



**ROBERT F.
KENNEDY
HUMAN
RIGHTS**


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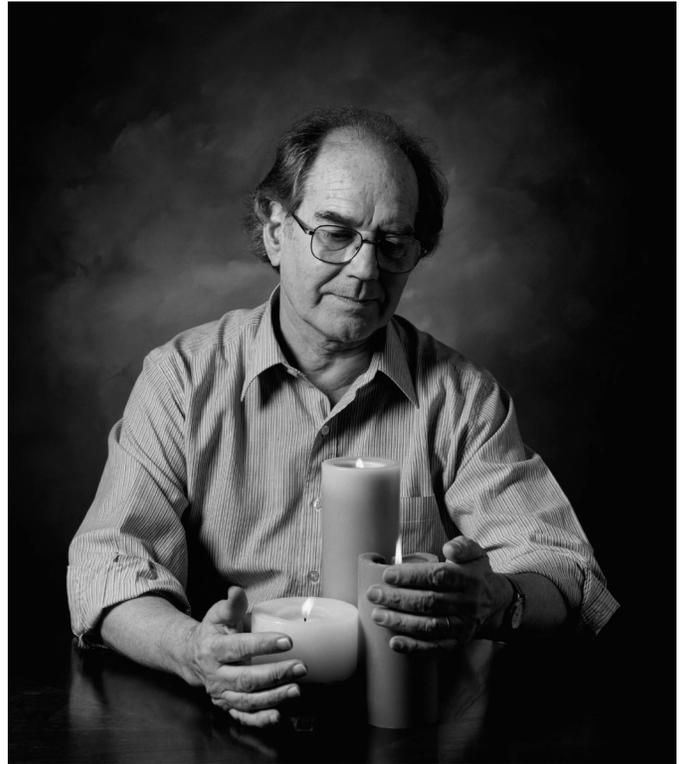
SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

**HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS WHO
ARE CHANGING
OUR WORLD**

**ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL: STEWARD OF
JUSTICE & PEACE**

ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL

(HE/HIM/HIS)



“WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN CONSENSUS BY FORCE. WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO HEARING, WHEREVER HUMAN RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED, THAT IT IS BEING DONE IN THE NAME OF HIGHER INTERESTS. I DECLARE THAT THERE EXISTS NO HIGHER INTEREST THAN THE HUMAN BEING.”

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1931. Despite family poverty, he trained as an architect and sculptor—his work reflected his foundational belief in God. He was also a professor of architecture for 25 years. But he worried about human rights abuses in his country, so he left his career in 1974 to coordinate nonviolent organizations in the region as secretary-general of the newly formed Servicio Paz y Justicia (Service, Peace, and Justice or SERPAJ).

In 1976, a military dictatorship took power in Argentina and imposed a brutal crackdown on democratic rights. Pérez Esquivel was campaigning to convince the United Nations of the need for a human rights commission when Argentinean authorities jailed him without charge in 1977, subjecting him to torture and holding him without trial for 14 months. After his release he faced restrictions, but by 1980 he was able to continue his important work with SERPAJ, assisting rural workers in their struggle for land and trade unions to protect their rights.

Pérez Esquivel was awarded the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize for his courageous defense of human rights and democracy for the people of Latin America.

INTERVIEW WITH ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL

EXCERPTS FROM ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL: 1980 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LECTURE.

I come before you, having just received the Nobel Peace Prize from so prestigious an academy, in order to share a reflection about my continent and our struggle.

I would like to give thanks to everyone for the invitation to speak in this chamber of high learning. Not only to receive me personally, but by the mark of appreciation, recognition and esteem that this invitation implies with respect to the values and actions which sustain and are the hope and faith of our people in the struggle for justice and respect for the dignity of persons as the necessary condition for attaining true peace.

I come as a man of the people, with humility and steadfastness to share with you this reality that I live and know.

When receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, I said, from the first moment, I do not assume a personal honor, but receive it in the name of the people of Latin America, and most especially in the name of the poor, the most small and needy, the Indigenous, the peasants, the workers, the young, and the many thousand members of the religious orders who work in the most inhospitable places of our continent, and of all those persons of goodwill who work and struggle to build a society free from domination.

I would like to turn my attention to the anguish and hopes of our Latin Americans, not as a politician or technocrat in regard to social problems, but as a man identifying with the cause of the people in the daily struggle in defense of human rights and the affirming of values, and as a man who shares their hopes and faith in complete liberation.

In the last decades the Church initiated a new kind of reflection and action: the consideration of faith in regard to the brother or sister who suffers, who is dispossessed, the poor.

It is the faces of our workers, peasants, young, old, Indigenous, and children that are the face of our

Lord, Jesus Christ, who calls us to the obligation to *love our brothers and sisters*.

The Latin American bishops, gathered in Puebla de los Angeles in Mexico to assess the Latin American reality, gave thought from this perspective: to assume for the Church an inescapable commitment: The first priority must be the poor.

And from all which stood in the way of reflection on the life of our peoples, there is surging forth a new active theology and way of living the faith.

Thus is assumed a reasoned understanding of faith, an intent to know and explain the desperate reality that we live. The poor will not now be seen as objects of charity, as isolated individuals, but as products of a system of structures of injustice that produce marginalization, misery, and hunger for our people.

It was a sharing of experiences and apprehending knowledge of this reality in all its aspects and facets. For Christians, faith cannot be foreign to these problems; theology, then, was considered as a reflection of this faith and of the moral force of the Word, for the work of liberation from injustice and from sin, in its structural as well as personal dimension.

Reflection is only a partial understanding of truth if it does not translate itself in practice into commitments to the common good and justice. Truth is not mere abstraction, but something to be done, and is only apprehended when this is realized.

It is this concrete work, which Christians must undertake in great numbers, that will lead to the process of liberation of our people.

Like many other persons and Christian organizations, ours, the Service for Peace and Justice in Latin America—of which as general coordinator I am the current voice for its work and objectives—tries to encourage and exert our efforts on the path toward achieving a society free from

domination that overcomes systems of injustice and inspires the fraternal embrace between humans and the reconciliation with God.

Our voice seeks to be the voice of those who have no voice, of those who are excluded, of the humble and small.

Our hands seek to speak the language of those who labor, to add to the effort to construct a new world solidarity founded on love, justice, liberty and truth.

Our analysis is a direct consequence of this commitment; our practice is the theory and use of nonviolence based on the gospel. This is a spirit and a method, the participative power of the struggle for the needs of the most small who are the elect of our Lord, who animates them with His spirit to organize themselves and unite to accomplish their own liberation. It is thus, in this way, we are facing our work in Latin America.

I would like now to speak of Latin America, this reality which was defined by the beloved Pope Paul VI as *el Continente de la Esperanza* (“the Continent of Hope”).

It seems that in Latin America, as we come wanting to help, we suffer the shock of the contradictions between two models of development of our nations sustained by force and social diversity.

Our Latin American nations have said of our people: “They have taken opportunities to use their talents and to organize themselves and have shown they can succeed to obtain vindication for their just rights.”

The stifling of these rights weighs heavily on this creative capacity and also weighs down the natural economic richness and development of our countries. Latin America lives the anguish of an economically unequal growth that accompanies a development not integral to the participation of the people. This generates conflict that manifests itself in many ways in all parts of our societies.

I speak of situations like that of Bolivia, where a military regime pays no heed and oppresses the will of a people.

I speak of Salvador, where the general violence, product of structures of domination and injustices with the force of law, seen for decades, compromises today the practical possibility of a peaceful solution.

I speak of Cuba, its prisoners and politicians responsible for clear transgressions against human rights. I speak of Paraguay, Chile, Brazil, Guatemala, countries where there exists no capacity for constitutional order nor any intent to institute such order for the openly limited and deceitful forms that will not grant to the people their authentic right to be makers of their own destiny.

