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## **Human Rights Learning: Pedagogies and Politics of Peace**

Betty A. Reardon

I am honored to be invited to deliver this lecture, delighted to be in Puerto Rico, enjoying this beautiful island and inspired by the wonderful work of the UNESCO Chair for Peace Education of the University of Puerto Rico, a model of all that my lecture will advocate.

**Foreword: Five assumptions underlay the linking of human rights learning to the pedagogies and politics of peace.**

The following propositions and reflections arguing that human rights learning (HRL) is constitutive to effective pedagogies and politics of peace are informed throughout by five basic assumptions about the requirements for achieving peace; requirements that pose significant challenges to peace education.

First: A sustainable world peace can only be assured through the universal actualization of human dignity; human rights concepts and standards are tools for the realization of the conditions necessary to human dignity. The universal actualization of human dignity and the achievement of world peace require a transformation of prevailing worldviews and modes of thought.

Second: Holism and critical reflection are essential and necessary to the transformation of thinking (and transformational thinking) conducive to the political processes requisite to the realization of human rights as the basis of a peaceful world order. Holism demands that we address peace and justice problems in all dimensions and in relation to other problems which mutually affect each other. Critical reflection is needed to assess the nature and severity of problems of peace and the viability of potential responses.

Third: A truly democratic, nonviolent politics of peace would be a politics of learning, learning being a process of internalized change through which we and our societies become who and what we are. Most current practices in education focus on transfer of knowledge rather than on the development of the capacities to produce and internalize it; so they remain mechanisms for the continuation of the pedagogies and politics of the status quo.

Fourth: Human rights learning - active learning and learning for action - offers lively and effective means to develop our capacities to be human and to prepare citizens to devise and engage in a politics of peace. Engaging in a politics of peace would be practicing politics as learning and learning as political engagement.

Fifth: The International Year of Human Rights Learning, 2009, provides a moment for the advancement of the critical pedagogy espoused by Paulo Freire whose dialogic method is still the most conducive to induce transformative social and political learning.

**Seven propositions comprise the essential argument to be made on human rights learning as a means to cultivate learning and politics for peace.**

These five assumptions infuse the seven propositions elaborated below about the challenges to, and possibilities for, peace education forthcoming from the International Year of Human Rights Learning. These propositions form the arguments essential to my central assertion that human rights learning offers the most effective form of education for achieving peace and cultivating a peaceful politics.

**Proposition 1: Human rights are integral and essential to peace and peace education.**

As a political framework for the actualization of human dignity, human rights are the ethical core of peace education; not a complement, or a particular component, and certainly not an alternative or an educationally equivalent substitute for peace education.

Human rights are integral to peace education, that is, without human rights peace education lacks a primary component of its core and essential substance. Human rights are the essence and the arbiter of peace, the antithesis of violence, touching on multiple and complex aspects of the human experience, illuminating the necessity of holism to the field. The potential of human rights as the means to cultivate transformational thinking lies in viewing all human rights norms and standards as a whole, an integrated ethical system. That system, I propose, holds the promise of a transformed peaceful and just global order.

An alternative statement of this assertion is a formulation I often used in introducing human rights in my peace education classes. Human rights *is* and human rights *are*. The sum and ethos of the values and principles of human rights taken as a whole *is* – or would be – peace. Human rights standards *are* the specific indicators and particular measures of progress toward and the realization of peace. Human rights puts flesh on the bones of the abstraction of peace and provide the details of how to bring the flesh to life.

Putting flesh on the bones is a metaphor for what I believe to be transformation, the substance of profound and lasting change of such a nature as to reconstitute the very body and organic functioning of a person or a society. It is not the surface or cosmetic change that goes by the names of reform, progress or development. It is not the time-bound structural change of a revolution. It is a reconstitution of the psychosocial DNA of a person or society, comprising changes in worldviews, values and modes of thinking. Transformational thinking is that form of reflection and analysis that recognizes the living organic nature of human personalities, relationships and institutions. It attempts to consider and deliberate issues in organic terms, recognizing human and social life as evolving processes, reflecting upon what actions might improve the health of an organism, individual or institution and what learning and political processes are most likely to facilitate those actions.<sup>i</sup>

The term human rights learning as used in my theme and arguments refers to a process inspired by an impulse toward social justice that takes place in all settings where people

learn for civic purposes. They include - but most certainly are not limited to - schools and universities. Human rights learning (HRL) is the conjoined philosophic twin of critical pedagogy, coming to be the preferred pedagogy of peace education, the two united by a common assumption about the relationship between teaching methodology and social and political learning. An even more significant belief that peace educator advocates of participatory, reflective pedagogies share with advocates of human rights learning is that in itself HRL is political in nature. The efficacy of education for humane and positive social and political purposes is most likely determined by the internalization of values and world views that should complement the acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant to the realization of human rights.

Internalizing values is possible through the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills if the learning process is mediated through active and reflective involvement of the learner with the substance of study. (An explanatory metaphor for this process of rigorous and vigorous engaged thinking is sculpting with clay, the clay being of the substance explored and formed through the intellectual, emotional hands of critical reflection). This is especially so if the process involves the examination and - in most cases - the challenging of the worldviews of the learners and their societies. In distinguishing, as I will here, between human rights education and human rights learning, I intend to argue that such examination and challenge of prevailing social and personal values is still largely missing from standard, formal human rights education, precluding it from being peace education. (This is so, I argue, because peace education is now becoming more widely devoted to Freirean critical praxis as the core of its pedagogy.)

