



## HRE USA Regional Human Rights Educators Gathering

### Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 12, 2013

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Human Rights Watch Office, Los Angeles



#### Action Items:

- All: please reach out to the presenters ([Ashley](#), [Wesley](#) and [Amy](#)) for more information and resources connected to their respective programs: [Girls Learn International](#), RFK Center's [Speak Truth to Power](#), USC Shoah Institute's [i-Witness Program](#).
- All: Consider and share ideas for forming a higher education local HRE group.
- Alique: include length of lesson plans in [Top 10 Lesson Plans](#) documents.
- Kristin: edit the website title of [Todd Jennings' presentation](#) from first Regional Gathering to include his name and that it is a PowerPoint presentation.

#### Meeting Goals:

1. Get to know the HRE USA network and regional members.
2. Encourage partnership and resource-sharing among members.
3. Leave the gathering with ideas and materials for implementing HRE.

#### Agenda Items/Discussion Points

##### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- Pam Bruns welcomed everyone in attendance and reviewed the meeting goals
- Participants introduced themselves and their HRE work. See attached "Participants' Bios".

##### 2. Recap of May 11 gathering of Southern California Regional HRE USA

- Resources, HRE definitions, agenda and minutes are on the [STF website](#).
- Felisa Tibbitts, founder of HRE USA network joined us via Skype to discuss the background of HRE USA and provided definitions of Human Rights Education.
- Todd Jennings, keynote speaker, discussed the place and purpose of HRE. The full video of his presentation, and his corresponding PowerPoint, are on the [STF website](#).
  - "Teachers and educators are the only profession mentioned in the preamble of the UDHR – this underscores their importance in ensuring a rights-respecting society."
  - "HRE can be a key tool in helping students connect what they are learning to their private and public lives..."

##### 3. Goals for HRE USA within the Southern California region

###### a. What HRE resources do members need?

- Participants filled out a comprehensive survey to let HRE USA know what resources we have available to share and what resources we need. Results will be shared ASAP.
- Top needs, suggestions, questions or resource suggestions from the group:
  - Pam Haldeman, Mount Saint Mary's College, suggested, "Can we get a higher education group to have a yearly conversation? We feel isolated and we are trying to figure out how to reach out locally or regionally."
  - Meredith Louria, English teacher at Santa Monica High, asked, "Is there something targeting freedom of the press or journalism issues of today, particularly attacks on the press?"
    - Abdiel Lopez, student at Palisades Charter High School, said, "I've been taught that, while we're safer here than in other countries, journalism is in danger and we need to raise more awareness on the freedom of the press internationally."

- Amy M. Carnes, UCS's Shoah Foundation, said, "We also need media literacy or skills-based curriculum, social media, YouTube, etc."
  - Resource suggestion – There is Free Speech Radio News that reports on stories that our mainstream media doesn't cover.
- Tassie Hadlock-Piltz, Human Rights teacher at Wildwood School, asked, "Are there any resources about Euthanasia and the right to life?"
- Amy M. Carnes said, "There may not be a need for resources on the right to privacy, but there are a lot of places that don't have a right to a private life."
- Question: How do you, or can you, submit a resource that is more discussion-based rather than a lesson plan?
  - Answer: HRE USA is looking more for lesson plans and resources for the website. In the region, we're also looking for things to be shared amongst the group.

**b. Members share and present HRE resources**

**i. [Girls Learn International \(GLI\)](#) – [Ashley Steimer-King](#), Director of GLI**

- What is GLI?
  - Founded in 2003 by a mother and her two daughters who were inspired to assist girls exploited in US and abroad. GLI educates and energizes US students in the global movement for girls' education. Through extensive curriculum designed to develop an understanding of issues and leadership skills, students learn about human rights, particularly free and mandatory education for all.
  - With support from the GLI guidebook, faculty advisors and GLI program staff, student leaders start chapters, coordinate and lead meetings and participate in student advisory boards. All clubs have partner schools in countries where girls still lag behind boys in access to education.
- GLI Guidebook: the idea is that anyone can pick up the guidebook and in 10 minutes hold a HRE meeting with your peers.
  - There are six broad themes: human rights, poverty and hunger, education and empowerment, violence against girls, girls' health, media and advertising.
  - All meetings are designed to be easy for student use, with little to no preparation needed. Meetings are laid out step-by-step, complete with notes to the leader, reference materials and the amount of time per activity (approximately 30 minutes).
  - There are 43 human rights meetings in the guidebook. Example: In Her Shoes Meeting: helps students understand that we all start off in a different situation and we aren't all born on a level playing field. There is a script, flash drive, guide to how to relate the situational experience activity and the review of what human rights were affected in each situation.
- Questions for Ashley:
  - Question: How do you introduce human rights from the start?
    - Answer: We look at the UDHR, talk about how human rights may affect their lives. Most topics are scenario-based meetings, we give them a situation and ask them to make a choice (applicable or not, debates, etc.).
  - Question: How does the Feminist Majority feel about using these materials in a non-GLI setting?
    - Answer: We work at a variety of schools, including where STF chapters exist, but we don't make a practice of handing out the guidebook. However, I'm willing to give individual materials to people who want them.
  - Question: Do you redo the guidebook each year?
    - Answer: We update and add meetings each year. This year we added a meeting on female cutting, legal discussion in the US, sanitary pads. The curriculum isn't perfect so if you see something that you don't think is right, please let us know.
  - To request materials or for more questions please contact Ashley:

