

Asian American Activists and Leaders



Highlighting examples of interracial solidarity and intersectionality

This resource is designed for caregivers and children to explore together, to learn the stories of Asian American activists and leaders, past and present, who have stood up for the rights of their own communities and others.



Pro tip: For help explaining tricky vocabulary, check out the definitions of key terms at the end of this resource!

Do you know what an activist is? Activists are like real-life superheroes! They use their words and actions to help make things more fair and right so that the world is a better place for everyone. Just like how superheroes want to help other people, activists stand up for what they believe in so that everyone has what they need and are treated fairly.

But, activists can't do their important work by themselves. Most of the time, activists work in solidarity with other people who might be different from them because they know that they have more power to make change happen if they work together. Being in solidarity means standing up together, across different groups like race and ethnicity, to make sure everyone is treated fairly. It's just like how superheroes also work in teams because they each have a unique power that can help make a difference. But, unlike superheroes in books or movies, activists are also regular people. Anyone can be an activist! And, activists help each other out because they know their voices are stronger if they work together.

Here, we'll learn about examples of Asian American activists and leaders who have all worked hard to make our world a better place.

Grace Lee Boggs

An activist involved in many social change movements across her lifetime, and actively worked to build lines of solidarity across racial groups.



Grace was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1915. Her parents were immigrants from China who eventually became successful restaurateurs in New York. Grace grew up in a mostly White neighborhood and loved playing baseball with her brothers, but didn't like when people would stare at her because she was Asian American. Grace went on to earn her Ph.D. in philosophy. But after graduating, Grace faced a lot of racism and had a hard time finding a job or housing because landlords would not rent to Asian Americans. She finally found a place to rent in Chicago, but it was full of rats! Grace knew she and others deserved much better living conditions and joined the South Side Tenants Organization and worked together with Black residents to fight for their housing rights. Grace eventually moved to Detroit in the 1950s and married James Boggs, who was a Black labor activist and worked in the Chrysler auto plant. Grace and James worked side-by-side as activists on many social and racial justice issues, opening the doors to their home to gather activists from all different races. Grace believed that change in society comes by small groups working together to make positive change, and her work teaches us that we can all do our part to work with our family, friends, and neighbors to make our communities a better place.

“If we want to see change in our lives, we have to change things ourselves.”

Questions to Explore

- What did Grace do to improve living conditions for herself and others?
- Why did Grace and James open their home to activists from different races?
- What is one way that you can work together with your friends or family to help make your neighborhood or community a better place?

What do you think Grace meant?

Lydia X. Z. Brown

A disability justice activist who identifies with being multiply disabled, queer, and a nonbinary Chinese American, transracial and transnational adoptee.



Photo by Sarah Tundermann Blue Photography

Lydia was born in Suzhou, China in 1993 and then was adopted by a White family when they were one-year-old and moved to Melrose, Massachusetts. Lydia started their activism in disability justice in high school when they worked with a congressperson to introduce legislation in Massachusetts that would require police officers to be trained on how to interact with people with autism and other disabilities. In 2018, they founded The Autistic People of Color Fund, which has provided over \$300,000 in funds to autistic people of color. Lydia also teaches others about disability studies at Georgetown University. Lydia believes that “all human beings are valuable,” and that disability justice can work with other social justice movements to help everyone achieve a more just society.

Questions to Explore

- What is disability justice and why is it important?
- Why did Lydia want police officers to be trained on how to interact with people with autism and other disabilities?
- What can we learn from Lydia's story about the importance of valuing and supporting everyone?

“Disability justice reminds us that there is no such thing as a person who does not deserve to exist. There is no such thing as a person who is useless, or a person who is pointless, or a person who does not deserve to be.”

What do you think Lydia meant?

Ibrahim Chowdry

A community leader in New York who helped build a community for working-class Bengali immigrants and worked together with other racial-ethnic groups like Black and Puerto Rican communities to fight for social justice.



