

## Calls for Reform and Responses

*We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.*

—Nelson Mandela (1918–2013)

**Essential Question:** How have social categories, roles, and practices changed and stayed the same since 1900?

In the age of global economics, global transportation and communication, and global devastation from war, human rights were, for the first time, also elevated to the level of global discourse, which challenged long-held assumptions about race, class, gender, and religion. Efforts to establish and safeguard human rights opened doors of educational and professional opportunity and political participation for some who had previously been excluded. People sought liberation from the “continuing bondage,” in Nelson Mandela’s terms, that had kept them in poverty. People around the globe also began to protest the inequalities and environmental damage that globalization had created or reinforced.

### An Era of Rights

In December of 1948, the United Nations laid the groundwork for an era of rights when it adopted a foundational document, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, asserting basic rights and fundamental freedoms for all human beings. It stated that everyone is entitled to these rights without distinctions based on “race, colour [color], sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

**The UN and Human Rights** Since its creation, the United Nations has promoted **human rights**, basic protections that are common to all people. As part of its humanitarian work, the UN created the **United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)** in 1946 to provide food for children in Europe who were still suffering more than a year after the end of World War II. In 1948, the UN formalized its position on human rights in the Universal Declaration. Since that time, the UN has investigated abuses of human rights, such as genocide, war crimes, government oppression, and crimes against women.



The **International Court of Justice** is a judicial body set up by the original UN charter. It settles disputes over international law that countries bring to it. Also called the World Court, it has 15 judges, and each must be a citizen of a different country. It often deals with border disputes and treaty violations.

Another main aim of the UN is to protect **refugees**, people who have fled their home countries. In times of war, famine, and natural disasters, people often leave their country and seek refuge in a safe location. Working through sub-agencies such as NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and the agency UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), the UN provides food, medicine, and temporary shelter. Among the earliest refugees the UN helped were Palestinians who fled the disorder when the UN partitioned Palestine to create the state of Israel in 1948.

**Global Feminism** On January 21, 2017, the day after Donald Trump’s inauguration as president, the Women’s March on Washington drew about 500,000 demonstrators standing up for women’s rights and other concerns. However, the march drew even more power from the millions more demonstrators who took part in locations on every continent around the globe, from Antarctica to Zagreb, Croatia and from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Mumbai, India. As many as five million people stood together that day representing a global solidarity for women’s rights. That march was the most dramatic sign of global feminism, but other landmark events since 1900 had done their part to solidify the movement.

Landmark Events in Global Feminism after 1900		
Date	Event	Highlight
March 1911	First International Women’s Day Celebration	One million demonstrators in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland stand for women’s rights
April 1915	Meeting of First International Congress of Women	Representatives from 12 nations, including the United States, attended.
June 1975	United Nations First World Conference on Women	Representatives from 133 nations met in Mexico City and planned for the advancement of women over the next decade.
December 1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	An “international bill of rights for women” adopted by United Nations
September 1995	Meeting of Fourth International Congress of Women	Thousands of participants and activists met in Beijing, China, where then-First Lady Hillary Clinton declared that “women’s rights are human rights.”

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women outlined many rights and protections that are cornerstones of global feminism:

- The right to vote and to hold office
- The right to freely choose a spouse
- The right to access the same education as men
- The right to access family planning resources and birth control.

**Cultural and Religious Movements** Discourse on rights also became part of cultural and religious movements. For example, the **Négritude Movement**, which took root primarily in French West Africa, emphasized pride in “blackness,” the rejection of French colonial authority, and the right to self-determination. **Léopold Sédar Senghor** of Senegal wrote poems about the beauty and uniqueness of African culture and is now regarded as one of the 20th century’s most distinguished French writers. (Senghor later served as first president of independent Senegal.) During the 1920s and 1930s, American intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes wrote movingly about the multiple meanings of “blackness” in the world. What many now refer to as “black pride” of the 1960s had its roots in the Négritude Movement

Inherent rights became a focus of a religious ideology as well. **Liberation theology**, which combined socialism with Catholicism, spread through Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. It interpreted the teachings of Jesus to include freeing people from the abuses of economic, political, and social conditions. Part of this liberation included redistributing some wealth from the rich to the poor. In many countries, military dictators persecuted and killed religious workers who embraced liberation theology.

However, advocates of liberation theology had a few notable successes. In Nicaragua, they helped a rebel movement topple a dictator and institute a socialist government. In Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez was deeply influenced by the movement. Then, in 2013, the Roman Catholic Church selected a cardinal from Argentina as pope, the first one from Latin America. The new leader, who took the name **Pope Francis**, reversed the Vatican’s opposition to liberation theology.