Peace education is also of its very nature critical. Not in the sense of criticism as opposition, but in the sense of being probingly analytic and evaluative. Granted analysis and evaluation may indeed lead learners to oppose some public policies or social, economic or political structures, when they find them to contradict the fundamental values of peace and justice which guide the evaluation; or when the analysis shows failure to achieve just public purposes. For human rights learning, however, such challenge is a core learning goal of critical reflection, with the realization of human rights

as social purpose, issues of human rights as substance and observance of principles of human rights in the facilitation of the intended learning, a process mediated within a holistic – and potentially transformative - human rights framework.

Human rights as learning goal and social purpose, substance, and process - stated in traditional curricular terms as objectives, content and method - have always been integral to comprehensive peace education, also grounded in holism. The holistic and or comprehensive approach of peace education stands in contrast to general education practice still caught in the fragmented and reductionist thinking that has characterized modern Western thought, (post modernism notwithstanding). Too few educators fully understand or act upon the principle of holism, thus lessening the potential of formal, institutionalized education to serve as the vehicle for significant social or political change. Even peace education that has advocated holism more than most other fields of social and political education has suffered to some degree from these limits. Some of the best peace education practices developed in formal education have been derived from elementary education. Gifted educators of the young recognize the power of holism and affect in learning. The tyranny of separation of distinct subject matters, around which curriculum is organized in secondary and university education, does not usually obtain in the lower grades where content is often organized around themes that infuse lessons in all subjects in comprehensive study units. The holism of early education sets learning in a context of the linkages and interrelationships between cognition and affect and among subjects of study that more closely approximates the natural learning of lived experience. Human rights learning seeks to establish linkages among human rights problems to illuminate the relationships of the problems to the lives of the learners. Personalizing the learning, as did Freire, motivates the learners to engage with the problem and ultimately inspires them to seek alternatives.

Considering the distinctions I perceive between the largely content based general practice of human rights education (HRE) and human rights learning that puts equal emphasis on an engaged pedagogy, provides an arena of discourse on the purposes and processes of social education in general and peace education in particular. We need to enter this arena

to grapple with the limits to learning inherent in the information transfer form of education as obstacles to the ultimate social purpose of peace education, transformation toward a culture of peace through the de-legitimization of violence as a political tool and the development of a social commitment to nonviolent societies, striving to realize universal human dignity in institutions, relationships, and customs. The separations and limits of traditional pedagogies imposed by the fragmentation and reductionism of divided subject matter are characteristic of the “political realism” that still dominates current politics - including issues of human rights and peace. The rationalization and tolerance of various forms of economic and political violence as unavoidable in the face of concerns deemed more significant to order and stability is a given in public discourse. In the names of more urgent public priorities such as national security, human rights fall by the policy wayside. Issues continue to be discussed and decisions made without regard to the essential interrelationships among them. So, too, the ethical and normative dimensions and consequences of public policies are screened out in favor of what is argued to be pragmatism and practicality. Neither do ethical dimensions play much of a role in standard information based education.

Authentic realism in the sense of the realities as seen by the oppressed and vulnerable of the world, rather than as interpreted by the powerful who control our institutions, is to be found in human rights learning as politics. One of the most promising possibilities of HRL is that it offers the basis for a process of assessing the human condition, which enables us to identify and diagnose the violence of the stable order and the conditions of vulnerability that it perpetuates.

A holistic approach calls for identifying links and relationships among issues and problems. It entails looking as broadly as possible at the global social system that functions to a painful extent through the manipulation of violence and vulnerability, the very conditions which lead Freire to his critique of the dominant society and his rejection of the forms of education that served it. By linking the personal-reflective with the communal-political, he suggested a pedagogy that challenges the system and the limits imposed by political realism. He made idealism a practical and effective mode of

politics. He devised a pedagogy that challenged both learner and society to intervene in the reality they perceived so as to expose and transform the structural injustices – the violence and vulnerabilities – rationalized by realist politics and the mechanisms of oppression obscured by fragmented, reductionist thinking.

**Proposition 2: Human rights learning is a contemporary form of Freirean political pedagogy.**

This proposition is the core of the thesis I wish to bring to this discussion of human rights learning as the pedagogies and politics of peace. The proposition is not necessarily new, but I believe it has renewed currency in 2009, the International Year of Human Rights Learning. The basic argument is a call for the fulfillment of the Freirean promise of education as a means to the realization of human rights through that form of human rights learning defined as *conscientization* - awakening to awareness of the realities of our lives and societies and the interrelationship between these two realms of human experience. It is exactly Freire's focus on the capacity of the inner dynamic of the learning process to illuminate the outer social and political structures that forms the essence of human rights learning as advocated by the Peoples' Movement for Human Rights Learning and of the communally based approaches to learning demonstrated in the processes of the International Institute on Peace Education and its offspring Community Based Institutes on Peace Education.

This International Year of Human Rights Learning can be an impetus for peace educators to renew their commitment to the Freirean promise; to take up the challenge that is best expressed by the peace movement's call to "speak truth to power", acknowledging the political nature and purpose of peace education. By political I do not mean the politics of existing political systems, nor the contentions among the categories of political positions ossified into political parties, reifying the dualistic thinking that in the American system plays out in a two-party politics. I mean rather politics in a more profound and basic sense of public deliberation on the aims and purposes of society; the decisions about means to achieve those purposes by sustainably producing and fairly expending the fruits of a peoples' labors, resources and talents. I mean a politics of peace infused with a

common commitment to the general public good, a just distribution and equitable enjoyment of benefits and resources; in short a politics of human rights. This is a politics far from the present power contestations of political realism, the win-lose process that obscures and poses obstacles to the learning required to devise and develop a politics of peace. Without an effective politics of peace, peace cannot be achieved. Without an effective political education there can be no politics of peace. I would submit that human rights learning is the most promising vehicle for an effective education for a politics of peace. For it has been devised through such a politics in the places where it has been put into practice as grass roots activism for community change.

