

Amnesty International

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

SECTION 3

CLAIMING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

WOMEN WORKING FOR CHANGE

Human Rights Education Activities for use in teaching
Personal Social and Health Education, Citizenship and
English for ages 11-18

The activities in this section are:

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|
| ACTIVITY 1 | Claims for women's rights in Europe and America | |
| | Ages: 14 upwards | 2 |
| ACTIVITY 2 | Working for equality in the UK | |
| | Ages: 14 upwards | 7 |
| ACTIVITY 3 | Women of courage | |
| | Ages: 14 upwards | 10 |

NB: These activities are designed for ages 14 and upwards, but some could be adapted for younger students, if they have some prior knowledge of the issues.

Detailed information about curriculum links is given at the end of this booklet.

THE STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CAMPAIGN

The Amnesty International global campaign to Stop Violence against Women was launched on International Women's Day in March 2004.

The campaign focuses on identifying and exposing acts of violence in the home, and in conflict and post-conflict situations globally. It calls on governments, communities and individuals to take action to prevent such acts and provide redress.

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

‘Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.’

UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan

All human rights issues affect women. However, women also suffer specific denial of their human rights because of their gender. The experience or threat of violence affects the lives of millions of women everywhere, cutting across boundaries of age, wealth, race, religion, sexual identity and culture. Domestic violence affects one in four women in the UK. The targeting of women in conflict and post-conflict situations is part of the ‘culture of war’ and violence against women is used as a military tactic.

Despite its pervasiveness this violence is not ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’. It is an expression of historical and cultural values and patriarchal structures – women across all societies experience role stereotyping, discrimination and violence. Under international law, states must ensure the protection of human rights of all people, without discrimination. But although progress has been made, there is still a long way to go to bring about the eradication of violence against women in the UK and across the world.

Education plays a vital role in challenging the underlying stereotyping and discrimination, which fuels violence against women. This booklet is packed full of ideas for interesting lessons with background information to help students explore the issues. Undertaking the activities in this pack will also help you to fulfil the requirements of UK curricula, particularly English, Citizenship and Personal, Social and Health Education.

The set of activities in this booklet is the last of three on women and human rights. The series aims to help students to think about violence against women as a human rights issue, and to explore its causes and consequences:

Set 1. Global Gender Inequality examines underlying factors such as gender stereotyping, global inequality and discrimination.

Set 2. Violence Against Women demonstrates the widespread existence of violence against women, defines the ways in which violence against women manifests and shows what must be done to prevent violence against women.

Set 3. Claiming Women’s Rights analyses progress towards women’s rights and celebrate human rights defenders.

Each set of materials presents classroom activities with clear curriculum links and an indication of age suitability. Some activities are accompanied by an information sheet or an activity sheet for students to fill in. These may be photocopied and handed out to individual students or working groups. In using the activities, you will need to bear in mind that some of your students may have witnessed or experienced violence against women, or other violations of human rights. Many organisations provide help and support. The BBC website provides a comprehensive list of these at www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/links.shtml. Two of the national helplines are:

Women’s Aid 24 Hour National Domestic Violence helpline: Freephone: 0808 2000 247
Post: P.O.Box 391, Bristol, BS99 7WS
www.womensaid.org.uk

ChildLine Free 24 hour helpline: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

This series of materials was produced as part of Amnesty International’s Stop Violence Against Women campaign. The activities are edited and updated from *Freedom: Human Right Education Pack* by Caroline Adams, Marietta Harrow and Dan Jones (London, 2001), Chapter 3, pp 81-105.

Activity 1

CLAIMS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

Age group: 14 upwards

Time:

TV broadcast: 1 lesson

Writing a short play: 1 lesson

Writing a blog: 1 lesson

Role-play: 1 lesson

Ask students when women could first vote in the UK.

Hand out copies of the two information sheets:
Claims for women's rights (two pages) and ***Votes for women in the UK***.

Invite students to find out about the following women, by reading the information sheet and by further web research if you have time:

Olympe de Gouges

Mary Wollstonecraft

Sojourner Truth

They can also look for pictures of them on the internet.

