

Equality: Are Some More Equal than Others? International Conference on Human Rights

Purpose:

This activity is designed to help you develop a deep knowledge and understanding of an issue related to human rights throughout history and today, both in the United States and around the world.

Overview:

Students work in groups to put on a conference in which various figures in the field of human rights make presentations.

Standards:

- Analyze concepts such as role, status, and social class during conflicts among individuals, groups, and institutions
- Apply ideas, theories, and modes of historical inquiry to understand historical and contemporary developments in order to make informed decisions and take appropriate action concerning public policy issues
- Analyze historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures
- Evaluate the roles of citizens and their participation and involvement in civic projects

Instructions:

Look at the timelines to think about a theme in human rights that your group would like to investigate. You may select from the following topics or think of your own:

- Education
- Healthcare
- Violence
- Economics and Employment
- Suffrage
- Legal Rights
- War Crimes

Keep in mind that your topic must cross historical periods and countries, and that there is only one group per topic. Get your topic approved before moving to the next step.

Each group member must select a person to research. That group member will play the role of the person he or she selected, making a presentation on the group's topic. Your group members must reflect a variety of perspectives on your topic. Get your names approved before beginning your research. People who fill the following roles would be appropriate:

- A historical or contemporary resident of a developing nation, such as a child working in a sweatshop in Asia or a single mother in Sudan.
- Historical or contemporary people who have struggled to attain equality in the United States or other countries, such as a working mother in the 1920s or an immigrant from Colombia to the United States.
- Contemporary or historical human rights activists in the United States or around the globe, such as Susan B. Anthony from the United States or José Gallardo from México.
- Artists, authors, or musicians who have spoken out on the issue of human rights, such as Ruben Blades, Pablo Picasso, or Alanis Morissette.

The following resources can help you with your research:

Human Rights Resource Center

www.hrusa.org*

A collection of a variety of print and media resources for use by teachers and others interested in human rights education

Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

www.ohchr.org/english/press/index2.htm*

News and resources about current human rights issues around the world

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org*

Information about human rights around the world, easily organized by geographic area

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

Statement by the United Nations, available in over 300 languages

Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org*

A highly political organization dedicated to promoting human rights around the world

Human Rights Education Associates

www.hrea.org/sitemap.html*

A collection of resources for teachers and students in different languages

National Archives and Records Administration

www.archives.gov/search/index.html*

A searchable database with primary documents and other information

Each group member creates a multimedia presentation focusing on the perspective of the person they are representing to support a 3-5 minute speech. Each presentation should include six slides with information about and quotations from the person who was researched. Then, the slides should be combined into one presentation, with introductory and concluding slides on the topic.

The group prepares a 1-2 page handout with excerpts from the presenters' comments, correctly cited, and a list of annotated resources.

The group then presents their portion of the conference. Each group has 3-4 minutes per presenter for the presentation, 1-2 minutes for introduction and conclusion, and 3-5 minutes for questions. If appropriate, the group may wear costumes and create simple sets or props. (The emphasis, however, should be kept on the content.) After the prepared portion of the conference is completed, the audience will ask questions.