



Speak Truth to Power Arts Program How-to Manual

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

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RIGHTS



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Theatre lesson plan

Every Voice Counts

UDHR: Articles 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 15, 18, 19, 25, 28

Guiding Questions

- How do we identify with victims of social injustice?
- How does the way society treats these victims affect the way they feel about themselves?
- How can we create the positive change needed to build a cooperative and considerate society?

Time Requirements: minimum 60 minutes, maximum 150 minutes

Objectives

How can we use theater to better understand defenders of human rights and ourselves in order to bring about positive change in our communities and the greater world? After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify how injustice affects the individual
- Compare and Contrast our own lives with those who have experienced injustices
- Understand how to problem solve and bring about positive change through the use of Tableaux
- Understand Defenders of human rights by embodying their stories through theatre exercises

Vocabulary: tableaux, injustice, social justice, roll on wall, biased

Technology (optional): Clips of performances of the Speak Truth to Power play <https://rfkhumanrights.org/work/teaching-human-rights/the-play>

Note to teachers: Activities can be taught together or independently depending on time

Anticipatory Set

Group game: ODD PERSON OUT

1. Have the students stand in a circle
2. Choose one student in the circle to begin. This student will choose someone across the circle and say that person's name. The chosen person will say the original person's name (person 1: "John" person 2: "Nancy") and then switch places.
3. Then 'Nancy' will say another student's name, and the process will repeat until everyone has switched places.
4. The last person chosen will go into the center of the circle.
5. Choose a person to begin this next section. They will make eye contact and nod to the person across from them in the circle and will attempt to switch places with that person. The person in the middle of the circle must try to steal a place of the two switching places. Whoever doesn't have a place in the circle after swapping places will move to the center of the circle.
6. Only 2 people can cross at once so everyone can be aware of each other.



Group discussion

Ask the students the following questions:

1. How did it feel to be the “in person” in the circle, and the “odd person” out?
2. Was it easy to “fit in” when you were not included in or able to understand the communication happening around you?
3. How might this relate to others who have felt left out?
4. How does this play out in your classroom, school, community, or the world?

Activity 1

ROLE ON WALL: Based on monologues from “Speak Truth To Power”

Each group will be assigned (or select) a monologue from the Speak Truth To Power Play.

1. Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 (depending on number of participants) by having students count off around the room. Have all of the 1's go to one corner, 2's go to another place in the room, etc. to divide the group fairly. Ask each group to quietly read one of the monologues from the play.
2. Give each group a large piece of chart paper with the outline of a human body.
3. On the inside of the body- brainstorm ideas of how victims of violence might feel about themselves and write descriptions on the inside of the body (proud, confident, lonely, self sufficient, etc). Try to fill the outline with as many descriptive words as possible.
4. On the outside of the body, brainstorm ideas of how the oppressors could see the victim (How could the victim be targeted? What could some of the oppressors biases be?)
5. Post the pictures close to each group so that their work is visible as they perform their tableaux in activity 2.
6. DISCUSS each groups' Role on Wall with the following questions:
 - a. What are the similarities/differences between each group's victim?
 - b. What are the differences between what we think the person feels on the inside and how they are seen by their oppressors on the outside? Are there any characteristics that blend between the inside and outside (similarities)?
 - c. Do you think the characters believe the views of their oppressors?
 - d. How can we relate this to our own lives?
 - e. If we did a role on wall of ourselves- what would it look like?
 - f. (if there's time each person can draw their own roll on wall about themselves and society)

Activity 2

LIVING PICTURE based on the roll on wall activity

1. Each group will choose an aspect from the inside and the outside of this person and create a living picture based on their human rights defender's monologue. One person in the group will take on the role of sculptor/director to make sure the final picture is clear for the audience. Once the group has chosen a scene, the group and the sculptor will work together to form



a picture that best represents this scene and how the person feels on the inside, and how society sees them on the outside. The sculptor will say “1, 2, 3 TABLEAU” and the group will form the picture. PRACTICE A FEW TIMES.