- Ask pairs of students to prepare a one-minute speech for a national TV broadcast, based on the words quoted in ***Claims for women's rights*** of either Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft or Sojourner Truth. The speech should be written in simple, up-to-date accessible language. (A dictionary may help students understand all the original text.)

Choose one representative of each woman to make the speech.

OR

- Ask students, working in threes, to write a short play in which Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft and Sojourner Truth meet and talk about their lives, women's rights in their countries in their time, and their shared vision for the future.

OR

- Ask students to imagine that the suffragette campaigner Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst visits the UK now. She writes a blog of her visit for a website. What will she be most surprised at? Proud of? Disappointed about?

OR

- Ask groups to role-play the debate in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies on whether their movement should continue to try to gain the vote through lawful methods or adopt more militant tactics.

Further activities for students

- Find out how people campaigned for the vote for women in your area.
- Find out when women in different countries achieved the right to vote. Which is the most recent country to give women the vote? Where in the world can women still not vote?
- Design a poster to encourage women to vote.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Ages: 14 and up. Citizenship, English, PSE/PSD

SEE DETAILED CURRICULUM LINKS ON PAGE 15

Activity 1 Claims for women's rights in Europe and America

INFORMATION SHEET

Claims for women's rights in Europe and America

From the 18th century, democracies across the world were formed on the basis that 'man' was the citizen and woman was 'without Reason' and therefore not fully human. Women were excluded from full citizenship and rights. Women's lives were put under the control of their menfolk. And radicals and revolutionaries for over 200 years, from Algeria to Poland to Zambia, Argentina to Laos to Zimbabwe, adapted these ideas in their struggle for democracy.

*(Adapted from 'Women , Men, Democracy and Governance'
British Council/CHANGE exhibition 1998)*

Campaigners for women's rights in the 18th century were often either ignored or badly treated.

Olympe de Gouges

In France in 1791, **Olympe de Gouges**, a butcher's daughter who wrote plays and political pamphlets, published *The Declaration of the Rights of Women*. She argued that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, drawn up in the French Revolution two years earlier, had excluded women. In her Declaration she called for full equal rights for women in law and government and stressed the need for women's education. In 1793 she was executed by guillotine as a troublemaker.

In her own words:

Woman, wake up; the tocsin of reason is being heard throughout the whole universe; discover your rights. The powerful empire of nature is no longer surrounded by prejudice, fanaticism, superstition, and lies. The flame of truth has dispersed all the clouds of folly and usurpation. Enslaved man has multiplied his strength and needs recourse to yours to break his chains. Having become free, he has become unjust to his companion. Oh, women, women! When will you cease to be blind? What advantage have you received from the Revolution? A more pronounced scorn, a more marked disdain.

Activity 1 Claims for women's rights in Europe and America

INFORMATION SHEET

Claims for women's rights in Europe and America **continued**

Mary Wollstonecraft

In 1792 the English teacher and writer, **Mary Wollstonecraft**, later known as the 'mother of feminism', published a book called *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She argued that women are born equal but taught to be subordinate to men. She called for democratic rights, universal education, and for women's right to work in trades, professions and civil and political life.

In her own words:

Consider... whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness?

In this style argue tyrants of every denomination, from the weak king to the weak father of a family; they are all eager to crush reason, yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful. Do you not act a similar part when you force all women by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark? For surely, sir, you will not assert that a duty can be binding which is not founded on reason?

Sojourner Truth

A former slave and travelling preacher in the United States, **Sojourner Truth**, was quoted as having made this speech at a conference on women's rights in New York in September 1853:

In her own words:

I've been looking round and watching things... I came forth to speak about Woman's Rights, and want... to keep the scales moving.... We have all been thrown down so low, that nobody thought we'd ever get up again; but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again, and now I am here.

I was thinking, when I saw women contending for their rights, what a difference there is now and... in old times in the Scriptures... the kings of the earth would kill a woman if she came into their presence but Queen Esther came forth, for she was oppressed, and felt there was a great wrong, and she said 'I will die or I will bring my complaint before the king'. Should the king of the United States be greater, or more crueler, or more harder? But that king... raised up his sceptre and said, 'Thy request shall be granted unto thee... the half of my kingdom will I grant it to thee!' ... But that is not what women came forward to contend.... Now women do not ask half of a kingdom, but their rights, and they don't get them. When they come to demand them, don't you hear how sons hiss their mothers, like snakes, because they ask for their rights; and can they ask for any thing less?

