



**ROBERT F.  
KENNEDY  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS**

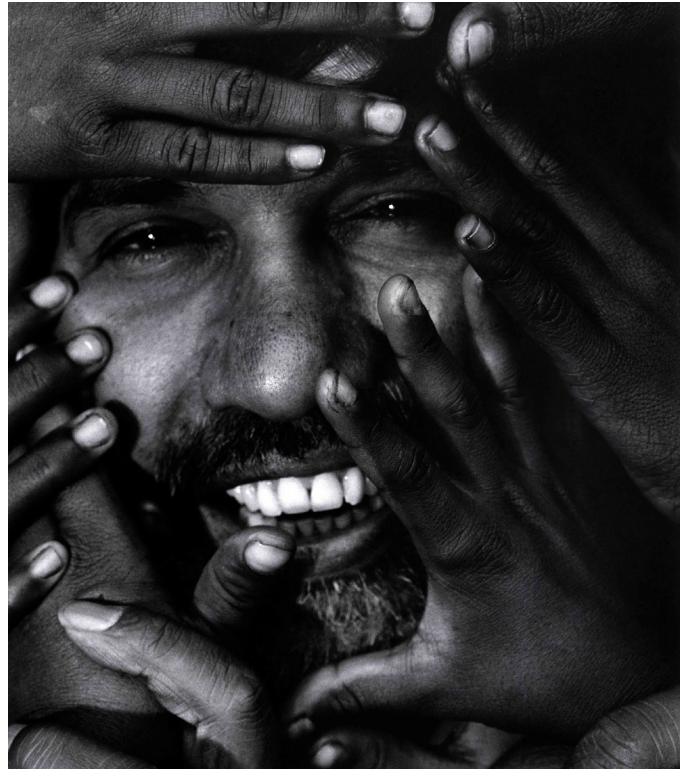
# **SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER**

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

**KAILASH SATYARTHI: CHILD LABOR**

# KAILASH SATYARTHI

(HE/HIM/HIS)



**“SMALL CHILDREN OF 6, 7 YEARS AND OLDER ARE FORCED TO WORK 14 HOURS A DAY, WITHOUT BREAKS OR A DAY OF REST. IF THEY CRY FOR THEIR PARENTS, THEY ARE BEATEN SEVERELY, SOMETIMES HANGED UPSIDE-DOWN FROM THE TREES AND EVEN BRANDED OR BURNED WITH CIGARETTES.”**

Kailash Satyarthi was born in India in 1954. When he started school, he was deeply affected by the fact that many children were unable to be educated because their families couldn't afford it. At age 11, he organized a soccer club and used the membership dues to pay the tuition of disadvantaged children. He also asked for parents to donate their children's used books so that he could give them to students in need for the next school year.

As an adult, Satyarthi earned advanced degrees in engineering and worked as a teacher. However, by 1980, he left his lucrative career and founded Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) to create an India in which children receive free education and are no longer exploited. BBA helped the government perform raids on shops using child labor and directly extricated children themselves. By 2015, the organization had rescued over 86,000 children from slavery and trafficking.

Satyarthi has devoted his life to shining a light on exploitation and insisting on education. In 2014, he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Malala Yousafzai “for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.”

# INTERVIEW WITH KAILASH SATYARTHI

## INTERVIEW FROM KERRY KENNEDY'S BOOK *SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER*, 2000.

Bonded labor is a form of modern-day slavery, where ordinary people lose the most basic freedom of movement, the freedom of choice. They are forced to work long hours with little rest. Over 5 million children are born into such slavery. Their parents or grandparents may have borrowed a petty sum from a local landlord and consequently generations and generations have to work for the same master. They are prisoners—forbidden to leave. Another 5 million children are sent to work when their parents receive a token advance, and this small amount is used to justify unending years of hardship.

