

Activity 3: Rights issues and HIV/AIDS

Purpose: To familiarize students with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to encourage examination of how human rights violations contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS; to raise awareness of the types of human rights violations that people living with HIV/AIDS may face.

Standards:

Social Studies: NCSS standards

IX: Global Connections

X. Civic Ideals and Practices

English Language Arts: NCTE standards

1: Reading for perspective

Materials:

Activity 3 Student Material: A Summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Activity 3 Student Material: The Human Rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS

Activity 3 Student Material: True Stories

Description:

1. Explain to students that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a document that spells out the basic rights that all human beings everywhere are entitled to, simply by virtue of the fact that they are human. The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Many of the human rights treaties that have followed have expanded on the ideas enshrined in the UDHR.

2. **For middle school students:** Have students read the “Summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

For high school students: Have students read the full text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

3. Review the “Factors Contributing to the Spread of HIV/AIDS” handout used in Activity 2. Which of these factors are mentioned in the UDHR? How do violations of human rights contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS?

4. Have students read the handout “The Human Rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS”. Which of these rights violations are mentioned in the UDHR?

5. Have students read the handout “True Stories”. They can then work with a partner to identify the rights from the UDHR that are violated in each story. These may be rights violations that increased the likelihood of getting HIV/AIDS, or ones that occurred because of having HIV/AIDS.

6. Discuss the following questions with the group:

What are the roots of prejudice against people living with HIV/AIDS?

Do people with other illnesses also suffer from discrimination?

What can be done about discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS?

Follow-up activity: Invite a person living with HIV/AIDS to talk to the class about their experiences. Non-profit organizations that work with people with AIDS, or your local department of health or social services, may be able to suggest a speaker.

Activity 3 Student Material

A Summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. Everyone is free and we should all be treated in the same way.
2. Everyone is equal despite differences in skin color, sex, religion, language, etc.
3. Everyone has the right to life and to live in freedom and safety.
4. No one has the right to treat you as a slave nor should you make anyone your slave.
5. No one has the right to hurt you or to torture you.
6. Everyone has the right to be treated equally by the law.
7. The law is the same for everyone, it should be applied in the same way to all.
8. Everyone has the right to ask for legal help when their rights are not respected.
9. No one has the right to imprison you unjustly or expel you from your own country.
10. Everyone has the right to a fair and public trial.
11. Everyone should be considered innocent until guilt is proved.
12. Everyone has the right to ask for help if someone tries to harm you. No one can enter your home, open your letters or bother you or your family without a good reason.
13. Everyone has the right to travel as they wish.
14. Everyone has the right to go to another country and ask for protection if they are being persecuted or are in danger of being persecuted.
15. Everyone has the right to belong to a country. No one has the right to prevent you from belonging to another country if you wish to.
16. Everyone has the right to marry and have a family.

17. Everyone has the right to own property and possessions.
18. Everyone has the right to practice and observe all aspects of their own religion and change their religion if they want to.
19. Everyone has the right to say what they think and to give and receive information.
20. Everyone has the right to take part in meetings and to join associations in a peaceful way.
21. Everyone has the right to help choose and take part in the government of their country.
22. Everyone has the right to social security and to opportunities to develop their skills.
23. Everyone has the right to work for a fair wage in a safe environment and to join a trade union.
24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.
25. Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living and medical help if they are ill.
26. Everyone has the right to go to school.
27. Everyone has the right to share in their community's cultural life.
28. Everyone must respect the 'social order' that is necessary for all these rights to be available.
29. Everyone must respect the rights of others, the community and public property.
30. No one has the right to take away any of the rights in this declaration.

Source: Human Rights Education Associates, <http://www.hrea.org/feature-events/simplified-udhr.html>

Activity 3 Student Material:

The Human Rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a preventable disease that has spread rapidly due to neglect of basic human rights. Those who are poor, marginalized, uneducated and unable to access information, hungry, in poor health and lacking health care are at greater risk of contracting HIV.

Once infected, people with HIV, or who are suspected of having HIV, are often discriminated against. One reason discrimination occurs is because of misinformation. For example, some people believe that they can “catch” HIV/AIDS through casual contact at work or school (sitting next to an infected person, shaking hands, sharing food, or being exposed to coughing or sneezing). Even though HIV/AIDS cannot be transmitted in these ways, fear and prejudice persist.

