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HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL?

Grades: 9 and up

Time: 30-45 minutes

Materials: Copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (www.un.org/Overview/rights.html); writing utensils for each student; sample story (see below); resources for writing letters in support of those without freedom

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, History, and Language Arts

1. Divide participants into small groups of 3 to 5. Ask them: “What do you know about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?” Invite responses.
2. Pass out copies of the Declaration to each group and give them a couple minutes to look it over.
3. Read them a brief story that illustrates several violations of the Declaration (see sample below). After you’ve read the story, ask the groups to brainstorm which violations of the Declaration they recognized from the story. (You may wish to post the story – or hand out copies – so that groups can refer to it.)
4. Invite each group to share which Declaration articles they noted were violated.
5. Lead a brief discussion, focusing on questions such as:
 - Were you surprised by anything you saw in the articles?
 - How well do you think countries are upholding these articles?
 - What can we do to increase awareness about these articles and support for human rights?

You may want to share a bit of history and information about the Declaration.

6. Ask participants to close their eyes and contemplate. Lead them in a quick visualization activity, tailoring it to the environment in which you’re leading the activity. (For example, it could add strength to do this visualization outside on a warm, sunny day, perhaps having them lie in the grass.)

“Given the war and violence going on all over the world, take a moment to think about peace....(pause several moments). Feel the warm sun on your face, the gentle breeze....(pause). Think about all the freedoms that you have, all the things that we each take for granted...going where we want, talking with whom we want, living and working where we want, saying what we want... (and so on, pausing to give them time to contemplate)....

Have them sit up and open their eyes. Say: “When you consider you own peace and freedom, keep in mind those who don’t have freedom, who can’t feel the sun on their face, who have never known peace.”

7. Invite participants to write a letter in support of people who have lost their rights and freedoms. (One sample resource: Amnesty International’s Worldwide Appeals <http://web.amnesty.org/appeals/active>.)

Activity by Lisa Mangiardi (M.Ed. Student)

Sample Story:

My name is Maria. I am a journalist. I wrote a story in my local newspaper that made someone in a high position angry. The next day unidentified people broke into my home and took me away. I was beaten and put in a room alone. No one knows where I am. No one has offered to do anything. I have been here for months.