There are certainly indicators that such a politics may be even now being born. Such phenomena as the World Social Forum and the Obama election campaign bear witness to it. But the labor is a difficult one in which all the midwifery skills peace education and human rights learning can muster must be applied in the face of great odds. That labor, the struggle to give birth to a new reality is the core of politics as learning, of an authentically democratic politics, a nonviolent politics, a process of public discourse and action directed toward the realization of social wellbeing and human dignity; a process through which citizens learn to realize their social and political goals. Peace Education as human rights learning is an approach to impelling this process. It is Freireanism in action. Now, in this year, we can integrate into the Freirean approach, some of the conceptual tools that have been developed by peace education. Among the conceptual tools most relevant to our task are the concepts of violence and vulnerability, concepts derived from an analysis of the patriarchal nature of the fundamental inequities of the global political economy.<sup>ii</sup>

**Proposition 3: The violence and vulnerabilities of the global system frame ethical issues for human rights learning and a politics of peace.**

What Freire confronted as oppression of the poor, I would identify as a symptom of a system of social and economic violence, similar to, but not synonymous with what peace research refers to as structural violence. It seems to me that the concept of structural



violence is a general abstraction that can obscure the ethical and moral dimension and the individual personal responsibility at play in of this category of violence.

Granted, it is accepted that social and economic structures restrict the opportunities for human fulfillment and access to social benefits available to the poor, and the concept of structural violence enables us to discern the institutional and political causes of, and possible alternatives to, these unjust conditions. However, the degree to which personal behaviors and choices conditioned by social values determine the actual processes of deprivation within the structures call for normative reflection that makes ethics and values a significant factor in peace learning and peace politics. Justice and injustice may be mediated through structures but they are not synonymous with nor necessarily determined by structures. Indeed, I would argue that peace and human rights learning and action are not only often inspired by unjust structures, but that they can take place within them. It is this fact that makes peace education possible within our present politics and education systems. It also makes it incumbent upon peace education, especially when it takes the form of human rights learning to pose issues and develop skills for the exercise and application of ethics and morality.

Both ethics and morality may have a place in peace learning and peace politics, but their respective places are distinct and different. They are not synonymous and cannot substitute one for the other. It is not the role of peace education or human rights learning to moralize, that is to teach by moral precept. But they have a responsibility to guide learners in discerning when moralizing is introduced into political discourse as it was so frequently in the last American administration - most lamentably in the case of depicting the war against Iraq as a crusade and the shocking and frightening habit of the then Secretary of Defense of introducing strategic directives with Biblical quotations. In addition to being an egregious violation of the constitutional requirement of separation of church (meaning for legal and political purposes all religions) and state, the habit was a prejudgment on public matters of national security that denied the citizens the right to form and argue for their own positions.

Ethical reflection and analysis, on the other hand should be an integral component of peace learning and peace politics. The development of ethical skills can derive from applying global society's agreed principles of justice and equity - such as those that are enshrined in law, pertaining to all no matter what moral system they may live by – to the assessment of political issues and choices. The development and application of ethical principles is a process of engagement similar to my sculpting in clay metaphor. It is a peace education and human rights learning process consistent with Freirean pedagogy. It is a process similar to what I think Martin Luther King may have meant when he said that serious thinking about political issues was a form of action. <sup>iii</sup>

The differences between ethics and morality most relevant to the transformative learning toward which we are striving are the sources from which they come and the thinking that goes into their application. Ethics, derived by persons wrestling with what might be good and true on as wide a basis as possible derives principles that require deeper reflection on the what as well as the how of the substance of principles and the complexity of their application. Morality, based on precepts set forth by authority - usually but not always religious authority - is more in the area of what is permissible. The range of how is often limited when the authority from which the precepts emanate posits prescriptions, instructing in specific behaviors or imposing specific social norms and policies such as those applying to reproductive rights and sexual practices. There is no area in which the distinctions between the two and the consequences of the application of one or the other is more evident than in the controversies over the human rights of women and children. I would submit the issues involved there are not contending moralities, but contentions between moralities and ethical principles many of the latter having been encoded into the international legal standards of the Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What I find potentially counter productive to the intention of human rights education is that in cases where it is delivered through some variation of transfer method of imparting knowledge, it can easily - and sometimes has -used the standards as moral precepts rather than ethical principles, undermining the possibilities for the ethical reflection that is

essential both to dealing with the contradictions, complexities and controversies involved in applying the standards and to transformative thinking developed through ethical reflection. I fear that even some who purport to practice or advocate human rights learning have fallen into the same trap. It was, I believe, an intention of Freire to enable those with whom he practiced his pedagogy to develop these skills of ethical as well as structural analysis. For in the struggle for structural transformation – the intent of conceptualizing oppression as structural violence – these ethical skills are of great political practicality; and are, therefore, essential objectives of a pedagogy of human rights learning.

The structures of oppression aggregate into a global system that calls for a holistic approach to comprehend and challenge it. By speaking specifically of social and economic violence I mean not only the avoidable harm imposed by unjust and inequitable institutions, I mean as well attitudes, behaviors and values that comprehend individual/personal as well as social/political responsibility. I suspect the outrage against those who brought about the present global financial crisis might be far greater were we to fully realize the extent to which the lot of the poorest and most vulnerable was made even more painful by the current situation. This crisis, too, needs to be viewed within this larger system in which the global economy became not so production oriented as monetized and controlled by global markets with little ethical reference to how production and distribution was failing to meet the basic needs of most of the world's peoples; in short denying their economic human rights.

