

When citizens take action in times of crisis:
A lesson plan and Project for 9th graders Civic students inspired by Centropa
film: "Survival in Sarajevo"

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Skill Goals:

1. To experience writing a short essay based on what was seen in the film.
2. To experience making a PowerPoint Presentation.
3. To experience working independently and in a workgroup.

Pedagogical Goals:

1. To learn about the importance of civil society.
2. To be acquainted with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
3. To learn about one voluntary organization that fulfills the meaning of Civil Society.
4. To expose quotes of important Human Rights activists of the 20th century, like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King.

Preparation:

The Civic Education curriculum cannot be taught fully without dealing with the content of Human Rights. In my classes I put a lot of time in teaching each Human Right in order to explain that Rights are the core foundation of every democratic society. We call the Rights basic, as each human being is entitled to them and the state is obligated to protect them. The Rights are: **the Right to Life and Security, Respect, Equality, Freedom, Property and the Right to receive a Fair Legal Process.** In order to fully learn and understand those rights I devote about 10 lessons for that purpose.

Lesson1:

We start the Human Rights unit by reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations in 1948. Most of the Declaration's articles relate to those Basic Rights that are mentioned above, as can be seen from article 1 to 20. The articles 22-26, as I see it, are dealing with more "social rights", i.e. beyond the basic one. For example: *"Article 26: (1) Everyone has the right to education, Article 23: 1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.* I teach those rights as Social Rights. After asking students to explain what the civic meaning of those last articles is, I write what they say as closely to the word-definition of the Social Rights

as we teach it: The Right for Adequate standard of living, for Housing and Shelter, for Education, Appropriate Medical Care and Employee Rights. In Civics we teach that there is no obligation for the government to protect those rights, but rather it chooses whether to endow those right or not.

My homework assignment for them is: to write a few notes about what can be done when the government isn't able to ensure that it's citizen's Basic Rights are protected and Social Rights are granted.

Lesson 2:

The student comes back with different answers. I write their answers on the board and then ask what is the fastest way to make a change in a society, especially in times of crisis:

1. One can run for politics and make a change for weak social groups.
2. One can organize a protest against the government.
3. One can immigrate to another country to seek a better future.
4. One can form a voluntary organization for special groups in society.

We then discuss which kind of crises exists in modern countries. From the answers the students understand that there can be economical, political, ethnical, social crises. We then discuss a little bit about the civil wars that tore Yugoslavia apart during the 90's, and afterwards we watch the Centropa film: "*Survival in Sarajevo*". After the film we have a short discussion about what they saw and their impression of the film.

My homework assignment for them is: to write a short essay about the film according to the next guidelines:

- Watch the film again [here](#).
- Write a one paragraph summary of the film.
- Choose two articles from the Human Right Declaration that were violated in Sarajevo during the siege and explain how La Benvolencija's activity succeeded to realize it. You can find the full declaration in Hebrew [here](#) and in English [here](#).
- Choose one quote of Nelson Mandela and one of Martin Luther King and explain how La Benvolencija's activity in Sarajevo fulfills it. **Here are the quotes:**

Nelson Mandela

- "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others".
- "It always seems impossible until its done".

- “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Martin Luther King:

- “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”
- “There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.”
- “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

Important note: I give those quotes to my student only after they already completed a little project essay about one of those important figures in the 1st semester when we only started to learn about Human Rights. Otherwise, at least one lesson should be devoted to those important human rights activist of the 20th century.

Lesson 3:

The goal of this lesson is to understand the importance of Civil Society. The students should realize that there are cases in times of crises or lack of social policy of the government when different groups in society don't receive the proper condition in order to have an adequate standard of living. In this open space created where government involvement is absent, civil voluntary organizations rise up and enter the picture. My goal therefore is to encourage my students to explore the area of civil society in their home town and to research one specific organization that helps a certain group in the population, because the state doesn't help enough or not at all. The project needs to be follow the next guidelines:

1. Choose one voluntary organization that is active in Israeli society that is fulfilling Civic Society.
2. Explain which basic/social Right the organization fulfills in its activity. Find the right article in the Human Right Declaration that is related to that Right.
3. Prepare a kind of ID about the organization, similar to what you saw about La Benevolencija. Refer to the following questions:
 - What is the name of the organization?
 - What is their area of activity?
 - Who are the main figures behind it?
4. Depict one of their activities.
5. What have you learned from the process? Show and present your conclusions.