

# KA HSAW WA

"I THINK TO MYSELF, 'WHAT AM I DOING?' I DON'T GAIN ANYTHING FOR MYSELF AND I CAN'T SEEM TO DO ANYTHING TO LESSEN THE SUFFERING OF THE VILLAGERS. AT THE SAME TIME, IF I TURN MY BACK AND WALK AWAY, THERE WOULD BE NO ONE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE."

Ka Hsaw Wa is the founder of EarthRights International, a nongovernmental organization that filed a precedent-setting lawsuit against a U.S. corporation for torture committed by its agents overseas. The suit charges that Burmese government agents hired by Unocal, a U.S.-based oil company, to provide security, transportation, and infrastructure support for an oil pipeline, committed extortion, torture, rape, forced labor, and extrajudicial killings against the local indigenous population. Ka Hsaw Wa knows about the abuses committed by the military regime firsthand. He has spent years walking thousands of miles through the forests of Burma, interviewing witnesses and recording testimonies of victims of human rights abuses. He has taught hundreds of people to investigate, document, and expose violations of international human rights. As a student leader in the 1980s, Ka Hsaw Wa organized pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon. He was seized and tortured by agents of the Burmese military regime, in power since 1962 (and renamed SLORC—State Law and Order Restoration Council—in late 1988). When police opened fire on peaceful demonstrators, one of Ka Hsaw Wa's best friends died in his arms. Ka Hsaw Wa fled into exile along the Thai border. To protect family members he took a new name, Ka Hsaw Wa, which means "white elephant." Ka Hsaw Wa's meticulously compiled documentation of systemic rape and forced labor is relied upon and cited by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international organizations. He has collaborated on several books about the abuses, including *School for Rape* (1988): "Take over 300,000 men, many of them under the age of seventeen and largely uneducated. Force some of them to enlist at gunpoint and promise all of them a salary they never receive entirely. Give them guns and bombs. Train them to shoot, to crawl through the jungle at night, to ambush. Convince them that their enemies are ethnic minorities, students, women, anyone who disagrees with the government, and that these millions of people are traitors or infidels. Starve them. Withhold their mail and don't allow them to send any letters. Forbid them from visiting their families. Force them to beat each other for punishment. Abandon some of them if they are too sick to walk. Abuse them verbally and physically every day. Allow them plenty of alcohol and drugs. You have just created the army of Burma's ruling military regime." Ka Hsaw Wa's work, at tremendous personal risk, continues in the jungles of Burma. Ka Hsaw Wa has been awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize, Reebok Human Rights Award, Whitley Fund for Nature/Sting and Trudie Styler Award for Human Rights and the Environment, the Conde Nast Environmental Award, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Emergent Leadership for his work in defense of human rights and the environment. Ka Hsaw Wa splits his time between the U.S. and Southeast Asia offices of EarthRights International.



Ka Hsaw Wa, ©2000 Eddie Adams

I've been doing this for eleven years. Most of the time I coordinate fieldwork, collect information, conduct fact-finding missions, and train my staff to do the same, specifically in the pipeline area of the U.S. oil company Unocal. We currently have a lawsuit pending against Unocal. The crux of the case is that a U.S. company is using human rights abuses to further their profit margins.

We interview people inside Burma and ask questions about human rights violations perpetrated by the military government. We hear cases of torture and forced labor, forced portering and rape, and extrajudicial killings. Sometimes I collect information outside of Burma along the Thai border and at other times I collect it in the refugee camps.

The villagers who support us keep in touch secretly or by code. We use radios and GPS (Global Positioning Systems) to find our way through the jungle. It is extremely dangerous. There are a lot of military bases. We listen to the radio in order to track the military's movements and to avoid being caught. I wear black clothes and carry a backpack. We travel with a maximum of three people at a time. Sometimes, the military walks across the path just in front of us, so close we can touch them. We have to be very careful. I have been shot at twice.

