



*The*  
STORY OF  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS





# *United for Human Rights*

United for Human Rights (UHR) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Los Angeles in the United States with chapters around the world. UHR assists and unites individuals, educators, organizations and governmental bodies to raise awareness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at local, regional, national and international levels.

UHR supports the work of many other human rights organizations and encourages them to unite toward the implementation of the Universal Declaration and its progeny, the International Bill of Human Rights. The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

One of UHR's primary functions is educative. Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI) is the component of UHR that educates children and young people in human rights so they become advocates for tolerance and peace. UHR as a whole supports measures that advance the full implementation of the Declaration and distributes informative and educational materials to increase public knowledge and bring about a full understanding of human rights.





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This booklet  
is a companion to  
the educational film,  
*The Story of Human Rights.*





# *Film* INDEX

## THE STORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A striking short film defining one of the world's most misunderstood subjects: human rights.

## 30 RIGHTS, 30 ADS

Thirty award-winning public service announcements illustrating each of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.






# *Human Rights* AN INTRODUCTION

*Human Rights  
are defined as:*

“The basic rights and freedoms  
to which all human beings are entitled,  
often held to include the right to life and liberty,  
freedom of thought and expression,  
and equality before the law.”

**H**uman rights are based on the principle of respect for the individual. Their fundamental assumption is that each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity. They are called *human* rights because they are universal. Whereas nations or specialized groups enjoy specific rights that apply only to them, human rights apply to everyone.





The full scope of human rights is very broad. They mean choice and opportunity. They mean the freedom to obtain a job, adopt a career, select a partner of one's choice and raise children. They include the right to travel widely and the right to work gainfully without harassment, abuse and threat of arbitrary dismissal. They even embrace the right to leisure. Ultimately, human rights are the basis of everything people cherish about their way of life. Long before the term "human rights" came into existence, men and women struggled, fought and died for these principles.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the world's premier human rights instrument. Its opening paragraph is a powerful affirmation of the principles that lie at the heart of the modern human rights system: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

Yet a wide gap exists between the articulation of these goals and their accomplishment. Millions are not free. Justice is often inequitable. And peace continues to elude many regions of the world. Bridging the enormous gulf between the ideal of universal human rights and the reality of widespread human rights violations is the challenge that drives human rights advocates.





# The BACKGROUND OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The story of human rights is a drama of persistent struggle and steady advance, often against heavy odds. And with human rights comes peace and the means to true freedom.

Thus, it is important to understand the subject within its historical framework, a tradition that stretches back more than 2,500 years:

- 539 B.C.: The Cyrus Cylinder**—recognized by many as the world's first charter of human rights, this clay tablet contains proclamations of freedom and equality made by Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia.
- 1215: The Magna Carta**—establishing new rights and making the King of England subject to the law.
- 1628: The Petition of Right**—setting out the rights and liberties of the people as opposed to the British Crown.
- 1776: The United States Declaration of Independence**—proclaiming the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.







The Cyrus Cylinder: Hailed as the first human rights charter, the decrees of Cyrus the Great (585–529 B.C.) were recorded on this baked clay cylinder.



**1787: The Constitution of the United States of**

**America**—forming the fundamental law of the US federal system of government and defining the basic rights of citizens.

**1789: The Declaration of the Rights of Man**

**and of the Citizen**—in France, establishing that all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law.

**1791: The US Bill of Rights**—limiting the powers of the federal government and protecting the rights of all citizens, residents and visitors on United States territory.

**1864: The First Geneva Convention**—setting standards of international law.

**1948: The Universal Declaration of Human**

**Rights**—the first charter proclaiming the thirty rights to which every human being is entitled.





# *A Brief History* OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The atrocities perpetrated by fascist Germany against minorities and independent-minded individuals before and during World War II triggered shock and horror across the world. When the war ended, the victorious nations met to adopt measures intended to prevent a repetition of these murderous acts and to forward peace. The result was the founding of the United Nations in 1945.