2. At 15 minutes the teacher calls time and each group will demonstrate their Tableau. After each group demonstrates, the class will discuss:
 - What did you see in the picture?
 - What was represented?
 - How did their bodies tell a story?
 - What did you feel while watching the Tableaux?
3. The performing group will explain what their tableau is and how they used their ROLE ON WALL to create their picture. This will continue with the other groups.
4. Go back to your group and choose the OPPOSITE ACTION of the first tableau to create a positive change (for example, if the current tableau represents oppression, create a tableau that demonstrates absolute freedom). The new tableau should be a solution to the first living picture.
5. Present the new Tableaux.

DISCUSS HOW IT FEELS TO CREATE THIS POSITIVE CHANGE WITH THEIR BODIES

Activity 3

TABLEAUX of the opening monologue of Speak Truth To Power: Voices From Beyond the Dark

Courage begins with one voice.

It's that simple.

I did what I had to do.

That is what we know.

You walk into the corridor of death and you know.

They know. They can't say they don't know.

They can't say they don't walk into this with their eyes open.

You walk into the corridor of death and you know. You know this moment might be your last.

You walk into the corridor of death. . .

. . . and you know, you know this moment might be your last.

That is what you know.

I know what it is to wait in the dark for torture and what it is to wait in the dark for truth.

I did what I had to do.

Anything else would have tasted like ashes.

They can't say they don't know.

If we don't do this who will?

1. Break down the speech into various parts and give parts to each group (or if the group is small, give lines to individuals)
2. Students will go back to their groups and form “LIVING PICTURES - TABLEAUX” based on different parts of the speech.
3. During this section, the groups will create a tableau that represents their part of the story. USE THE SCULPTOR. After the tableau is formed, the group will say their part of the speech



(as a group or one person at a time) from their frozen positions. USE ONE GROUP TO DEMONSTRATE THE ACTIVITY. The sculptor/director can point to each person or group to recite their part of the speech.

4. After 15 minutes each group will present their part of the speech
5. THE GOAL IS TO CREATE A LIVING PICTURE OF THIS SPEECH

How does creating these living pictures help you better understand these defenders?

Culminating Activity

RIPPLE OF HOPE TABLEAU

(The idea that one act of courage will ripple other acts of courage)

1. AS A CLASS: Together - they will create/ sculpt the rest of the class in this final tableau.
2. The tableau will reflect the expression RIPPLE OF HOPE.

How does a ripple of hope create change?

END WITH A REFLECTION

Extension Activities

Create tableaux on the experiences of your students. Have the students present them to the class, then build towards writing a play (this will require some lessons on playwriting, improvisation and more ensemble [group] work).

The play or monologues created by students can be integrated into existing Speak Truth To Power monologues.

How to create a call-to-action

Creating a Call To Action is a powerful element of staging the Speak Truth To Power play. A Call To Action capitalizes on the energy in the room after a production, and gives audience members tangible steps to affect change. Calls to Action can also create a memorable event students associate with the play, and can help usher them into a lifetime of activism.

Here are some elements to creating an effective Call To Action:

Step 1

Determine pressing issues in your school or community that need attention

Is there an issue that many of your students struggle with on a daily basis? Does your community have access to the resources it needs? Do your students have access to clean water and healthy food options? Has climate change affected your community? Are your students being affected by anti-immigration policies?

Ask yourself questions like these to help determine an issue that impacts your community members. A strong issue to take on might be one where you know there are personal stories connected, as a key element of organizing and gaining traction is compelling storytelling.

Step 2

What is the change you are trying to affect?

Often the change we seek can only be affected a shift in policy, and therefore the aim of a Call to Action is frequently to make enough noise that policy makers will take notice.

Do you need a new bridge built in your community? Do your students need more options in their school lunches? Do you need more funding for after-school programming?

