
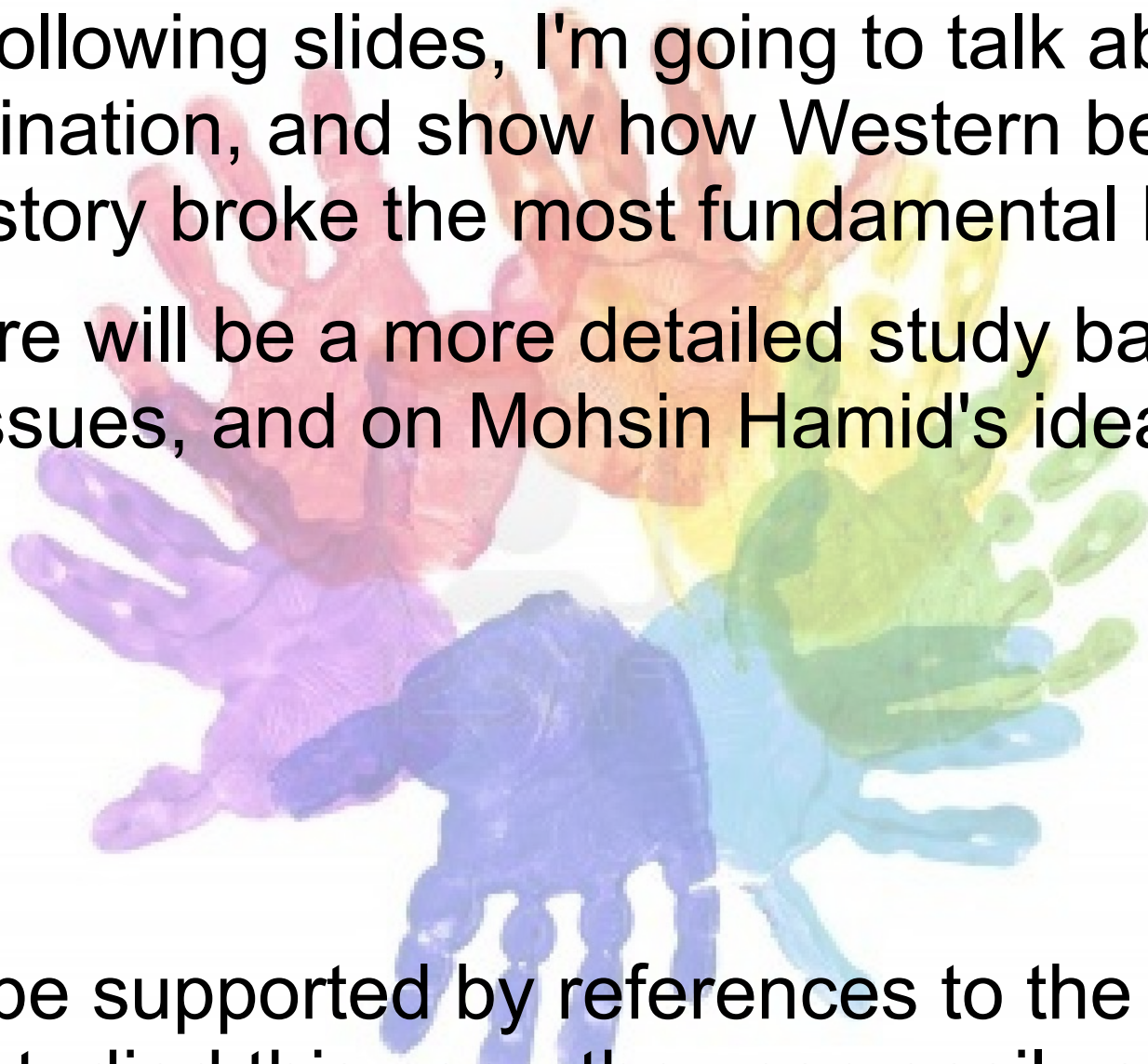


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- 1) Declaration of intent
  - 2) Human Rights: definition, history, violations
  - 3) Discrimination: some laws preventing it
  - 4) Literature applied to the topic
  - 5) Post-colonial issues: “migration as a human right”

With the following slides, I'm going to talk about the topic of discrimination, and show how Western behaviour toward history broke the most fundamental human rights. Then, there will be a more detailed study based on post-colonial issues, and on Mohsin Hamid's ideas about migration.