The Charter of the United Nations established six principal bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice and, in relation to human rights, an Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The UN Charter empowered ECOSOC to establish





On December 10, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt holds a copy of the document she tirelessly promoted.

“commissions in economic and social fields and for the promotion of human rights...” One of these was the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Under the chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt, human rights champion and United States delegate to the UN, the Commission set out to draft the document that became the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights. The Declaration, adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, is the most universal human rights document in operation. Eleanor Roosevelt, credited with its inspiration, called it the international Magna Carta for all humankind.

In its preamble and in Article 1, the Declaration unequivocally proclaims the inherent rights of *all* human beings: “Disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people... All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

The Member States of the United Nations pledged to work together to promote the thirty articles of human rights that, for the first time in history, had been assembled and codified into a single document. In consequence, many of these rights, in various forms, are today part of the constitutional laws of democratic nations.





# *The* UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**O**n December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the full text of which appears in the following pages. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and “to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories.”

# PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

## Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

## Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.



### Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

### Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

### Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.





## Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

## Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

## Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.





## Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

## Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

## Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

## Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

## Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from nonpolitical crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.



## Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

## Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.



## Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

## Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

## Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.



## Article 20

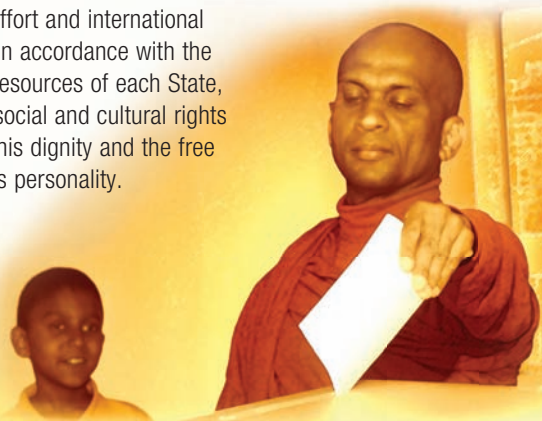
1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

## Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

## Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.



## Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

## Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

## Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

## Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

## Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

## Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.



## Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

## Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.



Make  
human  
rights  
a reality



What you  
should know about

# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS

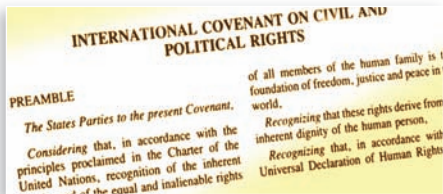
## International Bill of Human Rights

**T**he Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a commonly held standard by nations around the world. Yet it bears no force of law. Thus, from 1948 to 1966 the UN Human Rights Commission's main task was to create a body of international human rights law based on the Declaration. The Human Rights Commission produced two major documents: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Both became international law in 1976. Together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these two Covenants comprise what is known as the "International Bill of Human Rights."



Article 26 of the ICCPR established a Human Rights Committee of the United Nations. Composed of 18 human rights experts, the Committee is responsible for ensuring that each signatory to the ICCPR complies with its terms. The Committee examines reports submitted by countries every five years to ensure they are in compliance with the Covenant and issues findings on a country's performance.

Many countries that ratified the ICCPR also agreed that the Human Rights Committee may investigate allegations by individuals and organizations that the State has violated their rights. Before appealing to the Committee, the complainant must exhaust all legal recourse in the courts of that country. After an investigation, the Committee publishes the results. These findings have great force. If the Committee upholds the allegations, the State must take measures to remedy the abuse.



## The Human Rights Council

In the early 2000s, the United Nations Human Rights Commission came under increasing criticism for failing to uphold human rights standards across the world, in part because its membership had expanded to include many states widely regarded as major human rights violators. As a result, in March 2006 the UN Human Rights Council replaced the Commission. An intergovernmental body with membership comprising 47 states, the Human Rights Council has the task of promoting and protecting human rights internationally. Its mechanisms to forward these ends include a Universal Periodic Review which assesses situations in all 192 UN Member States, an Advisory Committee which provides expertise on human rights issues and a Complaints Procedure for individuals and organizations to bring complaints of human rights violations to the attention of the Council.