After you've determined the key element, you must consider your strategy to tip the scales.

Step 3

Determine a clear, simple task audience members can take to bring attention to or help resolve this issue.

Remember that attention spans grow shorter and shorter by the day. In order to engage the most audience members possible, the call to action should be either short and simple, or fun and exciting. If people can partake while they are still in the theater, you will have the greatest chance for participation.



Here are a couple of quick ideas to get your brainstorming rolling

- Setting up a video booth where people can film a short video about why they want that specific thing changed
- Signing a petition
- Tweeting a specific message including their personal story and a hashtag that ties your campaign together
- Writing a card to a policy maker
- Creating some type of art

Step 4

How can a Call To Action be presented to an audience?

When you describe the Call To Action to your audience, tell them what the issue is that you chose, who in the community this issue impacts the most, and why you believe it deserves this type of attention. After you've described the "who", "what", and "why", introduce your "how".

When you're presenting your Call To Action to the audience, the steps should be clear and easy. If you're doing videos for instance, have the booths set up beforehand with enough stations that people won't have to wait in line for very long in order to participate. If you're using a specific hashtag, have signage to make it easy for people to copy. If you want to collect personal stories, provide paper, pens, and a collection station near the door.

The more students you have involved in the setup of each Call To Action, the more investment and enthusiasm you will have. If you create signage, ask everyone to participate who is willing. Ask for volunteers to stand around and answer questions in the lobby after the event. Not only will involving more students in the setup of your Call To Action help you pull it off with more ease, you will be starting these participants off with an even more compelling narrative.

How to create a talkback

The talkback is an opportunity for cast members and Director to engage with their audience post performance. It can be an opportunity to find out directly what an audience thought of the show, what material resonated with them, and to deepen the audience's understanding of the work. If a Call to Action is asked of the audience during the performance, this can be a good opportunity to explain the importance of that CTA.

Have a moderator facilitate the conversation

A strong moderator will make clear where the conversation is going. Focusing on the themes of the play will allow for more focused questions from the audience. Think about raising questions instead of providing answers.

Lay out basic audience ground rules

Some suggestions: be polite, keep questions and comments brief, don't interrupt others.

Aim to keep the conversation to around 30 minutes

If the moderator knows what the focus of the talkback is, the audience will know what the focus of the talkback is. The Speak Truth To Power play can be a lot for audiences to absorb, and this conversation will help them digest the material.

Prepare questions ahead of time for actors, Director or audience members

Some questions to consider: Why was the play produced at this time? What was the most surprising or unexpected part of producing the play? Why are the social issues presented in the play important to the director and/or actors? What do you hope audiences walk away with?

How to generate promotional partnerships

Creating partnerships can really step up your promotion efforts. If you are thoughtful about who you choose to partner with, and you put energy into keeping the partnerships going, your future efforts will be easier, and you'll have more eyes on the show.

Finding partners that share your target audience is key

- Think locally. Are there active organizations on campus? Who are they and what is their focus?
- What are their specialties? Do they make art? Do they make pizzas?
- Think about how you can use each partner's specialization to your advantage. Perhaps you can ask the art club to make materials for you. Maybe the local pizza shop can put the posters up in their restaurant. Get creative!

Share the whole story

- Your partners will buy into the program you're promoting if they fully understand its purpose. Tell them about Speak Truth To Power and what your students are getting out of it. Tell them about your goals for the program.

Make a clear ask

- Be specific in what you would like them to do and why. Don't leave it up to your partner to decide or they might get lost and wait for you to come back with something more solid.
- Keep it simple and give your partner a timeline.

Offer to cross-promote

- Sometimes a partner will want to know what's in it for them. Either way it's a nice thing to offer if you can swing it. It doesn't have to be big or expensive, but it can be specific to them where appropriate.
- One simple way to cross-promote is to offer real estate in the literature for the performance. You can also offer to tweet a thank you or make an announcement at the school.
- Come to the table with ideas so your partner doesn't have to think of them. You don't want them to make an ask you can't even entertain.