The conditions of bonded labor are completely inhuman. Small children of 6, 7 years and older are forced to work 14 hours a day, without breaks or a day of rest. If they cry for their parents, they are beaten severely, sometimes hanged upside-down from the trees and even branded or burned with cigarettes. They are often kept half-fed because the employers feel that if they are fed properly, then they will be sleepy and slow in their work. In many cases they are not even permitted to talk to each other or laugh out loud because it makes the work less efficient. It is real medieval slavery.

We believe that no other form of human rights violation can be worse than this. This is the most shameful defeat of Indian law, our country's constitution, and the United Nations Charter. Our most effective armor in this situation is to educate the masses and to create concern and awareness against this social evil. In addition, we attempt to identify areas where child slavery is common. We conduct secret raids to free these children and return them to their families. Follow-up on their education and rehabilitation is an equally vital step in the whole process.

We lobby different sectors of society, parliamentarians, religious groups, trade unions, and others, who we believe could influence the situation. We have about a hundred full-time and part-time associates in our group. But we have also

formed a network of over 470 nongovernmental organizations in India and other South Asian countries.

For us, working with enslaved children has never been an easy task. It very often involves quite traumatic situations. These children have been in bondage ever since the time they can remember. Liberty for them is an unfamiliar word. They don't know what it is like to be "free." For us, the foremost challenge is to return to them their lost childhood. It is not as simple as it might sound—we really have to work hard at it. For instance, one of the children we've freed was a 14-year-old boy, Nageshwar, who was found branded with red-hot iron rods. Coincidentally, at that time, an official from the RFK Center for Human Rights was in India and she came across the boy in New Delhi. The trauma Nageshwar went through had made him lose his speech. He was even unable to explain his condition. It was only later through other children that we came to know about what had happened to him. We really have to work hard to reach such children.

As you may be well aware, marches and walks have been an integral part of our Indian tradition. Mahatma Gandhi marched several times to educate the people (and also to learn something himself!). Keeping in view their strong impact, especially when it comes to mass mobilization, marches have always occupied a prominent place in our overall strategy to combat child slavery. Marching doesn't mean that we are trying to impose anything. Our demonstrations have about 200 to 250 marchers, half of whom are children—children who have been freed from bondage and slavery. They act as living examples of the dire need to educate people about both the negative impact of the bonded labor system and the positive impact of their newly gained freedom. The other marchers are representatives from human rights organizations, trade unions, and social organizations who join in solidarity. We go to different villages every day, and conduct public meetings, street theater, cultural activities, and press conferences to put across our message to the people.

Two years ago we welcomed the prime minister's promise to act against child labor, if not against bonded labor. We were hoping for some positive results, some impetus to reforms. But even after all this time, no action has taken place. It is very unfortunate. The pronouncement initially created some fear in the minds of employers, but now it is going to prove counterproductive to reform.

People by now realized it was nothing more than a political gimmick and that there was no real will behind it. The employees are a varied lot. When a child is bonded to a street restaurant, the employer is usually an ordinary person of some remote village or town. But when children are employed in carpet weaving, or the glass industry, or the brassware industry, the employers are "big" people. They generate a lot of foreign exchange through exports and are always considered favorably by the government.

Despite this, I am not in favor of a total boycott or blanket ban on the export of Indian carpets. Instead I have suggested that consumers buy only those carpets that are guaranteed made without child labor. Consumer education is a must to generate demand for such carpets. We believe that if more and more consumers pressed this issue, more and more employers would be compelled to free child workers and replace them with adults. It is unfortunate that in the last few years in India, Pakistan, and Nepal, the numbers of children in servitude have gone up, paralleling the growth in exports. For instance, today in India we have about 300,000 children in the carpet industry alone with the export market of over U.S. \$600 million a year. Ten or 15 years ago, the number of children was somewhere between 75,000 to 100,000 and at that time the exports were not for more than U.S. \$100 million. The direct relation between these two is clearly evident.