This, will be supported by references to the literary texts we have studied this year: they can easily show how discrimination has always been part of our mentality

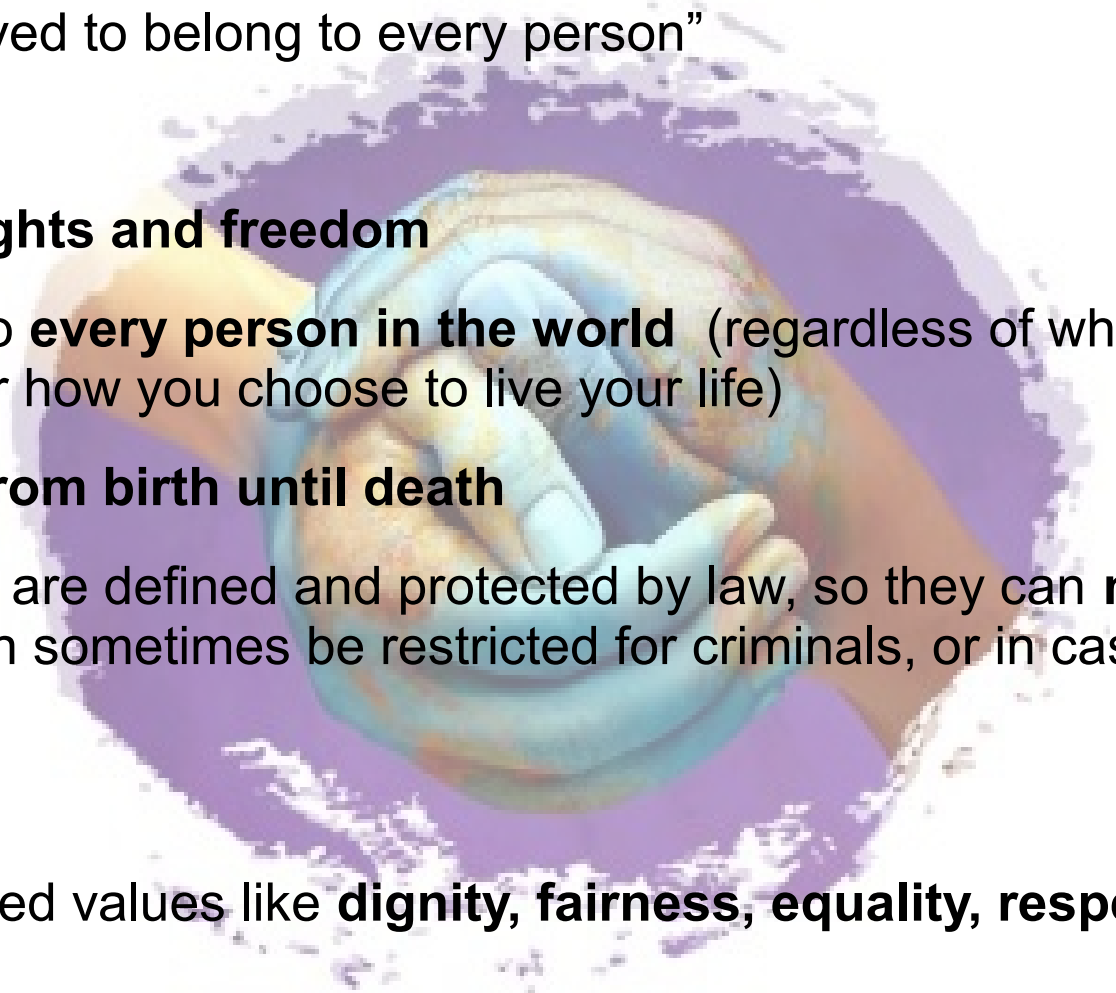


# WHAT IS A HUMAN RIGHT?

DICTIONARY: “a right which is believed to belong to every person”