## European Human Rights Bodies

Translated into more than 300 languages, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the foundation of all modern human rights laws and covenants. Among such charters is the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Convention was adopted in 1953 by the Council of Europe, comprised of 47 member nations which are home to some 800 million citizens. The Council was formed in the aftermath of World War II to strengthen and promote democracy and the rule of law.



The Convention is enforced by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. Any person or organization whose rights have been violated by a Member State of the Council of Europe may seek recourse from the European Court. First, however, the complainant must exhaust all recourse in the courts of that country.

Another organization created to ensure democratic and fair government is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), composed of 56 participating States including the United States and Canada. In the event of Member States violating human rights, the OSCE hears complaints from human rights organizations and requires a defense from the governments accused of improper conduct.

## American and African Human Rights Covenants

Two further international human rights covenants inspired by the Universal Declaration are the American Convention on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human Rights.

The American Convention was adopted in 1969 by the nations of the Americas and entered into force in 1978. The Convention established a human rights commission and a human rights court to oversee compliance with its provisions.

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights came into force in 1986 and has been ratified by more than 50 African states. It covers economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. A commission was set up in 1987 to oversee and interpret the Charter.





# *The* IDEAL VERSUS REALITY

**T**oday all 192 Member States of the United Nations have adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a body of international law exists to protect them. Yet although human rights exist, are recognized at least in principle by most nations, and form the heart of many national constitutions, the actual situation in the world is far distant from the ideals envisioned in the Declaration.

For many, the full realization of human rights is a remote and unattainable goal. Even international human rights laws are difficult to enforce and pursuing a complaint can take years and a great deal of money. These international laws serve a restraining function but are insufficient to provide adequate human rights protection, as evidenced by the stark reality of abuses perpetrated



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the inherent dignity

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

daily. Discrimination is rampant throughout the world. Thousands are in prison for speaking their minds. Torture and politically motivated imprisonment, often without trial, are commonplace, condoned and practiced even in some democratic countries. Twenty-seven million people live in slavery—more than twice the number as in 1800. And more than a billion adults are unable to read. Given the magnitude of human rights violations—and those listed are only a glimpse of the full picture—it is not surprising that an estimated 90 percent of people are unable to name more than three of their 30 rights.



# Voices for Human Rights

With many people unaware of their rights, the question arises: who will make sure that human rights are respected? To answer, we can draw inspiration from those who made a difference and helped create the human rights we have today. These humanitarians stood up for human rights because they recognized that peace and progress can never be achieved without them. Each, in a significant way, changed the world.

Martin Luther King, Jr., when championing the rights of people of color in the United States in the 1960s, declared “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

The great advocate of peaceful resistance to oppression, Mahatma Gandhi, described nonviolence as “the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.”

Thomas Jefferson, author of the American Declaration of Independence, declared that “The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government.”

Each of these individuals spoke and lived as a powerful and effective advocate of human rights and so can you.





"People are free to live in all regions and take up a job provided that they never violate others' rights. ... I prevent slavery and ... prohibit exchanging men and women as slaves ... Such traditions should be exterminated the world over." Cyrus the Great, Persia (585–529 B.C.) ▼



The US Declaration of Independence, principally written by Thomas Jefferson, affirms that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." ◀



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Martin Luther King, Jr., when championing the rights of African-Americans in the 1960s. ▶



Fighting fiercely against religious persecution in 18th-century France, Voltaire wrote, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." ▼



Mahatma Gandhi, described nonviolence as "the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man." ◀



