Introduction to Human Rights 101

“We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others.”
-Will Rogers

As countries and communities become more globally connected, it is vital to educate and impress young people with the importance of understanding the complex issues affecting the world’s cultures and people and the basic human rights that can pull us apart and bind us together.

Thirteen’s Human Rights 101 will encourage high school teachers to explore human rights issues with their students. These issues include tolerance, racism, women’s rights, refugees, religious freedom, children’s rights, academic freedom, labor rights, lesbian and gay rights, and international justice.

The basic concepts of human rights reveal the common humanity of individuals, beyond the specifics of religion, environment, collective history, culture, class, race, gender or age. Human rights principles at once protect cultural expression, and attempt to bridge the superficial differences that lead to misunderstanding and violence. They assert that there are fundamental needs and privileges, including the right to cultural and religious expression, that are common to all people, and which may not be denied. These same basic human rights principles stress, above all else, the concept of mutual responsibility.

Through viewing PBS programs, creating focused discussions, and enabling conversations with experts in the field, Human Rights 101 will help teens better understand themselves, better understand others, and become better equipped for life in a global society.

PROJECT DESIGN

Human Rights 101 will encourage high school teachers to explore a specific human rights issue with their students and demonstrate the impact one person, group, and/or school can make in the quest for human rights. Thirteen’s Human Rights 101 will provide area high schools with an opportunity to screen PBS programs with a strong human rights focus. The schools will select programs that best tie into their curricular focus or educational mission from a list provided by Thirteen. These school-based screenings will be followed by a presentation and/or conversation with speakers who are experts in the subject matter explored in the PBS program. Following the screening and discussion event, teachers and students will develop projects that address a particular human rights issue or need.
STUDENT PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

All projects proposed must:

- Be student driven and student run;
- Be school supported;
- Have a faculty advisor connected to the project and involved in its implementation, acting as Thirteen’s contact in the school;
- Stem from and use Thirteen or other PBS/PTV programs and resources;
- Produce some tangible evidence of completion (newsletter, research paper or essay, Web site, video/photos of event(s));
- Be able to, at project end, demonstrate an increased awareness in the issues, problems, and solutions surrounding a specific human rights topic.

SELECTION CRITERIA

School participation will be selected based upon:

- The originality and inventiveness of the project design;
- The scope and reach of the project.

Projects that incorporate outside partners in the plan (i.e. other grades, schools, or outside organizations) will be given additional consideration.

PARTICIPATION ELEMENTS

Thirteen will initially select up to 15 schools to participate, offering grants up to $1,000 per school, and will require the key participants (student and faculty advisors) in the project to:

- Attend an introductory training/meeting on December 11, 2004 in which all participants will share their project goals and plans, meet their Thirteen contact, and establish the best means for ongoing communication throughout the school year;
- Submit formal documentation of progress at an interim period (February, 2005) and produce the deliverable student project at the final stage of their project (June, 2005);
- Attend the final reception. Date TBA.
CONCLUSION

Thirteen’s Human Rights 101 project will help build knowledge and encourage critical thinking about human rights issues; help students become empowered as citizens of their communities, nation, and the world; and encourage teachers and non-traditional educators to become active learning partners.