I speak of my own Argentina, where situations have led to systems of injustice that we share with the rest of our large Latin American fatherland. These have devolved into violence from both the left and the right, which have resulted in the murdered, the injured, the disappeared, the tortured, imprisoned, and exiled.

This situation, anguished and unjust, is shared by all responsible sectors of national life. It is felt with sorrow by the families of the disappeared, and especially the mothers, like the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, whose valorous and international action for peace is a patient witness bearing the sorrow of uncertainty about the fate of their sons.

The churches, the workers’ organizations, the political parties, and the institutions for the defense of human rights have all demanded a solution of this problem that stands in the way of a real meeting of the Argentines.

I do not wish to speak more of the abovementioned injustices, since I do not believe the latter is the struggle for you here. These are things I must deal with in my own country and confront with the present government.

I would like now to speak of my hope, because it is that which empowers our actions and commitment.

Beginning to speak of this, I am remembering a martyr to peace, the Archbishop of Salvador, Monsignor Oscar Romero, who, in his work of the gospel, shared in the way of the people even to

giving his life for them. Even his martyrdom is a sign of hope.

Our hope is the benevolent notice of Christ Jesus, who in these days of the Advent and Christmas season fortifies human conscience in all latitudes. We take hope because we believe with St. Paul that love never dies, and that humankind, in the historical process, has always created enclaves of love in solidarity with the active practice of the full rights of persons.

For this, our testimony in the world cannot be limited to the exercise of critical judgment of the injustices of the social, economic, and political order or to the consequent denunciation of the sins of those responsible.

I want to affirm with emphasis: *This world is possible.*

The social order we seek is not a utopia. It is a world where political life is understood in terms of active participation by the governors and the governed in the realization of the common good.

We do not believe in consensus by force. We are accustomed to hearing, wherever human rights are

being violated, that it is being done in the name of higher interests. I declare that there exists no higher interest than the human being.

I point out my conviction in the maturity of the people, who are able to govern themselves without paternalistic guardians.

For this reason we have hope. We believe in the vocation and participation of our people, who day to day are awakened to their political conscience and express their desire for change and the complete democratization of society. A change based on justice, built with love, and which will bring us the most anxiously desired fruit of peace.

We must all commit ourselves to this task. And I want my voice to help build the chorus of voices so that the clamor for justice will become deafening.

I live this hope which I am sure I share with many others. I am confident that one day our daily effort will have its reward.

Peace and good wishes to all.

Muchas gracias. Many thanks.



STEWARD OF JUSTICE & PEACE

LESSON GRADE LEVELS 9 TO 12

FREE EXPRESSION AND RELIGION, NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- **ARTICLE 2:** Right to freedom from discrimination.
- **ARTICLE 9:** Right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile.
- **ARTICLE 18:** Right to freedom of belief and religion.
- **ARTICLE 19:** Right to freedom of opinion and information.
- **ARTICLE 23:** Right to desirable work and to join trade unions.

TIME REQUIREMENT

250 minutes

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are human rights? What rights do governments have an obligation to protect?
- What is justice? How do people attain justice?
- What is protest? How do you know that a protest is successful?
- What is faith? How does faith inspire action?
- What is activism? Why do people become activists?
- What role does nonviolence play in activism?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Define liberation theology, gospel, junta, atrocities, habeas corpus, and restorative justice.
- Analyze the roles of religion and nonviolence in modern protest movements.
- Discuss the impact of dictatorial regimes using Argentina's Dirty War as an example.
- Demonstrate understanding of Adolfo Pérez Esquivel's work and the potential impact of activists.
- Read and analyze primary and secondary sources to identify evidence for guiding questions.
- Create visual protest art to express their own beliefs about justice.
- Think of ways to participate in future nonviolent activism or protest.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

CONCEPTS

- Nonviolence
- Activism
- Protest
- Justice
- Due process
- Regime change
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of religion
- Human rights
- Poverty
- Peace