But we'll have our rights; see if we don't: and you can't stop us from them; see if you can. You may hiss as much as you like, but it is coming. Women don't get half as much rights as they ought to; we want more, and we will have it.

(Extracts from Sojourner Truth's address to the Woman's Rights Convention, Broadway Tabernacle, New York, September 7, 1853, **Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention. Votes for Women, 1848-1921**)

Activity 1 Claims for women's rights in Europe and America

INFORMATION SHEET

Votes for women in the UK

In 1865 **Emily Davies** and **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** handed in the first women's petition demanding votes for women to **John Stuart Mill** to present in the House of Commons. Women wanted the vote to give them the power to push for all the other reforms they needed to gain equality in education, employment, marriage and family life.

For most of the 19th century in the UK, married women:

- did not have legal control over their own children
- could not obtain a divorce
- had no control over their earnings, which belonged to their husbands
- did not legally own any possessions, whether clothes or belongings
- could not attend university
- could not enter any of the professions
- could not earn enough for a living wage.

The suffragists

The campaign for the right of women to vote (the women's suffrage movement) came into existence in the mid-19th century with groups in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Edinburgh. Until the early years of the 20th century these groups tried to gain the vote through 'constitutional' means. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), led by **Mrs Philippa Fawcett**, held meetings, collected petitions, lobbied members of Parliament, published pamphlets, wrote letters to the press and enlisted the support of prominent public figures, all without success.

The suffragettes

From 1903, **Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst** and others founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Their members became more militant, believing that the 'polite' strategies were not working. From 1905 to 1914, these 'suffragettes' used public demonstrations, window-smashing, arson and the destruction of property in their campaigning. Hundreds of suffragettes were arrested and imprisoned. In 1909 suffragette Marion Wallace Dunlop went on hunger-strike in Birmingham jail. She was the first of many women prisoners to endure forcible feeding. Despite an

outcry from the public, the press and many MPs, the Liberal government of the day continued to imprison and ill-treat the suffragettes.

Victory

In February 1918 women over 30 who were married or owned property were allowed to vote. Voting rights for all women over 21 were finally granted in 1928 – after 63 years of campaigning.

Activity 2

WORKING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN BRITAIN

Age group: 14 upwards

Time:

Main activity: 1 lesson

Further activities 1): 1 lesson or homework

Further activities 2): 2 lessons

Photocopy one copy of the activity sheet (two pages) for each group. Separate the dates and the landmarks, cut them up and ask groups to arrange them in the correct chronological order.

You can select a few key events, rather than using all of them, depending on the ability of your group and the time available.

Students could also group the achievements in different areas of progress.

Discuss with the students :

- Which of these achievements had the most significance?
- What are the benefits to young people today of progress in claiming women's rights?
- What other achievements should be added?

Further activities:

1) Students can research other women who made a difference and other achievements in campaigns for women's rights at:

www.eoc.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/timeline/timeline.shtml

2) Pairs or small groups of students can undertake a research project and prepare a presentation on an organisation working for positive change for women. Some suggestions:

- **Stop Violence Against Women** – Amnesty International campaign
www.amnesty.org.uk/svaw/
- **SEWA** – A women's organisation and movement in India that supports poor women's struggles for economic independence and campaigns for women's rights
www.sewa.org/

- Research micro-finance on the website of the Micro-Credit Summit

www.microcreditsummit.org

Visit the **Grameen Bank** website to learn about the work in Bangladesh

www.grameen-info.org

- **Engender** – an information, research and networking organisation for women in Scotland, working with other groups locally and internationally to improve women's lives and increase their power and influence

www.engender.org.uk

- **Womankind Worldwide** – Promoting women's development and women's human rights around the world. One current campaign is about domestic violence

www.womankind.org.uk/

- **Women's Environmental and Development Organisation (WEDO)** 50/50 campaign for fair and equal representation of women in government

www.wedo.org

CURRICULUM LINKS

Ages: 14 and up. Citizenship, History, PSE/PSD

SEE DETAILED CURRICULUM LINKS ON PAGE 15

Activity 2

ACTIVITY SHEET

Working to achieve women's rights in Britain

In the UK it took 63 years of campaigning to achieve the vote for women. Throughout the 20th and early 21st century, women have had to continue campaigning to gain equal access to education, jobs and pay, for control over their own fertility, for

safety and justice in the face of male violence, for equal political and civil rights, for free childcare provision, for freedom from sexual exploitation. Some of these rights have been won; some are still to be won.

