

ROBERT F.  
KENNEDY  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS

# SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS WHO ARE  
CHANGING OUR WORLD

Based on the book by **KERRY KENNEDY** | Photography by **EDDIE ADAMS** and **ARCHITECTS OF PEACE**  
Containing excerpts from the play *Speak Truth To Power: Voices from Beyond the Dark* by **ARIEL DORFMAN**  
**ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS**





# KERRY KENNEDY

In a world when a common lament is that there are no more heroes, too often cynicism and despair are perceived as evidence of the death of moral courage. That perception is wrong. People of great valor and heart, committed to a noble purpose, with long records of personal sacrifice, walk among us in every country of the world. Nearly twenty years ago, I traveled the globe to forty countries and five continents, interviewing individuals who appear in the pages of the first edition of *Speak Truth To Power*, and in the Ariel Dorfman play. These are people whose lives are filled with extraordinary feats of bravery. I've listened to them speak about the quality and nature of courage, and in their stories I found hope and inspiration, a vision of a better world.

For many of these heroes, their understanding of the abrogation of human rights has been profoundly shaped by their personal experiences: of death threats, imprisonment, and in some cases, bodily harm. However, this is not, by any measure, a compilation of victims. Rather, courage, with its affirmation of possibility and change, is what defines them, singly and together. Each spoke with compelling eloquence of the causes to which they have devoted their lives, and for which they are willing to sacrifice—from freedom of expression to the rule of law, from environmental defense to the eradication of bonded labor, from access to capital to the right to due process, from women's rights to religious liberty. These leaders hold in common an inspiring record of accomplishment and a profound capacity to ignite change.

The defenders' own voices provoke fundamental questions: why do people who face imprisonment, torture, and death continue to pursue their work when the chance of success is so remote and the personal consequences are so grave? Why did they become involved? What keeps them going? From where do they derive their strength and inspiration? How do they overcome their fear? How do they measure success? Out of their answers emerges a sympathetic and strength-giving portrait of the power of personal resolve and determination in the face of injustice. These fundamental questions have a special interest for me personally. As a mother of three girls, I deeply wished to understand if there were steps I could take to encourage my own daughters to develop similar attributes, or if moral courage was something certain people are born with, inherently, while the rest of us (with our own lesser sensibilities) are left to muddle through. And if we are capable of less, then are we off the hook? Condemned to be sinners, is there any point in striving to be saints?

Several defenders recalled an early moment or incident that galvanized their social conscience forever. Some told

stories of searing childhood encounters with injustice. Many defenders are members of groups that have endured sustained repression, and so have come to a natural understanding of the issues and desire to overcome the wrongs. Others saw injustice in a community they were not a part of and took up the cause. And still others had enjoyed the comforts of being among the elite in their countries, yet risked banishment—and worse—to right wrongs committed by their peers.

Despite the overwhelming powers arrayed against them, these men and women are, as a whole, an optimistic lot. In my interview with Archbishop Tutu, he emphasized this attitude, saying, "We have a God who doesn't say, 'Ah... Got you!' No. God says, 'Get up,' and God dusts us off and God says, 'Try again.'" Perhaps the stance should be qualified as less optimistic than hopeful. Overwhelmingly pragmatic and realistic about the prospects for change, all too aware of the challenges they face, nonetheless they continue to roll their boulders back up the hill.

These voices are, most of all, a call to action, much needed because human rights violations often occur by cover of dark, in remote places. For many of those who suffer, isolation is their worst enemy, and exposure of the atrocities is their only hope. We must bring the international spotlight to violations and broaden the community of those who know and care about the individuals portrayed. This alone may well stop a disappearance, cancel a torture session, or even, save a life.

I grew up in the Judeo-Christian tradition where our prophets were painted on ceilings and our saints were sealed in stained glass. They were superhuman, untouchable, and so we were freed from the burden of their challenge. But here on Earth, people like these and countless other defenders are living, breathing human beings in our midst. Their determination, valor, and commitment in the face of overwhelming danger challenge each of us to take up the torch for a more decent society. Today we are blessed by the presence of these people. They are teachers who show us not how to be saints, but how to be fully human.

In the *Speak Truth to Power* lessons, you will find both the stories of the most courageous people on Earth, and ways in which educators from kindergarten through university can bring those stories to life in the classroom and beyond.

Robert F. Kennedy once called education, "the key to human dignity"—the key to a more just and peaceful world.