[Ashley@girlslearn.org](mailto:Ashley@girlslearn.org)

**ii. [Speak Truth to Power \(STTP\)](#) – [Wesley Farrow](#), RFK Center for Justice**

- Video: [Introduction to the RFK Center](#)

- Originally developed in conjunction with Amnesty International, STTP is a toolkit for action to help students become agents for change in their communities.
  - [The play](#): Actors read the stories of human rights activists to bring their actions to life.
  - [The curriculum](#): Building on human rights activists' stories, the curriculum includes lesson plans, activities, discussion topics, and more, on various human rights themes. Each lesson ends with "become a human rights defender" so students can learn how to take action on the human rights issue. Some teachers use the curriculum as a single lesson and others use it over the course of an entire year. You must [sign up](#) for the website in order to access the full entire curriculum.
  - STTP is also working with LAUSD's [Linked-Learning](#) program to connect the classroom to the outside, addressing relevance of material and needs of all students.
- Other STTP programs:
  - Youth Speaking Truth: tries to empower a youth-driven unit to HRE. This program is in its infancy. We have a couple of student groups around the country who are developing the materials for this student-run program.
  - [Video contest](#): In the past we've had a video contest in New York, and the winner is featured at the Tribeca Film Festival. Last year's winner was a school in Brooklyn with a video on human trafficking. This year we're expanding nationwide and the video contest will be available to all schools.
  - [Project Seatbelt](#): a school-based bullying prevention program that has resources for parents, teachers and community members regarding school climate and safety.
- Questions for Wesley:
  - Question: How do you do things in the international programs? Do you translate the curriculum?
    - Answer: The book is the focus of the program. It became a play, a photo exhibit and now a curriculum. We have them available in English (complete), Italian (complete), Spanish (partial) and Khmer (nearly complete).
  - Question: Who is looking at the curriculum to teach or experience the activities?
    - Answer: The Youth Speaking Truth piece is in its infancy and is being built by youth. The curriculum targets teachers for grades 6-12. We also have a law school program in DC that we are now expanding to LA, which teaches law students how to communicate human rights issues and has them teach human rights in schools.
  - Question: Is there a way for you to track how often teachers use the curriculum? How can I access it if I don't want to join directly? Besides the initial page what other materials do I get?
    - Answer: The curriculum is a comprehensive lesson plan that ranges from 30-240 minutes; most often it's used in pieces. We are working on tracking how often our materials are used but it is a long process.
  - Question: Is the push toward action? And are you a resource as well?
    - Answer: Everything drives toward the "become a defender" piece and empowerment. Yes, we are a resource.
  - To request materials or for more questions please contact Wesley: [farrow@rfkcenter.org](mailto:farrow@rfkcenter.org)

iii. **[iWitness](#) – [Amy M. Carnes](#), Associate Director, International Programs, USC Shoah Foundation**

- Established by Steven Spielberg after "Schindler's List," the Shoah Foundation is a video resource of testimony for genocide survivors with over 100,000 hours of video testimony. 65 testimonies of Rwandan survivors, witnesses, etc. were recently added.
- As a project of the Shoah Foundation, iWitness is an educational platform to address standards and content areas. It targets teachers and students locally and globally, with 1,200 video testimonies available that can be used to address common core standards and build digital, media and other literacies. Students can search, watch, listen, build word clouds and produce multimedia activities.
- Ways to use iWitness:

- [Video challenge](#): This challenge encourages students to add value to their communities by filming themselves doing some sort of human rights work. Teachers can easily build this challenge into curriculum. The submission deadline is December 2 and the winner gets to attend the Shoah Institute Gala, where their film will be screened.
  - Example: A student in Santa Barbara made sandwiches for homeless people and filmed her conversations with the homeless as her submission.
- Classroom use: You have to [sign up](#) as an educator or as a student to use the majority of the site. Once signed up, there are [foundational videos](#) for how to use the site and testimonies and how to incorporate them into the curriculum. There are also supplemental materials for teachers with an assessment rubric and a guide to document whatever it is they are doing.
- Build your own activity: video (listen to a story and pick out key words) or information (make a word cloud based on the words in the stories).
- Inspired by Todd Jennings' presentation idea that "HRE is not about teaching students about human rights but about enacting human rights," Amy is drafting an activity that focuses on how identities are linked to the UDHR and how human rights mechanisms encourage a link between human rights values and identity.
- Questions for Amy:
  - Question: Is this for high school only?
    - Answer: The program can be used in middle and high schools, although it might not fit into university curriculum.
  - Question: Are there other testimony areas in terms of human rights abuses or experiences that are also documented or are the majority Holocaust and Rwanda?
    - Answer: We are fundraising for an Armenian survivor testimony block and we have relationships with Cambodian survivors. We have conversations with organizations working on Darfur. The scope of our work is to expand to general genocide (or crimes against humanity). It's slow and expensive to do.
  - Question: Have you ever had issues with your website being blocked in schools?
    - Answer: We have technical issues (still in beta) and bandwidth could be our ultimate demise but time will tell. We are working with Education Super Highway, which is dedicated to increasing bandwidth in schools to solve these issues.
  - Question: Do schools have to contact iWitness directly to use it?
    - Answer: No, you can get access to it anywhere. If you don't use your school email address then you can't get access to everything. It's a requirement that you're an educator or student.
- To request materials or for more questions please contact Amy: [amyhrw@gmail.com](mailto:amyhrw@gmail.com)

#### iv. **Member sharing...All**

- STF HRE research project presented by Alique Berberian, STF intern: Alique has researched resources and created "Top 10" lesson plans for the UDHR, CRC, HRE Background and Basics, Individual Rights and General Resources. You can find all of these resources on the [STF website](#).
  - Question: Will you need a password to access these materials?
    - Answer: No, most of the links are directly to the lesson plans or resources.
  - Question: Can you add the length to the information about each lesson plan?
    - Answer: Most lesson plans are a standard class period. You can read how long they are in the description or special notes.
  - Comment: It's interesting that some of these come in other languages and get your language instructors to teach information so you don't have to do it.
    - Response: Many of them are in English but the ones that are in other languages can be used in language classes. Some of the websites may have further information in other languages but we didn't have time to create a list.
- Wildwood Human Rights Course Syllabus, explained by Tassie Hadlock-Piltz, Human Rights Teacher : Students have to be involved in an organization or human rights project

here in LA. The course is designed to get them engaged and they do the activities between February and May.

- Unit 1: Philosophical foundations of societies and global human rights
- Unit 2: History and web of structures of global human rights
  - Students have to find an organization in LA that is involved in working with HR
- Unit 3: Global state of human rights for societies and individuals
  - Students do a research project
- Unit 4: HR responsibilities, actions and solutions
- [I-Act](#) outlined by Gabriel Stauring, Co-Founder and Director: We connect human rights advocates in the US with refugees in camps in Chad who want to learn about human rights. The most important thing is making it personal, we allow students here to become friends with real individuals in the camps.
  - We have a lot of multimedia material and exhibits schools can use here.
  - We're thinking of expanding the [Human Rights Mobile Library](#) to all 12 refugee camps and creating a curriculum. (The Human Rights Mobile Library materials in two camps were created, researched and funded by HRW Student Task Force from 2011-present.)
    - Recently, refugees were forced to go to the peace talks with no background on what their rights are, so it's important for these populations to have knowledge of the basics of human rights.
    - A few months ago the UNHCR visited refugees and said education would be affected by budget cuts. Delegations went to the classrooms and spoke with students and teachers where one student said, "You've been telling us about education cuts but we've been learning about our human rights and we know we have a right to education and we're demanding it."
- Mount Saint Mary's College (MSMC) outlined by Pam Haldeman, Chair of the Sociology, Social Work, and Gerontology Department: We have infused the UDHR into 80% of our department's core curriculum. By the time the students are ready to graduate, they have a solid understanding of the UDHR.
  - Upper division quantitative research project: Students pick any topic but they have to justify their research and work, usually through the UDHR articles.
  - Film project: Students have to pick an UDHR article and find a nonprofit that works on that article. They then create a nonfiction film documentary about it.
- Student suggestion by Linda Gordon, Santa Monica High: So many students at my school haven't even thought about human rights in their classes so we would like to see little pieces incorporated, such as articles or films. If you can offer something during lunch or afterschool, people will show up.

4. **Follow up and next gathering:** No date was set yet for the next meeting. All follow up will be conducted via email in the coming weeks and materials from the meeting will be posted to [www.hrwtf.org](http://www.hrwtf.org) and to [www.hreusa.net](http://www.hreusa.net) .

Submitted by: Kristin Ghazarians and Alique Berberian