- 1918 Married or property-owning women over 30 allowed to vote. Women can be elected as MPs. First woman MP: **Countess Constance Markiewicz** (As a representative of Sinn Féin in Dublin, she declines to take her seat in Parliament in protest against British rule in Ireland.)
- 1919 First woman MP to take her seat in Parliament: **Lady Nancy Astor**. The **Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act** abolishes the restrictions on women entering the professions. It allows women to do jury service and become magistrates.
- 1921 First English birth-control clinic opened by **Marie Stopes**.
- 1928 All women over 21 in the United Kingdom have the right to vote.
- 1929 First woman Cabinet Minister: **Margaret Bondfield** (Labour).
- 1930 First woman to fly a plane from Britain to Australia: **Amy Johnson**.
- 1943 First woman President of the Trades Union Congress: **Anne Loughlin**.
- 1945 Family Allowance (child benefits) introduced and paid directly to mothers.
- 1949 First women appointed King's Counsels (senior barristers): **Rose Heilbron** and **Helena Normanton**.
- 1955 First woman head of a Civil Service Department: **Evelyn Sharp**.
- 1958 First woman member of the House of Lords: **Baroness Wootton of Abinger**. First British woman Nobel Prize-winner: **Dorothy Hodgkin** (chemistry).
- 1964 First woman High Court Judge: **Elizabeth Lane**.
- 1965 The **Abortion Act** makes abortion legal for the first time.
- 1969 The **Family Law Reform Act**: Wives can enter into financial and legal contracts in their own right.
Successful strike for equal pay by women machinists at Ford's in Dagenham, leading to the National Joint Action Committee on Equal Pay
- 1970 The **Equal Pay Act**: Men and women to receive the same pay for the same jobs.
- 1971 First refuges set up to help women escaping domestic violence.

Activity 2

ACTIVITY SHEET

Working to achieve women's rights in Britain continued

- 1972 Virago, the feminist publishing house, set up by Carmen Callil.
- 1975 The **Sex Discrimination Act** bans sex discrimination in employment, education and advertising. The **Equal Opportunities Commission** is set up to see that this act and the Equal Pay Act are observed.
- 1979 First woman prime minister of the UK: **Margaret Thatcher**.
First woman president of the British Medical Association: **Josephine Barnes**.
- 1980 The **Social Security Act**: married women entitled to claim Supplementary Benefit and Family Income Supplement if they are main breadwinners.
- 1984 Greenham Common women peace protesters receive worldwide media attention.
- 1985 The **Equal Pay (Equal Value Amendment) Act**: women entitled to the same pay as men for jobs of equal value.
- 1986 The **Sexual Offences Act** makes kerb-crawlers liable for prosecution.
- 1987 The **Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Act** allows women to retire at the same age as men and to work night shifts in manufacturing industries.
- 1988 The **Metropolitan Force Order**: police to treat domestic violence like any other serious violent offence.
- 1989 First black woman MP: **Diane Abbot**.
- 1990 The **Finance Act**: independent taxation for husband and wife.
- 1991 First police Domestic Violence Units set up.
- 1992 Rape in marriage recognised as a crime.
First black woman QC: **Patricia Scotland**
Sexual harassment in the workplace recognised as a crime.
- 1993 Synod of the Church of England votes to allow women to become priests.
Home Office Select Committee on Domestic Violence established.
- 1994 'Zero Tolerance': campaign launched to reduce violence against women.
- 1999 Law Lords recognise rape and domestic violence as grounds for seeking asylum.
- 2002 The **Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act** enables political parties to adopt positive measures to reduce inequality in the numbers of men and women elected as representatives.
- 2003 The **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations** outlaw discrimination in employment and vocational training on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The **Sexual Offences Act**: extended to types of sex crimes not previously covered in law, eg sex with a child under 13 becomes statutory rape.