Onward,  
Kerry Kennedy  
President, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights



# THE PROJECT

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights’ Speak Truth To Power (STTP) program evolved from Kerry Kennedy’s book, *Speak Truth To Power: Human Rights Defenders Who Are Changing Our World*, first printed in English in 2000, and since been printed in seven languages. Featuring interviews with more than 50 human rights defenders, including Nobel Peace Prize winners Wangari Maathai, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Elie Wiesel, and Muhammad Yunus, the book is a remarkable tribute to the indomitable human spirit.

Alongside the interviews, in the original book, are portraits by Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Eddie Adams, which have since been developed into a museum-quality exhibition. The exhibition began its international tour at The Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C. and has since traveled to four continents, reaching countries such as Cambodia, Greece, Italy, Qatar, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, South Korea and South Africa. Most recently it was displayed at Baltimore-Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport for six months, major train stations throughout Sweden, and in public spaces throughout Norway.

Award-winning playwright Ariel Dorfman adapted the words from the book into a play, *Speak Truth To Power: Voices From Beyond the Dark*. Hosted by President Bill Clinton, the play premiered at the Kennedy Center in 2000. A one-hour video was broadcast on PBS as part of its Great Performances Series. Many of our greatest actors have performed in the play, including Alec Baldwin, Glenn Close, John Malkovich, Sean Penn, Vanessa Redgrave, Martin Sheen, and Meryl Streep. The play has been produced across the United States and performed by major actors in capitals around the world. Notably, a performance in Doha, Qatar, was transmitted live on the Arab news network Al Jazeera and read by ten of the most

celebrated actors and singers of the Arab world. It has also been performed by school children, college students, local heroes, and even prisoners. In 2014, at the European Union in Brussels, several Members of the European Parliament, including Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, performed the play.

The Speak Truth To Power human rights education curriculum, comprised of over fifty lesson plans, has been taught to millions of students from kindergarten through law school in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. As an educational tool for students at every grade level, the curriculum shows students that they, too, can make a difference in the global struggle for justice. STTP uses the stories of courageous heroes from around the world to teach students about human rights and empower them to become defenders themselves. As students begin to self-identify as human rights defenders, they learn to take active roles in the work of creating a more just and peaceful world. What sets Speak Truth To Power apart is its power to inspire action. By allowing students to see themselves as human rights defenders, they begin to act as human rights defenders.

In addition to the curriculum and the play, the Speak Truth To Power project includes a video contest, a partnership with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Tribeca Film Institute (TFI) and a music contest, a partnership with the GRAMMY Museum. Both contests are aimed at encouraging students to create change through film and music.

Speak Truth To Power encourages governments, NGOs, major foundations, and individuals to support human rights, and brings much-needed attention to continuing abuses. But perhaps its most lasting effect will be to demonstrate the capacity of each individual to create change.

**“IN A WORLD WHEN A COMMON LAMENT IS THAT THERE ARE NO MORE HEROES, TOO OFTEN CYNICISM AND DESPAIR ARE PERCEIVED AS EVIDENCE OF THE DEATH OF MORAL COURAGE. THAT PERCEPTION IS WRONG. PEOPLE OF GREAT VALOR AND HEART, COMMITTED TO A NOBLE PURPOSE, WITH LONG RECORDS OF PERSONAL SACRIFICE, WALK AMONG US IN EVERY COUNTRY OF THE WORLD.”—Kerry Kennedy**

To learn more about the music and video contests, visit [www.speaktruthvideo.com](http://www.speaktruthvideo.com) and [speakupsingout.org](http://speakupsingout.org)

# “WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?”

**HUMAN RIGHTS ARE THE RIGHTS A PERSON HAS SIMPLY BECAUSE SHE OR HE IS A HUMAN BEING. HUMAN RIGHTS ARE HELD BY ALL PERSONS EQUALLY, UNIVERSALLY, AND FOREVER.** Human rights are inalienable: you cannot lose these rights any more than you can cease being a human being. Human rights are indivisible: you cannot be denied a right because it is “less important” or “non-essential.” Human rights are interdependent: all human rights are part of a complementary framework. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Another definition of human rights is those basic standards without which people cannot live with dignity. To violate someone’s human rights is to treat that person as though she or he were not a human being. To advocate for human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected. In claiming these human rights, everyone also accepts the responsibility not to infringe on the rights of others and to support those whose rights are abused or denied.

Human rights are both inspirational and practical. Human rights principles hold up the vision of a free, just, and peaceful world, and set minimum standards for how individuals and institutions everywhere should treat people. Human rights also empower people with a framework for action when those minimum standards are not met, for people still have human rights, even if the laws or those in power do not recognize or protect them.

