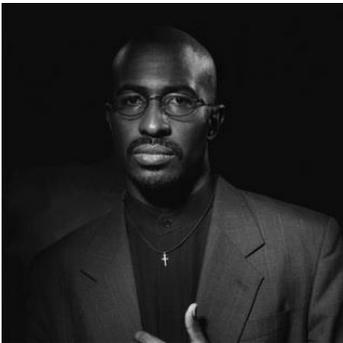


The Speak Truth to Power curriculum introduces general human rights issues through the stories of some remarkable people working in the field, and urges students to become personally involved in the protection of human rights.



Defender: Van Jones

Issue: Police Brutality

Grade Level: 12 , 10 , 11 , 9 , HIGHER ED

Standards: NY State , VA State

Time Requirement: 120 min

Location: United States

BIO:

Van Jones is the founding director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. Founded in 1996 and named for an unsung civil rights heroine, the Center challenges human rights abuses in the U.S. criminal justice system. A project of the Ella Baker Center, Bay Area Police Watch is committed to stopping police misconduct and protecting victims of abuse. Police Watch takes a multifaceted approach, combining advocacy with public education and community organizing. Staff work directly with individuals who have suffered police harassment, intimidation, and brutality. Jones's efforts to establish civilian oversight, and to require transparency and accountability within disciplinary proceedings, have yielded results. Jones's efforts to ban the use of pepper

spray, routinely used by police in subduing suspects, has helped launch a nationwide campaign against the chemical weapon...*For the [complete lesson plan click here](#)*

INTERVIEW:

The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights is a strategy center for documenting and exposing human rights violations in the United States- particularly those perpetuated by law enforcement. A project of the Center, Bay Area Police Watch has a hotline that opened in 1995 here in the San Francisco Bay area and in 1998 in New York City where people can call and report abuses. We designed a computer database, the first of its kind in the country, that allows us to track problem officers, problem precincts, problem practices, so at the click of a mouse we can now identify trouble spots and troublemakers. This has given us a tremendous advantage in trying to understand the scope and scale of the problem. Now, obviously, just because somebody calls and says, "Officer so-and-so did something to me," doesn't mean it actually happened, but if you get two, four, six phone calls about the same officer, then you begin to see a pattern. It gives you a chance to try and take affirmative steps.

We also try to expose abuse by doing a lot of public education. This is something we've really pioneered. Sometimes when people who suffered abuse at the hands of the police tried to engage the mainstream media, they would do it in a way that made them seem shrill, alarmist, or racially divisive. Instead, we thought it was important to interact intelligently with the media in a way that let them know that we were credible and interested in moving this issue forward in a responsible way.

Look, we get ten phone calls a day here from survivors of police misconduct and violence. Some of it is, "Officer so-and-so called me a boogerhead," or something minor like that, but it also goes as far as wrongful death. We see the full gamut here. We try to spend half an hour to an hour with every person who calls. We have people who call because their children have come home with a broken arm or broken jaw or their teeth shattered or because the child has been held in jail for four or five days with no... *For the [complete lesson plan click here](#)*