The economic crisis is a human rights crisis involving large-scale structural violence against the vulnerable, a consequence of the ethical failures of the powerful and the privileged who support them. Within the present global structures I would identify the privileged as those whose survival is economically assured, who enjoy a life style that affords them a level of comfort much beyond survival, and who have the privilege of time and circumstances for reflection on the consequences of their political and life style choices.

However, most of the privileged do not seem to realize – nor attend to - the harm endured as a consequence of the global economic structures. This harm is not solely attributable to the actions of corporate and financial titans, but also to personal choices made by many, if not all, in most societies. Even if only in tolerating injustice, the toleration is a choice and has ethical valence. It is exactly in this ethical sphere that the conscientization some have referred to as “the pedagogy of the privileged”- human rights learning for those who are not deprived or visibly oppressed - is the most relevant task of peace education. Transformation toward fulfillment of the economic rights of the poor may well depend upon awakening the awareness of those whose life choices and standards of living are the mainstays of the structures, whose behaviors uphold the economic policies and actions of the titans. The human rights learning goal of their conscientization is their becoming aware of their implication in the structures and the ethical dimensions of their personal circumstances, their political and economic choices.

HRL for the privileged is also a sphere wherein human rights education is distinguished from human rights learning, and where action forthcoming from such conscientization constitutes politics as learning, for it is a pedagogy intended to lead a public conscientized to the avoidable harm suffered by the vulnerable in the global economic system to action. A conceptualization of injustice as unacceptable, avoidable harm developed through such a process of conscientization, inspired those who conceptualized and brought to ratification the normative standards articulated in the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights wherein governments agreed that these injustices – forms of violence were, indeed, avoidable harm. However, there is little in the language of those standards that acknowledges the standards to be the product of a political process I would describe as human rights learning. Neither is there in the language of the documents that established the International Decade for Human Rights Education (1994) and the Resolution declaring 2009 the International Year of Human Rights Learning (2008) any indication that achievement of the goals of the decade and the year require wide-spread public learning with a focus on conscientization. More importantly the documents reveal blindness to the philosophic contradiction inherent in taking the terms education and learning to be functionally interchangeable. Even more

limiting is the apparent assumption that learning is the inevitable consequence of education. Classroom experience and human history both give the lie to that belief.

A process of public conscientization will of necessity involve ethical reflection. It seems to me that what I know of human rights education in its traditional education form does not assure that the ethical issues of complicity with the systemic violence and social responsibility for the suffering of the vulnerable will be considered. The assumption that substantive knowledge, per se, is the object of education still infuses the mindset in which the privileged are educated. Knowledge is considered to be a commodity to be acquired, a source of power and of “market advantage.” The uses to which power is put and the ends served by knowledge are not considered as issues subject to ethical assessment. Power and knowledge are bases of individual, corporate, or familial wealth to be used to the advantage of the possessors, only secondarily – if at all – as resources to be put to the betterment of the human condition or for the fulfillment of social responsibility. Peace education has long advocated the cultivation of the skills and capacities of social responsibility as integral to its purpose. Human rights learning, at its core, is the cultivation of ethical reflection and assessment for the exercise of social responsibility. Both sets of capacities, ethical reflection and social responsibility, are essential to the development of transformative thinking. Both are essential to citizen action to overcome the avoidable harm of structural violence. Comprehension of structural and all other forms of violence is crucial to devising the strategies of a politics of peace.

Those familiar with my work will know that I identify violence as the central problematic of peace education. All violence degrades and/or denies human dignity. This is why I assert that the substance of the field should comprise an inquiry into violence as a phenomenon and a system, its multiple and pervasive forms, the interrelationships among the various forms, its sources and purposes, how it functions and potential alternatives for achieving the legally sanctioned, socially accepted, or politically tolerated purposes commonly pursued through violence. I emphasize these structural forms of economic, social and political violence as I believe them to be more significant to our task than, the non-systemic, aberrant violence of crime, interpersonal conflict, vandalism, etc. that I

believe are both rooted in and facilitated by the systemic violence of the institutions that uphold the wider culture of violence. (I do want to note here, however, that I consider gender violence, including domestic violence, to be systemic.)

Peace research has defined various categories of violence. However, little has been done to devise a widely agreed conceptual definition of the larger comprehensive concept of violence, making the determination of what comprises nonviolence somewhat problematic. Having recently read some of the exchanges about the limits of commitment to nonviolence among members of the Peace and Justice Studies Association, I see a real need to clarify our thinking about what constitutes both violence and nonviolence. Absent an agreed definition of violence, is it possible to discuss the potentials and limits of nonviolence – or to strategizing ways in which it might be integrated into peaceful politics?

For the purposes of this presentation and in the absence of a generally agreed definition in the field, I will offer the most simple and brief definition of violence that informs my assertion about the central problematic of peace education and my arguments about the educational goals designated to address the problematic. (I might note that the following is not inconsistent with the very lengthy list of meanings offered by the Oxford English Dictionary.) I define violence as intentional, avoidable harm – usually committed to achieve a purpose. By designating it as intentional harm, I intend to indicate that using violence, especially to achieve economic or political purposes or to maintain social conditions (such as male dominance) is an act of choice, strategic as well as ethical choice. In most situations there are alternatives courses of action toward the ends sought.