Activity 3

WOMEN OF COURAGE

Age Group: 14 upwards

Time:

Main activity: 1 lesson

Further activities: 1 lesson or homework for each activity

Ask pairs or small groups to read the information sheet **'They can't kill everyone'** (two pages).

Then discuss:

- What do these three women have in common?
- What adjectives would you use to describe them?
- What difficult decisions have they had to make?
- What do you think inspires them?
- What sets them apart from, and what unites them with, other women?

Groups make a list of women, past and present, that they admire. What do they feel about the word 'heroine'? (Why does Maya Angelou use the term 'sheroes' to describe women she admires?)

Pairs can read the information sheet **Women working for rights** and then find out more about women, known and less well-known, who have worked for change:

'Distinguished Women of Past and Present'

www.distinguishedwomen.com

Further activities

- Students create a 'Heroines' Gallery', with picture and stories about women they have investigated.
- Students think of a woman they admire in their own life. What are the qualities that they admire in her? Invite them to interview her and write a profile of her.
- Students read, discuss and perform the Maya Angelou poem 'Still I rise'.
 - What forms of oppression is the poem about?
 - How does the poet celebrate the strength of the human spirit?
 - Find out about Maya Angelou's life and work.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Ages: 14 and up. Citizenship, English, History, PSE/PSD

SEE DETAILED CURRICULUM LINKS ON PAGE 15

Activity 3 Women of courage

INFORMATION SHEET

'They can't kill everyone'

Salima Ghezali

Salima Ghezali is a human rights activist and a journalist in Algeria. She became involved in the women's movement in her country, and the struggle to defend fundamental rights and democracy, in the 1980s. She criticised her government's attacks on freedom of expression, human rights, and women's rights, and also the behaviour of Islamic groups and parties. In November 1994, she became Algeria's only woman newspaper editor. She was editor of the weekly *La Nation*, which was constantly harassed and then closed down for years by the authorities.

In 1996, Ghezali was named Editor of the Year by the World Press Review. In 1997 she received the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights from the European Parliament and the Olaf Palme Prize for braving constant danger to report on the violence and brutality meted out to the people of Algeria.

A UK journalist who met her in 1998, wrote: 'Over 70 journalists have been murdered in Algeria, but although she can now only publish abroad and on the Internet, Salima goes on writing, arguing for human rights and a negotiated end to the conflict. When I met her in April, her casual bravery was daunting. "I hear from a friend that someone has told someone they know that I talk too much and will be found in a ditch with my throat cut. They may kill me, but they can't kill everyone."'

(Mark Lattimer, *The Independent*, 23 June 1998)

Nawal el Saadawi

Nawal el Saadawi was born in Egypt in 1931. Her first rebellion was her refusal to get married at 10 years old. 'This was my first challenge and when I succeeded it gave me a lot of strength.' That strength led her to overcome many obstacles and to qualify as a doctor and psychiatrist. She became Egypt's Director of Public Health. She said that 'writing was a stronger weapon than medicine in the fight against poverty and ignorance'. She began to write poems, stories, novels and plays. Her writing, in books like *The Hidden Face of Eve*, focused more on women's oppression and rights essential to freedom: 'Women are the first target because we are politically weak and because our status in religions is inferior.' Her books were banned for many years in Egypt. Her writing lost her her job. She was prevented from practising medicine, imprisoned and exiled.

Nawal el Saadawi believes that human rights cannot be divided: 'We need a movement... which seeks unity in diversity by breaking down barriers built on discrimination (by gender, class, race, religion) and by discovering what we have in common as human beings.'

She returned to Egypt in 1998. Now she works against all forms of oppression, particularly against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a traditional practice used in some societies where a girl's genitals are cut. She organises rights and economic projects with rural women to liberate them economically from male domination. Her name figured on a deathlist issued by fundamentalist terrorist organisations.

'I am in danger... but it has become part of me. I no longer feel it. It is like sitting in a train; after a time you no longer feel the movement; you become part of it.'

