

**SPEAK TRUTH  
TO POWER**

The Defenders: An Interactive Map

**EDUCATOR  
GUIDE**

# INTRODUCTION

Human rights are based on the principle that all people—regardless of the language they speak, the color of their skin, where they are born, their gender, their sexual orientation or their financial situation—are entitled to the exact same rights. Human rights are the foundation of a peaceful and prosperous world—they are the blueprint for equality, justice and freedom and hold us to a higher standard that recognizes the dignity and worth of all.

The idea that all people are equal and have the same fundamental rights may seem obvious to some in the modern world. However, in the early 20th century many world leaders did not recognize the human rights of people living inside—or outside—their nations. The United Nations (UN) sought to address this. The UN was founded to promote international cooperation and maintain peace following World War II and soon commissioned a group of intellectuals and politicians from around the world to create an international Bill of Rights. Their work resulted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Adopted in 1948, the UDHR contains 30 Articles that identify and define all human rights that must be promoted and protected by all nations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is aspirational and it is not always reflected in the real world. Many of the nations who signed the UDHR have had (and still have) issues that have kept them from reaching the ideal. Many nations have not done an effective job of moving towards these goals on their own. Instead, this work has been taken up by human rights defenders. Human rights defenders are people who decide to take a stand and fight against human rights violations and for the promotion of human rights. Their efforts may focus on helping specific individuals, spreading awareness of violations, or changing laws and government policies. Often, these defenders work at their own expense, sacrificing health, personal relationships, and opportunities for financial gain to lift up their fellow humans.

Human rights defenders don't do this work alone. Many defenders run organizations that are full of like-minded individuals, and these organizations offer ways for students to get involved. Because these defenders are taking action, often starting with small measures – and sometimes at a young age – we are one step closer to fully upholding the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is important for students to read and engage with their stories so that they can realize two critical concepts:

- Human rights are not to be taken for granted. Violations happen around the world every day, and while many places are getting better, some places are getting worse.
- Becoming a human rights defender is about ordinary people taking consistent and sustained actions that will create change and lead to the fulfillment of human rights for all.

Speak Truth To Power seeks to move beyond just providing a platform to understand these concepts, these stories have the power to inspire students to champion the causes that matter to them most and to see themselves as human rights defenders necessary to the push for equality.

## INTERACTIVE MAP SUMMARY

*The Defenders: An Interactive Map* is an engaging resource to introduce students to the lives and work of human rights defenders from around the world, all in hopes of inspiring students to uphold the ideals of the UDHR by becoming human rights defenders themselves. The map offers students immediate access to thought-provoking stories of human rights defenders and critical information about human rights issues in an easy-to-navigate, visual format.

# WHO ARE THE SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER DEFENDERS?



The defenders featured in this map are a selected collection of people from around the world. Their backgrounds and stories are varied. Some were born into privilege, while others were born into poverty. Some have been defenders since childhood, while others started their work later in life. Some were victims of human rights abuses themselves, and others acted out of compassion and a sense of justice.

Yet, despite these differences, one common thread connects them—the remarkable work they do to protect and defend human rights. These stories show that becoming a human rights defender is about action, no matter who you are or where you come from.

The following defenders are represented on the map:

**Sonita Alizadeh:** After her own parents attempted to sell her into marriage, Sonita produced a rap video to expose and bring awareness to the trauma associated with [child marriage](#). In 2016, the UN General Assembly released a [report](#) from the Secretary-General Child summarizing progress toward eliminating early and forced childhood.

**Lucas Benitez:** At the age of 16, Lucas became angered by the mistreatment, poor pay and grueling working conditions of [migrant workers](#). Lucas brought critical attention to the issue and helped found the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) (CIW). He has become a leader in the struggle to end exploitation of American farmworkers.

**Dalai Lama:** Born in 1935, Dalai Lama was recognized at the age of 2 as the manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saints of Tibet. He was exiled in 1959 following a brutal uprising, and has worked since then to bring international awareness of the

[plight of Tibetans](#), including [torture](#), and the [preservation of Tibetan culture](#).

**Marian Wright Edelman:** Marian started her career as a lawyer representing members of the Civil Rights Movement and continues to fight inequality by protecting the [rights of children](#) everywhere.

**Gábor Gombos:** Gábor is known worldwide as an advocate for the rights of individuals with mental health disabilities. He cofounded the Hungarian Mental Health Interest Forum, an organization that incubates and networks consumer organizations, patient councils, and patient support groups. He has been one of the key actors in developing the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and ensuring its implementation in Hungary.