VOCABULARY

- Liberation theology
- Gospel
- Junta
- Atrocities
- Habeas corpus
- Restorative justice

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

- TV and DVD player or laptop and projector
- Computer lab access, if desired

MATERIALS

- Chart paper or whiteboard/chalkboard
- Markers and writing utensils
- Notebook paper
- Copies of primary and secondary sources or computer lab access if desired
- TV and DVD player or laptop and projector
- DVD or digital file of "Spoils of War"
- Art supplies if needed

ANTICIPATORY SET

- Assign students to five small groups and assign each group one of the corresponding five guiding questions for the lesson.
- Students will discuss and record their answers in groups on chart paper, then present their ideas to the class.
- Each group will record the others' answers in a graphic organizer.
- Guide the discussion, allowing students from other groups to add their ideas.
- Instruct students to brainstorm and write down, in their own notebooks, examples of rights they feel they have, if they believe these rights have been violated, and if so, how. Instruct students to list ways they think they could protest these violations or other injustices and what steps they would take to become activists. This may be finished for homework for discussion the next day.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

- Write the terms “liberation theology” and “gospel” on the board. Ask students to define the terms in their own words.
- After a brief discussion, give the formal definitions of liberation theology and gospel and explain their connection to Latin American history and religion, either on paper or projected on the board. Help students compare their own definitions to the provided one.
- Assign students to one of four small groups. Each group will be assigned one of the following:
 - Mahatma Gandhi and independence in India.
 - Mother Teresa and India.
 - Martin Luther King Jr. or the Southern Christian Leadership Council.
 - Desmond Tutu and restorative justice in South Africa.
- Provide each group with links to source(s) for their activist, describing the role of religion and/or nonviolence in activism. Ask students to answer the following questions about the activist and cite short specific quotations:
 - What injustice did they fight? What kind of people did they advocate for? People in what conditions?
 - What kind of rhetoric did they use to describe the fight?
 - How did they describe the role of religion in their activism?
 - How did they justify the use of non-violence as necessary?
 - How do they define justice?
- **MAHATMA GANDHI:**
 - Primary source: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/r/145/whm.html>
 - Secondary source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/themes/mahatma-gandhi-the-missing-laureate/>
 - Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vPa_H3tAsE
- **MOTHER TERESA:**
 - Primary source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/26200-mother-teresa-acceptance-speech-1979/>
 - Secondary source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/26200-mother-teresa-acceptance-speech-1979/>

[org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/facts/](http://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/facts/)

- Video: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/acceptance-speech/>
- **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.:**
 - Primary source: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/>
 - Secondary source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1964/king/biographical/>
 - Video: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1964/king/acceptance-speech/>
- **DESMOND TUTU:**
 - Primary source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1984/tutu/interview/>
 - Secondary source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1984/tutu/biographical/>
 - Video: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1984/tutu/acceptance-speech/>
- Students will read the sources and discuss and record their answers in their groups.
- Students will present a summary of what they learned about their activist to the class. Their peers will record notes answering the main idea questions in a chart that organizes answers by person in columns.
- Ask students to think of or research someone who works today to fight injustice using religion or nonviolence to ground her or his actions. This may be assigned for homework.

ACTIVITY 2

- Write “junta” and “atrocities” on the board. Ask students to use classroom dictionaries or the internet to look up definitions of these terms. Guide the discussion as students share the terms with the class and talk about what they think causes both.
- Provide students a secondary source summary of Argentina’s Dirty War. (<https://www.history.com/news/mothers-plaza-de-mayo-disappeared-children-dirty-war-argentina>) Ask individual students to create a short timeline of the war based on the reading. They will compare their

work with a partner. Lead a short discussion with the whole class to check comprehension of the reading and the war. Time permitting, show students this YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMTzJXrmwm>) about the war.