Photo courtesy of Laily Chowdry

Ibrahim was born in the 1900s in Bengal, a country that is now mostly present-day Bangladesh in South Asia. He cared about social justice from a young age and decided to become a student activist. But, Bengal was ruled by the British empire at the time and the British did not like his activism, so he had no choice but to leave his home for Harlem, New York in the 1920s. Even while trying to adjust to a new country, Ibrahim cared a lot about his fellow Bengali people who were all working hard to make enough money to be able to pay their rent and put food on their family's tables. He naturally became a community leader by creating places for Bengalis to spend time together and by helping out his community when they were sick or needed a place to stay. As a devout Muslim, Ibrahim made connections with not only Muslims from all different backgrounds but also with Christians and Jews. He and his fellow Bengalis also faced a lot of racial discrimination, and Ibrahim believed it was important to work with Black and Puerto Rican communities in New York to fight for their civil rights together. Ibrahim's community organizing teaches us the importance of caring for other people in our communities and the importance of working together with other racial groups and across religious groups to make change happen.

“I talk for those of our men who, in factory and field, in all sections of American industry, work side by side with their fellow American workers to strengthen the industrial framework of this country.”

What do you think Ibrahim meant?

Questions to Explore

- What challenges did Ibrahim and his fellow Bengalis face in New York?
- Why is it important to care for people in our communities?
- What is one thing you could do to help someone in your community?

Schuyler Miwon Hong Bailar

A transgender rights and social justice activist who was the first openly transgender athlete to compete at the college level in U.S. history.



Schuyler Miwon Hong Bailar was born in 1996 and grew up in Virginia. Schuyler's family is mixed race - his mom is an immigrant from Korea and his dad is White. He grew up eating kimchi at every meal and visiting his Korean grandparents and great aunt all the time. As a child, Schuyler loved to be in the water and learned how to swim and walk at the same time. He became a star swimmer in high school and was accepted to compete for Harvard University. While Schuyler was a kid, he was told by other people that he was a girl based on his body, but Schuyler liked to be a tomboy and became more and more unhappy with his body and how he felt about himself as he got older. Before he started college, he realized that he was transgender and that he wanted to be treated by others as a boy. He decided to get surgery so that his body would look like who he knew he was inside. It was a really hard decision for Schuyler but his parents, friends, and family were all very supportive of his decision. Schuyler went on to compete for the Harvard men's swim team, becoming the first person in U.S. history to compete at the college-level as an openly transgender athlete. He is now an author, motivational speaker, and activist for transgender rights and other social justice issues. Schuyler's bravery shows us how important it is to be true to ourselves and to support and accept each other's journeys as we all try to become the best versions of ourselves.

Questions to Explore

- What does it mean to be transgender?
- Why do you think it can be hard or scary for people like Schuyler to tell other people they are transgender?
- Why do you think it was important that Schuyler's parents, friends and family supported him no matter what?

“Kindness costs nothing, and should be commonly expected and freely given. I’m fighting for that day, and I hope you’ll join with me. Until then, my family near and far serves as proof of this possibility, as examples of the kind of love we all deserve, and the kind of love we can all provide to others. Love can transcend all barriers if we let it.”

What do you think Schuyler meant?

Larry Itliong

A labor activist who worked in solidarity with Cesar Chavez to organize the Delano Grape Strike, where Filipino and Mexican American farm workers walked side-by-side on the picket line in order to win better pay and worker rights.

Photo: Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University



Larry Itliong was born in Pangasinan, Philippines in 1913. When he was 15, he moved to the United States and started working as a migrant farm worker in California. While working on grape farms, Larry realized that Filipino American farm workers were paid less than other workers, even though they were all doing the same work. He and the other Filipino American workers were angry that they were not receiving their fair share of pay. So in 1965, he led over a thousand Filipino American farm workers as they walked off the fields and went on strike, meaning they would not work until they received equal pay. The farms tried to stop their strike by hiring Mexican American farm workers as their replacements. So, Larry went to another labor activist, Cesar Chavez, who was the leader of a union of Mexican American farm workers, and asked Cesar and his union to join the strike. Members of the Mexican American farm workers' union all voted "Yes!" to join the strike because they knew that joining the strike would mean everyone could get better pay and worker benefits, like medical insurance and more rules on how harmful pesticides were used in farming. For the first time, Filipino and Mexican American farm workers walked side-by-side, in solidarity, on the picket line to demand equal rights. Over time, people across the nation started supporting the strike – they stopped buying grapes and donated food and money to the striking workers and their families. And after five long years, the farm workers finally won! Larry taught us that we are stronger together when we join hands across racial groups and fight for our rights in order to make change happen.