We make our decisions based on the movement of the troops. Normally, we don't go into the villages because it's

so dangerous. Instead, we ask the people to come secretly to the jungle because we don't want to expose ourselves to them and also because we might put them in jeopardy. Among the villagers, there are spies for SLORC, the local military organization. Therefore, we must be very, very careful.

There are many human rights violations directly connected to the Unocal pipeline. The most common is forced labor and portering. The latter occurs when soldiers force villagers to carry their ammunition, their supplies, and food. The porters are not paid for their labor and, at times, they try to escape and to report these crimes to the authorities. If they are caught, the porters may be tortured, imprisoned, or possibly killed by members of SLORC. This happened recently to a close friend of mine. He and a group of villagers had been collecting information for me in order to help themselves and to raise public awareness of local human rights violations. SLORC suspected him of these activities and killed him.

Likewise, in the last four or five years, I have heard of twelve to fifteen rapes against local women by SLORC soldiers providing security for the pipeline. Two of these rape victims are plaintiffs in our lawsuit. The whole area is crawling with soldiers and these women were raped while walking between their village and a nearby farm.

In response to abuses like these, I organized a group of students in 1988 to protest against SLORC and to demonstrate for democracy. Though I was living in Rangoon, each student in my group organized a demonstration in the towns outside Rangoon. Eventually, there were protests all over Burma to educate people about democracy and to resist SLORC. During one demonstration in Rangoon, two of my friends were shot. One died there with me; the other was shot through the mouth and jaw. I carried him to the hospital but, in order to escape, I had to abandon him.

I didn't want to leave Burma and my elderly parents, so I decided to go to an area outside of Rangoon. At that time, I stayed in the jungle and observed the terrible lives of the villagers. In the morning, the villagers took hoes and baskets and were forced to build things for the military. One day the owner of the house that I was living in said, "Tomorrow I have to go and work for the dogs again." "What are you talking about?" I asked. "The villagers refer to the soldiers as dogs because they hate them," he replied. "We don't have time to do anything we need to do because we always have to work for them. We don't get any pay." Then, I got a letter from my mum saying, "Son, it's too dangerous. Wait for me and I will come to see you." My mother came and I said goodbye to her.

I walked through the jungle for five days to the Karen area with another student and a villager. As we neared the village, I saw a sight that I will never forget. I saw a dead woman with a large tree branch in her vagina. I walked to the village and I asked about her. The villagers told me that she was a nurse and that a group of soldiers had taken her to cure one of their comrades who had contracted malaria. Instead, they raped and killed her. It was so sad.

I stayed around the village for quite a while. This totally

changed my life. Since no one was doing interviews at the time, I decided to do some. I talked to everyone. I talked to one mother whose son had committed suicide because a group of soldiers had forced him to have sex with her. The soldiers then clapped their hands and called the boy a motherfucker. The son later killed himself out of shame. The mother was heartbroken. It was then that I made the decision to work for these people.

In the beginning, I had neither a pen nor paper to work with. I went to the Karen National Union (KNU) resistance authority and was dismissed as just another young student. The union told me that this kind of incident happened all the time and that no one cared. They told me not to bother, but to take arms and to fight the soldiers. I didn't know how to go about the work I wanted to do without the necessary resources or support. I kept approaching the KNU and asked them to buy me a tape recorder, paper, and a pen with which to write down and pass along important information to the concerned people. They simply told me not to fool myself.

I made a decision to continue working on the testimonies. All that I could do was to talk with the people and to absorb their stories as best that I could. We were living in the middle of the jungle, so I decided to go to a town to get some paper and a pen. I used these resources to write messages to people, but no one listened and no one even cared. "What am I doing?" I thought. I was so frustrated.

Finally, in the beginning of 1992, I met a man by the name of Kevin Heppner. He was a Canadian and together we started doing human rights documentation. I translated the testimonies to English, he typed them, and we sent them to anyone who might be interested. Kevin primarily sent the information to human rights groups like Amnesty International because I didn't have papers to cross into Thailand. I got arrested four or five times in Thailand because I was illegal there. They'd put me in jail for seven days and then release me. It was extremely difficult. In the beginning, we were very poor. Finally we met a woman from France who gave us money for paper and mailing. I was so happy that we could finally do something.