We experience our human rights every day when we worship according to our beliefs, or choose not to worship at all; when we debate and criticize government policies; when we join a trade union; or when we travel to other parts of the country or overseas. Although we usually take these actions for granted, people both here in America and in other countries do not enjoy all these liberties equally. Human rights violations occur when a parent abuses a child; when a family is homeless; when a school provides inadequate education; when women are paid less than men; or when one person steals from another. Human rights are an everyday issue.

## BECOME A DEFENDER

Everyone can become a defender, whether you have one day or an entire academic year. Following are a few examples of how you can support students in their efforts to be defenders.

### TIPS:

Have a strategy:

- Identify the problem to be addressed.
- Research the problem: Why is this a problem, what solutions have been tried? (Some of this will have been covered in the lesson.)
- What change is required?
- Define action steps and specific target audiences—who can make the change happen?
- How can the group involve other supporters?
- How will the impact of the group’s efforts be measured?

**1 DAY:** If you have one day to take action, select an action that is simple and focused, such as writing letters or organizing an information day in your school.

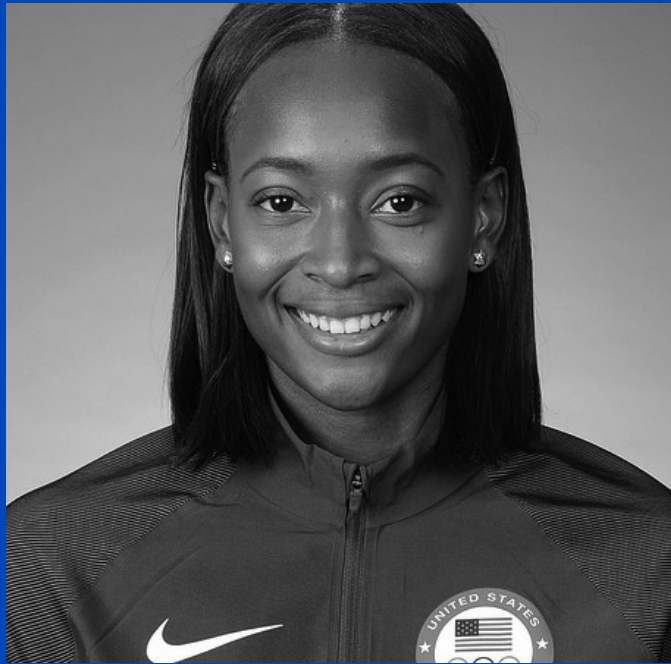
**1 WEEK:** If you have a week to take action, focus on an event or program that builds over the week from awareness to action.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

Organize a week for effecting change. Over the course of the week, begin by educating your target community on the issue and then provide a series of actions people can take.

**1 SEMESTER:** If you have a term to take action, build a program that integrates your classroom learning with a comprehensive, multi-layered project. Consider designing a human rights-based service learning project.

## DALILAH MUHAMMAD



Born to Muslim parents in Jamaica, Queens, New York City, Dalilah Muhammad began running as a child. When she was only four years old, representatives from the NY Novas Track Club in Brooklyn saw Muhammad's long jumps and expressed interest in her joining the team. Eventually, at age seven, she joined the club. At first, Muhammad's mother, Nadirah Muhammad, was opposed to Dalilah competing in the hurdles, fearing for her safety. However, Muhammad's coaches convinced her that Dalilah would be great, and with time, they would prove right.

Throughout high school, Muhammad competed in various track and field events, including the hurdles, sprints and high jump. While at Benjamin N. Cardozo High School, she won the 2008 New York State and Nike Outdoor

Nationals titles in the 400 m hurdles. During that period she also competed for the first time on the international stage. At the 2007 World Youth Championships in Athletics she took the 400 m hurdles gold medal. Also in 2007, Muhammad was named Gatorade Female Athlete of the Year for New York State.

In 2008, Muhammad enrolled at the University of Southern California on a track scholarship, majoring in business. During her first season on the USC Trojans track team, she placed runner-up in the 400 m hurdles, fourth in the 4×400-meter relay, and also set a personal record of 13.79 seconds as a finalist in the 100-meter hurdles at the Pacific-10 Conference. In her second year at USC she was a runner-up at the Pac-10 championships, narrowly missing out on the NCAA final. In 2012, she was again an NCAA finalist in her speciality, coming fifth, and she also participated in the heats at the 2012 United States Olympic Trials. She ended her career as a USC Trojan athlete as the school's third fastest ever 400 m hurdler and a four-time NCAA All-American. This past July, Muhammad won the 400 m hurdles in 52.88 seconds at the 2016 United States Olympic Trials (track and field) and then went on to the 2016 Summer Olympics, where she won gold in the 400 m hurdles.

