

# Human Rights **Here and Now**

*Addressing Contemporary Human Rights Issues*

## LINKAGES

As we carry out our work to have Human Rights Education (HRE) become an integral part of U.S. public education standards and curricula, we believe it is vital to articulate how HRE intersects with endeavors such as climate action, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, education for democracy, and social justice advocacy.

Recognizing and valuing these connections can help strengthen collaborations and clarify that all of us working in these arenas have common goals for positive social change that furthers equality, equity, justice, and dignity for all people.

## CONNECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION TO INITIATIVES AFFECTING PEOPLE AND THEIR COMMUNITIES



## CLIMATE ACTION

### ***What are the ramifications/effects of climate change on human rights?***

- What do rising sea levels have to do with human rights?
- What do air pollution, carbon footprint or forest fires have to do with human rights?

### ***Why must we care? What can we do about it?***

The idea of human rights dates back many centuries. However, it's with the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR),\* adopted in 1948, that we have the first systematic assertion of the principle that human beings, regardless of who they are or where they are, are entitled to certain inalienable and immutable rights, and that these rights need to be protected and promoted. The UDHR declares them to be the birthrights of every member of the human family. No one has to earn these human rights; they are inherent, part of one's being.

The UDHR Articles directly related to the impacts of climate action are:

- Article 23: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protections against unemployment;
- Article 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [one]self and of [one's] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...
- Article 26: Everyone has the right to an education...

Our full explanation to the connection *Climate Action and Human Rights Education* (available at [hreusa.org/our-work/human-rights-education-linkages](https://hreusa.org/our-work/human-rights-education-linkages)) which includes a lesson plan and slide deck (available at [tinyurl.com/hre-climateaction](https://tinyurl.com/hre-climateaction)) on how to teach about the impact of climate change, understand the connection of these impacts to climate change, and how to take action to address these impacts.

\* Learn more at [un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](https://un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights), and [hreusa.org/hre-library/topics/udhr](https://hreusa.org/hre-library/topics/udhr), and [hreusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/bulletin9.pdf](https://hreusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/bulletin9.pdf)

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

On April 7, 2022, Ketanji Brown Jackson delivered her Supreme Court confirmation acceptance speech surrounded by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Neither Justice Jackson nor Vice President Harris would have had the opportunity to stand as they did on April 7th based on the rights spelled out when the U. S. Constitution was ratified on June 21, 1788. Both have benefitted from legislation and policy efforts since that date that have addressed the exclusion of women, people of color, and other minority groups women from full participation in many social, political and economic aspects of American life. While the term “human rights” was not part of the lexicon of most of these efforts, one can clearly see its principles embedded in them. Efforts now referred to as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are extensions of work begun in the 1960’s to address exclusion. The full description and explanation of DEI, along with the linkages to HRE are provided in this document titled *The Human Rights Perspective on the Importance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts* (available at [tinyurl.com/hre-dei](https://tinyurl.com/hre-dei))

## EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

The Educating for American Democracy (EAD) initiative provides national guidance that states, local school districts, and all educators can use to transform teaching of civics and history to sustain our constitutional democracy and meet the needs of a diverse 21<sup>st</sup>-century K-12.

HRE reinforces civil society and provides a strong basis for “civic friendship” across ideological differences. The essence of Human Rights theory and practice and the foundation for both content and methodology in Human Rights Education is recognition of the equality and inherent dignity of persons, without references to their differentiation characteristics. While we acknowledge and seek to understand differences of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification, age, ability/disability, economic circumstances, etc., the fact that such differences exist does not make any of us less worthy or less entitled to the benefits of participation in an inclusive, democratic society.

The full description of how to transform the teaching of Civics and History to inspire student engagement to uphold constitutional democracy, as well as how Human Rights Education is integral to this endeavor is provided in this document titled *Educating for American Democracy* (available at [tinyurl.com/hre-ead](https://tinyurl.com/hre-ead))

## SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

Universal human rights are the bedrock principles that underlie all racial and social justice movements. The universal human rights principles, spelled out in such documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as expounded by HRE, provide practical and well-established legal and ethical foundations for use by all social justice movements, worldwide. When referenced and followed, universal human rights principles provide standards and norms that are invaluable tools to support social justice advocates in their struggles to overcome white supremacy and other oppressive ideologies.

The HRE USA document titled *Social Justice Advocacy & Human Rights Education* (available at [tinyurl.com/sje-hre](https://tinyurl.com/sje-hre)) includes a full explanation of this vital linkage, including an example of applying this connection to furthering our right to participate in our Government.

## HRE USA RESOURCES

**K-12 HRE Library:** [hreusa.org/hre-library](https://hreusa.org/hre-library) | **HRE Collections:** [hreusa.org/hre-collections](https://hreusa.org/hre-collections)  
**Human Rights Education Now! Podcast** [humanrightseducationnow.buzzsprout.com](https://humanrightseducationnow.buzzsprout.com)  
**Free Monthly HRE USA e-Newsletter:** [hreusa.org/publications/newsletter](https://hreusa.org/publications/newsletter)  
**HRE Awards, Grants, & Fellowships:** [hreusa.org/awards-and-grant-opportunities](https://hreusa.org/awards-and-grant-opportunities)  
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