



HOW TO TACKLE CHILD MARRIAGE AND FGC

SECONDARY RESOURCES



In a Senegalese village, Molly Melching displays educational booklets on human rights.

INFORMATION

- According to the global organization Girls not Brides, every year approximately 14 million girls around the world are forced by their families to get married before they are 18 years old. In the developing world, that's one out of every three girls. In some countries, girls as young as 11 or 12 are forced to marry.
- Child marriage is considered a negative practice because, in most cases, when a girl is forced to marry before 18, it means she can no longer go to school. Child marriage can also harm the health of girls when they are forced to have children before their bodies are physically ready.
- Child marriage is considered an illegal act under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Female genital cutting (FGC) is the term for a custom practiced in some cultures where the external genitalia of young girls are deliberately damaged. FGC is also sometimes called female genital mutilation, or female circumcision.
- FGC is usually performed on a girl to prevent her from having sex before she is married, and to keep her loyal to her husband after marriage. In some cultures it is considered a rite of passage, and a girl will not be considered a woman until she has had FGC. Parents in these cultures often believe their daughter will not get a good husband unless she has been cut.
- The United Nations estimates that 100 to 140 million women and girls worldwide today have experienced FGC, and three million more are at risk each year.
- In December 2012, the United Nations unanimously passed a resolution banning the practice of FGC. It is illegal to perform FGC on a girl or woman in Canada and most other western nations.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

ADVISORY



This article was inspired by a tragic event. Please take caution when sharing this column with students.

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

KEY TERMS

Abhorrent—Disgusting or offensive

Patronizing—Treating someone like a child, as though you are superior to them.

Moral condemnation—Declaring a person or idea to be wrong or bad based on our own morals or values.

THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- Themes: Women’s Rights, Education, Global Issues, Inspirational Figures
- Course Connections: Canadian and World Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Social Sciences and the Humanities

MATERIALS

- Paper and writing utensils

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in oral, visual or text form.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express and defend a position on an issue.

MAP IT

Have students locate the different countries mentioned in the article and where Molly Melching’s organization—Tostan—works to gain an understanding of the international expanse of the issues.

- Canada
- The United States
- Senegal
- Djibouti
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Somalia
- The Gambia

DISCUSS

1. Did it surprise you that a 12-year-old girl could be forced into marriage?
2. Explain the issue of child marriage. Have you heard of this practice before?
3. How is child marriage harmful?
4. What does it mean to be patronizing? What do you think of the statement: “we struggle constantly with how to end [child marriage and FGC] and empower women and girls, without being patronizing Westerners ramming our values down others’ throats”?
5. Were you surprised at the outcome of Khady’s story? Why did her father change his mind?
6. Many of us share different cultural traditions, values, and languages within our own families and communities. Do you think it is important to learn about diverse cultures? How do you do it?

DIVE DEEPER

Rather than shaming and morally condemning the cultural values and traditions of others, the column suggests that creating positive change stems from the power of listening and cultural understanding. In this simulation exercise, students will consider multiple perspectives and gain insight into the importance of empathy.

Using Khady’s story as a case study, organize students into six groups. Each group will assume the role of one of the individuals or groups listed below:

- Khady
- Khady’s father
- Molly Melching
- Khady’s friends at school
- A Western organization working to stop child marriage and FGC
- Community leaders in Dakar

To explore the issue of child marriage from their character’s perspective, ask students to create a word web. How would each group view child marriage and why? Allow time for each group to prepare a brief presentation using the ideas from their web chart. Invite them to share their points of view to the rest of the class.

Wrap up the class by reflecting on Molly Melching’s approach. Discuss the following questions:

- Which point of view would have been the easiest role for you to play? Why?
- Do you see how Molly Melching’s approach of “harmony with, not opposition to” can work to change minds—even abhorrent ones like child marriage and FGC?
- What other issues and situations would this approach work?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

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

Photo Credit: <http://www.tostan.org/about-us>