In Burma, I was arrested before the student uprising and tortured as well. A friend of mine had had a fight with one of the authorities' children and then had disappeared. Although I didn't know where he had gone, the authorities tortured me and insisted that I tell them of his whereabouts.

The torture began with something referred to as the "motorcycle ride," in which I was forced to assume a specific position and to utter the sounds "vroom, vroom, vroom." Once I was exhausted, my shins were beaten with a special tool with a tough outside and pure metal core. Next, I was subjected to "the railway." I had to pretend to ride a railway and to call out the name of each stop.

If I didn't know the name or if I pronounced it incorrectly, I was beaten. They would beat me continuously and let me break, asking me the same question repeatedly. Finally, I couldn't say anything more and they didn't believe me. Before I passed out, I was tortured once more. There was a cement floor with a pile of sharp rocks in one corner. These rocks were typically

used for roads and construction. I was forced to swing myself across them until I would talk. "I can't say anything," I said. They continued to torture me until the pain was unbearable. They stepped on my back and asked me whether I was going to talk. Again, I responded that I didn't have anything more to say and they kicked me. Two of the soldiers, their faces covered, held me and proceeded to punch and kick me. I was so angry but all I could do was to look at them. I finally started to throw up blood and passed out. Although the entire ordeal lasted for about three days, I've seen worse. Some of my friends have been shot and killed.

A lot of my former classmates now have their Ph.D.'s in the United States. They are educated and come here with money. I think to myself, "What am I doing?" I don't gain anything for myself and I can't seem to do anything to lessen the suffering of the villagers. I see the situation worsening and I blame myself for not being able to do enough. At the same time, I can't quit. If I turn my back and walk away, there would be no one to address the issue.

In 1994, one of my friends died and I wanted to give up. I decided that I had to do something for myself. I needed an income to be able to give money to the people. "If I turn my back," I thought, "who is going to do this work?" The suffering would never end. Although it was a hard decision to make, I decided not to stop working for the people. I committed myself to poverty, living in the jungle with very little available food. There was a time when I wanted to shoot myself when there wasn't any water and we had to eat raw rice. We couldn't cook for fear that the soldiers might see the fire. One of us contracted malaria and we didn't have any medicine. It was very cold in the hills and all we had was a sheet of plastic and a blanket to cover ourselves. Some people felt sorry for us and gave us a hammock. In the rainy season, life was very tough. Although we hung our hammocks to avoid the leeches on the ground, in the morning we realized the leeches had fallen from the trees and sucked our blood.

We knew the difficulty of the situation, but if we wanted to help the people, we had to make big sacrifices. At times we felt dumbfounded because we had committed a great deal of time without seeing significant results. At one point, I saw the documentation in the trash that we'd been working so hard on. It had been crunched up and thrown away. I felt heartbroken, though I understood that the issue they were working on was different than ours. I had to be open-minded and to understand the situation. It was so difficult for us to get that piece of paper mailed and to document the suffering that the people had endured. We have an ideal goal: we just want people to be treated like human beings.

I don't know if courage comes from power or from pain. I remember a time that I listened to someone's testimony and my whole body began to shake. It was the most horrible thing I had ever heard. The wife of a revolutionary had been arrested in an attempt to get to her husband. The soldiers killed their baby and burned it, then forced the mother to eat it because the father didn't come back. Tales like this repulse me and simultaneously give me courage. The suffering that I have endured is nothing compared to theirs. These people's needs are greater than my own.