This fact compelled us to launch a consumer campaign abroad. Health and environment have been the prime concerns among the consumers in the West—in Germany, in the U.S. But the issue of children was never linked with this consumer consciousness. People thought of environment and animal rights, but they never thought about children. But in the last couple years, I am proud

that the child labor issue has gained momentum and has become one of the big campaigns in the world. What began with awareness and publicity has now expanded to issues of compliance.

We have recommended the establishment of an independent and professional, internationally credible body to inspect, monitor, and finally certify carpets and other products have been made without child labor. We formed the Rugmark Foundation as an independent body with nongovernmental organizations like UNICEF. They appoint field inspectors, and give all carpets a quote number that gives the details of the production history of the carpet. The labels are woven in the backside of the carpet, and nobody can remove or replace them. This is a significant step in ending this exploitation.

But even this task of educating Western consumers is not so easy. It does involve its share of risks. For example, a German TV film company, after initial research, exposed the employment of children in the carpet export industry. The story was of an importer in Germany, IKEA, who had announced that they would deal only with child-labor-free goods. So reporters started investigating. They came to my office and ashram and interviewed me. Their interview was of a very general nature but when the film was shown later it mentioned Sheena Export in detail, which resulted in the cancellation of a big order from IKEA. Sheena Export, one of the biggest players in the field, became notorious, which affected their exports to other countries, including the United States, which was worth U.S. \$200 million a year. The company is politically very powerful (one of the brothers is the transport minister in the state of Haryana) and so they decided to fight back.

I know that the entire carpet industry, or the majority of it, opposes me. They believe I am their enemy; they just want to eliminate me. They wanted to take me to Haryana, the state known for the worst human rights violations, fake encounters, illegal custody, and killings of people in jail and in police stations. I was arrested on June 1. They wanted to arrest me legally, but they never informed the Delhi police, which is required under Indian law. Because the police came from another state and had no jurisdiction, they couldn't legally arrest me in my

home in Delhi. But they tried. I was able to make phone calls and consult a few people on this, and finally I told them that they could not arrest me. The Haryana police did not pay any attention and threatened to break in. They took out their pistols. As you can imagine, their presence had created terror in the whole neighborhood. I was finally arrested and later released on bail. It was not the first time, though it was the first that such a big plot was cooked up against me. At times in the past I have faced such threats. Two of my colleagues have also been killed.

I think of it all as a test. This is a moral examination that one has to pass. If you decide to stand up against such social evils, you have to be fully prepared—not just physically or mentally, but also spiritually. One has to pull oneself together for the supreme sacrifice—and people have done so in the past. Robert F. Kennedy did, Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, John Kennedy—the list can go on endlessly. Resistance—it is there always, we only have to prepare ourselves for it. We will have to face it, sooner or later. It is the history of humanity, after all.



# CHILD LABOR

## LESSON GRADE LEVELS 6 TO 8

### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CHILD LABOR

#### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- **ARTICLE 4:** Right to freedom from slavery.
- **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 an education.

#### TIME REQUIREMENT

120 minutes

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why does child labor exist?
- How can I make a difference in ending child labor?
- What examples of child labor can I find closest to my community?

#### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the causes and conditions of child labor in South Asia (rug-making industry), Ecuador (banana industry), and the United States (migrant farm workers).
- Explain how Kailash Satyarthi fights against child labor in South Asia.
- Understand how Rugmark and Fairtrade advocate for fair labor practices.
- Determine the causes of child labor and what can be done to prevent it.
- Research one area or industry where child labor is prevalent and prepare an action to address it.
- Create an action plan to fight child labor.

#### COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9

#### CONCEPTS

- Bonded labor
- Child slavery
- Migrant labor
- Human dignity
- Courage

#### VOCABULARY

- Bonded labor
- Parliamentarians
- Mass mobilization
- Prominent
- Solidarity
- Boycott
- Fair trade
- Migrant worker
- South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude
- Advocacy
- Emancipate
- Caste system
- Untouchable

#### TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

- Computer, projection equipment for online videos

#### MATERIALS

- A banana
- Student journals
- [Article on child labor on the banana plantations of Ecuador](#)
- ["Price of Free" Documentary](#)
- [Stolen Childhoods resource](#)
- [Migrant children](#)
- Dateline NBC's ["America Now: Children of the Harvest."](#) July 19, 2010. Parts 4-6 are the best.