Today, Dalilah Muhammad is a champion for the rights of Muslims here in the United States, often speaking out against injustices in the media. Recently, as a part of Nike's 'Equality' Campaign, Muhammad spoke out against the executive order on immigration, and the importance for other athletes to speak on behalf of others. "Being a Muslim woman, being a black woman, just being a woman in general," she said in a behind-the-scenes look at Nike's ad, "we have so many things fighting against us already, so it's important to be that voice for someone else."

**"BEING A MUSLIM WOMAN, BEING A BLACK WOMAN, JUST BEING A WOMAN IN GENERAL, WE HAVE SO MANY THINGS FIGHTING AGAINST US ALREADY, SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE THAT VOICE FOR SOMEONE ELSE."**

**—Dalilah Muhammad**

**"I STAND UP FOR ALL OPPRESSED AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES. THIS IS WHAT MY FAITH (ISLAM) TEACHES ME TO DO." —Linda Sarsour**

## LINDA SARSOUR



Linda Sarsour is a Palestinian Muslim-American and a self-proclaimed "pure New Yorker", born and raised in Brooklyn. She is the Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York and co-founder of the first Muslim online organizing platform, MPOWER Change. Linda has been at the forefront of major civil rights campaigns including calling for an end to unwarranted surveillance of New York's Muslim communities and ending police policies like stop and frisk. In the wake of the police murder of Mike Brown, she co-founded Muslims for Ferguson to build solidarity amongst American Muslim communities and to work against police brutality. Most recently, Sarsour co-chaired the 2017 Women's March on Washington, which garnered the support of millions of Americans to rally

for change, and equality for all. She is a member of the Justice League NYC, a leading force of activists, formerly incarcerated individuals, and artists working to reform the New York Police Department and the criminal justice system.

Sarsour also co-chaired the March2Justice, a 250-mile journey on foot to deliver a justice package to end racial profiling, demilitarize police, and demand the government invest in young people and communities. She was instrumental in the Coalition for Muslim School Holidays, created to push New York City to incorporate two Muslim high holy holidays into the public school calendar. Starting in 2017, New York City Public Schools will be the largest school system in the country to officially recognize these holidays. In addition, this year Linda joined leading social justice faith leaders as a Senior Fellow at Auburn Seminary.

She has received numerous awards and honors including "Champion of Change", as issued from the White House, YWCA USA's Women of Distinction Award for Advocacy and Civic Engagement, and the Hala Maksoud Leadership Award from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Sarsour was named among 500 of the most influential Muslims in the world. Most recently, Sarsour was featured on the front page of the New York Times Metro Section, dubbed "Brooklyn Homegirl in a Hijab" introducing her to their readership. She has written for and been featured in local, national, and international media discussing the impact of domestic policies that target Arab and Muslim American communities, criminal justice issues, and the affairs of the Middle East. Sarsour is well respected amongst diverse communities in both in New York City and nationally. She is most known for her intersectional coalition work and building bridges across issues, racial, ethnic, and faith communities.



**“FAITH REALLY SHOULD BE A BRIDGE, NOT A WALL. BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE SHOULD BE FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU BELIEVE, NOT WHAT YOUR RELIGION IS.” –Keith Ellison**

## KEITH ELLISON



Congressman Keith Ellison represents Minnesota’s 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Fifth District includes the City of Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs and is one of the most vibrant and ethnically diverse districts in Minnesota.

Rep. Ellison’s guiding philosophy is based on “generosity and inclusion,” and his priorities in Congress are building prosperity for working families, promoting peace, pursuing environmental sustainability, and advancing civil and human rights.

Rep. Ellison’s commitment to consumer justice led him to write legislation that was included in the Credit Cardholders’ Bill of Rights of 2009. This law prevents an unfair practice called “universal default,” which allowed

lenders to increase their customers’ interest rates if they had late payments with another lender. In response to the foreclosure crisis that began in 2008, Rep. Ellison also wrote the Protecting Tenants in Foreclosure Act, which requires banks and other new owners to provide at least 90 days’ notice of eviction to renters occupying foreclosed homes.

As a member of the House Financial Services Committee, the congressman helps oversee the nation’s financial services and housing industries, as well as Wall Street. He also serves on the House Democratic Steering & Policy Committee, which decides committee assignments for Democratic Members and sets the Democratic Caucus’ policy agenda. In the past, he served on the House Judiciary Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

For the 113th Congress, Rep. Ellison was elected co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which promotes the progressive promise of fairness for all.