- WHAT ARE THEM? our **basic rights and freedom**
- WHO DO THEY BELONG TO? to **every person in the world** (regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life)
- HOW MUCH DO THEY LAST? **from birth until death**
- CAN THEY BE UNDONE? They are defined and protected by law, so they can **never** be taken away (although they can sometimes be restricted for criminals, or in case of war)

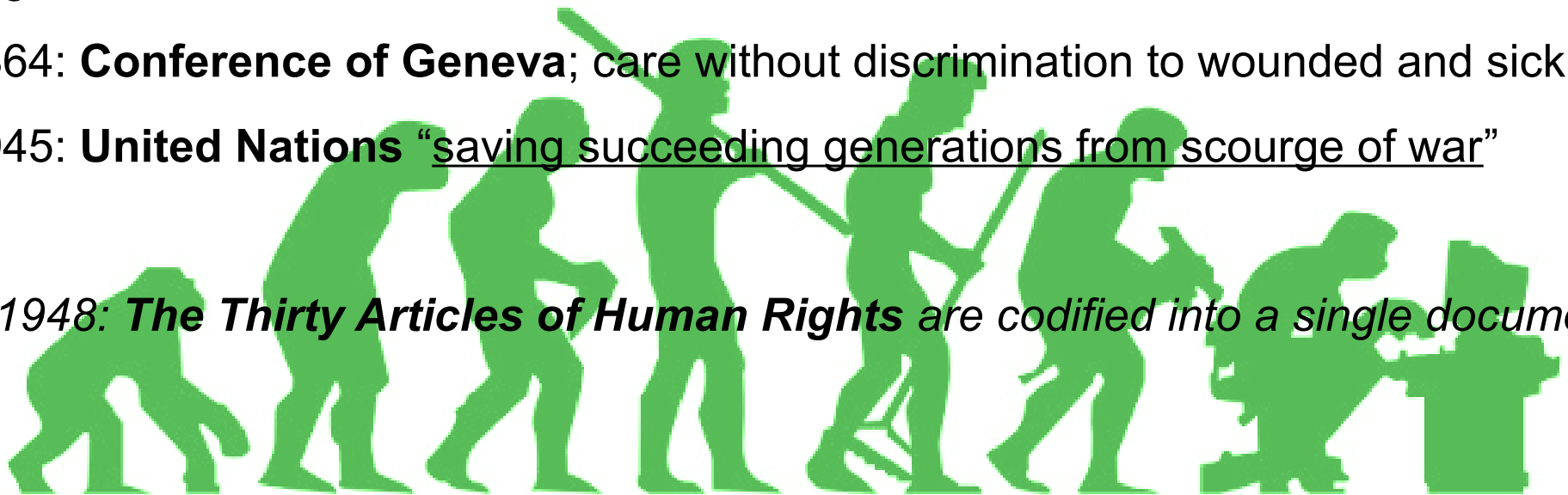
WHAT ARE THEY BASED ON? shared values like **dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence.**



# The path of Human Rights

- 539 B.C.: Cyrus The Great frees all slaves, promotes racial equality
- 1215: the **Great Charter**, that declares equality before the law
- 1628: the **Petition of Rights**; no imprisonment without case shown
- 1776: **American Declaration of Independence** (the right of evolution)
- 1791: the **Bill of Rights**; personal freedom
- 1789: the **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen**; law as expression of general will;
- 1864: **Conference of Geneva**; care without discrimination to wounded and sick ones
- 1945: **United Nations** “saving succeeding generations from scourge of war”