"Because in that Constitution, it said that everybody has equal rights and justice. You've got to make that come about. They are not going to give it to you."

What do you think Larry meant?

Questions to Explore

- Why was it important for Larry to ask Cesar and his union of Mexican American farm workers for help so that their strike would be successful?
- What does it mean to be 'in solidarity' with other groups or people in social justice movements?
- Labor strikes are still common to this day. Do you know of any other strikes that have happened in recent years? What were the workers asking for?

Yuri Kochiyama

An activist who is known for her work to build lines of solidarity between Asian American social movements and Black liberation movements during the 1960s and her friendship with Malcolm X.



Yuri Kochiyama was born in San Pedro, California in 1921. When she was 21, the U.S. entered World War II, and the U.S. government forced her and 120,000 other Japanese Americans to go to Incarceration Camps, just because she was Japanese. The camps were just like prison, and this unfair treatment inspired Yuri's drive to fight for social justice. In the 1960s, she moved to Harlem, New York, where she began her work as an activist. She worked hard to build connections and solidarity between Asian American movements and Black civil rights movements because she believed it was important that they all worked together to make things more fair for everyone. Through her work, she met and became friends with Malcolm X, a famous Black liberation activist, and joined his work fighting for racial justice. Sadly, Malcolm X was shot and killed a year later, and Yuri was by Malcolm's side even then, holding his head in her hands. Yuri was involved in a lot of different social justice movements with different racial groups, like joining sit-ins during the civil rights movement and protesting for the release of Black and Puerto Rican political prisoners. She also contributed to the Japanese American Redress Movement, a movement that successfully got the U.S. government to apologize and give money back to Japanese Americans who were forced to go to the Japanese American Incarceration Camps during World War II. Through her activism in different social justice movements, Yuri showed us the importance of working together across different races to make change happen.

Questions to Explore

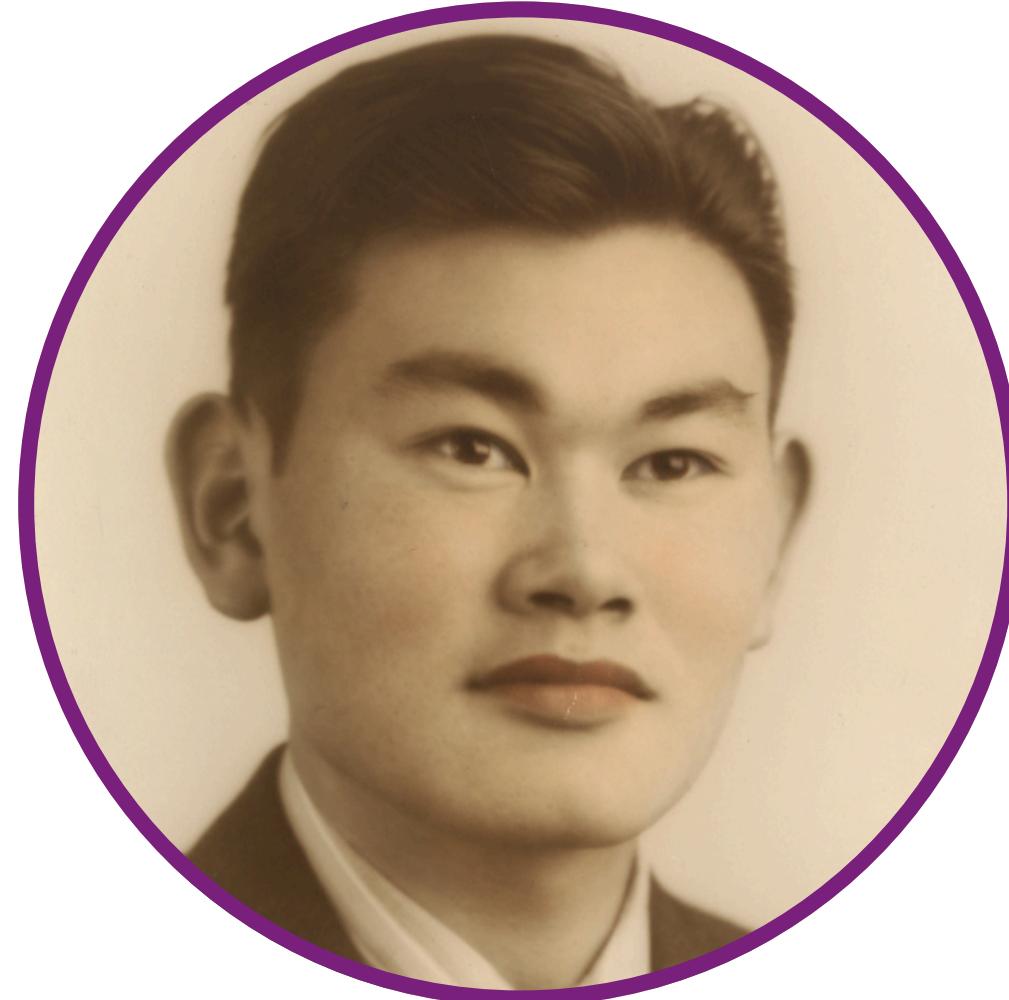
- Why do you think Yuri's experience in the Japanese American Incarceration Camps pushed Yuri to become an activist?
- Why do you think Yuri wanted to build connections between Asian American social justice movements and social justice movements led by other racial groups?
- What is the Japanese American Redress Movement, and what did it achieve?

