



RFK DEFENDERS

VIDEO VIGNETTE ACTIVITY 1: SONITA ALIZADEH

TOPIC

CREATIVE VOICES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Analyze song lyrics to learn about the topic of child marriage
- Identify causes and consequences of child marriage
- Explain how Sonita Alizadeh has influenced local, national, and international laws
- Collaborate to develop ideas for using creative arts in defense of human rights

OVERVIEW

In this activity, students learn about the life of Afghan rapper and activist Sonita Alizadeh and her brave fight against child marriage. Students investigate other human rights defenders who have used creative arts to defend human rights and are challenged to find their own way put their artistic talents to use as a human rights defender.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Article 3: Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person
- Article 4: Prohibition Against Slavery (forced marriage is a form of human trafficking)
- Article 16: Right to Consent to Marriage
- Article 19: Right to Freedom and Expression
- Article 26: Right to Education

TARGET AUDIENCE

Social Studies, Language Arts, Fine Arts, Grades 9–12

ACTIVITY DURATION

One to two 45–60 minute class periods

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- All humans have basic rights that are universal and transcend the rights granted by the nations in which they live.
- We have a collective responsibility to protect and defend the human rights of people everywhere.
- Child marriage violates fundamental human rights.
- The creative arts are an effective mechanism to advocate for social change.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are human rights and why are they important?
- Why do human rights need to be protected?
- How can people use creative arts to advocate for social change in defense of human rights?

MATERIALS

- Lyrics from "Daughters for Sale" by Sonita Alizadeh handout (display or distribute one per student)
- Summary of Human Rights List from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (display or distribute one per student)
- Creative Voices for Change Activity Sheet (one per student)
- Can't, Can, Will Activity Sheet (one per student)
- Access to the biographies of Van Jones, Malala Yousafzai, and Kailash Satyarthi available on the Interactive Map
- Internet and computer access
- Optional: "[Daughters for Sale](#)" video (Duration: 3:49)
 - In this video, Sonita Alizadeh visually illustrates some of the emotionally and physically painful consequences of child marriage. Sonita appears bruised and battered and has a barcode on her forehead to symbolize how child brides often feel like commodities, rather than valued humans with individual rights.
 - Be sure to preview the video before sharing it with students.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/LINKS

Sonita Alizadeh was born in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan during a time of hardship and difficulty. At 10 years old, her family tried to sell her into marriage to help make ends meet. At 14, they fled to Iran. While there, she was inspired by Iranian rappers to speak out about important human rights issues. When, at age 16, her family tried once again to sell her into marriage, she wrote a rap song about child marriage and posted it to YouTube. It went viral, and a nonprofit group in the United States helped her relocate to Utah, where she continues to share her story and fights to end child marriage.

Child marriage is a human rights violation that emerges from poverty and gender inequality. Around the world, one in five women is married before they reach the age of 18. However, child marriage is not evenly distributed among the regions of the world. In some regions, as many as half of women are married as children. These marriages are often arranged, meaning brides have little or no say in who they marry, violating women's' human right to consent to marriage. Women who are forced into marriage as children are less likely to continue their education, more likely to be abused by their frequently older husbands, and are at a higher risk for complications during pregnancy.

Resources:

- [Child Marriage](#) website from The United Nations Population Fund
- [Girls' Voices](#) articles from Girls Not Brides

- Human Rights Defenders' Interactive Map

This activity is sequenced in four phases: Ask, Analyze, Apply, and Act:

- Ask: The students will ask and answer the 5W + 1H questions about child marriage using the lyrics from "Daughters for Sale" and be introduced to the focus question. (Day 1: 15 minutes)
- Analyze: The students will analyze resources and collect evidence to address the focus question (Day 1: 30 minutes)
- Apply: The students will complete an activity that requires them to use knowledge gained earlier in the activity (Day 2: 30 minutes)
- Act: The students will explain how they will use what they have learned about Sonita Alizadeh's activism and use of art to defend human rights in their day to day lives (Day 2: 15 minutes)

PROCEDURE

Ask

1. Before class begins, either display the lyrics to "Daughters for Sale" or distribute copies. If appropriate, consider showing the music video to the class or have it playing while students enter.
2. Begin the class by reading, or asking a student to read, the lyrics to "Daughters for Sale." Afterward, direct students to discuss with a partner what they think the song is about and who could have written it. Ask volunteers to share their predictions, using specific lyrics to support their thinking. Tell students the song was written by Sonita Alizadeh, a young woman from Afghanistan.
3. Ask, "When you hear the term "human rights" what comes to mind? What human right do you think is being violated here? How do you think child marriage violates human rights?"
4. Display or distribute Summary of Human Rights List from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Then, share the following definition of human rights from the United Nations website and ask students if it helps clarify or add context to their thinking about the connection between Sonita's song and human rights violations
"Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination."
5. Tell students that they are going to use Sonita's song to teach themselves about the issue of child marriage. Have students take out a sheet of paper (or a digital device, if available) and write the following in a list on the left-hand side of the page or document: "Who?", "What?", "When?", "Where?", "Why?", and "How?" with enough space next to each question to take notes. Give students about 10 minutes to read the lyrics and look for answers to their questions as they relate to child marriage.