*1948: The Thirty Articles of Human Rights are codified into a single document.*





# Are Human Rights respected today?

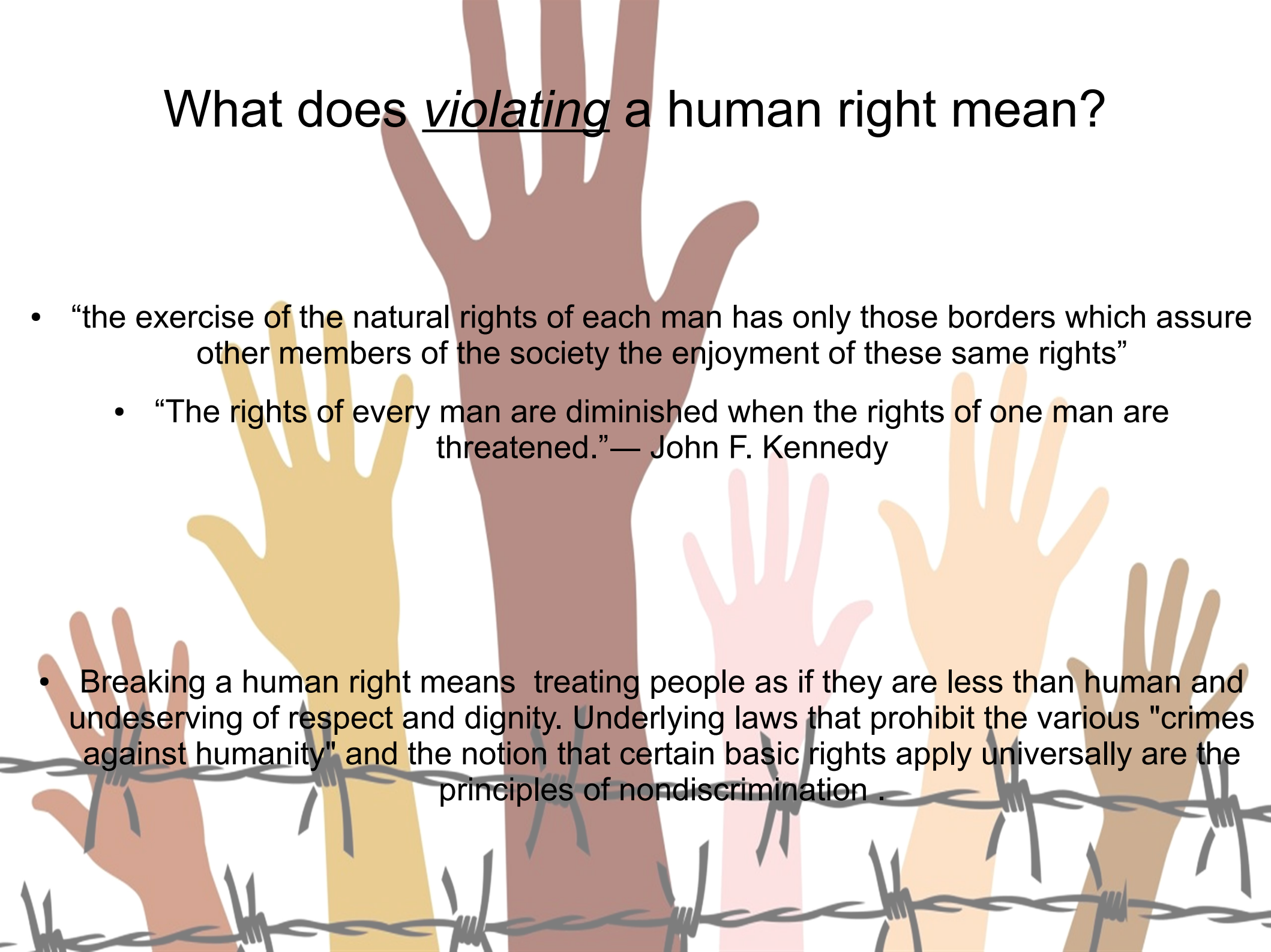
PARTIALLY





# What does violating a human right mean?

- “the exercise of the natural rights of each man has only those borders which assure other members of the society the enjoyment of these same rights”
  - “The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.” — John F. Kennedy
- Breaking a human right means treating people as if they are less than human and undeserving of respect and dignity. Underlying laws that prohibit the various "crimes against humanity" and the notion that certain basic rights apply universally are the principles of nondiscrimination .