"Our ultimate objective in learning about anything is to try to create and develop a more just society."

What do you think Yuri meant?

Fred Korematsu

A civil rights activist who refused to go to the Japanese American Incarceration Camps during World War II and appealed his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.



Fred was born in Oakland, California in 1919. His parents were immigrants from Japan and ran a family flower shop. But, in 1942, Fred and his family were ordered by the U.S. government to leave their home and go to Japanese American Incarceration Camps. Fred knew that what the government was forcing him to do was not right - they were forcing him to go to a prison camp just because of his ethnicity. He and many of his fellow Japanese Americans were U.S. citizens and had done nothing wrong. So, Fred decided not to go to the camp and was eventually arrested a few months later. He took his case to court and appealed his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. At the time, the Supreme Court decided that the incarceration camps were lawful due to "military necessity," because the judges believed the U.S. government needed to act quickly since the country was at war, and Fred was convicted of the crime of not following the orders to go to the incarceration camps. Sadly, Fred was incarcerated in terrible conditions during the war, along with thousands of other Japanese Americans. Even after the war ended and they could finally leave the camps, life was not easy for Fred because his criminal record made it hard to find a job. But, 40 years after the war ended, Fred's case was finally reopened and the judge in the federal court in San Francisco decided to overturn Fred's conviction. The judge's decision erased away the criminal record that followed Fred for so many years. Fred's brave decision to question the U.S. government's unjust actions reminds us that the government cannot treat us differently just because of our race or skin color and the importance of fighting for our rights when they are unjustly taken away.

"If you have the feeling that something is wrong, don't be afraid to speak up."

What do you think Fred meant?

Questions to Explore

- Why did Fred decide not to go to the Japanese American Incarceration Camps?
- Why was it wrong for the U.S. government to order Japanese Americans in the U.S. to go to prison camps just because they were Japanese?
- Why was it important that a judge decided that the decision was unfair and overturned Fred's conviction over 40 years later?

Corky Lee

An activist who documented Asian Pacific American political movements through photography for almost 50 years.



Photo by Alan Chin

Corky was born in Queens, New York in 1947. His parents were immigrants from China, and Corky grew up helping his family's laundry business with his three brothers. Corky picked up photography in high school when he saw a 1869 picture of the workers celebrating the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, but noticed that no Chinese workers were included in the photo, even though thousands of Chinese workers had worked on the railroad. With this photo, Corky realized that Asian Americans can easily be erased from American history if nobody includes them in stories or photos. So, Corky made it his life's mission to take photos of different Asian Pacific American events and social justice movements, so that his photos could fight against anti-Asian injustice, discrimination, and stereotypes. Corky's work shows us that activism comes in many different forms and the importance of documenting Asian American social justice movements and history so that Asian American experiences can be remembered and cherished.