# BULLYING: DOES COURAGE COME FROM POWER OR PAIN?

KA HSAW WA

LESSON GRADE LEVEL: GRADES 6 - 8

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE: MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

- **Article 2:** Freedom from Discrimination
- **Article 3:** Right to Life, Liberty, Personal Security
- **Article 5:** Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment
- **Article 7:** Right to Equality Before the Law
- **Article 19:** Freedom of Opinion and Information
- **Article 20:** Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association
- **Article 23:** Right to Desirable Work and Join Trade Unions
- **Article 25:** Right to Adequate Living Standard
- **Article 30:** Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the Above Rights

## TIME REQUIREMENT:

- Anticipatory set – 80 minutes
- Individual activity – 40 minutes
- Eight activities – 320 minutes

## GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- An inevitable consequence of being a member of society is to experience or witness discrimination or oppression. In what ways do people contribute to, cope with, or avoid this phenomenon? What roles do indifference and courage play?
- How does this apply to the perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and defenders within specific situations involving the jungles of Burma, the Holocaust, or students' own lives?

## OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to

- Relate the concept of bullying in their own lives to new information.
- Identify significant literary elements (including metaphor, symbolism, foreshadowing, irony) in a poem and use those elements to help create original poetic devices to interpret the work.
- Produce an original poem focused on the concepts of indifference, courage, and perseverance.
- Listen and speak about personal experiences that relate to new information.
- Evaluate and apply vocabulary words in various contexts to facilitate generalization.
- Collect data, facts, and ideas on Ka Hsaw Wa and corporate responsibility; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations integrated with bullying between the Holocaust, Ka Hsaw Wa's life, and their own experiences.
- Develop information with supporting materials such as sensory/reporter notes, facts, details, examples and exclude extraneous materials.
- Synthesize information to select, organize, and categorize information to produce an original poem and slideshow in sequential steps.
- Analyze and evaluate information from a variety of perspectives and recognize the relative validity of divergent points of view.
- Write a poem to create narration to be used under a sequence of slides for an original Movie Maker slideshow comparing and contrasting a bullying situation with Ka Hsaw Wa's story.
- Listen attentively to others and build on others' ideas in conversation and class discussions.
- Gather a collection of Internet-based photographs or video clips to demonstrate a particular point for slideshow.
- Evaluate information to justify speaking out against bullies and not being a bystander.

## STUDENT SKILLS:

- Writing and application of the writing process
- Writing in a variety of genres
- Grammar and mechanics
- Gathering and using information for research
- Critical thinking and problem solving

## NEW YORK STATE

### LEARNING STANDARDS:

- English Language Arts Standard 1 Language for information and understanding
  - Intermediate Reading PI 1, 2; Writing PI 1, 2, 4
- English Language Arts Standard 2 Language for literary response and expression
  - Intermediate Reading PI 1; Writing PI 3
- English Language Arts Standard 3: Language for critical analysis and evaluation
  - Intermediate Reading PI 1, 3; Writing PI 1
- English Language Arts Standard 4: Language for social interaction
  - Intermediate Reading PI 1, 2; Writing PI 1, 2
- Social Studies Standard 1: The History of the United States and New York
  - Intermediate KI 2 PI 3; KI 4 PI 1, 2
- Social Studies Standard 2: World History
  - Intermediate KI 1 PI 1; KI 3 PI 1, 2; KI 4 PI 1, 2, 3, 4
- Social Studies Standard 4: Economics
  - Intermediate KI 1 PI 1, 2, 4; KI 2 PI 4
- Social Studies Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government
  - Intermediate KI 1 PI 1; KI 4 PI 1, 2
- Health, Physical Education, and Family & Consumer Sciences Standard 2: A Safe and Healthy Environment
  - Intermediate Physical Education KI 1 PI 3
- Health, Physical Education and Family & Consumer Sciences Standard 3: Resource Management
  - Intermediate Family & Consumer Sciences KI 1 PI 2

- Career Development and Occupational Studies Standard 3a: Universal Foundation Skills
  - Intermediate Thinking Skills KI 2 PI 1
  - Intermediate Personal Qualities KI 3 PI 1
  - Intermediate Managing Resources KI 7 PI 1
- The Arts: Dance, Theater, Music, and Visual Arts Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
  - Intermediate Visual Arts KI 2 PI 2

#### MATERIALS:

- *Speak Truth to Power* interview <http://www.speaktruth.org/> Click on Defenders/click Defenders list/scroll to Ka Hsaw Wa
- Vocabulary
- Student handouts
- Internet connection
- PowerPoint template

