



Amnesty International

CONFLICTING RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CURRICULUM

A human rights resource for teachers of KS4-5 Citizenship, RE, PSHE and related subjects

BACKGROUND

On 10 January 2007 new regulations outlawing businesses from discriminating against homosexuals were upheld in the House of Lords. Details of how the Sexual Orientation Regulations will work in practice were not finalised at the time of the debate. However, those who opposed the regulations argue that implementing them would deny religious people the right to practise their beliefs. Opposition groups argue that, in practice, the law will mean that religious hoteliers would not be able to refuse to provide rooms for gay couples and religious groups would be obliged to rent out halls for 'gay wedding' receptions.

This is a topical example of a conflict of rights in society: in this case, the right of homosexual people not to be discriminated against is in tension with the right to free religious expression for those who oppose homosexuality on the grounds of religious belief. This resource asks students to explore the different views surrounding the debate and to consider whether it can be resolved.

www.amnesty.org.uk/education

PROTECT THE HUMAN



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource provides the opportunity for students to gain knowledge and understanding of different opinions regarding homosexuality. It also encourages an understanding of key human rights documents, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The photocopiable information and activity sheets with this resource can be used during one lesson. They are most suited to a KS4 RE/Citizenship or PSHE lesson and require IT access.

This resource is part of Amnesty International's **Human Rights in the Curriculum** series, raising awareness of human rights issues through curriculum-linked lessons and resources. Full curriculum links for this resource are provided at the end of the document. For more free resources see www.amnesty.org.uk/education

Learning objectives

- To understand and explore different religious and non-religious attitudes to homosexuality
- To learn about the human rights principles and laws underpinning society.
- To make moral decisions and to attempt to resolve moral dilemmas.
- To research an issue using IT

ICT opportunities

Students will need access to computers in order to research different attitudes to homosexuality.

Human rights

The following articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are relevant to this activity:

Article 1:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Article 2:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the UDHR, without distinction of any kind.

Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 19:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The following articles of the **European Convention on Human Rights** and the UK **Human Rights Act** are relevant to this activity (the articles are the same in both documents):

Article 9:

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 10:

Freedom of expression

Article 14:

Prohibition of discrimination

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CONFLICTING RIGHTS CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



Starter

The 'agree-disagree' starter activity introduces students to the issues and asks for their opinions.

Put a sign saying 'AGREE' on one side of the classroom, and sign saying 'DISAGREE' on the other side. Ask students to imagine a line between the two points representing a continuum. Read out each of the 10 statements below and ask the class to move to the area on the continuum that represents their opinions (in the middle of the line would be 'I'm not sure', or 'I see both sides of the argument').

Try to generate a discussion by asking students to explain why they have chosen to stand where they have. If students' views on discrimination relating to race and religion differ from their views on sexual orientation, ask them why.

Agree-disagree statements

1. People should be able to practise their religion freely, without any restrictions.
2. All religions and their teachings are relevant in today's society.
3. If a religious person runs a business, they should be able to employ only people who are the same religion as they are.
4. If a religious person runs a hotel and they don't want people of a certain religion staying there, they should be able to say so.
5. If someone working in a hotel refused to let me stay there because I am a different race to him or her, I would have a right to complain.
6. If I was to run my own company, I would take business from anyone: I would not discriminate against anyone.
7. Religious business people should be able to turn away business from gay people if they believe that homosexuality is a sin.
8. It is acceptable in some situations to discriminate against someone because of their religion.
9. It is acceptable in some situations to discriminate against someone because of their race.
10. It is acceptable in some situations to discriminate against someone because of their sexuality, eg because they are gay.

Background

Outline the current debate surrounding the Sexual Orientation Regulations. In addition to using information from the 'background' notes (page 1), you may want to check www.news.bbc.co.uk/ for up-to-date information on how the Sexual Orientation Regulations are to be enforced.

Let the class know that they will be discussing and debating this issue after they have researched the viewpoints of different groups involved in the argument.

