

Significance of Individuals to Defending Human Rights:
Meet Four Human Rights Defenders
High School American Government / Civics

Elaborated Lesson Focus

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to four human rights defenders as examples of positive character and strong leadership qualities that are essential to effective defense of a

Georgia Standards of Excellence

SSCG6 Analyze the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured.

SSCG7 Demonstrate knowledge of civil liberties and civil rights.

- a. Define civil liberties as protections against government actions (e.g., First Amendment).
- b. Define civil rights as equal protections for all people (e.g., Civil Rights Act, Brown v. Board of Education, etc.)
- c. Analyze due process of law as expressed in the 5th and 14th amendments, as understood through the process of incorporation.
- d. Identify how amendments extend the right to vote.

Enduring Understanding / Essential Questions

Individuals work passionately to uphold the neglected, victimized and ignored are defenders of human rights. They are average individuals who, because of their strong character, take a stand for justice and equality. Their courageous leadership is a powerful example of the ability of individuals to affect change in the world.

Why are defenders of human rights necessary?

What qualities do these four individuals possess that make them effective human rights defenders?

What motivates these individuals as leaders?

Procedure

1. Warm-up Activity

On the board, teacher will guide students in brainstorming to develop a class definition for _____les of human rights and list historical examples of times/situations when human rights have been violated. Ask students to discuss how those rights were restored. (Assessment Dialogue and Discussion, Teacher Observation)

2. Topic Overview

Students will be introduced to four human rights defenders as important figures in the global campaign for basic rights for all people. Teacher should use the overview transparency included here and provide students with definitions of key terms, as needed. (Key Terms: human rights, impunity, democracy, justice, policymaker, Haiti, Guatemala, Egypt, Israel.)

3. Breakout Groups

Students will divide into four groups, and each group will read the profile of one human rights defender as assigned by the teacher. Note: teacher may also distribute the optional corresponding primary source material as time and reading level permit. One student in the group will be the

-What human rights is this person working to defend? -What challenges does this individual face in promoting human rights? -What motivates this individual?

4. Presentations & Discussion

One student from each group will present an overview of the defender they read about and share group responses to the questions above. Once each group has presented, teacher will guide the class in discussion, using the provided Discussion Questions. Note: teachers can select questions

Dialogue and

Discussion, Teacher Observation)

Materials

1. Transparency: Meet Four Human Rights Defenders
2. Student handout: Defender Profiles
3. Student handout: Primary source material (optional)
4. Teacher guide: Discussion Questions

Meet Four Human Rights Defenders

Dr. Saad Ibrahim

Egypt

His call for democracy and human rights in the Middle East has risked his life. His persistence continues to spark dialogue for advancement of democratic principles.

Jessica Montell

Israel

Her passion for justice and truth inspires her work of exposing rights abuses in the Occupied Territories, holding policy-makers accountable for their decisions.

PROFILES

Gerard Jean-Juste

Haiti



Carry Me Home to Haiti

South Florida may seem an idyllic location for a political prisoner living in exile.

But not even a debilitating case of leukemia and the possibility of persecution at home are enough to stop Gerard Jean-Juste from heading back to his native Haiti again.

"I expect to return as soon as my medical staff allows me," says the 61-year-old priest and human rights activist.

The volatile storms of Haiti's political fortunes have tossed Jean-Juste between his island homeland and the United States for the better part of the last 35 years, and along the way, he has earned considerable respect in both countries for his efforts to improve the civil liberties of Haitians regardless of where they live.

Jean-Juste still has charges of weapons possession and conspiracy to kill Haitian police officers outstanding against him. But the fact that he is so eager to return home underscores improvements made under the current government of René Prével after the humanitarian disaster that marked the previous U.S.-installed regime.

Jean-Juste gained fame in Haiti for preaching liberation theology on the radio after a military coup in 1991. For the longest time, the military junta running the country sought intelligence on the mysterious rabble-rousing rector but failed to stop his activities because they had no idea what he looked like.

The last time Jean-Juste lived in Haiti, he was jailed twice after rebels overthrew the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. "The illegal, de facto government always brought some trumped-up charges that could not hold," he says.

The first arrest was on charges of inciting violence and harboring pro-Aristide soldiers. Jean-Juste had close ties with Aristide, a former Catholic priest. The second was for the murder of his cousin at a time when Jean-Juste was out of the country—a charge that was eventually dropped.

Under the regime installed in 2004 by the "council of the wise" set up by France, the United States and Canada, thousands of people were killed in one of the worst spasms of violence the Caribbean has seen in recent years. During this period, Prime Minister Gerard Latortue—a former radio talk-show host from Boca Raton—was accused of being largely indifferent to a surge in human rights violations and corruption.

"Former military personnel who should have been subject to prosecution for crimes ended up becoming members of the local police force," says professor Irwin Stotzky at the University of Miami, an expert in Haitian politics. "It was basically a failed state."

In the run up to the elections to replace the discredited interim government, Jean-Juste was considered by many a potential presidential candidate even though he was in prison. Indeed, his incarceration made him something of a 'Nelson Mandela figure' and served to highlight his years of work in Haiti to support the poor and feed homeless children. In the end, however, Jean-Juste endorsed the eventual winner, René Préval, from behind bars.

"I support President Préval even though we disagree on some key issues," says the ailing priest. His main reason for optimism is that the democratic process is moving forward. "I love the voters as long as they stay committed, awake, and aware," he says, "the political situation must go forward in the right direction."

Jean-Juste was released in January 2006 to be treated for leukemia in Miami, where he enjoys an equally celebrated status as a far-sighted social reformer. In the United States, he has been active in social issues since 1978, when he helped set up the Haitian Refugee Center to assist refugees, protest U.S. immigration laws, and fight local discrimination. He is a hero to many in Little Haiti and signs in shop windows around Miami demanding his freedom were a common sight after his arrest in 2005.