#### VOCABULARY:

- Lawsuit
- Profit margin
- Pending
- Perpetrate
- Porter/portering
- Extrajudicial killings
- Refugee
- Plaintiff
- Demonstration
- Atrocities
- Testimonies
- Repulse

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

### ANTICIPATORY SET

- Begin a dialogue with the students on what it means to stand up to bullies.
- After a brief discussion, give students Handout #1, Journal Entry #1 (Link for the PDF)
- Instruct the students to write a short narrative describing a time when they stood up for someone else.
- When students have finished, ask them to share their situations and experiences in a class discussion.
- Write these names on the board:
  - Perpetrators
  - Victims
  - Bystanders
  - Defenders
- Discuss and brainstorm the characteristics of each person. Have students write the description under the appropriate heading.

### ACTIVITY 1

- Give students Handout #2 Vocabulary List (Link for the PDF)
- Students are to work in pairs to find the definitions of the words.
- Once students have defined the words, they are to create sentences using the words appropriately.
- Students will share the definitions and sentences in a class discussion.

### ANTICIPATORY SET: VOCABULARY SCAVENGER HUNT

- Upon entering class, students are given a Post-it with either the definition or a vocabulary word.
- Time the students to see how long it takes them to find their match. Students quickly sit down when they find a match.
- Review the words and definitions and discuss how they can be used.

### ACTIVITY 1

- Have students work in pairs.
- Assign students to choose a minimum of 15 vocabulary words and definitions.
- Students are to write a mini-story using these vocabulary words in the correct context.
- This counts as a quiz grade

### ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Repeat Day 3's anticipatory set

### ACTIVITY 1

- Give the students Handout #3 Journal Entry #2 (Link for the PDF)
- Instruct the students to write their thoughts inside the box on: What kind of people do you see getting picked on?
- When done, ask students to share their answers with the class.
- Students can volunteer to write their answers on the board.

### ACTIVITY 2

- Give students Handout #4, Building Perspectives (Link for the PDF)
- Ask students to complete the feelings/traits worksheet individually to categorize the traits and feelings of a victim, perpetrator, and defender.
- Instruct the students to log the words they don't know and look up the meaning.
- When done, ask students to justify their answers in a class discussion.
- Students will share their experiences and examples.

- Precedent
- Extortion
- Indigenous
- Meticulously
- Sweatshop
- Exploit
- Activist
- Suppression
- Courage
- Perseverance
- Indifference
- Bystander
- Self-doubt

#### CONCEPTS:

- Culture
- Empathy
- Needs and wants
- Justice
- Decision making
- Civic values
- Human rights

#### TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- Internet
- Windows Movie Maker®

#### ANTICIPATORY SET

- Give to students Handout #5 Ka Hsaw Wa Guiding Questions (Link to the PDF)
- Have students read through the questions aloud.

#### ACTIVITY I

- Give students the story of Ka Hsaw Wa from the book, *Speak Truth to Power*.  
  - <http://www.speaktruth.org/>
- Have students take turns reading the story aloud.
- When the story has been completed, instruct the students to answer the questions individually.
- Review the answers aloud with the class.

#### ANTICIPATORY SET

- Give students Handouts # 6 and #7 Sensory Notes and Reporter Notes (Link to the PDF)
- Have students work in pairs.
- Instruct students to fill in the sensory notes organizer, Handout # 6, from the perspective of Ka Hsaw Wa's five senses in the story.
- Using Handout # 7, have students classify the roles of the perpetrators, bystanders, and victims according to Ka Hsaw Wa's story.

#### ACTIVITY I

- Give students Handout # 8
- Have students read Pastor Neimoller's quote and write an interpretation on the guiding questions.

#### ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Give students Handout #8, Developing Inter-textual Connections (Link to the PDF) and Courage (Link to the PDF)
- Ask students to read the quote written by Pastor Martin Neimoller and answer the following:
  - Why do you think it is important to speak up when there is injustice?
  - Describe the benefits and risks involved with speaking out.
- Have students work in pairs.
- Instruct students to classify and organize the similarities between the three situations; their own experiences with bullying, Ka Hsaw Wa's story, and the Holocaust.
- After completing the worksheet, have students answer the following:
  - Who are the heroes in each encounter?
  - Who are the ones that show courage, who persevere, and take action to speak out against injustice?
  - Students will share their information in a class discussion.
- Extension/homework.

#### CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

- Give students Handout #9 Movie Maker slideshow template and directions
- Review directions for storyboard.
- The slideshow will consist of a sequence of thematic connections.
- There should be a minimum of 14 slides and a maximum of 23 slides unless there are requirements to provide accommodations and/or modifications.

The school needs to provide the space and support for students to take a leadership role and responsibility for stopping bullying in their school.

- On a personal level, try to understand how your actions impact others and work to create a safe environment for all the students in your school.
- On the school level, take the Bully Free temperature to see if your school is a “safe” learning environment.
- Create a “Bully Free Zone” with identified safe places, safe staff/teachers, an alert box for students to flag issues or perceived issues.
- Write the No Bullying Code of Conduct that includes responses from students who bully or falsely accuse someone of bullying.
- Host an evening for parents to highlight achievements in creating a Bully Free School.
- Students can create a movie about bullying using Windows Movie Maker®
- Handout #10 and #11 tell how to make a movie.
- Students can present the movie to their school, board of education and community.

## TELL US ABOUT IT

The Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights is sponsoring an annual contest honoring a student who submits the best advocacy activity based upon the lesson studied. A goal of the lesson is to instill into each student that one voice, one person can make monumental changes in the lives of many. Tell us how you “Became a Defender”!

### THE CRITERIA FOR THE CONTEST ARE:

- A one-page summary of the advocacy activity
- Digitized copies of materials that can be sent electronically
- Photos of the activity (please include parental consent form)
- A one-page summary of how the activity made a change in the lives of one person or many

### THE PRIZES INCLUDE:

- A week long “virtual” internship at RFK Center
- An opportunity to meet the defender through a SKYPE visit,
- A visit from Kerry Kennedy or a defender to your school
- A poster of a *Speak Truth to Power* Human Rights Defender
- A donation of a signed copy of *Speak Truth to Power* for the school library

The application and instructions for entry can be downloaded here (link for materials)

The deadline for all applications is the third week in November.

The winning student and teacher will be notified by the last week of January.

### Bullying.org — Where you are NOT alone!

<http://www.bullying.org/>

An interactive website with information about bullying and how to prevent it. The organization provides resources and educational programs to individuals, families, schools, community organizations to help educate against bullying.

### Stop Bullying Now

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/>

This is an interactive website for children with explanations of what bullying is, what they can do to prevent bullying, and has games and Webisodes. There is also an adults' page that has state-by-state anti-bullying laws, tip sheets, and other resources.

### CNN: Stop Bullying: Speak Up

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/studentnews/09/30/antibullying.resource/index.html>

This is a website for students, parents and teachers. It includes tips for teachers and parents on how to talk with their children about bullying and videos for students with interviews with kids who have been bullied and their reactions and feelings.

### Kids Turn Central — Anti-Bullying Resources.

<http://www.kidsturncentral.com/links/bullylinks.htm>

An interactive website for children from the UK, showing that bullying is not just a problem in the United States.

### The Ellen DeGeneres Show — Anti-Bullying Web site

[http://ellen.warnerbros.com/2010/10/resources\\_to\\_help\\_stop\\_bullying\\_0930.php](http://ellen.warnerbros.com/2010/10/resources_to_help_stop_bullying_0930.php)

This popular comedienne and daytime show host provides resources for children and supports the Trevor Project.

### The Humane Connection — Banishing Bullying

<http://humaneconnectionblog.blogspot.com/2010/09/banishing-bullying-5-anti-bullying.html>

The site has multiple links to resources for kids on bullying and how to stop it.

### Bullying Information Center at Education.com

<http://www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/>

This site has information on cyberbullying, school bullying and raising children in the digital age.