I also distinguish between violence and necessary, legitimate force. When there are no known non-forceful alternatives, we have recourse to legitimate force – peacekeeping and police forces for instance - to be used, keeping in mind in its application that harm should be kept to the lowest possible level. I would categorize what is commonly called police brutality as violence. It is harmful force that exceeds what is necessary to achieve the legitimate social ends to which it is being put. So, too we can say that the use of military

when all other avenues to defense against armed attack are closed off under the present system - which lacks sufficient institutional alternatives - is legitimate. It is recognized to be so in Article 8 of the Charter of United Nations. (I do not consider 9/11 to have been such an attack. There were and are institutional alternatives to respond to and remedy such acts of violence which are crimes, not acts war.) As we can consider police brutality to be violence, so too, there are clear instances of what Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV), a Japanese peace organization, have defined as military violence, intentional harm to civilians or avoidable harm inflicted outside combat conditions by military personnel. An example of the latter is the abuse of prisoners taken in combat and held outside the actual arena of armed struggle. Other examples are the frequent crimes of sexual violence around the U.S. bases in Okinawa and other areas in which significant numbers of military personnel are stationed, the ecological violence resulting from military activity and the health consequences of such activity as in the island of Vieques<sup>iv</sup>. These are certainly avoidable harms and clear violations of human rights.

My definition of violence derives from the core value of human dignity and respect for the living Earth; and from the concomitant human responsibility to honor them. The values of human dignity and human responsibility are also central to the theories and practices of nonviolence. Nonviolence comprises efforts to pursue goals imbued with an intention to do no harm; and where that may not be possible, to minimize any potential harm - if possible to enlist the consent of those who will suffer some of the harms that sometimes occur in the use of nonviolent strategies. Strikes are a good example here. Those who withhold their labor may have just cause, but all those who suffer the consequence of the strike may not be implicated in the injustice. Such consent was given by large numbers of Black South Africans to the boycotts and sanctions that helped to topple Apartheid in South Africa. These are but two examples of the kinds of human rights issues, the resolution of which involves citizens in consideration of consequences, especially ethical considerations.

Because the values of human dignity and human responsibility from which this concept of violence derives are integral to human rights, human rights issues and human rights learning are excellent lenses through which to seek the requisite clarification about what constitutes violence and how it is implicated in the perpetuation of the vulnerability of the oppressed. Human rights study provides us with tools of definition and diagnosis of what comprises violence, experientially as well as conceptually, and provides opportunities to consider approaches to overcoming vulnerability.

A condition that often produces the impulse to violence is vulnerability. The concept of vulnerability provides another useful analytic tool with which to assess the circumstances that make possible the denial of human dignity to large masses of the human population. Vulnerability, - in particular structural vulnerability - I would define as a chronic disadvantage suffered by person or groups at the lower levels of the prevailing social, economic and political structures, women, the poor, the aged, children and minorities. It is a condition in which the vulnerable are the most likely to suffer harm as a consequence of the prevailing structures and policies, as well as, from the periodic disturbances that shake the structures interrupting their normal operation. Although determined by people's positions in the social and political structures rather than by any personal quality or action on their parts, given the widespread lack of general recognition of the principle of human dignity, the vulnerable themselves are often held responsible for their own disadvantaged circumstances. Too often unaware of their human rights, they seem powerless to make claims on the society for the assurance of those rights. Those at the top, "the rich and the powerful" are least likely to suffer harm from system wide events and developments (other than in natural disasters) and face few limits to the claims they make to the all the benefits of the society. Those at the bottom are most likely to suffer harm, both on a daily basis and in the case of humanly caused or natural disasters. The vulnerable are one of the present system's most exploitable resources, providing minimum cost labor, commodities for the human trafficking markets. In political systems that hold elections, votes are often bought for the price of a meal. As violence is the central problematic of peace education, vulnerability is at the center of the problematic of HRE and HRL.



I think it important to note that the early practice and development of Freirean approaches to human rights learning were among the vulnerable of the world, mainly in the “global south.” The intentions of this human rights learning were to enable vulnerable communities to become aware of the structural causes of their vulnerability, to help them to understand that it was not the necessary or inevitable consequence of any legitimate social goal and to inspire them to take action to overcome it. Further, the international standards of human rights were both a recognition that their vulnerability should not be accepted by them or their societies and could serve as tools to overcome it. In order to do so they needed critical skills, not just literacy. In short, these are arguments similar to those Freire made about the relation of standard education practice to the maintenance of existing power structures. So it was appropriate for human rights learning to work with Freire’s pedagogy in that these endeavors were directed at reducing the structural harms suffered by the oppressed. These endeavors were instructive examples of learning as politics and learning applied to perfecting ever more effective strategies and political means toward reducing avoidable harms - politics as learning.

Politics as learning is in some significant part, a process of identifying and conceptualizing problems. Indeed, conscientization is in its first stages a process of conceptualization, or “naming” of the social conditions that impede or enhance human dignity, such as circumstances and indicators of oppression or justice. Concepts are the components from which we construct the holistic frameworks used in peace education, the core ideas of the problems to be addressed and/or goals to be pursued. So, too, they figure in the pedagogies of human rights learning, and provide an instructive mode for the curricular use of the international human rights standards.

Conceptual definitions encapsulate the abstract and philosophic dimensions of human rights imbedded in basic principles of human worth and human dignity. Such are the ethical injunctions articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration defines the ethical and normative aspirations that form the principles to guide ethical deliberations about human rights issues and problems. The individual standards of the covenants and conventions are instruments for disclosure of specific,

experiential dimensions of denial and enjoyment of particular rights. The standards help us to comprehend and reveal the often unobserved bulwarks or abnegations of human dignity. In their fulfillment they are hallmarks of dignity. In their denial they are indicators of vulnerability in a global system characterized by violence. We can best perceive the multiplicities of violence from a holistic perspective revealing the interrelationships between violence and vulnerability. Our analysis must put us simultaneously in touch with the systemic and the particular. To satisfy this injunction in my teaching practice, I used the metaphor of the zoom lens, mentally shifting from a wide angle view of the entire scope of a subject under discussion, the general, central problematic, to a narrow focus on a very specific detail or datum that relates to or forms part of the central problematic. The term problematic is a formulation that comprehends all aspects and sub-problems that comprise a major problem of peace or human rights, a formulation that facilitates holism as an approach to peace education and human rights learning.<sup>v</sup> Peace education and human rights learning aim to facilitate a learning process in which the skill of making this shift is invoked whenever appropriate to the analysis.