He says his battle with leukemia has slowed him down but also serves as a source of reverence for the human condition. He likens the sickness and treatment process to a near-death experience and says he has had many questions answered about such problems as the pain of torture, imprisonment, poison, and rejection. "I understand the Bible and the biblical martyrs better," he says.

Jean-Juste's personal aura is almost palpable to those who know him. "I first met him many years ago, when he set up the refugee center. He's just an incredibly brave guy and very peaceful," says professor Stotzky.

Unsurprising for a priest, Jean-Juste's main source of strength is his faith. Yet in addition to the teachings of the church, he says his inspiration for his activism also comes from what he calls his "debt as a member of the human race."

While his faith gives him the power to serve people without discrimination, the rules of the Catholic Church have blocked him from exercising his charge. When it appeared that Jean-Juste might run for president an activity prohibited by the Vatican

Saad Eddin

These recent steps toward restoring momentum to Arab democracy movements are significant given that a key driving force in Egypt's secular civil liberties movement was left in tatters for several years by the imprisonment of Dr. Ibrahim and his colleagues.

Many say that the Ibn Khaldun Center's focus on election monitoring landed him in jail. The trial was seen as an attempt to muzzle civil society groups and prevent Dr. Ibrahim and the center from scrutinizing upcoming polls.

Dunn, editor of *The Middle East Journal* and former professor at Georgetown University.

Dr. Ibrahim was convicted in May 2001 for preparing slanderous reports about Egypt and receiving unauthorized funds from overseas, a ruling that sparked a storm of condemnation from the West. The case became a cause celebre for both domestic and foreign human rights groups that threw the spotlight on the poor political reform record of the Mubarak government. This along with the threat of the United States cutting off aid, were key factors in the acquittal of Dr. Ibrahim on all charges in 2003, says Dunn.

Around the time of his release, it appeared that liberal democracy was gaining more of a foothold throughout the Arab world not only within a secular context but also among religious groups. A party of Muslim democrats won power for the first time in Turkey, while a similar political organization made substantial progress in Morocco. Both men and women voted in Bahrain's first elections since 1975, and Egypt held its first multi-party polls in 50 years in 2005. Dr. Ibrahim says the West can take some of the credit for this period of liberalization.

"After 9/11, there was a push from the United States and Western Europe to promote democracy in the Middle East as part of the war on terror," he says. "We think democracy should be supported for its own sake, but the initial effect was to give added energy to our cause."

But the long-awaited Cairo spring was to prove elusive. The message being disseminated by such people as Dr. Ibrahim struck a chord with Islamic-oriented groups, who had long suffered under the rule of authoritarian governments. The banned Muslim Brotherhood won 20 percent of seats in the 2005 election to form the largest opposition bloc, prompting the regime of President Hosnei Mubarak to quickly clamp down by throwing their leaders in prison and stifling political dissent.

In a recent example of the growing atmosphere of oppression facing civil society groups, the Egyptian Secret Service arrested in May 2007 members of a group, known as the Quranists, who were working to promote human rights and democracy from within a Muslim perspective.

"The Mubarak government has used the gains made by the Muslim Brotherhood as a pretext for rolling back democracy," says Dr. Ibrahim. The government recently passed a series of constitutional amendments, which analysts say remove civil liberties and increase the risk of vote-rigging by removing the judicial monitoring of elections.

Dr. Ibrahim says the West is guilty of double standards when it comes to supporting democracy in the Middle East. A typical example is the case of Ayman Nour, the secular opposition leader

Helen Mack

Guatemala

Sister Activist

What's the definition of patience in Guatemala? Answer: Helen Mack.

Some 14 years after the military murdered her sister Myrna, Ms. Mack brought the authors of the crime to justice despite the fact that only 5 percent of crimes committed in the Central American nation ever go to trial and less than 1 percent end with a conviction.

Along the way, Ms. Mack also transformed from an apolitical businesswoman into Guatemala's leading judicial reform activist. She runs the Myrna Mack Foundation, a group of about 40 workers who lobby for change to the legal system, fight impunity for military crimes, promote human security, and empower local communities to stand up for their rights.

The organization has had some success in rolling back the culture of impunity that dominates the Guatemala military. The army used to claim jurisdiction in military courts over incidents such as car accidents and rape in order to pass off executions of civilians as accidental deaths. "We said if the military were involved in (such cases), then they should be judged by civilian tribunals, not military ones. We created a debate about this issue and proposed reforms, which were adopted as part of the peace agreement in December 1996," says Ms. Mack.

She says there have been two distinct sides — the political and the personal — to the journey that began when the police told her late in the summer of 1990 that Myrna had died in a traffic accident. Despite the eventual guilty verdict passed down in 2004, both aspects of her battle remain far from resolved.

On the personal level, she has doubts about

The following is an excerpt from the Seymour Martin Lipset Lecture delivered by Dr. Ibrahim on Nov. 1, 2006, entitled "Toward Muslim Democracies"

Our concern must not be with a supposed incompatibility of freedom and Islam or, for that matter, democracy or liberal values and Islam. There is a universal hunger for all three, and Muslims are part of that universality. Two- eady live under democratically elected

The following is an editorial written by Ms. Montell for the Los Angeles Times, May 26, 2004.

Demolishing Houses, and Lives

By Jessica Montell

Throughout the last week, a macabre exercise has been running through my head. I imagine I have five minutes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Knowledge:

What is the name of the leader you are studying?
Can you identify his/her home country on a map?
What basic human rights is this person defending? How?

Comprehension:

What challenges has this leader faced in defending human rights?
How do you think the leader feels about violent vs. nonviolent intervention to promote his/her cause?

Application:

contemporar