in the world do not enjoy their basic human rights, while others are able to acquire almost everything they need or want.

(continued on next page)
4. Plan for migration. Working in their small groups, give students 10 minutes to devise a plan to allow people to travel to other countries (i.e. change groups) in order to increase their income. When students arrive in a new income group, each current resident must give one unit of currency to each newcomer. Remind the students that they should try to devise a plan that is representative of what they think their income group would do, which may not necessarily be what they personally would do. For example, people in the top income group may not be willing to share their wealth, even if the students are personally more generous. Ask each group to appoint a spokesperson to explain their plan to others and to answer questions.

Each group should:
- Describe who, if anyone, should be allowed to move and why.
- Show why their plan is fair.

The teacher can offer a sample plan, such as the following, to help students understand how to create their own plan.

“Under my plan, people from the lowest income group can go to any other income group, but no one else is allowed to migrate. That way, the people who need the most help will get it without placing too much of a burden on other countries.”

5. Vote and implement. After the plans have been presented and discussed, announce that a vote will now be held on which plan to adopt. When students are ready to vote, announce the following to the class: 1) students with more than eight currency units have five votes each, 2) those with four to eight units have two votes, and 3) those with one or two units have 1/2 vote. This strategy introduces the connection between wealth and power. Have participants vote and tabulate the results. Announce which plan is to be implemented and carry out this plan. If people are allowed to migrate, have students stand up and move to their new income group. Once all students have arrived at their new groups, redistribute the wealth.

6. Discuss. Explain to the students that there was enough wealth in currency units to ensure that everyone in the room could have nine units and therefore fulfill all the needs and wants on the board. In the large group, discuss how the students felt about the exercise.

Questions for Discussion

- How many people were able to meet their needs adequately?
- How did you feel about having two units or less? Eight units or more?
- How did you feel about the outcome of the vote?
- In real life, how do you think wealth and power affect one’s ability to enjoy human rights and human dignity?
- How is the choice to migrate linked to global inequality and human rights?
- What might be some fair ways to address global inequality and the denial of human rights, other than migration?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Right to Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Freedom from Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Right to Life, Liberty, Personal Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Freedom from Slavery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Right to Equality before the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Right to Fair Public Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home and Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Right to Free Movement in and out of the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Right to Marriage and Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Right to Own Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Freedom of Belief and Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Freedom of Opinion and Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Right to Social Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Right to Rest and Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Right to Adequate Living Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Right to Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Right to a Social Order that Articulates this Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the Above Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SELECTED U.S. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS (ABBR.)

Amendment I
Freedom of Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly, and Right to Petition Government

Amendment II
Right to Bear Arms

Amendment III
Freedom from Housing Troops

Amendment IV
Freedom from Unlawful Search and Seizure

Amendment V
Right to Due Process of Law and Freedom from Self-Incrimination

Amendment VI
Right to a Fair Criminal Trial

Amendment VII
Right to a Trial by Jury in Civil Lawsuits

Amendment VIII
Freedom from Cruel and Unusual Punishment

Amendment XIII
Abolition of Slavery

Amendment XIV
Right to Equal Protection of the Law

Amendment XV
Right to Vote For All Races

Amendment XIX
Women’s Right to Vote

Amendment XXIII
Right to Vote for President for Residents of Washington D.C.

Amendment XXIV
Right to Vote Cannot Be Blocked by Poll Tax

Amendment XXVI
Right to Vote at Age 18
**HUMAN RIGHTS COMPARISON**

**Students:** Use Handout 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Handout 2: Selected U.S. Constitutional Amendments to fill in the table below. Rights found ONLY in the U.S. Constitution should go in column 1, while rights found ONLY in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should go in column 2. Some rights are found in both the Constitution and the UDHR – list these in column 3. Finally, you may feel there are rights that should be protected but which are not in either document. Write these in column 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitution</th>
<th>UDHR</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to bear arms</td>
<td>• Right to remedy</td>
<td>• Freedom of religion</td>
<td>Possible answers include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Freedom from housing troops</td>
<td>• Right to be innocent until proven guilty</td>
<td>• Freedom of speech and press</td>
<td>• Rights of LGBT individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to a jury trial</td>
<td>• Right to free movement</td>
<td>• Freedom of assembly and association</td>
<td>• Right to clean environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to asylum</td>
<td>• Freedom from unlawful search and seizure</td>
<td>• Right to enter other countries/immigrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to a nationality</td>
<td>• Right to due process</td>
<td>• Right to water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to family</td>
<td>• Freedom from unlawful seizure of property</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to social security</td>
<td>• Freedom from arbitrary arrest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to desirable work and trade unions</td>
<td>• Right to a fair trial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to rest</td>
<td>• Freedom from cruel and unusual punishment/torture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to adequate living standard (health, housing, food)</td>
<td>• Freedom from slavery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to education</td>
<td>• Right to equal protection/freedom from discrimination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Right to participate in culture</td>
<td>• Right to vote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 2: Handout 4

GLOBAL INEQUALITY MAP

World Income Distribution by Country

Red countries = poorest fifth of world population
Orange countries = lower middle fifth of world population
Yellow countries = middle fifth of world population
Green countries = upper middle fifth of world population
Blue countries = wealthiest fifth of world population