In human rights learning within a holistic approach - applying the framework of the international standards as a whole - the learning process would alternate its focus between the wide angle of the visions of a society universally informed by human rights projected in the UDHR and the specific details of the vision, as outlined by the particular standards of the covenants and conventions, designed to bring about the conditions that comprise the vision. The particular standards, when viewed in the wider perspective of the multiplicities of violations, also help us to see the systemic nature of violence in the present world order, as well as, to recognize and assess specific instances of violence as visible violations of particular rights. So, too, they enable us to see how instances of fulfillment of particular rights manifest the abstract concepts that define the values we espouse, the norms we seek to actualize, the ethics that can guide our actions and policies.

These international legal standards are useful devices for on-going *conscientization* from awareness of injustice, conceptualized at the systemic level, to recognizing and

confronting the specific conditions and incidence of the actual violence in daily, lived experience. Confronting the symptoms requires political action taken - on principle and wherever possible - in one of the nonviolent modes that are integral to a politics of peace, action that can be the basis for learning toward further action toward the realization of the right in question. So, human rights standards need not be consigned to HRE content to be absorbed but not necessarily applied or to legal exotica, confined to the discourse of lawyers and diplomats. They can serve citizens and learners on the ground living in the conditions of human rights violations as diagnostic tools and instruments for the legal remediation of the injustices that afflict them. Most human rights standards, be they entitlements or protections, designate instances of violence and stand as injunctions to overcome a particular form of vulnerability.

As one example of how the recognition of a form of vulnerability as the basis for defining a human rights principle and a related standard, we might take Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its history reflects a process similar to all the organic and practical political and learning processes that produced the whole range of human rights standards. The UDHR was adopted in 1948 by acclamation of the General Assembly as a set of principles, later made enforceable as international law in the two foundational covenants. One, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights encodes in international law, as declared in Article 24, “the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays.” While this right can be traced to the labor movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1948 it was also a reflection of the immediate egregious violations of the human body and spirit by the inhuman conditions of work in concentration and labor camps and the imposition of industrial slavery in the munitions factories in Germany and the Nazi Occupied Europe of World War II. In our world today, it serves as witness to the criminality of violations, ranging from child slavery such as that in the infamous rug factories of Asia to the 12 to 16 hours shifts served by illegal immigrants in restaurants in the wealthy cities of the world.

Each of these and other oppressed and exploited groups suffer these inhuman conditions because they are vulnerable to the exploiters. We could go through the entire Declaration

and all the covenants and conventions, identifying the many forms of avoidable, intentional harm these standards declare to be counter to the social good stated as the wellbeing of the individual. It is the public recognition of such unnecessary harms that have produced the human rights movements that have given us the international human rights law comprised by the covenants and conventions, and aggregated into the whole of the human rights framework, a framework comprising a system of indicators of the conditions of peace.

Awakening of publics to all forms of violence and vulnerability, as noted, are goals of peace education and human rights learning. These are goals, which are approached through learning as it is facilitated in programs of education and in the political action that is a medium for so much human rights learning. Among the learning objectives integrally related to this goal is the *conscientization* of the privileged to their implication in and responsibility for this systemic and structural violence, advocated above as the pedagogy of the privileged. The complement to that goal is the awakening of the vulnerable, not only to awareness of the structural foundations of their oppression but, also and especially, to consciousness of themselves as the subjects of rights they may claim on the basis of universal human dignity, the core principle and foundation of all realms of human rights. Political action to claim human rights is the politics of justice, a potentially transformative politics of learning.

When we assert that human rights are the particular components of economic, social, cultural and political justice, we recognize that just societies are those that are conscious of vulnerabilities, seek to prevent them from becoming the occasions of avoidable harm, and devote resources to care for those who are vulnerable so long as they are in such condition. Much of President Roosevelt's New Deal to overcome the Great Depression of the 1930s - recently both invoked and reviled in the face of the present economic crisis as it is affecting the United States - was just such an effort to help the vulnerable through the period of their vulnerability and to provide ways out of it for the long term. I think it is not just an accident of history that the drafters of the UDHR and most of those who drafted the covenants to implement it had experienced the Great Depression as well as

World War II. Both disasters, viewed within the philosophical framework of the United Nations and the legal norms it developed, were deemed to be avoidable harms, the overcoming of which the international organization claimed as its fundamental purpose. In so doing, the UN stated to the world that it is possible to overcome the conditions that brought about the two disasters, even to replace the structures in which they unfolded. What I argue here is that the possibility to overcome becomes more probable when publics have experienced human rights learning.

While the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2000) have reclaimed the practical possibility of overcoming poverty, the possibility of the abolition of war has since been relegated to the ranks of Utopian ideas best ignored as we get on with the business of real politics. Advocates of peace education and human rights learning, however, continue to uphold the vision of the just society described above as a possibility we need to learn how to work toward realizing. The history of the development of the ever-expanding concepts and standards of human rights attests to the practicality of the possibility of the vision. Human rights standards derive from human experience, from the history of human beings struggling to overcome their vulnerabilities. Lived human experience is the medium of human rights learning, the arena in which social ethics and social conscience are actualized. At its most dynamic human rights learning is infused with the vision of a just world order, an ethical global society, striving to overcome structural vulnerability and the violence that maintains and manifests the power of the structures over the lives of the vulnerable.