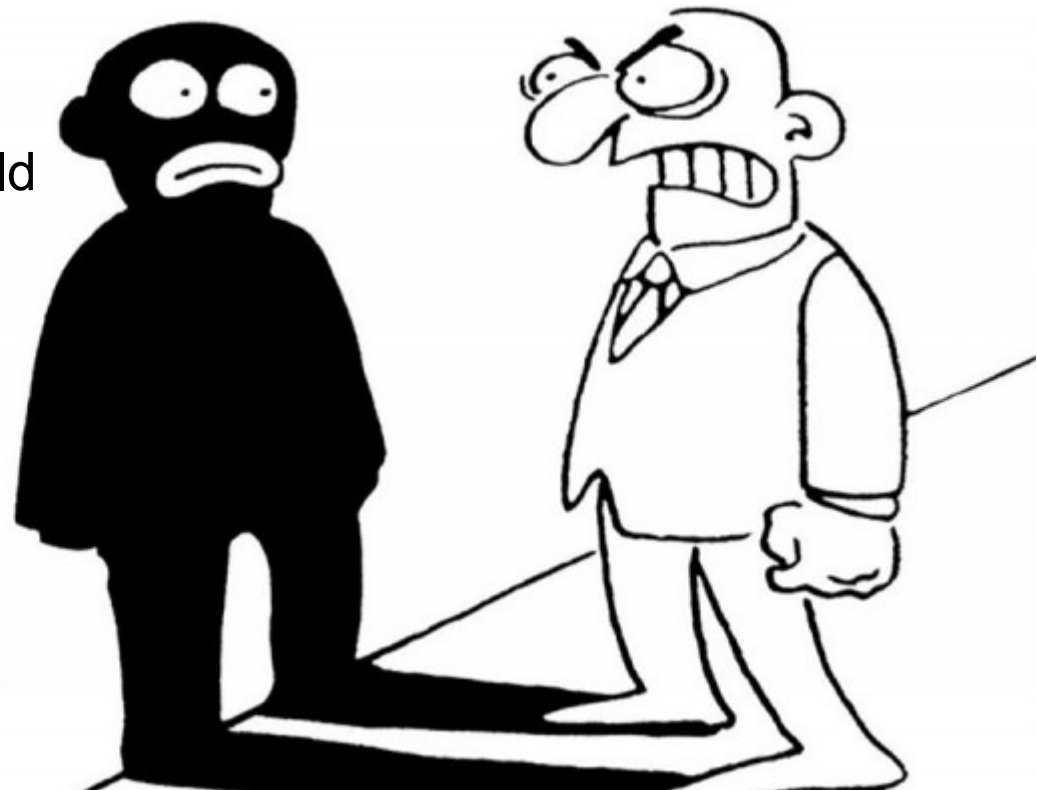
# WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

DICTIONARY: “the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.”

This, may led to the deny of human rights on the simple basis of personal characteristics

Some examples nowadays can be:

- European intolerance towards immigrants
- Women's unfair treatment all over the world
- Post-colonial issues
- American interventionism



# SOME EXAMPLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

## People's equality

- «The Republic recognises and guarantees inviolable human rights, both for the individual and within social groups where the individual's personality is expressed, and it requires the fulfilment of the imperative duties of political, economic and social solidarity» (article 2 of the Italian Constitution)
- «All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction as to sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, or personal or social condition. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic and social nature that, by in fact limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, impede the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country»  
(article 3 of the Italian Constitution)





## **Prohibition of discrimination**

- The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

(article 14 of the European Convention)

- "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."

(article 25 of the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights)



# Applying human rights to literature

*“Literature can be as powerful as life itself. It can be like our prophecy. It can inspire us to change our world and give us the comfort, hope, passion and strength that we need in order to fight to create a better future for us, as well as all humanity. We just need to keep on reading and to allow the tremendous power of literature to enter our hearts and lead us to our own path”.*

***(from the foreword to “Freedom”)***



# Is American still Puritan?

*(from The New York Times)*

- SUMMARY: it is an article exposing the social experiments led by the psychologist Eric Uhlmann; it shows how the current American mentality is similar to the old Puritan one, and so based on hard work, achievement, progress. On the other side, it also proves a marked sense of religion, that condemns sexual behaviours, and limits certain leanings.