Teacher Note: If necessary, consider giving students an example, such as the following: Read the first stanza together and model writing down "young girls" next to "Who?" Ask students if any other questions can be answered in the first stanza. Model writing "Iran" next to "Where?" For additional support or to reduce task time, have students work in small groups or with a partner.

¹ United Nations: Human Rights retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/>.

6. After 10 minutes, ask students to discuss what they learned about child marriage from the song, along with any questions they still have about Sonita or child marriage.

Teacher Note: If time allows during this activity or later, have students to do additional research using the resources listed in the Background Knowledge section above or other resources you have vetted.

Analyze

7. Ask students to describe why they think Sonita wrote the song. Encourage students to quote lyrics that support their thinking.
8. Have students watch the Sonita video, then engage in a group discussion around the following questions:
 - Based on what you saw in the story, is Sonita a valid and reliable source of information about child marriage? If so, why so? If not, why not?
 - What are the causes of child marriage? Why would parents force their daughter to marry?
 - What are the consequences of child marriage?
 - How do you think child marriage affects those forced to marry?
 - Why is it important for people to be able to choose who they marry?
 - How might you help someone who doesn't have that choice?
 - How did Sonita use creative arts to defend human rights?
 - Do you think it was an effective use of creative arts? If so, why so? If not, why not?
 - What are some other examples of people using creative arts to advocate for social change in the defense of human rights?
 - What do you think it means to “use your voice?” Does it always mean literally using your voice?
 - Why is it important that people “use their voices” to protect the human rights of other people?
9. Explain to students that their discussions have led them to the focus question that will frame the next phase of the activity: How can I use creative arts to protect and defend human rights?

Apply

10. Explain to students that they will be learning about other human rights defenders who used creative arts in different ways to defend and protect the human rights of others. Display the focus question: How can I use creative arts to protect and defend human rights? Tell students that while they read, they should be thinking about how the defenders used their artistic talents to fight for the human rights of others.
11. Hand out the Voices for Change Activity Sheet. Have students read the biographies of Van Jones, Malala Yousafzai, and Elie Wiesel on the Interactive Map and record the information they are gathering. Sonita's information has been completed to provide an example. Explain that while biographical details are important, students should be analyzing how the defenders used their voices (e.g., rap, blogging, writing stories) and whose rights they defended with their voices. Allow 5–7 minutes for students to complete this part of the activity.

Teacher Note: The intent of this activity is for students to quickly gather information that will help them begin to think of ways they might use creative arts to defend human rights. Encourage students to go back to the Speak Truth to Power website and the Interactive Map at a later time to learn more about human rights defenders.

12. Direct students to use the information they are gathering, along with their personal experiences, interests, and passions, to complete the final section related to their focus question: How can I use creative arts to protect and defend human rights?

Teacher Note: If time allows, encourage students to explore the [Speak Truth to Power website](#) to learn more about human rights and human rights defenders.

13. Meet as a class and discuss students' responses. Have students identify the human rights issue they are interested in. Record their responses so students can identify others who share their interests.

Act

14. Divide the class into small groups based on their shared human rights interests.
15. Distribute the Can't, Can, and Will Activity Sheet to each student. Explain that big problems can sometimes seem daunting but remind them that big problems are easier to solve when we work with others, break the problem down into smaller, more manageable problems, and identify specific actions that can be taken to move toward resolution. The Can't, Can, Will Activity Sheet will help them work together to identify how they want to respond to the focus question: How can I use creative arts to protect and defend human rights? (Students should focus on the shared human rights issue they selected.)
16. As students work together, they should record in the I Can column actions they feel they can accomplish. When finished, each student should move one Can action over to the Will column. Have students collaborate to find ways to combine their creative arts interests/skills/talents. For example, a student who likes to draw may enjoy partnering with a student who can include the artwork in an informative video.
17. Tell students there are opportunities for them to share their creative arts human rights projects with others. Show students the websites for the [Speak Truth Video Contest](#) and the [Speak Up, Sing Out Music Contest](#). If time allows, share some of the entries with students; encourage students to visit the sites on their own or with their group members and consider entering.
18. Remind students that their exploration of human rights and ways to defend them does not have to end today; they can pursue their interests and learn more on their own. Encourage students to continue to research organizations and programs related to the human rights issue they are interested in defending. Be sure to provide opportunities in the coming weeks and months for students to share their projects and update classmates on their progress.