At the outset of this presentation I described human rights as the ethical core of peace education, built upon the value of human dignity. As a set of tools for diagnosing and overcoming vulnerabilities, human rights are also ethical criteria, a code of secular social ethics that is reminiscent of – and doubtless influenced by – the religious ethics and moral codes of the world’s great religions. I was pleased to find the theory of vulnerability and ethics proposed here validated by a recent lecture, “Ethics, Economics and Global Justice” (2009) in which Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury addressed contemporary ethics as they pertain to the current global financial crisis. “Ethics is

essentially about how we negotiate our own and other people's vulnerabilities... behavior we recognize as unethical is frequently something to do with the misuse of power..." In these observations, the archbishop calls to our attention the power-vulnerability relationship that reflects the relationship between political and civil rights and economic social and cultural rights, a relationship made evident in approaching human rights in the holistic framework essential to thinking our way to a politics of peace, modes of thinking I have referred to as transformative or transformational. The International Year for Human Rights Learning is an opportune moment to advance the development of transformative thinking as a significant process in education and political discourse.

**Proposition 4: The International Year of Human Rights Learning (IYHRL) may be a "teachable moment" to advance critical, transformational thinking.**

In declaring 2009 the International Year of Human Rights Learning (2008), the United Nations intended to extend and specify the goals of the International Decade of Human Rights Education (1994), with particular reference to schools (and, I would hope, to the preparation of teachers.) The question of why such efforts should be undertaken was addressed in discussions leading to the decade and the year. The tragic state of the human condition was the clear and urgent answer. However, the questions of, who should learn what about human rights, from whom and how should they learn it, were hardly raised. The discussion does not appear to have been the process of human rights learning that it might have been. Certainly, we do not expect nor do we want a detailed curricular recipe from the world body. However, a clear statement of learning goals and guidelines for procedures consistent with the social and political purposes of the year – and those of human rights learning - that would indicate that the international institution itself and the NGOs understand what is being called for. We would hope that those whose dedicated work brought about the declaration of IYHRL, actually understand the nature and implications of human rights learning.

I take the positive social and political purposes of the year to be progress toward the previously noted vision of a global social order comprised of institutions, relationships and behaviors consistent with the principles and standards of human rights. In my own

opinion - one shared by a number of colleagues in the fields of peace education and human rights learning - the goals and procedures for achieving these purposes should be consistent with the principles of human dignity and the values integral to the international standards of human rights. Putting it succinctly, adapting the saying, “There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.” We might say, “Human rights are the way to human rights.” Or as my colleague, Shula Koenig, founder of the People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning might say, “Living human rights is the way to justice, and living human rights requires learning human rights.”<sup>vi</sup> The two reciprocal processes living and learning are essential and constitutive one to the other. Both are dynamic processes unfolding through human interaction. At their best, each is characterized by respect for human dignity, held as a value evident in behaviors and relationships. While education is too often the ingestion of lifeless subject matter through narrowly prescribed procedures, true learning is an organic, vibrant process through which we develop our human identities and social capacities. It cannot be bestowed. It must be generated. Human rights learning is a generative process. Education may plant seeds, but it is learning that cultivates the fruit of human and social potential. Learning is as essential to becoming fully human as breathing is to being alive. It is as essential as clean water and adequate food to a healthy society

Although the reciprocal relationship between pedagogy and learning might be obvious to those of us of a Freirean bent, it certainly was not so to all involved in the drafting of the various documents setting policy on what has been most widely referred to as human rights education. The contentions that arose in the discussion of terminology, particularly among those NGOs who sought to influence the drafting and adoption of the Declaration of the IYHRL, revealed a new dimension of the institutional challenges faced by advocates of peace education and human rights learning. It has become apparent that a significant challenge for peace educators is the education of the very institutions we expect to implement the goals and achieve the purposes of education for human rights and peace. Here I speak of education, not as the transfer of basic information and the development of essential skills for productive work, but as systematically planned learning intended to equip learners with knowledge and skills relevant to the achievement

of generally accepted social purposes, among which the world community has declared is the realization of human rights.

The nature of human rights learning may not be understood, but the social purpose, the “why” of human rights education - achieving the social and political conditions for the widest possible realization of all the universal human rights - is generally accepted. It is also agreed by most that knowledge of human rights is essential to claiming human rights, the necessary condition for a politics of their realization. In this regard, advocates of human rights learning argue that the process by which that knowledge is acquired and internalized is integral and essential to the political efficacy of those who seek to claim their rights, and thus, to a general realization of rights within the society. Passively acquired information about human rights cannot produce political efficacy.

The challenge of the year is to educate a broad range of actors toward an understanding of human rights learning; to its essential role in the fulfillment of the general social purposes of human rights education; and to the imperative that the means of human rights education should be consistent with the ends of human rights education. Because peace educators focus on devising pedagogies appropriate to, consistent with and effective for the achievement of the learning goals we set, the questions of the how as much as the what and the why of the learning are crucial to us. There is more agreement among human rights educators about what than about how. And a distinct difference in the significance each approach places on the how separates human rights education from human rights learning. Human rights education places much of its emphasis on conveying knowledge of human rights. Human rights learning places emphasis on developing political efficacy for the realization of human rights.

Among the institutional actors in need of learning to understand the nature and purposes of human rights learning are governments, ministries of education and universities, especially those who prepare teachers and organizational leaders. We are well aware that governments and other powerful institutions have violated human rights and ignored the needs of the vulnerable. Still, most peace educators believe that the validation of our



intentions by ministries and governmental departments of education of education and intergovernmental international organizations will enhance opportunities to do our work in our respective institutions and education settings. And so they have.

