

TAKE ACTION GUIDE

Downloading this page is your first step to taking action.

The best thing you can do to make changes in your world is to inform yourself and other people about the issues you think are important...

www.justfocus.org.nz

Did you know?

Every person has rights, no matter what their age, ethnicity, culture, religion, and location are. These are called 'human rights'. Dedicated people from all around the world protect and promote human rights, working locally, nationally, and internationally.

The largest children's rights document is the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)**. This document has been agreed by 192 countries around the world, including New Zealand in 1993. UNCROC ensures that children and young people's rights are being recognised and respected by more people in New Zealand and around the world.

Check out this guide [You have Rights: know them and share them with others](#) or for more info, go to the Children Commissioner's website www.occ.org.nz

Identity

"Onions have layers. Ogres have layers" says Shrek to Donkey.

What defines you and describes your place in the world? 60 years ago this might have been an easy question to answer. When you left school you tended to stay in the same job until retirement. Your place in the world was defined by your work, socio-economic status, community, religion and ethnicity; and, for various reasons, these stayed stable. But the onset of globalisation, advancements of technology and a growing culture of consumerism has meant that the elements that define you are constantly changing. Identity is more than a label defining who you are, our identity helps us to connect to each other and our world, and it is what gives meaning to our lives at any particular time. We may define ourselves through connecting with a youth subculture (such as hip hop or scene) or we may define ourselves through our values, beliefs, job or ethnicity. Most of the time, this identity process finds us continuously moving between groups redefining ourselves and repositioning ourselves in our world.

- *How would you describe your own identity?*

The right to identify

Believe it or not identity is associated with your human rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) outlines the rights of young people around the world, including the right to have a name and nationality. Despite this about 1.2 million children are trafficked into other countries each year. These children are not registered at birth – according to their home country, they don't even exist. They are denied their basic human rights through denying them the opportunity to identify with themselves, their families, their culture and their country.¹ UNCROC also protects children's rights to practice a culture or religion, the right to speak their own language and freedom of expression. You may think these issues don't affect us in Aotearoa New Zealand, but in fact the Māori language was suppressed in schools, either formally or informally, until the 1980s which saw a revival of te reo Māori. The impact of this suppression will be felt for many years, because although the number of te reo speakers is growing, only 25% of the Maori population currently identify themselves as fluent in the language.

- *Think about it. What would it feel like for you to have the right to express yourself and to identify with others taken away?*

Edgewalking

Identity is a key issue for many young people. It has been suggested that the globalised world has created a global youth culture, but, in doing this, it is also created a lot of confusion when it comes to pinpointing who we are at any one point and time. Some people find it hard to define who they are in their own countries and cultures, while others find themselves 'walking the edge' between identities, and experience contradictions in their own identities. Anne Marie Tupuola found that young Samoans brought up in New Zealand find themselves having to negotiate between a Samoan world and a Palangi (Pakeha) world. They 'edgewalk' between two cultural spaces and often have to deal with feelings of 'not quite' belonging in either culture. Other young people edgewalk between religions, languages and institutions. Most of us edgewalk between identities at some point in time – even if it is as simple as trying to find a balance between who we are with our friends and who we are with our families.

- *What do you think could be the effects of not being able to connect with ourselves and our identity?*

¹ http://www.unicef.org.uk/youthvoice/rights_item.asp?issue=6

Take Action!

- First learn about yourself. Write an identity diary for a couple of days. In different situations (like home, school, sport, church, and with friends) stop and think about what connects you to this group
 - What values join you to this group?
 - How do you fit into (or don't fit into) this group?
 - What parts of yourself, if any, do you find contradicting the group 'identity'?
 - How do you, or can you, balance these contradictions?
- Learn to take 'identity' breaks. When you are about to switch contexts (and identities), like home and school, find a healthy ritual to get you ready for the new context and cope with the contradictions and differences. This might be something as simple as having a refreshing drink, reading, physical activities and/or spiritual activities.
- Take the American Subculture Quiz <http://www.quizilla.com/quizzes/1181341/what-american-stereotypical-subculture-are-you>. But don't take it to find out where you fit but to look at the types of stereotypes and labels given to different youth cultures. Then ask yourself:
 - What is the positive effect of stereotypes on the young people in these subcultures?
 - How can stereotypes negatively affect young people in subculture?
 - How do we use stereotypes daily to put people into different boxes (ethnicity, sexuality, disability, age etc)? If you find this difficult just watch an episode of *Bro Town!*
- Now challenge yourself. Watch when you start stereotyping others and then take the challenge and put the stereotypes aside to ask the person about the stuff they are into (believe it or not some emos listen to scene and not all Pacific Islanders live in South Auckland!).
- Get onto *Just Focus* www.justfocus.org.nz and read different issues of *Global Bits* to find out how about the difficulties facing young people in majority world countries – issues like trafficking, child labour, globalization, climate change are just some examples of the types of issues affecting identity everyday. Write a rant for [The Soapbox](#), comment on other articles, get sharing, talking and reflecting on ways you can make a difference in Aotearoa New Zealand. One of the key ways is to create awareness. The Internet is a key tool you can use to do this.

Where can I learn more?

Online resources

- Headliners: Finding your own image and identity www.headliners.org/storylibrary/stories/2004/findingyourownimageandidentity.htm?id=398906044889976415358
- Identity and diversity New Zealand Youth (YouTube video) www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUnaf-J13hA
- Globalization and our identities (YouTube video) www.youtube.com/watch?v=roqRGW2kxHo&feature=related
- Forming a cultural identity: what does it mean to be ethnic? www.victoria.ac.nz/yfp/papers/ethnicity.html

Just Focus Articles

- [Identity and advertising – by Eva Lawrence](#)
- [Branded Identity - by Jenah Shaw.](#)

Other media

- *Global Bits Issue 8: Who are you? The search for self in the global village* Available from http://www.globaled.org.nz/gec_media/files/Global%20Bits/00354_GBits_0406_02.pdf
- *Righting our future a right to a name and nationality.* VHS video available from the Global Education Library
- *Global youth culture and youth identity.* Article from *Highly affected, rarely considered.* Available from <http://iyp.oxfam.org/documents/Chapter%2011%20Global%20Youth%20Culture%20&%20Youth%20Identity.pdf>