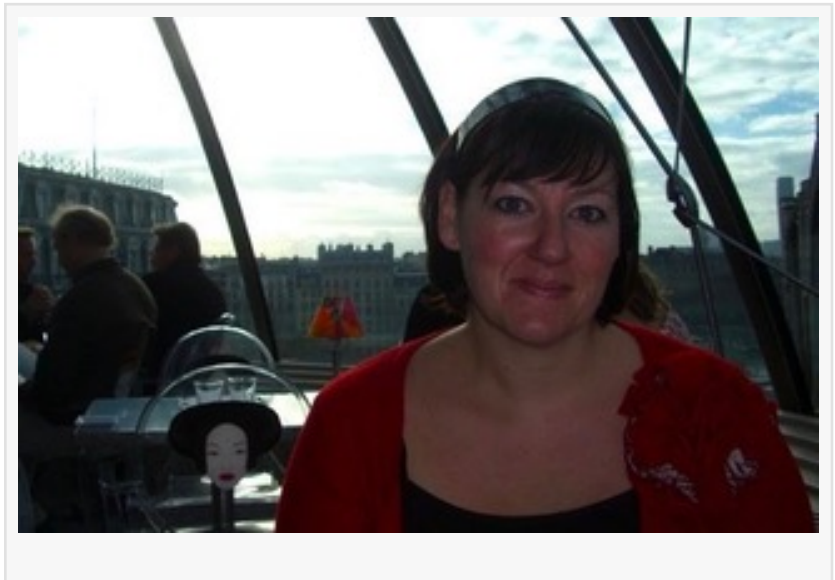


Dr. Irene Kepler Discusses the Difference Between Human Rights and Civil Rights

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Dr. Irene Kepler has been a social justice advocate for decades. As a sociologist, she studies social phenomena like poverty, classism, racism, and the impact these institutions have on our cultures and societies as humans. One of the areas she studies is that of human and civil rights. While these terms are often used synonymously, Kepler explains that they actually have different definitions and implications.



What Are Human Rights? Dr. Irene Kepler Explains

Human rights are the most fundamental rights of all people, no matter where they were born or into what kind of society, [says Irene Kepler LCSW](#). They are often the building blocks of every major civilization's justice and penal code. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, the right to education, freedom of expression, freedom from slavery, protection from torture, and the right to a fair trial.

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly gathered in Paris in the aftermath of World War II and drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document is still the "common standard of achievements for all peoples and nations." It has been translated into over 500 languages and inspired the constitutions of several democracies and states that formed after its creation. When combined with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, they are known as the International Bill of Human Rights.

What are Civil Rights?

Civil rights are different than human rights because they are rights provided to you by your

citizenship of a specific nation, culture, or state, [says Dr. Irene Kepler](#). So while basic human rights are considered fundamental and are to be protected on a global scale, civil rights vary greatly from one country to the next. For instance, in America, our civil rights are protected by the Constitution and our state and federal laws. The right to free speech, the right to bear arms, the right to vote - all of these are civil liberties provided by our country.

While no nation is allowed to deprive a person of their basic human rights, countries and nations can grant or restrict certain civil liberties at will. Often, in America, we think of racial issues when we hear the term "civil rights," says [Irene Kepler LCSW](#). This is because, in the 60s, Martin Luther King, Jr. and other black activists were petitioning for the right to participate fully in society and be granted civil liberties that were denied to black citizens in those times.

While many of these rights were granted to black Americans by President Kennedy, there are still many civil rights questions and violations occurring daily in our country, says Irene Kepler LCSW. And not all of them are based on race. Civil rights encompass all people who experience systematic oppression, including LGBTQ+ communities, women, people with disabilities, and veterans, among others.

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