



Questions

Philosophy For Young People

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Human Rights

Q This second issue of *Questions: Philosophy for Young People* explores questions about human rights. *What is a right? Which rights are most important? What responsibilities do rights entail?* Teachers and philosophers discussed with students in elementary, middle, and high schools the nature of rights and whether rights exist that belong to all human beings. Many of us used the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a resource to elicit from students the rights they believed to be most important. This issue includes transcripts of K-12 philosophical discussions about human rights, declarations of human rights written by students, drawings, essays, and articles offering advice and ideas for activities for teachers and parents interested in facilitating philosophical discussions with young people.

Many of the young people who participated in this issue engaged in very spirited discussions about rights. They were deeply interested in understanding what rights are and why people everywhere do not have all of the rights to which the children concluded we are all entitled. It is exciting to watch young people involved in passionate dialogues about these questions. We hope that some of the flavor of these classes reaches you as you read this issue.

We are pleased to be distributing a second issue of *Questions*. We have been gratified by the enthusiastic response to the first issue and look forward to the continued publication of this unique journal. We welcome your submissions, and you can find submission information on page 10. After this issue, *Questions* will be available by subscription only, and information about how to subscribe is on page 12.

Have a wonderful summer!

Jana Mohr Lone, Editor-in-Chief

Voice, Rights, and Reason: High School Students on Philosophy and Children's Rights

Hugh Taft-Morales

Hugh Taft-Morales has taught philosophy, history and values at the Edmund Burke School in Washington, D. C. for the past fifteen years.

Q For the past four years we have organized a high school conference on philosophy as part of Howard University's Alain Locke Conference. The 2000 high school program focused on children's rights, and the program on Friday, September 15 was attended by over eighty students from local public and private high schools. Schools included Benjamin Banneker High School, St. Albans, Cesar Chavez Charter School and Edmund Burke School in the District of Columbia, and Walter Johnson High School and Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School from Maryland.

All students read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from the United Nations Charter, as well as a parallel declaration from the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in November, 1989. Students were asked to consider the following questions: What is a right? What is the origin of "rights"? Do such documents create rights, or merely acknowledge their existence?

What follows is a selection from one of the small group discussions about the nature of rights, with some omissions due to noise on the tape and minor edits. All of the names of the young people have been changed for the purposes of this article.

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"The right to a home."

Joseph Carey, 2nd Grade, Methow Valley Elementary, Winthrop, WA

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