He is also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, founded the Congressional Consumer Justice Caucus, and belongs to more than a dozen other caucuses that focus on issues ranging from social inclusion to environmental protection.

Before being elected to Congress, Rep. Ellison was a noted community activist and ran a thriving civil rights, employment, and criminal defense law practice in Minneapolis. He also was elected to serve two terms in the Minnesota State House of Representatives.

Rep. Ellison was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. He has lived in Minnesota since earning his law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1990. Keith is the proud father of four children.

## DALIA MOGAHED



Dalia Mogahed is an American scholar of Egyptian origin. She is the Director of Research at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) in Washington, D.C. as well as President and CEO of Mogahed Consulting, a Washington, D.C.-based executive coaching and consulting firm specializing in Muslim societies and the Middle East. Mogahed is former Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, a

non-partisan research center that provided data and analysis to reflect the views of Muslims all over the world. Additionally, Mogahed was selected as an advisor by former U.S. President Barack Obama on the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Dalia Mogahed was born in Cairo, Egypt, and immigrated to the United States at the age of four. She received her undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering with a minor in Arabic from the University of Wisconsin. Upon graduation, Mogahed joined Procter & Gamble as a marketing products researcher. She subsequently received her MBA from the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business at the University of Pittsburgh.

Currently, as Director of Research at ISPU, Mogahed conducts research that supports American Muslim community development and amplifies the voices of American Muslims in the public square. Before ISPU, Dalia Mogahed chaired the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies from 2006 to 2012, which conducted research and statistics on Muslims throughout the world.

Mogahed is a board member and a leader in several organizations, including the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on the Arab World. She is also a senior public policy scholar at Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. Mogahed is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.

**“I CAN TELL YOU CHARCTER TRAITS I ADMIRE AND WORK TO DEVELOP IN MYSELF—PRESERVERANCE, SELF-DECIPLINE, COURAGE TO STAND UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT EVEN WHEN IT IS AGAINST ONE’S FRIENDS OR ONE’S SELF.” –Dalia Mogahed**

DEAN OBEIDALLAH



Born in New Jersey, Dean Obeidallah’s comedy comes largely in part from his unique upbringing, being the son of a Palestinian father and a Sicilian mother. Obeidallah, an award winning comedian who was at one time a practicing attorney, co-starred on Comedy Central’s “The Axis of Evil” comedy TV special. He is the co-creator of ComedyCentral.com’s critically acclaimed Internet series “The Watch List” featuring a cast of all

“...WHATEVER ROLE YOU CHOOSE TO PLAY, YOU WILL BE DOING A REAL SERVICE TO AMERICA BY MAKING ONE THING CLEAR: THERE’S NO PLACE FOR THIS TYPE OF [ANTI-MUSLIM] BIGOTRY IN OUR GREAT NATION.”  
–Dean Obeidallah

Middle Eastern-American comedians performing stand-up and sketch comedy. Obeidallah has appeared twice on ABC’s “The View,” on the nationally-syndicated TV series “Comics Unleashed with Byron Allen.” Also, he was one of the five comedians profiled in the recent one-hour TV special titled: “Stand Up: Muslim-American Comics Come of Age” which aired in the U.S. on PBS and internationally on BBC World and Al Jazeera.

Obeidallah co-directed and co-produced the award-winning documentary “The Muslims Are Coming!” featuring a tour of American-Muslim comedians performing free comedy shows across the heartland of America in the hopes of using comedy to foster understanding and dispel misconceptions about Muslims.

Obeidallah co-created the comedy show “Stand up for Peace” along with Jewish comic Scott Blakeman, which is performed at colleges across the country. The shows are held in support of peace in the Middle East, and they serve as a way of fostering understanding between Arab, Muslim, and Jewish-Americans.

He is an also columnist for The Daily Beast and frequently writes for CNN.com, as well as other publications, and is the co-creator and co-producer of the New York Arab-American Comedy Festival. He is also proud to serve as the Executive Director of The Amman Stand up Comedy Festival – the first stand-up comedy festival ever held in the Middle East.