Discrimination also occurs because of the belief that anyone who has HIV/AIDS must be an injecting drug user, a sex worker, or a man who has sex with men. While these three groups are at greater risk of contracting HIV, over 95% of HIV infections are spread through heterosexual contact.

People living with HIV/AIDS may experience discrimination in the form of:

- Difficulty getting medical care, if health care workers believe that they can contract AIDS from their patients.

- Being fired from a job, or denied work if employers believe other workers can “catch” HIV from casual contact.

- Denial of the opportunity to go to school if educators believe that there is a risk they will infect others.

- Difficulty finding housing, if neighbors are afraid of “catching” AIDS from casual contact, or make assumptions about the person’s lifestyle.

Without health care, employment, education and housing, the difficulties of surviving with HIV/AIDS are greatly increased.

Read more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/hiv/introhiv.htm>

<http://www.phrusa.org/campaigns/aids/aidsandhr.html>

Activity 3 Student Material

True Stories

Joey, USA

Joey was infected with AIDS when he was four years old. As a baby, he was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect, for which he underwent open-heart surgery. Four years later, after many medical complications, he was diagnosed with AIDS, which he had contracted from contaminated blood given to him during surgery. The doctor told Joey's family that he had one year to live, and that if they were smart they would not tell anyone about his sickness.

The family lived in strict silence until Joey was 10 years old and became so ill that the doctors gave him only 48 hours to live. Joey decided that he didn't want to live with this secret anymore. "I wanted my friends to know the truth."

When Joey went public, his picture appeared on the cover of *New York Newsday* in a story about children with AIDS, causing an uproar at his school. Local parents were frightened and angry and did not want Joey to attend school with their children. The protest and threats failed and Joey soon returned to school, but the discrimination he experienced then - and still faces today - had a profound impact. Joey is now 21 years old and says his mission is to "help fight for the rights of kids and adults who are infected, so that they are not discriminated against like I was."

Source: United Nations, <http://www.un.org/works/aidssession/feature3.html>

Suzana, Indonesia

Suzana found out in 1995 that she was HIV positive, after she went to hospital and doctors tested her without her consent. She was sent home with out any information about her deadly virus or counseling to help her deal with the emotional upheaval that followed.

"At first I was very angry and depressed, and then I lost all hope. I was afraid of the discrimination and the stigma I was going to face, being a person with HIV," recalls Suzana. Although she has been infected for 6 years, Suzana has never received any medication, which is too expensive for 95% of HIV/AIDS patients in Indonesia. "I don't want to do tragic things, like sell my car or my house for maybe 6 months of medication. Because, what happens next? I will have no more medicine, as well as no car or house. Maybe when I get really sick, and really scared of death, maybe then I will do that too."

Suzana feels strongly about the rights of other AIDS victims in Indonesia. "We should know about our illness and be given information on nutrition, so that we can live with our sickness for as long as possible. Patients should also be free to talk about how they feel." Suzana began writing brochures about living with HIV/AIDS and distributed them to local doctors and hospitals. She told them, "If you have HIV positive people, I want to meet them."

Source: United Nations, <http://www.un.org/works/aidsession/feature2.html>

Valeria, Ukraine

"I got HIV, because I did foolish things without reflecting how much devastation it can bring to my life," says Valeria. She contracted HIV when she was 18, injecting drugs with friends. Like many others, she didn't know that she might become infected with HIV by sharing used needles.

Since then she had to live with the devastating consequences. One of the first people in the country to be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, Valeria says she has faced extreme discrimination. She was rejected by those around her, she lost her sports career as a member of the national women's volleyball team and was forced to give up her university studies. Faced with such rejection and discrimination, Valeria says she lost her self-confidence and plunged deeper into drug addiction.

Today, Valeria is in charge of a day-care center for HIV positive children and is fighting against stigma and discrimination towards children living with AIDS. She's faced this first hand, as her daughter was born with HIV. "Many nurses and doctors are scared of providing services to people and even children living with HIV," she said, describing how a nurse refused to take a blood sample from her daughter for her first HIV test. "I had to take the blood myself", confirms Valeria.

With 'HIV' noted in her daughter's health records, no kindergarten or school would admit her. "Children are at no fault, they have a right to schooling and treatment, just like other children," said Valeria.

Source: World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/3by5/news19/en/>