Questions to Explore

- Why did Corky make it his mission to take photos at events organized by Asian Pacific Americans?
- Can you think of an example of an Asian American historical event or person? Where did you learn about it?
- Corky reminds us the importance of using photographs and pictures to remember important people and events. Draw a picture from an important day in your life! Why is this day important to you?

“I had to think that every time I take my camera out of my bag, it is like drawing a sword to combat indifference, injustice and discrimination and trying to get rid of stereotypes.”

What do you think Corky meant?

Content warning: This activist profile contains discussion of rape and sexual assault. We believe these topics can be appropriately discussed with young children, but you may choose to skip this profile.

Amanda Nguyen

A civil rights activist whose efforts led to the passage of sexual assault survivor rights in the United States and the United Nations.

Photo: Getty/Brianna Ellis-Mitchell



Amanda was born in 1991 and grew up in Southern California. Her parents were boat refugees from Vietnam, meaning they were forced to move away from their home country in order to escape war and be safe. Amanda grew up wanting to be an astronaut and she went to Harvard University to study and work towards her dreams. But while she was there, she was raped - somebody forced Amanda to do something with private parts of her body that she did not want to do. That night, she went to a hospital where they collected evidence from her body and saved the evidence in a what's called a "rape kit." This was important because she could later use the rape kit in a court case, if she decided to press charges against the person who raped her. But, six months later, Amanda learned that the rape kit was going to be destroyed unless she asked for it to be kept in storage. She was angry that she had to keep asking every six months just to save the evidence that was so important to bringing her justice. So, Amanda decided to found a non-profit organization called Rise, and worked with her team to fight for the rights of rape and sexual assault survivors. In 2016, Amanda's bill, the Sexual Assault Survivor's Bill of Rights was signed into law in the United States. It was the first time sexual assault survivors' rights were recognized by the law. She then decided to take her activism global, and in 2022, the United Nations passed a resolution that recognized the rights of sexual assault survivors all over the world. For her efforts, Amanda has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and has been the TIME woman of the year. A lot of people told Amanda that the laws she was fighting for would never pass. Amanda's determination and hard work shows us that we can make change happen, even when others don't believe we can. Amanda is currently training to be an astronaut!

"Joy is the most radical form of rebellion."

Questions to Explore

- Why was Amanda angry that the "rape kit" was going to be destroyed?
- Why was it so important for Amanda to change the laws so that sexual assault survivors' rights are recognized?
- Is there something you have done before that you thought at first you couldn't do?

What do you think Amanda meant?

Ai-jen Poo

A labor activist advocating for rights of domestic workers, particularly caretakers for family and the elderly.



Ai-jen Poo was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1974. Growing up, Ai-jen learned about the importance of caregivers — people who take care of other people — from her family. Her parents were immigrants from Taiwan and her mom took care of people as a cancer doctor, and her grandmother took care of people as a nurse. While living in New York, Ai-jen learned that caregivers that work in someone else's home, also called domestic workers, like nannies, housekeepers, or elder care providers, are often treated unfairly. For example, they might not be paid on time or might suddenly lose their job. Sometimes domestic workers would have to stay many hours after their scheduled time to leave because their employer didn't come home on time, even though the workers also had their own children and families to take care of. She also learned that most domestic workers didn't have a chance to talk to other domestic workers because they were often working in separate homes by themselves. Ai-jen wanted to create an organization where domestic workers could talk to each other and work together to fight for their rights, like the right to be paid on time and the right to stable job hours. So, she started the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and has since successfully fought for domestic workers' rights across the U.S. Ai-jen is currently working on passing a National Domestic Bill of Rights in the U.S. Congress, which would expand protections and the job rights of millions of domestic workers across the country. Ai-jen's activism teaches us the importance of advocating for the rights of people who are often overlooked or forgotten. Ai-jen believes that "love is the most powerful force for change in the world," and shows us how to put love and compassion in our activism.

