



UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS TO BENEFIT ALL

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Lesson Description

Often the most vulnerable in a population are its most marginalized. Marginalizing people based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, physical disability, or economic or social status means to relegate them, their views and their needs to the fringes of society. In this lesson, we look at what it means to provide equal protection and an equitable playing field for all members of society, and why human rights protections that benefit everyone are critical to a peaceful and just world.

Lesson Overview

1. How to identify marginalized groups.
2. Learn the difference between equality and equity.
3. How culture, economics and religion are used to violate human rights.

Discussion Questions

1. What individuals or groups are considered marginalized in your country? In what ways are they marginalized? Are they prevented from participating in democratic activities? Do they lack services? Are they subject to harassment, displacement or indiscriminate violence? Who are the abusers?
2. Who customarily speaks for marginalized populations in your community? Are they given an opportunity to speak for themselves? Why or why not? Why is it important to build the capacity of marginalized populations?
3. What have governmental and nongovernmental organizations done to bring equity to marginalized populations? What have been some of the more effective policies? How do nonmarginalized populations react to efforts to aid the marginalized? In what ways can you encourage communities to take responsibility for the protection of marginalized groups and their needs?

Developmental Actions

(Special note: Any actions, communications or activities taken on behalf of human rights very much depend on the context of the status of human rights in individual countries. YALI Network members should make a personal assessment of their ability to engage in these activities.)

1. United Nations human rights treaties require that States Parties report periodically on their implementation of their treaty obligations. Review the reports that your government submits to the U.N.
2. Develop a plan to educate your community about the concept of equality vs. equity and why it is important to your country's marginalized populations.
3. Develop a campaign (either online or offline) to highlight marginalized populations. Make marginalized individuals champions of their own cause by developing the plan in conjunction with them. Highlight their stories to raise awareness of the ways in which their human rights are being violated.

About the Presenter

Jennifer Thomas has worked as a youth development specialist for the IEL-led National Collaborative for Workforce and Disability for Youth since 2013. She is responsible for coordinating the youth development and leadership efforts. Her primary focus is steering the Youth Action Council on Transition (YouthACT), a national project geared toward getting more youth with disabilities and their allies involved as leaders who partner with adults and organizations to improve opportunities for youth to succeed in life. Jennifer is a former educator for Montgomery Public Schools of Alabama and was the first State Youth Consultant for Children's Rehabilitation Service, a division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and served on the steering committee for the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum for High School Students with Disabilities. Jennifer earned her Bachelor's of Science Degree in Elementary Education from Alabama State University, December 2005.