Keep in touch

- Continue your relationship with partners through the year if you can. Invite your them to the performance so they can see how they helped it succeed.

How to promote a performance

Amplify your work and the voices in the room with a full house. The bigger your audience, the further your message will be heard. Getting people in the room will also honor all of the effort you and your students put into the Speak Truth To Power performance. Here are a couple of guidelines to get you started:

Determine your audience

- Who is the “low hanging fruit”? Who will definitely come to the performance if they know it’s happening? Parents? Other students? Who needs to see the performance? Who would be most impacted if they saw the performance, but who wouldn’t seek out the show on their own?
- Who is your reach audience? Policy Makers? Donors? Community members?

Figure out where to find your audience

- Where do they physically hang out? The food hall? The Library? The Grocery Store? In an office? Local stores or restaurants?
- Where do they spend time online? Do they use any apps like Instagram or TikTok?

Partner up

- Partnerships can have a huge impact on visibility. Connect with folks in your community to have access to one of your target audiences, like a restaurant owner, a grocery store manager, or a local social media influencer. Ask them if they will post information about your event in their establishment or on their social channels. Local businesses love to help their communities, so connect with them when you can.

Determine your delivery systems

- Perhaps posters will be the most effective tool to reach the audience you’re looking for because you know they frequent certain areas often. No matter what you decide, you should use a couple of different delivery methods for the sake of repetition. Create a little buzz and excitement around the performance and get people talking. Here are a few ideas:
 - Put together a press pack that you can send out to partners to make promotion easier. Include photos you would want them to post on Instagram and Twitter, as well as language they should include. If you are using a specific hashtag, make sure to include it.
 - Have each of your students post on their favorite social media channels about the performance on a specific day to flood news feeds.
 - Call into radio stations
 - Cover the school with chalk ads

Use the tools you have access to

- Schools often have tools accessible to them that will have a high impact. Look into what those things might be and use them to their full potential. Maybe it’s a school-wide video system or morning announcements. Maybe it’s a message board in the main hallway. Find high-impact locations, and get your message out there.

Play considerations

Who will be your audience?

Students? Community members or leaders? What is your intention with your production and what would you like the audience to walk away with? You can consider creating a Call To Action for this performance or incorporate a Talkback at the end of the performance (See: HOW TO Create and Effective Call to Action, and HOW TO Create an Effective Talkback)

Are there issues in your community you would like to illuminate?

You can create your own production using the monologues of Human Rights Defenders who focus on issues that are important to you and your community. You can develop original monologues based on local Defenders. You can do a combination of both!

If you develop new monologues, we suggest reaching out to Defenders you are considering for their permission, and/or share your written piece with them for their approval. It is imperative that the Defenders you present are being represented accurately and honors their life and work.

Length of production?

If developing your own production of the play we recommend keeping the production to around 45 minutes as the themes of monologues are somewhat heavy. If the play exceeds 45 minutes, it is possible that you will lose the attention of some audience members.

What is your budget for the production?

The beauty of the Speak Truth to Power monologues and play is that little staging is needed to create a moving and memorable performance. The original staging of the play, which premiered at The Kennedy Center in Washington DC, 2001, consisted of actors reading monologues from music stands while images of each Defender was projected in the background. The play can be mounted with virtually no budget, or, as seen in other productions around the world, costumes, live music and staging can be incorporated. To see different adaptations of monologues and the Voices from Beyond the Dark play, visit the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Youtube page.

Would you like to perform the full-length version of Ariel Dorfman's play?

Ariel's powerful full-length production is approximately an hour long. If you elect to use his piece, it must be performed in its entirety, as written, and additional monologues may not be added. Please write to our team if you would like to use this play as we will inform Ariel of the production and will send you the necessary requirements.