Questions to Explore

- Why did Ai-jen start the National Domestic Workers Alliance?
- What does activism mean, and how did Ai-jen show activism in her work?
- Who are caretakers in your family? What do they do to take care of other people?

"It's precisely the people who are considered the least 'likely' leaders who end up inspiring others the most. Everyday people and everyday acts of courage eventually change everything."

What do you think Ai-jen meant?

Thenmozhi Soundararajan

A civil rights activist, artist, and author who continues to fight to end discrimination against Dalits, people who come from a group that used to be called “Untouchables” in India.



Thenmozhi was born in the United States to parents who were immigrants from India. When she was in fifth grade, she learned about the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in India and how it hurt many Dalit people. Dalits are a group in India that used to be called “Untouchables.” Thenmozhi asked her mom about these people and learned that her family was also Dalit, a secret that her family kept from other people because they did not want to be treated differently. Even though the ‘Untouchable’ group no longer exists by Indian law, and you cannot treat people as if they are in the ‘Untouchable’ group, many Dalit families that come from the former ‘Untouchable’ class continue to face discrimination and unequal access to jobs and money in India and around the world. When Thenmozhi was in college, she decided to publicly share her story about being Dalit because she wanted to fight back against the stereotypes about Dalits. Even though it was a scary decision to tell everyone she was Dalit, by telling her story, Thenmozhi was able to connect with thousands of people who were also Dalit. She realized that they needed to all come together to not only end discrimination against Dalits but also end caste discrimination that many South Asians, like Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis have faced in the United States and globally. Thenmozhi’s brave decision to tell her family’s story teaches us that we should fight back against stereotypes or false beliefs about a certain group. We should never face discrimination because of our identities!

“It is a powerful thing to return to your fellow humans and leave behind the social lies that have harmed all of us for too long. This is no time for silence. It is instead the time to heal.”

What do you think Thenmozhi meant?

Questions to Explore

- Do you think it was easy or hard for Thenmozhi to share her story with others? Why?
- Why did Thenmozhi decide to publicly share her story? What did she learn when she did share her story?
- Why do you think it's important to stand up against stereotypes?

Definitions of important words in activism:

- **Activist** - An activist is someone who uses their voice and takes action to help make the world more fair and right. Activists are like real-life superheroes! Just like how superheroes want to save the day, activists work with other people to stand up for what they believe in so that everyone has what they need and is treated fairly.
- **Solidarity** - Being in solidarity means standing up together, across different groups like race and ethnicity, to make sure everyone is treated fairly. It's like what good friends do. When you're a good friend, you care about your friend and want to help them out when they need it. Activists want to help each other out because they know their voices are stronger if they work together.
- **Justice** - Justice means making things fair and right for everyone. It's like when you're playing a game with a friend. It wouldn't be fair if your friend got lots of turns to play and you only got one turn. You each take turns so that everyone has a fair chance of winning. Justice means that everyone deserves to have a good life, no matter the color of their skin, where they're from, what language they speak, or how much money they have. If there are rules that are unfair for a group of people, we can move toward justice by changing those rules.
 - **Social justice** - Social justice means making sure that everyone is treated fairly and equitably in our communities and across the world. It's about making sure that everyone has the rights that they should have and nobody is left out or treated unfairly because of who they are.
 - **Racial justice** - Racial justice means making sure that people of all different races and ethnicities are treated fairly and equitably. It's about making sure that people are not disadvantaged or treated unfairly because of their skin color, the way they look, or where they come from.
- **Injustice** - Injustice is when people are treated unfairly and things aren't right for everyone. Unfortunately, there are many unfair rules that exist that give unfair advantages to some people, but not others. In our world, some examples of injustice are: not having healthy food or clean water, not having a safe place to live, not being paid enough money to support yourself or your family, or being put in prison or sent away from the place you live. In the United States, some groups of people that have faced injustice are people with darker skin, people with less money, people who come from different countries or speak languages other than English, and people with disabilities. It can make people feel sad, upset, frustrated, angry, or scared when they are not treated fairly. When we see injustice, we can stand up against it and use our voices to change the rules and make sure that everyone has what they need to live a safe, healthy, and happy life.
- **Rights** - Rights are like promises that we make to each other to make sure everyone is treated fairly and kindly. They're like the special rules to make sure we all have what we need and to help us all live together happily. For example, all children around the world have the same rights, like the right to have your own thoughts and to share your thoughts freely, the right to be treated kindly by others, and the right to be safe and happy. Just like how you have rights, other people have rights too. It's important to respect each other's rights and make sure everyone is treated fairly and kindly.
 - **Worker rights** - Worker rights are like special rules that make sure people are treated fairly while working their jobs. For example, worker rights might include things like the right to be paid fairly and on time, the right to be treated kindly and fairly by your boss, and the right to take breaks during long days of work and not be asked to do things that are unsafe or unhealthy.
 - **Civil rights** - Civil rights are like special rules to make sure everyone is treated fairly and kindly in their community and across the country. For example, civil rights include things like the right to go to school, the right to play in the park, the right to be friends with or get married to whoever you want, and the right to vote for the people who will make decisions in your community. These rules help make sure that everyone, no matter who they are, can live a happy and healthy life in the way that they want.
 - **Housing rights** - Housing rights are like special rules that make sure everyone has a healthy and safe place to live. For example, housing rights can include things like the right to be charged a fair amount of money for your home, the right to be treated fairly when looking for a place to live, and the right to live in a safe place that has things like working lights, clean water, and no pests like rats or termites.