# ANTICIPATORY SET

- Show a banana to students.
  - Ask: “What do you see?”
  - Instruct students to describe what they see in their journals.
- Ask students to share their responses with a partner.
- Ask one or two students to share. If the students described what they saw on the banana, but did not describe where the banana came from or who is behind the banana industry, ask “How did this banana get to the grocery store?” Allow about five minutes for students to respond.

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1

- Have students sit in a circle.
- Give students handout no. 1, “Questions from a Worker Who Reads.”
- Ask students to read it silently, then read it aloud to them.
- Ask the following questions:
  - What literary device does the poet use over and over? (Allusion.) Do you recognize any of the allusions?
  - Why does the poet use this device in particular? (He wants the reader to think about important historical events and figures who were made possible by an army of nameless, mostly exploited workers.)
  - What is this poem about? What is the author’s purpose/point?
  - Is there anything you don’t understand?
  - What does the poet mean by the question, “Who paid the piper?” What does this mean for us?
- For sixth grade students:
  - Hand students the article [“Tainted Harvest”](#)
  - Read the section of the article called “Child Workers.”

### TEACHER TIP

This article would also be useful in seventh or eighth grade for second-language learners and students with disabilities.

- For students in grades seven and eight, or gifted and talented students in grade six:
  - Hand students [this Human Rights Watch article](#)
  - Ask students to read the article with a partner.

---

## ACTIVITY 2

- Show students the following clips with Kailash Satyarthi:
  - [Video from World Vision Australia](#)
  - [YouTube clip from the Global March for Education on child labor in India](#)
- Instruct students to read the Speak Truth to Power interview with Kailash Satyarthi featured in this lesson plan.
- Ask students to answer the questions found on the worksheet “Meet the Defenders: Kailash Satyarthi.”

- Engage students in a classroom discussion using these questions:
  - Are children who work in carpet factories in South Asia slaves? Why or why not?
  - Why are these children sold into slavery?
  - Why do you think factories like this still exist in India even though child labor is illegal there?
  - How does the Rugmark Foundation help fight child labor?
  - What can we do as Americans to defend child laborers in South Asia?
- After discussing the responses to the quotation, do one or more of the following activities
  - Show students [Fair Trade: The Story](#) by TransFair
  - They could also see Green America's website, [What is Fairtrade?](#)
  - Show students [the GoodWeave label](#) so they know which carpets are guaranteed to be produced without child labor.
  - Bring in Fairtrade chocolate, coffee, and/or bananas to show students the label.

---

### ACTIVITY 3

- Show students the following videos on child labor in the United States agricultural industry:
  - AFT produced a video, [Lost Futures](#)
  - Dateline NBC's "[America Now: Children of the Harvest](#)," July 19, 2010. Parts 4–6 are the best.
- Engage students in a class discussion using the following questions:
  - Why does child labor occur in the United States?
  - What can we do to prevent this?
  - Who is in charge?
  - What are the laws about child labor in the U.S.?
  - What can be done about them?

---

### ACTIVITY 4

- Ask students to read the following quotation, and ask them how it applies to some of the stories or articles they have read throughout these lessons.
  - *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”* –Margaret Mead

#### TEACHER TIP

Students could play the [Banana Split Fairtrade game](#)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does Fairtrade certification help fight the problem of child labor? How does it help workers and the environment? (Certification means no child labor was used in production, parents are paid a living wage so that children do not need to work, profits are invested in the community for education, health care, etc.)
- What products can you find in your grocery store that are Fairtrade certified? (Examples: coffee, chocolate, sometimes bananas.)
- Fairtrade organic bananas cost about 99 cents a pound, vs. about 69 cents for regular bananas. Would you be willing to pay the extra cost? Why or why not?
- How can we get our grocery stores to get more Fairtrade certified products?



# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, many other international documents—also called treaties, covenants, resolutions, or conventions—have been drafted to develop these rights further. Countries commit to protect the rights recognized in these treaties by ratifying them, and sometimes a specific institution is created within the UN to monitor their compliance.

Here are examples of relevant international documents:

## CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

- **ARTICLE 19:** Right to be free from discrimination.
- **ARTICLE 27:** Prohibition of torture and of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

- **ARTICLE 28:** Right to liberty and security of person.
- **ARTICLE 32:** Right to recognition as a person before the law.

## CONVENTION NO. 138 ON THE MINIMUM AGE FOR ADMISSION TO EMPLOYMENT

## CONVENTION NO. 182 ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

## INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

## INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

*For more information, visit the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' website: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org).*

# BECOMING A DEFENDER

- Instruct students to choose one of the following to become defenders of human rights:
- Write a letter to your U.S. senator or representative to ask them to sponsor [HR 5117, Education for All Act of 201](#).
- Write a detailed letter of opinion or inquiry to someone connected with these issues, for example, the labor secretary, agriculture secretary, the CEOs of supermarkets, Dole, Chiquita, or other corporations, or to a carpet retailer. In this letter, you can both make a strong point and back it up with evidence from class and your own research, or you can raise important questions. Remember to cite at least two sources in your letter. You must use proper business letter format and include the address of the person to whom you are writing.
- Speak to the manager of your local grocery store or coffee shop and ask him or her to sell Fairtrade certified products, if they don't already. Explain why this is important.
- Write a poem about child labor and send it to your local newspaper, state representative, or member of Congress. You may also be able to publish your poem on the web. Make sure you include information from at least two sources. Your poem should be at least 20 lines.
- Create a poster about the issue to teach other students. You must use at least two sources. Use your own words (no plagiarizing), with lettering large enough to be read from a distance, and include graphics to illustrate your points. Display your poster prominently in your school.

- Write a story to share with the class in the form of an illustrated children’s book. You may use PowerPoint to do this, but it will be printed out in book format. You may work on this with a partner.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation to teach others about what you have learned. Email a copy to a government official or executive in the carpet or banana industry who has the power to make a change.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the problem of child labor and what readers can do about it. You may want to encourage readers to support the Education for All Act.
- Produce a song or video. (You would need to accompany this with a paragraph explaining and defending your point of view.) You can write new lyrics to an existing song. Sing your song or show your video to the class. You may work on this with a partner.
- Visit AFT’s site on child labor in the United States for an excellent overview of the history, state, and past and current legislation regarding child labor on America’s farms:
- See suggestions for current legislation and actions students can take on AFT website, Part III: What Can Be Done?
- This section is intended to provide alternatives that address the problem of American child farm workers. These alternatives include amending existing laws, improving enforcement of those laws, and expanding services for child farm workers. The options presented, however, are by no means comprehensive. As you review them, consider which are most feasible and most desirable, then try to develop your own strategies.
- The final step in a public policy project is one you will need to take on your own— deciding exactly what policy should be recommended. As you review the alternatives in this section and develop your own ideas, try to make a list of the objectives, costs (or disadvantages), benefits (or advantages), and practicality of each. When your list is complete, review it in order to help you decide which specific policy to recommend. In making your recommendation, keep in mind the need not only to defend your choice, but also to say why it is more important to pursue than the other options being considered.
- Motivation, Education and Training: An excerpt from the video Stolen Childhoods that highlights one program for serving child farm workers.

## EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Visit <https://www.we.org/>
- Create an action plan to raise funds for the Adopt a Village Campaign or the Brick by Brick campaign to build a school in a developing country.
- Read “The Circuit” by Francisco Jimenez, a short story told through the voice of a migrant worker child, written by a former migrant worker.
- Visit The Fair Food Program to see the current state of farm workers in this country and what is being done to make their lives better.