

TAKE ACTION: POET AGAINST PREJUDICE



In *Poet Against Prejudice* BYkids filmmaker Faiza Almontaser asks us all to examine our own notions, attitudes, biases about other religions, ethnicities and nationalities in our nation of immigrants. When thinking about these issues, consider Articles 2, 18, and 26 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 9:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 2:

(1) Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 18:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public and private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 26:

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

For Teachers: Research

The impact of and questions raised by immigration are some of the biggest issues we currently face as a nation. Ask your students to research the current statistics surrounding immigration in the United States. How many families immigrate to the U.S. each year seeking better education and more opportunities? What percentage of current citizens are immigrants? What percentage of your community's residents are immigrants? How have these percentages changed over the past 100 years? What effect does this immigration have on the countries these families are leaving? What might make it difficult or

easy for them to come to the U.S.? What steps must the families go through if they want to come here legally? What kind of discrimination did families historically face after immigrating? After doing this research and seeing *Poet Against Prejudice*, how would you characterize what has or hasn't changed about immigrants' circumstances in America over the past several decades?

For Students: Reflect

Faiza uses poetry to channel and express her feelings of disenfranchisement, just as many historical victims of discrimination have done before her. Using your own form of artistic expression (poetry, spoken word, song, drawing, etc.), reflect on why discrimination against immigrant populations has persisted in the U.S. for so many generations and how you would feel if you picked up and moved to another country today. How would you cope with your new environment? Just as Faiza struggles with her shifting identity — as a Muslim and as an American — how would you balance your desire to hold on to your heritage with wanting to assimilate to your new environment? Call upon any discrimination or bullying you might have experienced in your own life as you explore the use of artistic expression as a mode of reflection.

For All Of Us: Respond

1. Host a community or private screening of *Poet Against Prejudice* to raise awareness of the challenges facing immigrants in the U.S. and how storytelling through film can deepen our understanding of global issues. Email info@bykids.org for more information.
2. Do you see intolerance happening in your community? Get your school designated as a “No Place for Hate” school and help promote a culture of respect and dignity for your classmates, just like Faiza does in the film. See: www.adl.org/npfh/
3. Give to the ACLU’s Immigrants’ Rights Project, which is dedicated to expanding and enforcing the civil liberties and civil rights of immigrants and to combating public and private discrimination against them. See: www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights
4. Sign a petition or start one of your own to raise awareness about:

Immigrant Rights:

www.change.org/topics/immigration

Racial and Religious Discrimination:

www.change.org/tags/discrimination-6#today

Bullying:

www.change.org/tags/bullying-6#today

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