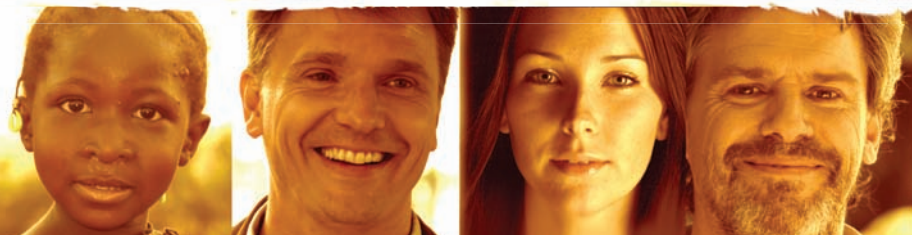
When placed on trial by the South African apartheid government in 1964, Nelson Mandela declared, "I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities." ▶

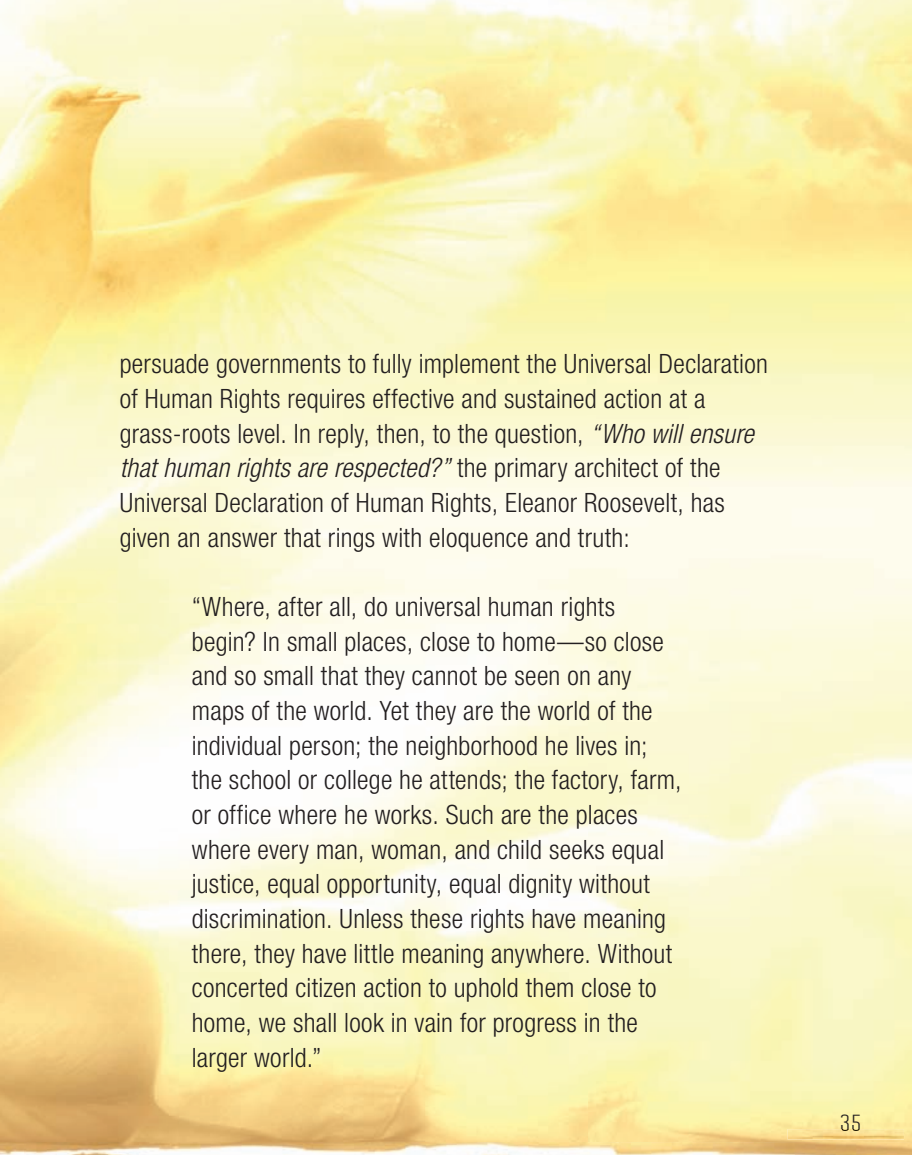




# *Become a* HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Those who work to achieve human rights today may or may not be well-known figures. But they all share a passionate commitment to the principle that everyone is born with equal rights and anything less is an injustice. At times, an individual may feel he or she can accomplish little significant progress. But those who made a lasting impact for human rights in the past could have felt the same way. They did not, and so the world changed. Today we have an advantage most of them lacked. Human rights do exist and are generally accepted. And while the goal seems distant, hundreds of millions of people enjoy an incomparably better life than most people did in the