Connections

Connect to Student Lives	Connect to Contemporary Events	Connect to the Future
While child marriage may seem foreign to students, they may see examples in their own schools or communities of human rights being violated.	Not only is child marriage still a global issue, but around the world, the human rights of women, minorities, and the poor are regularly violated.	This activity is designed to show students the power their voices and to encourage them to use that power to help others in the world around them.

LYRICS FROM “DAUGHTERS FOR SALE” BY SONITA ALIZADEH

Let me whisper to you my words
So no one hears that I speak of the selling of girls.
My voice shouldn't be heard, as it is against Sharia.
Women must remain silent: this is this city's tradition.

I scream to make up for a woman's lifetime of silence.
I scream on behalf of the deep wounds on my body.
I scream for a body exhausted in its cage,
A body that broke under the price tags you put on it.

I am fifteen years old, from Herat.
A few have come as suitors and I am confused.
I am perplexed by this tradition and these people.
They sell girls for money. No right to choose.

Now, my father is concerned about the cost of life.
Whoever pays more the girl is his.
If I knew that you would keep count of my costs,
If I knew that you would keep track of my bites,
I would have returned hungry from the table
Or I would have eaten your leftovers.

Like all other girls, I am caged.
I am seen as a sheep grown only to be devoured.
They repeat it is time to sell me.
I am a person too, these are my eyes and ears.
Have you ever seen a sheep complaining about death?
Have you ever seen a sheep as emotional as I am?

By God, I can't live far from you.
Cannot change you with anything, no matter how in need.
But you... alas, what should I say?
I know you gave birth to me, how can I repay?

Let me scream. I am tired of the silence.
Lift your hands off me. I feel suffocated.
You didn't converse with me for so long
That I keep checking to assure myself I am alive.

Voiceless, I am filled with doubt.
If I am dead, how can I feel the whips?
This is your city's tradition for girls to remain silent,
Then tell me, what can I do to prove my personhood?

Maybe escape and suicide are terribly stupid,
But what can one do if there is no support?
But even if you pull out all my hair,
I will not do anything to embarrass you.

If selling me will bring you happiness,
I will try to lie: "Everything is great."
I hope that God will keep your smiles
And my smile, I will exchange with your pain.

But I wish you would review the Quran.
I wish you knew it doesn't say women are for sale.
Hold on, I need some peace.
Leave me alone, I am sick of the makeup.
My bruised face will not heal with makeup.
What you did to me, infidels won't do to Muslims.
I swear it hurts when there are no feelings,
When you are in a stranger's embrace.

Continuing my verse is difficult.
Your happiness is all I want.
But look at me and remember my face.
I was the one up on your bedside all night.
I am leaving, thankful of your kindness,
But I am worried. Who will take care of you?
I am leaving, but just in case you miss me,
I leave my doll here for you.
Don't let her cry like me.
Don't sell her. Let her be a gift to remember me by.

LIST OF HUMAN RIGHTS FROM THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 1: Right to Equality

Article 2: Freedom from Discrimination

Article 3: Right to Life, Liberty, and Personal Security

Article 4: Freedom from Slavery

Article 5: Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment

Article 6: Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law

Article 7: Right to Equality before the Law

Article 8: Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal

Article 9: Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile

Article 10: Right to Fair Public Hearing

Article 11: Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty

Article 12: Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, and Correspondence

Article 13: Right to Free Movement in and out of the Country

Article 14: Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution

Article 15: Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change It

Article 16: Right to Marriage and Family

Article 17: Right to Own Property

Article 18: Freedom of Belief and Religion

Article 19: Freedom of Opinion and Information

Article 20: Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Article 21: Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections

Article 22: Right to Social Security

Article 23: Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions

Article 24: Right to Rest and Leisure

Article 25: Right to Adequate Living Standard

Article 26: Right to Education

Article 27: Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of Community

Article 28: Right to a Social Order that Articulates this Document

Article 29: Right to fulfill Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development

Article 30: Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the above Rights

Person	Whose Rights They Defended	How They Used Creative Arts to Defend Human Rights
Sonita Alizadeh	women children victims of child marriage	She wrote a rap song about her experiences with child marriage and posted a music video online to share her story with the world.
Van Jones		
Malala Yousafzai		
Elie Wiesel		
YOUR NAME:	Which human rights issue am I most interested in defending/protecting? Why?	How might I use my voice to defend and protect people whose human rights are being violated?

<p>I CAN'T stop all human rights abuse by myself.</p>
<p>I CAN...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
<p>I WILL...</p>

NATIONAL STANDARDS

College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

D1.5.9-12 Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.

D2.Civ.7.9-12 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.

D2.Civ.10.9-12 Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.12.9-12 Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

D2.Civ.14.9-12 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

D2.Geo.5.9-12 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.

D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain

RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.