MUSLIMS, ISLAM, STEREOTYPES

LESSON GRADE LEVELS 9–12

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Article 3: Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person
- Article 7: Freedom From Discrimination
- Article 19: Right to Freedom and Expression
- Article 26: Right to Education

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Identity and Understanding: Combating Islamophobia

UDHR

Identifies specific articles of the UDHR addressed in the lesson

NOTE TO TEACHERS

This lesson does not aim to cover the full study of a group of people and a major world religion. The aim of this lesson is to provide you with a point of entry into a topic that is rife with misconceptions, misinformation, and lies. At the end of the lesson you will find resources for further study should you and/or your students want to learn more.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Who is a Muslim?
- What is the religion of Islam?
- Where is Islam practiced and how has it spread throughout history?
- What are the Muslim-majority countries?
- How have Muslim Americans, such as Dalilah Mohamed, Linda Sarsour, Dalia Mogahed, Dean Obeidallah, and Keith Ellison been portrayed in the US?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Know the STTP Defenders.
- Begin to break down stereotypes about people who are Muslim.
- Increase their understanding and knowledge of Muslim-majority countries.
- Increase their understanding and knowledge of Islam.
- Examine the similarities and differences between other ethnic or religious groups and Muslims in the U.S.

VOCABULARY

- Muslim
- Islam
- Stereotype
- Phobia

CONCEPTS

- Religious Foundations
- Interdependence
- Global Citizenship
- Cultural Norms
- Values
- Empathy

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

- Internet Access
- Computer Access

MATERIALS

- “How To Be An American Muslim A Satire,” video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6gQ8d3Nkmc>
- Simple Islam and Intro to Islam video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv2I9ROwwEs> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3v-frDiWrM>
- Student Handouts

ANTICIPATORY SET

- Ask students to answer the following questions regarding their knowledge of Muslims:
  - What do you know?
  - What do you think you know?
  - What would you like to know?
- Have students view “How To Be An American Muslim A Satire.” As the students watch the video ask them to write down their first thoughts.
- In small groups, have the students discuss the video and respond to the follow questions:
  - Did the video support what you know about Muslims?
  - Did it support or challenge what you thought you knew about Muslims?
  - Did it answer what you wanted to know about Muslims?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

- Ask the class to define “stereotype” and “phobia”. Write their responses on the board and as a class agree on a definition for each word. Once the students have agreed, share the following definitions and discuss any differences.
  - **Stereotype:** a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing
  - **Phobia:** an extreme or irrational fear of or aversion to something
  - Are all stereotypes negative? Can a stereotype be positive?
- Individually and then as a class, ask the students to respond to the following questions and fill in columns 1, 2, and 3 of Handout #1.
  - What do you think are some of the common stereotypes about people who are Muslim?
  - Where do you think the stereotypes about Muslim people come from?
  - How do you feel about these stereotypes and how they have influenced what you have seen and heard about people who are Muslim?
- Assign each student a biography of one of the Human Rights Defenders. Ask the students to read the biography and fill in column 4 of Handout #1.
- As a class, share the responses on Handout #1 and discuss how the story of your defender informed your understanding of people who are Muslim. As well, discuss why and how are stereotypes and stereotyping people dangerous.

ACTIVITY 2

Islam: A Global Religion

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv2I9ROwwEs>

*\*This channel is called Simple Islam. The link above is to the intro video, but teachers can play the additional videos in the series if they want to go more in-depth.*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3v-frDiWrM>

**Islam:** Islam is an Arabic word derived from the three-letter root s-l-m. Its meaning encompasses the concepts of peace, greeting, surrender, and commitment, and refers commonly to an individual’s surrender and commitment to God the Creator through adherence to the religion by the same name.

The five pillars of Islam:

- **shahadah** – to state belief in One God and the prophethood of Muhammad.
- **salat** – to pray the five obligatory prayers each day.
- **siyam** – to fast from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan each year.
- **zakat** – to pay a percentage of goods or money as obligatory charity each year.
- **hajj** – an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, and a mandatory religious duty for adult Muslims (who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey) that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime.

ACTIVITY 3

Who and Where: Muslims in the World

- In small groups, have your students research and compile a list of Muslim-majority countries. As a class, share the list of countries and write them up on the board.
- Ask each student to select one country to research in greater detail. Prior to the beginning of the research, ask each student to write down 5 things they know or believe they know about the country they selected.
- Each student will research their country and prepare a class presentation. The presentation should address the following topics:
  - Religion
    - How and when did Islam reach this country?
    - What other religions are practiced?
    - Do the religions coexist peacefully?
  - Politics
    - What type of political system does the nation use to govern?
  - History
    - Has the country always been a Muslim-majority country?