- Give students copies of an NPR article (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124125440>) about the Dirty War and the Disappeared. Ask students to volunteer to read the article aloud. Guide discussion of the following questions:
 - How can individuals fight against a repressive regime?
 - Can nonviolence be a successful response to violence?
 - What kind of lasting impact do you think the atrocities of the Dirty War have had on Argentina and its people?
 - How would you cope if you lost a family member?
- For homework, ask students to write a letter to a family member explaining how much that person means to them and what they would do if that family member were to disappear.
- Time permitting, have students watch all or part of the 2000 Argentinean documentary Spoils of War (Botin de Guerra) about the Disappeared, or excerpts from the 2004 Argentinean film Captive (Cautiva), and write a response to the film describing its purpose, value and limitations.

ACTIVITY 3

- Distribute to students a graphic organizer with three boxes on it numbered 1, 2, and 3. An arrow will lead from box 1 to 2 and 2 to 3.
 - Box #1 will contain the question, “Why would a person be arrested?” and have space for students to write a response.
 - Box #2 will have the question, “What rights does someone who is arrested have according to the U.S. Constitution?”
 - Box #3 will have the questions, “What if those rights are violated? Can someone unlawfully arrested or detained be ‘made whole’”

- Ask the students to answer these questions in pairs, then lead a class discussion. In the course of discussion, write “habeas corpus” on the board and make sure students remember this right. At the end or during the discussion of question #3, write the term “restorative justice” on the board and incorporate the definition into discussion.
- Give students a copy of a biographical profile of Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1980/esquivel/biographical/>) a volunteer will read it to the class. Highlight the circumstances of his arrest and jailing. Students will then watch a video clip of Pérez Esquivel (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1980/esquivel/acceptance-speech/>)
- Give students a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a short summary of its history and creation from the United Nations website. (<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>) Have the class briefly discuss why a document like this would have been created in 1948 and ask students to read a few of the rights aloud.
- Give students a copy of Esquivel’s Nobel Peace Prize lecture from December 11, 1980. (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1980/esquivel/lecture/>) In groups of three, students will read the speech and identify what rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights he addresses. Ask students to record and cite specific quotations from the speech and specific rights on a paper chart then identify three to five passages and rights. Have the whole class discuss the passages and their corresponding rights in terms of how Esquivel views religion, justice, and protest.
- For homework, ask students to compile their previous homework assignments (personal statement about injustice and protest; example of modern activist; letter to family member), reread and reflect on them, and bring them to class the next day.

ACTIVITY 4

- As a class, discuss these questions: What is art? Can art be a protest?
- Write the first question and record ideas on the board, then add the second question and

continue the discussion and notes.