## Steps toward Gender Equality

During the 20th century, men and women made great strides toward securing some of their rights and participating more fully in professional and political life. In the first part of the century the percentage of women who could read and who attended college increased, and in country after country, women won the right to vote. However, not all the women in a country won the right to vote at the same time. In the United States, for example, white women won



the right to vote in national elections in 1920. Native American and African American women did not have full voting rights throughout the country until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Britain granted women the right to vote in 1918, but at first only women over 30 who met a property qualification could do so. British women did not achieve the same right to vote as men until 1928. In Australia, white women gained some voting rights in 1894, but aboriginal men and women did not gain the right to vote until 1962.

When Women Won the Right to Vote	
Country	Year
New Zealand	1893
Azerbaijan	1918
Britain	1918
United States	1920
Brazil	1932
Turkey	1934
Japan	1945
India	1947
Morocco	1963
Switzerland	1971
Kuwait	2005
Saudi Arabia	2015

As of 2018, only the tiny country of Vatican City did not allow women to vote. Whether women are able to exercise their vote is another issue. In Pakistan, women gained the right to vote in 1947. However, in 2013, women cast only 10 percent of votes there.

## Steps toward Racial Equality

In the United States, African Americans won major victories against discrimination and segregation. Through the 1965 **Civil Rights Act**, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and the 1965 **Voting Rights Act**, which banned discrimination in voting, the federal government stepped in to protect the rights of all citizens. African Americans also sought equality of education through desegregation of schools.

**South Africa's Colonial Legacy** South Africa's system of **apartheid**, instituted in 1948, enforced the segregation of people based on race. Although white South Africans made up only 15 percent of South Africa's population, apartheid reserved good jobs and other privileges for them. So-called **pass laws** required black South Africans to carry identity documents when entering areas set aside for whites, which they often had to do when traveling to their

jobs. They were banned from living in certain areas of the country. Mixed marriages were prohibited. Although South Africa had 11 major languages, classes for blacks were taught only in Afrikaans, the language of many of the white South Africans who ruled the nation. These dehumanizing decrees marginalized the 85 percent of South Africans who were black, South Asian, or mixed race.

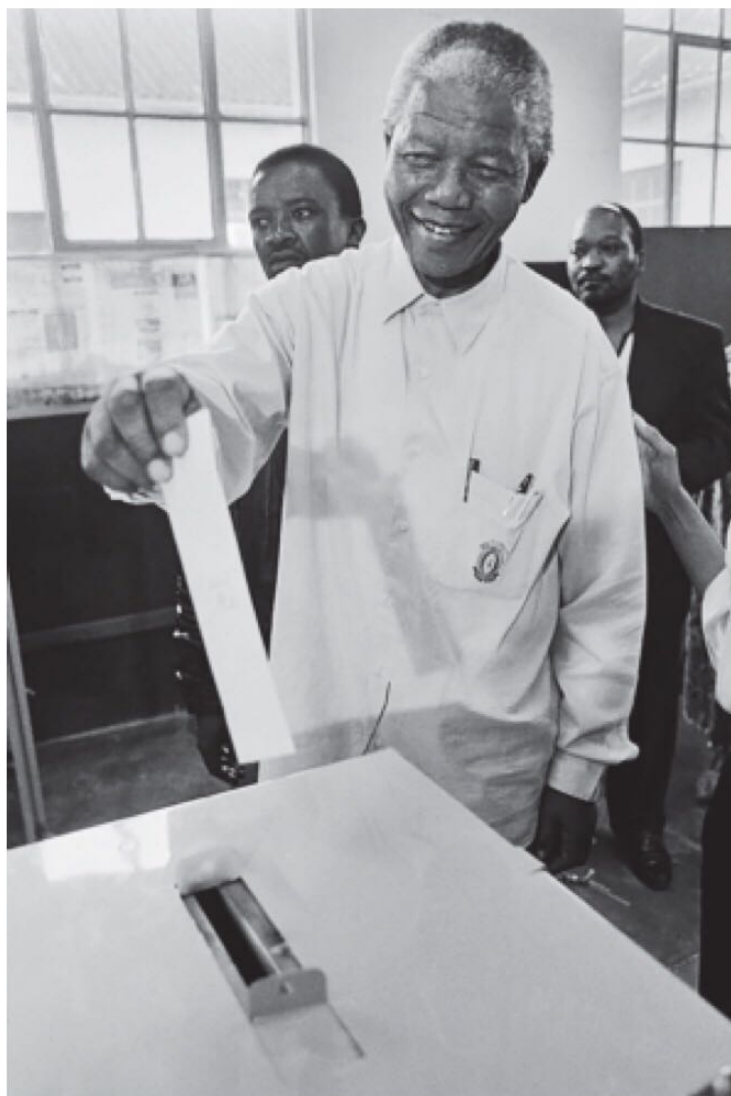
The white-dominated South African government had its basis in European colonization of Africa in general and the Dutch and British colonization of South Africa in particular. The colonizers pushed the native people off the fertile lands and gave them no say in government. South Africans began to demand equal treatment. “I am not interested in picking up crumbs of compassion,” said **Desmond Tutu**, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, and human rights activist. “I want the full menu of rights.”