(Adapted from Katrina Payne 'Paying the Price of Freedom', interview with Nawal el Saadawi, *New Internationalist* 298 Jan/Feb 1998; *Nawal el Saadawi Reader*, Zed Books 1997; Encyclopaedia of the Orient.)

To find out more about her life and work visit:
www.nawalsaadawi.net/

Activity 3 Women of courage

INFORMATION SHEET

'They can't kill everyone' continued

Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi was born in Burma in 1945. Her father, General Aung San, was the national hero of Burma. He led struggles against British colonialism and against the Japanese invasion. Aung San was assassinated just before Burma gained its independence in 1948. Aung San Suu Kyi studied anthropology at Oxford University, married an English academic and they had two sons.

In 1988 Suu Kyi returned to Burma to care for her dying mother. Her return coincided with the Burmese people's uprising against the repressive military regime which had ruled for 26 years. She became the leader of the movement and the party that she founded, the National League for Democracy, won a massive victory at the elections in 1990. But the military regime refused to hand over power and kept Suu Kyi under house arrest for six years. For nearly two and a half years she was allowed no contact with her husband and children. She said that she did not feel afraid or really lonely because 'I didn't feel hostile to the guards or soldiers surrounding me and I think fear comes from hostility. So I felt quite relaxed. I had the radio... and my books. And I think loneliness comes from inside.'

In 1991 Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. After her release from house arrest she continued – as the elected leader of the country – to campaign for the restoration of democracy as the first step towards rights for all: 'People keep asking me about women's rights and I find it a little difficult to answer because the men in Burma have no rights either. I feel that first we have to get basic rights for everyone and then we have to attack this area. Women are particularly discriminated against.' Her husband became ill with cancer but the regime denied him a visa to make a last visit to her. She decided not to leave the country to visit him, believing she would be prevented from returning. He died in 1999.

(Adapted from John Pilger 'Burma: a cry for freedom', *New Internationalist* 280 June 1996; Arlene Gregorius, *BBC Online News* 29 July 1998)

Activity 3 Women of courage

INFORMATION SHEET

Women working for rights

Countless women have campaigned in different ways for human rights.

- **Asrar al-Qabandi** (1960-1991) became a leader in the Kuwaiti resistance movement after the invasion by Iraq in 1990. She was arrested, tortured and murdered by Iraqi police. Her memory inspires the growing feminist movement in Kuwait – where women have just won the right to vote.
- **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** (1836-1914) fought to qualify as Britain's first woman doctor in 1865. She founded a women's hospital in 1866. She campaigned for women's right to vote, and was the first woman Mayor in England.
- **Yaa Asantewa** (d 1921) was a freedom fighter who rallied and led her people – the Asante – to fight the British who were trying to colonise the 'Gold Coast' (now Ghana) in West Africa. Eventually captured, she was exiled to the Seychelles, where she died.
- **Eve Ensler** (1953-), American playwright, performer, and campaigner. Following the world-wide success of her play *The Vagina Monologues*, she started a global campaign to stop violence against women.
- **Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain** (1880-1932) was born in Bengal, and fought against the restrictions of the *purdah* system which kept Indian women secluded and uneducated. In 1911 she started the first Muslim girls' school in Calcutta.
- **Audre Lorde** (1934-1992), born in New York City, described herself as a 'Black lesbian, mother, warrior, poet'. She became a famous poet and civil rights campaigner. She challenged all forms of oppression and campaigned for the rights of women, of African Americans and of the gay and lesbian community. She co-founded the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press and formed the Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa. She was a key speaker at the first national march for gay and lesbian liberation in Washington DC in 1979.
- **Eleanor Roosevelt** (1884-1962) was active in social work in the United States from the age of 18. She continued to work for the rights of the poor, minorities and the disadvantaged when her husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, became US president. In 1948 she chaired the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, which drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **Alice Walker** (1944-), a celebrated American writer, also worked to raise the consciousness of African American women and led an education campaign against genital mutilation of young girls, (FGM – a traditional practice in some societies where a girl's genitals are cut.)

Activity 3 Women of courage

INFORMATION SHEET

Still I Rise

Still I Rise

by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

(The Complete Collected Poems, Virago Press Ltd,
London, 1994)