Web research

Divide the class into groups: each group will research a different viewpoint. The number of groups will depend on the number of religions you look at. The 'Conflicting Rights – Websites' worksheet suggest websites for the following:

- The official teachings of the Catholic Church towards homosexuality
- The official teachings of the Church of England towards homosexuality



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES contd

- The views of the charity, the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement
- The views of the sexuality rights group, Stonewall
- The views of the sexuality rights group, The Labour Campaign for LGBT Rights
- The views of the National Secular Society

You may also wish to ask the students to research the views on homosexuality of other major world religions (if you are familiar with suitable websites/have the textbooks for this).

Each group should come up with the following information to present to the class.

- What is the attitude of this group towards homosexuality? Why do they hold this view?
- Do you think that this group would agree with the new Sexual Orientations Regulations?
- What human rights are at stake if this group's views are not heard? Look at any of the following documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights or the UK Human Rights Act.

Presentations and discussion

Students may present their research findings 'in role' – as if they are representatives of that particular group, religion or organisation. Be aware of sensitivities around this: if students have strong beliefs or views of their own on this issue, they may not be comfortable with this.

You may ask students to consider the following cases as part of their presentations:

- Should a Catholic hotel owner be allowed to turn away a gay couple?
- Should a Muslim who runs a printing company be forced to print flyers for a gay club night, or should he or she have the right to refuse this business?
- Should a gay couple be allowed to hold a 'wedding' reception in a Church of England church hall if they wish to?

After presenting each case to the class, encourage a discussion, raising the following questions:

- Which human rights clash in this situation?
- Are certain human rights more important than others?
- What might be the consequences of ignoring the views of one of these groups of people?
- Is it fair to ask people to compromise their religious beliefs?
- Should people be allowed to follow religious beliefs that may conflict with the laws of their country?
- Are all 'sins' illegal? Can you think of any other examples of behaviour that certain religious groups forbid, but which the UK law allows?
- Are there any compromises that can be reached here, so that both sides might be happy?

Follow-up

Students can write up their own views on this issue. They should weigh up both sides of the argument before offering their own opinions. They should also explain why they have come to these conclusions.

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CONFLICTING RIGHTS WEBSITES



1. The Church of England:
www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/marriage.html#humansexuality
2. The Catholic Church of England and Wales:
www.catholic-ew.org.uk/faith/living/homosexuality.htm
3. Religious Studies for students:
faithnet.org.uk/Theology/bibleandhomosexuality.htm
4. The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement:
www.lgcm.org.uk/
5. The sexuality rights organisation Stonewall:
www.stonewall.org.uk/campaigns/605.asp
6. The sexuality rights organisation The Labour Campaign for LGBT Rights:
www.lgbtlabour.org.uk/
7. The National Secular Society:
www.secularism.org.uk/thegovernmentmustseethesexualori.html
8. Other useful websites
www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/samesexmarriage/
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/re/relationships/
www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbt

IMPORTANT HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The UDHR was the first set of international human rights principles drawn up by world leaders. Created by the United Nations after World War II, it aims to prevent future human rights atrocities. While this it is not a law in itself, it lays down the basic rights needed for people around the world to live with dignity and justice. The UDHR encourages leaders across the world to protect and respect the rights of their citizens.

For the full text and simplified versions, see: www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/index.asp

The European Convention on Human Rights (1950)

The ECHR is similar in content to the UDHR, but is an international law established by the Council of Europe. All European member countries are legally bound by these laws. If any European citizen feels that one of these rights is being denied them in their country, they can take their case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

Full text: www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm Simplified version: www.hrea.org/learn/tutorials/europe/treaties/simplified-echr-en.html

The UK Human Rights Act (1998)

The UK Human Rights Act fully embeds the ECHR into UK law. The ECHR has always applied in the UK, because the UK is a member of the Council of Europe. What the UK Human Rights Act changed was that the rights of the ECHR became enforceable in UK courts: UK citizens no longer need to go to the European Court of Human Rights to get a human rights case heard.