**Challenges to Apartheid** In 1964, **Nelson Mandela**, a leader of the **African National Congress (ANC)**, was imprisoned for life for agitating against apartheid. The ANC’s primary goals were to end white domination and create a multiracial South Africa. Mandela’s imprisonment throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s inspired a global movement to end apartheid. Black protests in South Africa, which were often peaceful, were crushed violently by the government’s forces. South Africa’s reputation grew worse in the eyes of the global community. Musicians staged concerts calling for Mandela’s release from prison, college students urged universities and corporations to divest from South Africa, and many countries voted for strict economic sanctions against the country. The United Nation expelled South Africa in 1974 because of its apartheid,

As South Africa became a **pariah state** (undesirable state) in the 1980s, its leadership began to take notice. Mandela himself began negotiations with the government in 1986 while still in prison. In 1989, **F. W. de Klerk** became the nation’s acting president. He recognized the need for change. Within six months, de Klerk announced Nelson Mandela’s release from prison.

Although euphoria was high in the weeks following Mandela’s release, apartheid remained the law of the land. Police violence against protesters persisted, which stalled negotiations between Mandela and de Klerk. However, a series of reforms in the 1990s ended apartheid. In 1994, South Africa held its first free elections and rejoined the United Nations. The African National Congress won the majority of the seats in the Parliament. The Government of National Unity was established with ANC members in the majority. On May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as president, South Africa’s first black leader.

**Uniting South Africa** Immediately the Government of National Unity set up the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**. Unlike the Nuremberg Trials that sought retribution for crimes against humanity committed by Nazis during World War II, the TRC sought to restore and establish an atmosphere of trust in the new multiracial South Africa. The TRC organized a series of 19 public hearings designed to expose the truth of human rights violations that



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Nelson Mandela voted for the first time in 1994, at age 76. In that year, he was selected as president of South Africa.

had occurred during apartheid, while at the same time granting amnesty to members of the apartheid regime who agreed to testify.

**Caste Reservation in India** The fight for civil rights was also a global effort as people from different races and social classes began to demand equality. In India, the 1949 Constitution outlawed discrimination against the *Dalits*, also known as untouchables. Pakistan outlawed discrimination against Dalits in 1953. Before then, many people believed that being touched by a Dalit required the person who was touched to undergo a cleansing ritual. People in India and Pakistan continued to discriminate against Dalits until well into the 21st century.

To open doors of opportunity to social groups or castes that had faced historical discrimination, the government of India established the **caste reservation system**. Through this system, the government guaranteed that a certain percentage of government and public sector jobs and enrollment in higher education would be set aside for people whose caste had conferred an underprivileged life.

## Human Rights Repression in China

After the economic reforms of the late 1980s and 1990s, China quickly became an economic powerhouse. The economic liberalization, however, was not matched by democratic reforms. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ruled the People's Republic with an iron fist. It censored the news industry and controlled what students were taught in primary and secondary schools. Such practices limited freedom of speech and thought. The CCP also required all nonstate organizations and groups to register with the government. International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were not free to operate in China unless they were willing to undergo strict regulation. Opposition political parties did not stand a chance in China's governing system, although some debate was allowed in the legislative process. Overall, however, the governing system was designed to thwart all challenges to the CCP's authority.

How could the CCP have such power? The Communists had controlled China since 1949. The government owned and controlled all industries. Government officials had killed or imprisoned those who had spoken out against previous government actions, such as the Great Leap Forward.

**Tiananmen Square** Chinese intellectuals and students had a history of protesting against their government based on the May Fourth Movement in 1919. In the spring of 1989, pro-democracy activists organized a public event mourning the death of a sympathetic high official. The protesters demanded a chance to speak with Chinese leaders about freedom of the press and other reforms. After the Chinese government refused to meet with the activists, citizens in more than 400 Chinese cities staged sit-ins, refused to attend classes, and began hunger strikes. Hundreds of thousands of students, professors, and urban workers staged a massive protest in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. After seven weeks of protests, the government declared martial law. It sent troops armed with tanks and assault weapons into Beijing. Citizens responded by setting up barricades to block the troops.