- Was the country ever under imperial rule? If so, when did it gain its independence? Was the gaining of independence peaceful?
- What population flow has the country experienced?
- Economics
  - What is the economic system?
  - What are the country’s major resources? Exports? Imports?
- Noted Public Figures
  - Political
  - Cultural – music, the arts, theater
  - Business
  - Sport

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- Using the information learned in the previous activity, in small groups ask the students to select another ethnic or religious group and highlight key similarities between the movement and acceptance of that group.
- Possible groups: Catholics, Jews, Irish, Italians, Japanese, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, Anglicans.

BECOME A DEFENDER

- Organize a Speaker series to bring awareness in combating Islamophobia by listening to stories and experiences of Muslims from the community to move beyond ignorance, stereotypes, and Islamophobia.
- Take Action and report any bullying or prejudice towards Muslim classmates. Schools and Teachers should provide student-friendly mechanisms for reporting of intolerance and violence against Muslim students.
- Hold a world religion day or culture day—including Islam in class or school to embrace understanding of the different religions and cultures to reduce discrimination, prejudices, and stereotypes.
- In classroom settings, students should be encouraged to discuss their own experience of stereotypes or harassment regarding their faith with other classmates. Then, reflect by comparing and contrasting to the experience of Muslim students with the stereotype of Islam. Teachers should facilitate the discussion toward making positive changes in addressing stereotypes related to Islamophobia.
- Volunteer at a Muslim or Interfaith Community Center to gain understanding of different cultures, religions, and ethnicities to acknowledge their differences and coexistence within society.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE ISLAM PROJECT:

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/tvraceinitiative/islam/> – a multimedia effort aimed at schools, communities, and individuals who want a clearer understanding of Islam by emphasizing diversity, culture, spirituality, and history. The project comprises two PBS documentaries, a vibrant community engagement campaign, and an ambitious educational effort.

TANDIS (*Tolerance & Non-Discrimination Information System*):

<http://tandis.odihr.pl/?p=ki-mu,intro> – developed by the ODIHR to offer a one stop point of access related to collection of information on international commitment to tolerance and non-discriminatory practices, statistics, and other reports emphasizing educational programming aimed at combating intolerance and discrimination.

ISLAMIC NETWORK GROUP:

<https://ing.org/welcome-overview> – aims to promote religious literacy, cultural diversity, and interfaith engagement in schools and communities through education and community building to counter prejudice and discrimination against American Muslims. It provides multiple lesson plans, presentations, and panel discussions throughout the United States on various topics regarding Islam.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS HUMAN RIGHTS: ISLAMOPHOBIA:

<http://www.teachhumanrights.com/islamophobia.html>

– a multimedia lesson plan created by human rights educators addressing the stigmas associated with Muslims in America, presenting insightful ways in which to teach students about Muslim Americans, and acceptance.

FRONTLINE MUSLIMS :

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/> – a documentary that presents substantial information on the worldwide belief and practice of Islam through interviews with diverse Muslims and cultures across a range of countries.

GALLUP CENTER FOR MUSLIM STUDIES:

[http://www.gallup.com/topic/muslim\\_studies.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/topic/muslim_studies.aspx) – a non-partisan research center of the Gallup Organization providing in-depth data analysis about Muslims’ perspectives and opinions worldwide, including misperceptions and informing the global community about the religion, beliefs, culture and global coexistence of religions.

HUFFINGTON POST ISLAMOPHOBIA PROJECT:

<http://testkitchen.huffingtonpost.com/islamophobia/#> – a comprehensive multimedia overview of Islamophobia in the United States, featuring an interactive timeline in which viewers have the opportunity to engage with series of events presented, and donate to those impacted by these issues.

TEACHING TOLERANCE:

<http://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources> – a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center that promotes equality and reducing prejudice in the teaching environment. It provides anti-bias resources such as classroom documentaries, curricula, and lesson plans, along with Teaching Tolerance magazine, a publication on a wide range of issues including religion, ethnicity, and inclusiveness.

ISLAMOPHOBIA KILLED MY BROTHER. LET’S END THE HATE

[https://www.ted.com/talks/suzanne\\_barakat\\_islamophobia\\_killed\\_my\\_brother\\_let\\_s\\_end\\_the\\_hate](https://www.ted.com/talks/suzanne_barakat_islamophobia_killed_my_brother_let_s_end_the_hate) – Ted Talk by Suzanne Barakat on the hate crime murder of her brother, Deah. Barakat reflects on the bigotry and violence that Muslims face and urges people to step outside of their comfort zone and into the Ally Zone.