Definitions (continued)

- **Liberation** - Liberation means you are freed from unfair or unjust treatment. It can feel like you have the freedom to be who you are, like you can finally spread your wings and fly wherever you want and do what you want to do. It means being set free from unfairness and being able to be happy and safe.
- **Racial or ethnic groups** - A *racial group* comes from the idea of grouping people based on certain shared physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair texture and facial features. Racial groups are a made-up idea used to divide people and to treat different groups of people unfairly. Some of the names we use for racial groups are words like Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latine, White, and more. *Ethnic groups* are similar to racial groups, but they're more specific. For example, someone who is African American and someone who immigrated recently from Haiti might both identify as "Black." We also group many different Asian ethnicities under the "Asian American" racial category, including East Asian ethnicities like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and South Asian ethnicities like Indian or Pakistani. Similarly, people who identify racially as "White" might have Italian, Irish, German, Polish, or other ethnicities. Most people come from multiple ethnic groups, and some people identify with multiple racial groups. It is ok to use both racial and ethnic group terms to identify yourself!
- **Stereotype** - A stereotype is a false belief that everyone belonging to a group is the same, even though they are not. It's like when someone says all cats don't like water, but some cats actually do! Stereotypes are not fair because even before someone gets to know you, they may already think they know something about you that is not true. And, stereotypes about People of Color can be really mean and hurtful. It's important to remember that we are all unique and different in our own ways and that we should always get to know someone before deciding what we believe about them.
- **Protest** - A protest is a social justice action that a group of people can take by coming together to use their voices and show that they want change. During a protest, people are often walking together, holding signs, shouting, chanting, and yelling. You might hear music, singing, laughing, and even silence. Protests are a powerful way for a group of people to come together and use their voice to demand change in our communities and around the world.
- **Labor strike** - A labor strike is a social justice action when a group of workers decide not to go to work for some time because they want changes in their worker rights, like being paid fairly for their work. Labor strikes are often the last choice for workers because workers would rather talk with their bosses to come to an agreement together. But, sometimes the bosses don't listen to the workers. Strikes are a way for workers to get the attention of their bosses and to tell them the things they need in order to be treated fairly and to feel happy and safe at their jobs.
- **Sit-in** - A sit-in is a social justice action that a group of people can take by sitting in a certain place to show that they want something to change. For example, during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, sit-ins were used to protest the unfair treatment of African Americans in a nonviolent way. At the time, African Americans were not allowed to sit in certain places, like sit in certain seats in a restaurant. To show people that this was unfair, African American activists chose to sit in seats that were only for White people. The actions of brave activists who did the sit-ins along with lots of other social justice actions all helped make the civil rights movement a success. To this day, sit-ins are used by activists to tell people about injustices and unfairness and to fight for change.