## HOW DOES IT DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION?

If Puritan mentality helps the country in the economic side, it downgrades it in its moral-social one:

- Women are insulted if having a sexual life
- Men who don't want to reach the top can't have God
- Who isn't Christian, is considered as a danger



# Growing up

*(by Russel Wayne Baker)*

- SUMMARY: This is the author's autobiography, set between the Two World Wars, in the United States. The extract I'm going to analyse, deals with the separation of roles in 1930s, and with the way American Dream changed mentalities. Central is the experience of Mr. Baker's sister, Doris, whose condition of woman stopped her, in spite of her multiple talents.

## HOW DOES IT DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION?

On the surface America is the place of equality, but this isn't true

- Doris is better than most men, but can't work
- On the other side, men are told they can be whatever they want



# Revealed: child slaves powered industrial Revolution; Huge factory expansion would not have been possible without exploitation of the young

SUMMARY: the article, taken from The Independent and written by David Keys, deals with child-labour; it bases its conclusions on the studies of the Oxford's professor Jane Humphries, and marks how child slaves were one of the most important fundamentals of the industrial Revolution. Not only, but it shows how these conditions irremediably changed English families' conditions, and women's role and mentality.

## HOW DOES IT DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION?

Industrial Revolution was based on the work of poor and vulnerable groups of people, making the rich richer, the poor poorer

- Children were treated as things, just because they were poor
- Women had to stay at home and couldn't work anymore