**Highlander Research & Education Center—Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson & Rev. Allyn Maxfield-Steele:** [Highlander Research & Education Center](#) is a social justice leadership training school and cultural center that supports grassroots organizing and movement building in Appalachia and the South. Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson is a long-time activist on issues of mountaintop removal mining and environmental racism in central and southern Appalachia. Rev. Allyn Maxfield-Steele is involved in solidarity struggles with Thai people's movements and worked as an educator and organizer supporting [front-line struggles](#) throughout the American South and Appalachia.

**The International Indigenous Youth Council (IIYC):** The [IIYC](#) is an organization that was created and led by women and two-spirit peoples during the Standing Rock Indigenous Uprising of 2016, a peaceful protest to protect local rivers against the construction of the Dakota Access

Pipeline. The organization is rooted in the protection of the natural environment and the [rights and culture of indigenous people](#) through non-violent direct action and community organizing.

**Van Jones:** A commentator on CNN, Jones has helped victims of [police brutality](#) and has advocated for [environmentally friendly jobs](#) to promote equality in impoverished communities.

**Wangari Maathai:** Wangari started the Green Belt Movement to help Kenyan [women utilize their power](#) to better their lives and to improve their communities throughout Kenya. Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

**Frank Mugisha:** Frank fights to protect and defend the [human rights of LGBTI people](#) in Africa, especially in his native Uganda. Frank Mugisha was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

**Ibtihaj Muhammad:** From an early age, Ibtihaj aspired to be the first U.S. athlete to compete at the Olympic Games in a [hijab](#). In 2016, she achieved her goal and won a bronze medal. In addition to being an outstanding athlete, Muhammad is an activist and entrepreneur and launched her own clothing company, Louella, which aims to bring modest, fashionable and affordable clothing to the U.S. market.

**Marina Pisklakova:** Marina brought attention to [domestic violence](#) in Russia, starting a crisis hotline and the first women's shelters, despite a Russian culture that downplays marital violence against women.

**Kailash Satyarthi:** Kailash has been passionate about [equal rights to education for all children](#) since the age of 5. His first endeavor as a human rights defender began at 11 years old when he raised funds to help local children attend school. Kailash Satyarthi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

**Bishop Desmond Tutu:** Bishop Tutu played a vital role in drawing national and international attention to the [injustices of apartheid](#), a policy of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race. He advocated for nonviolent direct action and encouraged countries dealing with South Africa to impose economic sanctions. In 1984, Tutu was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace for his role in the opposition to apartheid in South Africa.

**Loune Viaud:** Loune has spent her life advocating for the citizens of Haiti. In 1990, she helped found Proje Sante Fanm, Haiti's first women's [health clinic](#). She also started a gender awareness training program for health care workers and launched women's literacy projects and scholarship programs. In addition, Viaud implemented projects focused on AIDS education and prevention in her homeland.

**Ka Hsaw Wa:** Using interviews and photographs, Ka Hsaw Wa documented [the human rights abuses](#) committed by the Burmese government. He has endured torture and isolation, but continues to fight for the human rights of others.

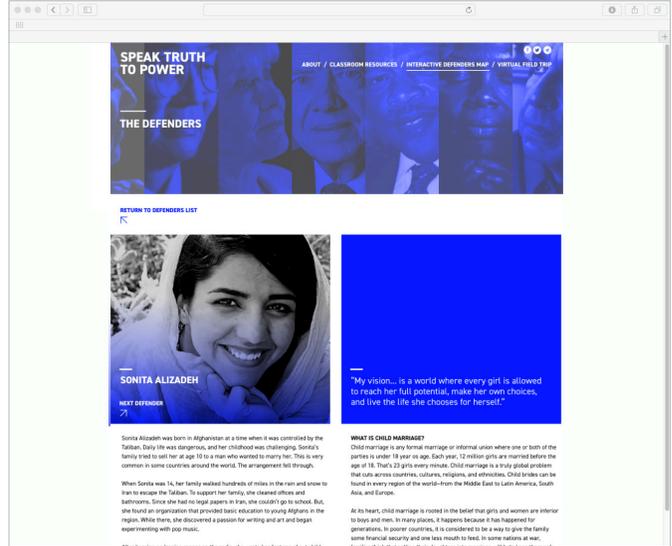
**Elie Wiesel:** At a young age, Elie lost most of his family at the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau during World War II. He spent his adult life speaking out about the Holocaust and writing stories that gave a voice to the people who suffered during and after this [genocide](#). Elie Wiesel won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

**Malala Yousafzai:** Malala began her activism by writing about her experiences as a girl who was banned from attending school by the Taliban in Pakistan. Although she was shot as a result of speaking out, she returned to advocacy and has become an international symbol of the fight for [education for girls](#). Malala Yousafzai won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

**Muhammad Yunus:** Driven by the belief that credit is a fundamental human right, Muhammad developed the idea of "micro" loans, a credit system to enable poor Bangladeshis to borrow small amounts of money as part of a peer group, which helped ensure accountability and repayment. In 1983, Yunus established the Grameen Bank, which has since become a major force in the world movement to [eradicate poverty](#) through microlending.