- Ask students to refer to their copy of Esquivel’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1980/esquivel/26128-adolfo-perez-esquivel-acceptance-speech-1980-2/>)
- Ask students to consider these three specific passages and discuss their meaning and advice:
- “For a man like myself, a small voice for those who have no voice, who struggles so that the cry of the people may be heard in all its power, for one without any special identity except as a veritable Latin American man and as a Christian— this is, without any doubt, the highest honour that I can receive: to be considered a servant of peace.”
- “I come from a continent that lives between anguish and hope, where my own history is being written. I am convinced that the gospel power of nonviolence presents a choice that opens up for us a challenge of new and radical perspectives. It is an option which gives priority to the essential Christian value: the dignity of the human being; the sacred, transcendent and irrevocable dignity that belongs to the human being by reason of being a child of God and a brother or sister in Christ, and therefore, our own brother and sister.”
- “As I speak to you, I see before my eyes the vivid images of my brothers and sisters: faces of the workers and peasants living at subhuman levels, whose rights to organize are severely limited; faces of children who suffer from malnutrition; of young people who see their hopes frustrated; of the marginal urban poor; of our Indigenous people; of the mothers searching for their missing sons and daughters; of the disappeared, many of them mere children; of thousands of exiles; of the people who clamour for liberty and justice of all.”
- Guide discussion and encourage students to express their opinions of the meaning of the passages.
- Show students electronic, projected, or printed out examples of Esquivel’s mural art. Time permitting, also show art of other activist artists.
- Assign students to brainstorm their culminating project.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- Students will use their homework assignments to brainstorm a design for an individual or small group mural, collage, or photomontage and write an accompanying poem or prose piece expressing their views of justice, injustice, peace, protest, etc., and/or how they think change can be made in their community or in the wider world.
 - If desired, ask an art teacher in the school or outside of it to assist students with their work.
 - Assign one student or a small group instead (or in addition for extra credit) to make a PowerPoint presentation or website about Esquivel's work and some Argentinean history.
 - Students will present their projects at a schoolwide program/art show. Invite parents and community members to attend.
 - Assign one student or a small group to write about their project for the school newspaper.
 - Students will first reflect upon why it is important to go beyond studying Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and mounting the art show at their school.
 - Students will prepare to become defenders by researching and identifying community organizations, other schools, and houses of worship in their community that they wish to partner with to continue this project.
 - Students will contact the organizations to offer them student-led teach-ins about how those organizations can make their own peace and justice art shows or to ask whether they can exhibit their own art in the organization's space, ideally including an open house or after-school event.
 - Based on the outcome of either having a teach-in, staging more art shows, or facing challenges in making either happen, students will write a reflective paper describing what they learned from this experience and what they will do in the future to continue learning about and working for peace and justice.
- school councils) meeting at their school to advocate for a human rights fundraiser or to present an idea for how to address student grievances at their school or in their community.
 - Students can write a letter to the editor responding to an article about a just, unjust, peaceful, or violent event that they feel is important.
 - Students can get training for and start a schoolwide Peace Circle program.
 - Students can start a Peace Jam affiliate or chapter in their city or get involved in an existing affiliate or chapter.
 - Students can work with their school administration to implement restorative justice practices instead of traditional punishments.
 - Students can research current human rights abuses around the world using the internet to start a fundraiser or presentation about the injustices. (Start with websites for the Southern Poverty Law Center, Human Rights Watch, ACLU.)
 - Students can support a picket line by local workers on strike or attend a protest about a current issue or injustice.
 - Students can write a letter to a legislator about the ways in which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ought to be upheld in our country or another country.
 - Students can volunteer with a religious organization or house of worship on a community project.
 - Students can raise and donate money to a global activism cause.
 - Students can research the Innocence Project and try to find ways that they get involved.
 - Students can research ways to support union solidarity in their community by going to the AFL-CIO website to find a local union that they can contact to get involved.
 - Students can write their own "I Believe" manifestos or Student Bill of Rights to display at their school or to use to lobby their school, district, or community for redress of grievances.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Students can attend a student council, PTA (parent-teacher association), or LSC (local

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NOBEL PRIZE

<https://www.nobelprize.org/>

The Nobel Prize is an award for achievement in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, economics, and for peace. It is internationally administered by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden.

THE STORY OF ALEJANDRO REI

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124125440>

This is the story of Alejandro Rei, an Argentine man who was given up for adoption during the Dirty War, and his quest for his parents. The story also describes the atrocities committed by the military dictatorship.

FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

<https://www.facinghistory.org/>

For more than 30 years, Facing History and Ourselves has believed that education is the key to combating bigotry and nurturing democracy. They work with educators throughout their careers to improve their effectiveness in the classroom as well as their students' academic performance and civic learning.

SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

<http://www.splcenter.org/>

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

LEARNING FOR JUSTICE

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/>

Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Learning for Justice is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations, and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children.

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

<http://www.aclu.org/>

The ACLU is our nation's guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

<http://www.hrw.org/>

Human Rights Watch is one of the world's leading independent organizations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights.

THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

<http://www.innocenceproject.org/>

The Innocence Project is a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted individuals through DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice.

AFL-CIO

<http://www.aflcio.org/>

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is a voluntary federation of 55 national and international labor unions. The AFL-CIO union movement represents 12.2 million members, including 3.2 million members in Working America, its community affiliate.