On June 4, 1989, the army arrived in Tiananmen Square and attacked the unarmed protesters. The Chinese government claimed that nobody died in Tiananmen Square that day. No mention of the event was included in school texts, and the government blocked all Web sites that discussed the Tiananmen Square incident and human rights abuses in China. However, estimates by Amnesty International, the International Red Cross, and the *New York Times* indicated that anywhere from several hundred to a few thousand civilians were killed. As Chinese officials continue to describe the Tiananmen event as a western conspiracy, Tiananmen mothers are prohibited from openly mourning family members who died in June 1989. The government still imprisons those who commemorate June 4. (Connect: Analyze the methods of protest at Tiananmen Square and the May 4th Movement. See Topic 7.5.)

**Minority Rights in China** The communist government in China has struggled with the demands of the nation's 55 ethnic minorities. Some prominent examples were calls by Tibetans for more autonomy or independence



and the complaints of the Uighur people concerning religious and political discrimination in the northwest province of Xinjiang.

In 2011, some of the Mongolian people in China protested against the high number of Han Chinese who had moved into Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region of northern China, and disrupted their pastoral way of life. The Han are the largest ethnic group in China and worldwide. The Mongolians protested the environmental damage that came with settled agriculture, strip-mining of coal, building of highways, damming of rivers, and overgrazing of land.

## Steps toward Environmental Repair

People realized that part of securing their rights in a globalized world is to claim their environmental rights to clean water and air and a sustainable planet with biodiversity. A number of organizations try to identify and achieve goals toward guaranteeing those rights.

**Earth Day** Starting in 1970, citizens in the United States designated April 22 each year as **Earth Day**, a day for people to focus on environmental awareness. Organizers hoped to highlight recycling, developing alternative energy, eating locally grown and organic foods, and passing antipollution legislation. Today, about 174 countries observe and participate in Earth Day activities with the Earth Day Network, an environmental advocacy group.

**Greenpeace** Founded in 1971 as an organization to advocate for the environment, **Greenpeace** grew into a multinational agency with offices in more than 55 countries. It battles deforestation, desertification, global warming, the killing of whales, and overfishing. Greenpeace has engaged in lobbying and education, but it became famous for its direct actions, such as confronting whaling boats in the ocean.

**Green Belt Movement** In 1977, Kenyan activist **Wangari Maathai** founded the **Green Belt Movement**, a direct response to the environmental degradation resulting from the colonial experience. Women in rural Kenya were reporting that streams were drying up and their food supply was unpredictable. The Green Belt Movement helped women work together to plant trees to improve the soil and collect rainwater. More than that, however, Dr. Maathai and the Green Belt Movement helped women see their capacity for making changes through participation in public life rather than leaving decisions to others.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

In 2004, Maathai won the Nobel Prize for Peace, becoming the first African woman to do so. “We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own,” she said.





## Steps toward Economic Fairness

To counterbalance the strictly commercial interests of the powerful World Trade Organization (see Topic 9.4), organizations from around the world combined resources to create the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) in 1989. Member organizations subscribe to the following 10 principles of fair trade, and the WFTO monitors its members to make sure they follow these principles.

### World Fair Trade Organization Principles of Fair Trade

1. Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers
2. Transparency and Accountability
3. Fair Trading Practices
4. Payment of a Fair Price
5. Ensuring no Child Labor and Forced Labor
6. Commitment to Non Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association
7. Ensuring Good Working Conditions
8. Providing Capacity Building
9. Promoting Fair Trade
10. Respect for the Environment

### KEY TERMS BY THEME

**SOCIETY: Leaders and Thinkers**

Nelson Mandela  
 Negritude  
 Leopold Senghor  
 Pope Francis  
 Liberation Theology  
 W. E. B. DuBois  
 Desmond Tutu  
 F. W. de Klerk  
 Wangari Maathai

**ENVIRONMENT: Actions**

Earth Day  
 Greenpeace  
 Green Belt Movement

**GOVERNMENT: United Nations**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)  
 International Court of Justice

**GOVERNMENT: Power and Control**

human rights  
 refugees  
 Civil Rights Act  
 Voting Rights Act  
 apartheid  
 pass laws  
 African National Congress (ANC)  
 pariah state  
 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)  
 dalits  
 caste reservation system  
 Tiananmen Square