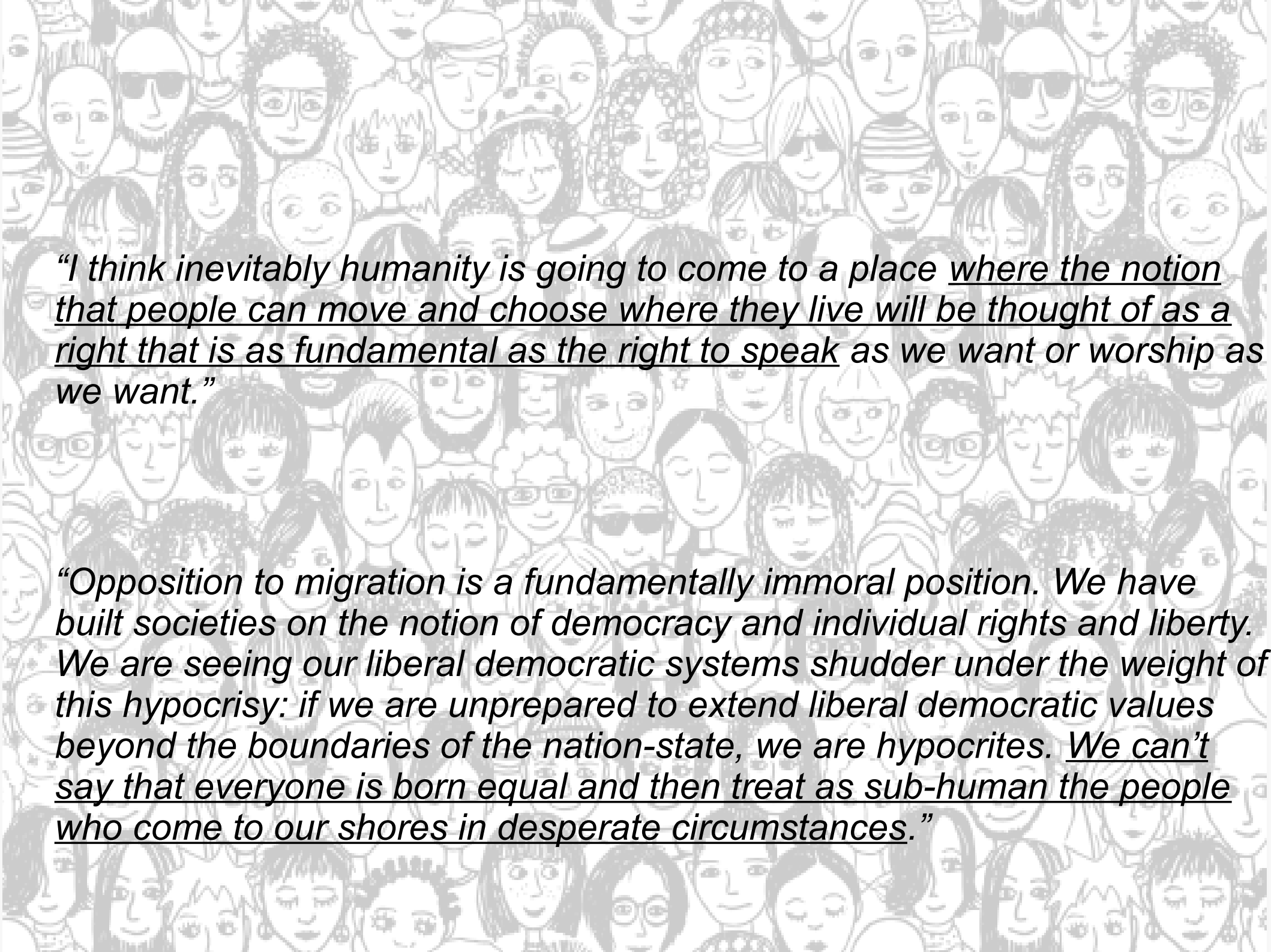
## **Different populations' equality**

- "All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

*(articles 1 and 2 of Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples)*

- "The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation"





*"I think inevitably humanity is going to come to a place where the notion that people can move and choose where they live will be thought of as a right that is as fundamental as the right to speak as we want or worship as we want."*

*"Opposition to migration is a fundamentally immoral position. We have built societies on the notion of democracy and individual rights and liberty. We are seeing our liberal democratic systems shudder under the weight of this hypocrisy: if we are unprepared to extend liberal democratic values beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, we are hypocrites. We can't say that everyone is born equal and then treat as sub-human the people who come to our shores in desperate circumstances."*

# Mohsin Hamid- Migration will become a human right

The previous two quotations of Moshin Hamid perfectly express a writer whose life has always been influenced by migration and colonization.

- Born in Pakistan, he studied in England and lived in USA; now he lives between Lahore, New York and London
- Pakistan is just one of the many countries who suffers from the interventionism of Western nations in their political and cultural affairs. Dealing with this kind of problems, he is considered as a post-colonial writer.
- Migration, racism and identity-issues are three of the most current and important post-colonial topics, dealing with human-rights' current violations

# Lispeth

(by Rudyard Kipling)

- SUMMARY: This short story's protagonist, Lispeth, is a Sonoo (a Hill-woman of the Hymalayas) who is adopted by two Christian and British colonizers. Lispeth's innocence and hope in European people vanish when she grows: she returns to live with the Hill-men, and changes drastically; her beauty and her determination are just a vague memory, her vision of the world gets negative.

## HOW DOES IT DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION?

The British sense of superiority is evident; Lispeth is treated as a slave, her feelings are ignored with no respect, her identity is seen with suspect.

- Whenever she does something of “bad” her behaviour is associated to her “rude” roots
- Her feelings aren't considered, she isn't considered, just beacuse she is different
- She is seen as inferior to the man she saves from death, because of her eyes, or the color of her skin



# The Reluctant Fundamentalist

*(by Mohsin Hamid)*

- SUMMARY: This post-colonial novel is told by a first person narrator called Changez, a young-Pakistani adult who meets an unnamed American man, and tells him his past-life in New York. It creates an Eastern point of view of themes as Colonialism, Islamic Fundamentalism and American Dream, in order to surprise the reader – making him reflect.

## HOW DOES IT DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION?

The Racism against Changez is evident since the first words of the novel. It results in suspect, clear during the dinner in Athens of the first chapters, and exaggerated in the last ones, after 09/11.

- Racism is the reason why the protagonist decides to escape from USA
- Pakistani terrible condition, caused by USA's interventionism



# Midnight's children

(by Salman Rushdie)

**SUMMARY:** It is a postmodernist novel, that faces postcolonial themes, telling about the post-independence India; the background is unrealistic, and deals with a group of children born the same hour of the same day, and who all have some sort of “super-powers”.

## HOW DOES IT DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION?

The date when those children were born reminds that the “New Republic of India” before August 15<sup>th</sup> 1947 was a colony; it was the most British exploited country, and subjected to alien-subjugation

- The belief that a country is better than an other is the arrogance which moved West during the last three centuries;
- This caused the sufference of millions of people: India is just one of the most famous examples