days when human rights hardly existed. Those who came before did make a difference. In the long term, governments do not set trends, they adopt those already established within the body of the people. To

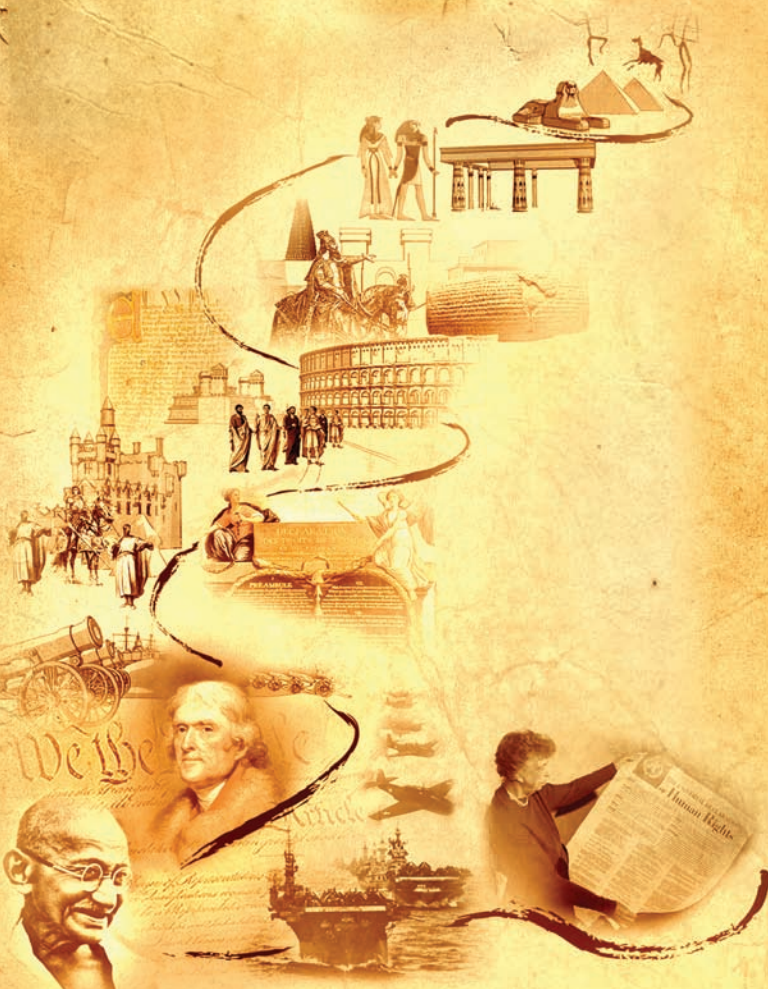


A hand holding a white dove against a bright, sunlit sky. The dove is in flight, and the background is a warm, golden light with soft clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

persuade governments to fully implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires effective and sustained action at a grass-roots level. In reply, then, to the question, “*Who will ensure that human rights are respected?*” the primary architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt, has given an answer that rings with eloquence and truth:

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”





## UNITED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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