Full text: www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1998/19980042.htm Simplified version: www.dca.gov.uk/peoples-rights/human-rights/pdf/hrintro.pdf

CURRICULUM LINKS



England

KS4 Citizenship

1. Knowledge and Understanding

Students should be taught:

- a. the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society and how they relate to citizens, including the role and operation of the criminal and civil justice systems.
- b. the origins and implications of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
- h. the rights and responsibilities of consumers, employers and employees

2. Skills of enquiry and communication:

- a. Students should be taught to research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social or cultural issue, problem or event by analysing information from different sources, including ICT-based sources, showing and awareness of the use and abuse of statistics.
- b. Students should be taught to express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events.
- c. Students should be taught to contribute to group and exploratory class discussions.

3. Skills of participation and responsible action:

- a. Students should be taught to use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and critically evaluate views that are not their own.

RE for 14-19 year olds

1. Learning about Religions:

- a. Students should investigate, study and interpret significant religious, philosophical and ethical issues...in light of their own sense of identity, experience and wider commitments
- b. Students should think rigorously and present coherent, widely informed and detailed arguments about beliefs, ethics, values and issues, drawing well-substantiated conclusions.

2. Learning from religions:

- a. Students should be taught to reflect on, express and justify their own opinions in light of their learning about religion and their study of religious, philosophical, moral and spiritual questions.
- b. Students should be taught to develop their own values and attitudes in order to recognise their rights and responsibilities in light of their learning about religion.
- c. Students should be taught to relate their learning in religious education to the wider world, gaining a sense of personal autonomy in preparation for adult life.
- d. Students should be taught to develop skills that are useful in a wide range of careers and in adult life generally, especially skills of critical enquiry, creative problem solving, and communication in a variety of media.

KS4 PSHE

3. Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people

Students should be taught:

- a. about the diversity of different ethnic groups and the power of prejudice
- c. to challenge offending behaviour, prejudice, bullying, racism and discrimination assertively and take the initiative in giving and receiving support

4. During the key stage, students should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through opportunities to:

- g. consider social and moral dilemmas [for example, young parenthood, genetic engineering, attitudes to the law)

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CURRICULUM LINKS contd

Northern Ireland

This activity makes close links with **Learning for Life and Work in the Revised Curriculum for NI**. In particular, it relates to the following key concepts in the Local and Global Citizenship strand of this subject:

- 'Diversity and Inclusion'
- 'Human Rights and Social Responsibility'
- 'Equality and Social Justice'

Scotland

Curriculum links relate to the current guidelines for the new Curriculum for Excellence.

The activity supports the development of students as:

- learn independently and as part of a group
- make reasoned evaluations

Responsible citizens able to:

- make informed choices and decisions
- develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.

Effective contributors

- communicate in different ways and in different settings
- solve problems.

Wales

KS4 PSE

PSE provision should enable pupils to:

- Value cultural diversity and equal opportunity and respect the dignity of all.
- Be moved by injustice, exploitation and denial of human rights.

PSE provision should enable pupils to:

- Listen attentively in different situations and respond appropriately.
- Communicate effectively their feelings and views in a wide range of situations.
- Make moral judgments and resolve moral issues and dilemmas.
- Work both independently and cooperatively.

Community Aspect

Pupils should:

- Know how democratic systems work and understand how individual citizens, public opinion, lobby groups, and the media can contribute and have an influence and impact.
- Have a developing global awareness of contemporary issues and events including human rights

Sexuality Aspect

Pupils should:

- Understand the range of sexual attitudes and behaviours in society.

Social Aspect

Pupils should:

- Recognise and know how to challenge expressions of prejudice and stereotyping.

England/Northern Ireland/Scotland/Wales

GCSE RE/Citizenship A level Ethics

These activities can be used in any GCSE Citizenship or RE syllabus, or A Level Ethics syllabus, which makes provision for the study of topical human rights issues.