**Bertha Isabel Zúñiga Cáceres:** Bertha has been an activist from an early age, attending marches and protests with her mother in Honduras. After her mother was murdered for her activism, Bertha suspended her graduate studies to focus on two goals: finding and bringing to justice her mother's murderers and carrying on her mother's fight for environmental and social justice. Bertha herself has survived attacks, too, but continues to fight for the [environmental rights](#) of Hondurans.

# FEATURES OF THE INTERACTIVE MAP



The Interactive Map features pins that mark the birthplace of each human rights defender. Students can choose to explore the map contents by focusing on human rights defenders or human rights issues. Both options provide students with real-world content and an introduction to human rights defenders and their contexts that will inspire them to take action for change.

## Human Rights Defender

Students can select a pin on the Interactive Map to read a brief description of the defender, including who they are, the rights they defend, their important accomplishments, and a common misconception about the topic or information on an unfamiliar, yet related idea.

Students can learn even more about each human rights defender by visiting a biography page featuring his or her life story. These biographies offer a deeper exploration of the issue associated with the defender's efforts, as well as links to external websites with information about specific human rights issues and suggestions to guide student action.

## Human Rights Issue

Students may also filter the map contents by human rights issue from a list located below the Interactive Map to learn important information about freedom of expression, personal security, freedom from torture, education, women's rights, children's rights, and freedom from discrimination from a global perspective. Students learn why those rights are in need of protection around the world and discover the amazing work that people are doing to defend them.

# USING *THE DEFENDERS:* *AN INTERACTIVE MAP* IN THE CLASSROOM

We recognize that every classroom is not the same. Class sizes, computer access, and internet connectivity can vary even within a single school. The following suggestions are to help you and your unique classroom get the most out of the Interactive Map and other Speak Truth to Power resources:

- Print out information from the website and distribute to students for use during activities, class discussions, and research.
- Display the Interactive Map using a projector or interactive whiteboard and navigate the map together as a class.
- Show videos to the whole class and group students for learning activities.
- Encourage smaller groups and individuals to visit the Speak Truth to Power website and Interactive Map as a resource for completing a larger project.
- Encourage students to utilize the Interactive Map as a core resource for their self-directed research projects.
- Create a “flipped classroom” activity in which students visit the Interactive Map and gather information at home and share and apply their learning in the classroom.

The stories of these defenders lend themselves well to covering a variety of subjects and content areas.

- English Language Arts
  - Use the map as a secondary source for a research project.
  - Analyze articles or books written by the defenders.
- Civics
  - Use the map to enhance a civil rights lesson.
  - Explore local and national human rights issues and potential solutions.
- History
  - Dive deeper into the development and adoption [of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
  - Add a personalized perspective to a history class covering the 20th century.
  - Use the map as a way to begin to learn about the history of certain human rights violations.

# GETTING STARTED

Below, you will find a few sample student activities to help you get started. In addition, there is a sample list of questions that can be used as the basis of lessons or student research projects.

## Sample Activities

- Students study human rights defenders who were active at their age or younger (e.g., Malala Yousafzai, Sonita Alizadeh, or Kailash Satyarthi), and then plan a service learning project based on what they read.
- Using the map and a newspaper or news website, students compare a human rights issue addressed by one of the defenders to a similar one in their home country.
- Starting with the video vignettes for Ka Hsaw Wa, Marian Wright Edelman, and Sonita Alizadeh as models, students research a different human rights defender and make a video answering similar questions about that defender.
- Students use their creative talents to educate others about human rights issues and human rights defenders. Student projects may include plays, songs or raps, videos, papers, websites, or choreography.
- Students plan and host a Human Rights Day at the school to share information with their peers and encourage others to become human rights defenders.

## Sample Discussion Questions

- What is meant by the word "privilege?" What is meant by the word "bystander?" How are these words related? How can we use our privilege to protect the human rights of others?
- What impact has technology had on the fight for human rights around the world?
- Do societies always progress towards greater respect for human rights?
- Why is caring the one of the most important parts of defending human rights?
- What role does an "us vs. them" mentality play in the violation of human rights?