THIS IS WHERE I NEED TO BE: ORAL HISTORIES OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN NYC :

<http://www.thisiswhereineedto.be.com/> – A book authored by 12 Muslim students documenting peer Muslim students in New York City high schools on their real-life experiences and feelings, and the stigma associated with being a Muslim post-9/11.

GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS ON COUNTERING INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS: ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA THROUGH EDUCATION:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002152/215299e.pdf> Council of Europe and OSCE’s ODIHR for educators to support inclusion of Muslim students, promoting of mutual understanding of religion and diversity in classrooms and schools across the globe.

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS:

<https://www.cair.com> – the largest Muslim civil liberties organization in the United States. It aims to promote the understanding of Islam, engagement and coalition-building within communities for justice and peace, and to empower American Muslims through political participation and activism.

“EVERY TIME WE TURN OUR HEADS THE OTHER WAY WHEN WE SEE THE LAW FLOUTED, WHEN WE TOLERATE WHAT WE KNOW TO BE WRONG, WHEN WE CLOSE OUR EYES AND EARS TO THE CORRUPT BECAUSE WE ARE TOO BUSY OR TOO FRIGHTENED, WHEN WE FAIL TO SPEAK UP AND SPEAK OUT, WE STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST FREEDOM AND DECENCY AND JUSTICE.”

–Robert F. Kennedy



# SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

## HUMAN RIGHTS CURRICULUM

LESSON PLANS CAN BE FOUND AT [RFKHUMANRIGHTS.ORG](http://RFKHUMANRIGHTS.ORG)

**ABUBACAR SULTAN**

*Mozambique, Children's Rights*

**ADOLFO PEREZ ESQUIVEL**

*Argentina, Free Expression & Religion*

**ANONYMOUS**

*Sudan, Genocide*

**BETTY WILLIAMS**

*Northern Ireland, Children's Rights*

**CARLOS FILIPE XIMENES BELO**

*East Timor,  
Free Expression & Religion*

**HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA**

*Tibet, Free Expression & Religion*

**ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU**

*South Africa, Reconciliation*

**ELIE WIESEL**

*Romania/USA, Genocide*

**ERIN MERRYIN**

*USA, Sexual Violence*

**ETHEL KENNEDY**

*USA, Political Participation*

**FRANK MUGISHA**

*Uganda, LGBTI Rights*

**FREDERIK WILLEM DE KLERK**

*South Africa, Political Freedom*

**GABOR GOMBOS**

*Hungary, Disability Rights*

**HARRY WU**

*China, Forced Labor*

**JAMIE NABOZNY**

*USA, Bullying*

**JODY WILILAMS**

*USA, Non-Violent Activism*

**JOHN LEWIS**

*USA, Political Freedom*

**JOSE RAMOS-HORTA**

*East Timor, Reconciliation*

**JULIANA DOGBADZI**

*Ghana, Slavery & Trafficking*

**KA HSAW WA**

*Burma, Environmental Rights*

**KAILASH SATYARTHI**

*India, Child Labor*

**KEK GALABRU**

*Cambodia, Political Freedom*

**LECH WALESIA**

*Poland, Labor Rights*

**LIBRADA PAZ**

*USA, Labor Rights*

**LOUNE VIAUD**

*Haiti, Right to Water*

**LUCAS BENITEZ**

*USA, Labor Rights*

**MAIREAD CORRIGAN MAGUIRE**

*Ireland, Non-Violent Activism*

**MALALA YOUSAFZAI**

*Pakistan, Freedom from Persecution*

**MARINA PISKLAKOVA**

*Russia, Domestic Violence*

**MIKHAIL GORBACHEV**

*Russia, Free Expression*

**MOHAMED ELBARADEI**

*Egypt, Nuclear Disarmament*

**MUHAMMAD YUNUS**

*Bangladesh, Combating Poverty*

**NORTH KOREA**

*The Power of Truth*

**OSCAR ARIAS SANCHEZ**

*Costa Rica, Non-Violent Activism*

**REFUGEE UNIT**

*Syria, Refugee Rights*

**RIGOBERTA MENCHU TUM**

*Guatemala, Political Participation*

**SHIMON PERES**

*Israel, Political Participation*

**SHIRIN EBADI**

*Iran, Free Expression & Religion*

**SONITA ALIZADEH**

*Afghanistan, Child Marriage*

**VACLAV HAVEL**

*Czech Republic,  
Free Expression & Religion*

**VAN JONES**

*USA, Police Brutality*

**WANGARI MAATHAI**

*Kenya, Environmental Rights*

**ROBERT F.  
KENNEDY  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS**

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Robert F. Kennedy,  
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