Peace educators like human rights educators have sought to win that validation and to influence the formulation of some of the international and national policy statements that affirm our work. They have used these official statements to argue for the necessity of formally sanctioned peace and human rights education. Peace educators have worked to implement the goals articulated in international education policy documents. Indeed, the Global Campaign for Peace Education (1999), designed and carried forward by an international group of peace educators, claimed as the purpose of the campaign the practical implementation and fulfillment of an intergovernmental statement, UNESCO's Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1994). The Final Document of UNESCO's World Congress on Disarmament Education (1980) and the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) have also been enabling devices for our practice. We need to assure that human rights education documents can be used to validate and inspire human rights learning as it is advocated by peace educators.

As useful as these UN documents are to our ultimate transformative purposes, we do not find transformation as a purpose actually reflected in these statements. Not surprising in that they are products of institutions embedded in the present system, with the usual institutional impulse to self protection, often perceiving the critical aspects of peace education and human rights learning to be threatening. In fairness to those educators who have exerted great effort to increase the effectiveness of these documents, I must acknowledge that some of them like the UNESCO Integrated Framework and the Secretary General's Report on Education for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (2002) advocate participatory methods of instruction. However, they do not indicate that participation should serve as the basis of critical analysis. The limited recognition of the relationship of process to purpose alerts us to the nature of the institutional learning task. Our goal requires institutional as well as personal change of transformative dimensions.

Transformational, critical learning needs to be pursued on all levels from the individual to the global institutional. While I believe that it is possible to pursue this end at all levels, I also recognize that the institutional is the most difficult and the most crucial, for structural change must be mediated through the current political structures.

The most challenging of learners are those who manage the structures, whose identities and perceived wellbeing are invested in and seemingly inseparable from those structures. How can we facilitate learning among the realists who hold the power to control political processes and resources, be they in governments, universities, school systems, religious authorities, or any of the institutions who are the “status quo”?

**Proposition 5: We need to devise a pedagogy for hidebound institutions.**

Like most powerful institutions, governments, on their own seldom initiate change, especially when a given change may mean, as well, limitation of their power. Indeed, in cases of change sought by civil society action and popular movements, governments are often at odds with their most active and responsible citizens. One major example is the governmental harassment of Martin Luther King after he became an open opponent of the Vietnam War in 1968. Governments, all authorities, want to be supported not challenged. Official curricula, except in revolutionary societies where they are designed to win allegiance to the revolution - so that it may become a status quo - are written to socialize to the acceptance of the prevailing structures as the normal order, best left as it is. People may want peace as 10 million around the world attested in the February 2003, seeking to dissuade the Bush Administration from attacking Iraq, but political realism's inclination toward armed conflict, invoked through prevarication won out. Long before the massive demonstrations of the anti- nuclear and peace movements and the convening of the World Social Forum, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower put his finger on the problem when he said, “The people of the world want peace so much that one day governments will have to get out of their way and let them have it.” (1953). Governments getting out of the way will take a good deal of transformative learning. For realist power brokers to get out of the way, to believe in the possibilities of peace and to internalize a genuine commitment to the universal realization of human rights will take concerted and

focused attention of peace and human rights educators. Our task is to devise a pedagogy for entrenched institutions, new forms of the politics of persuasion, forms that are intentionally designed to be a politics of learning for instructing our governments about peace possibilities and the integral role of human rights in achieving those possibilities.

Governments themselves have to learn new ways to do politics, to trust citizens enough to engage them in critical dialogue rather than standing in their way. What Eisenhower suggests will require a critical, creative and courageous citizenry taking up the challenge of helping our governments to learn. Standard curricula are not intended to bring forth these qualities of critical - instructional citizenship. Peace education and human rights learning on the other hand are committed to nurturing these qualities as integral to their pedagogic processes, as they are integral to the social purpose of transformational change.

Peace educators - like so many others seeking peace - may have become cynical about the true intentions of governments. Still, they see legitimate governments and political institutions as the major agents through which the arrangements and structures to achieve and maintain a peaceful and just social order can be brought about without violence. The challenge is to engage governments in dialogue toward a politics of peace.<sup>vii</sup> The challenge can be addressed exactly within the arena of human rights learning. Human rights issues provide the basis for inquiring into how we can work constructively with governments whose policies regarding justice, peace and security we are too often compelled to oppose; and how even in our relations with public authorities whose policies we may oppose, we can live out our fundamental belief in and commitment to learning as the most powerful engine of social and political change.

The beginnings of these inquiries can be found in the discourse on the differences and distinctions between human rights education and human rights learning approaches. The failure of the wider human rights education movement to engage with the distinctions and the tendency to emphasize education rather than learning attests to this need to lead the institutions themselves into a process of learning.

How might peace educators move our institutions to pursue this essential – primarily dialogic - learning? Most importantly, how might institutions learn how to learn and how to view the processes through which they seek to pursue their policy goals as learning processes rather than power maneuvers; to measure their efforts in terms of what is learned that can contribute to the goal rather than in terms of power gains and losses; to see political learning not as learning how to win, but rather how to advance the wellbeing of the entire polity. Could those in power come to view power less as the capacity to control and decide for the society and more as the capacity to learn how to best serve the society, how to assure the universal realization of all human rights? I submit that such learning must be mediated through the active intervention of citizens within a process of peaceful but critical politics; oppositional politics when necessary, but instructional opposition rather than confrontational zero-sum opposition, an opposition wherein all in contention are learning toward the common goal of achieving a society of mutual benefit to all.

Peaceful political processes are learning processes. They are Freirean politics of deliberation – action - reflection – renewed deliberation; action and reflection toward the best possible results, all within a process imbued with respect for and guided by the principles and standards of human rights. Authentic social progress is the product of the learning experienced by institutions and societies, as well as by individuals, each being a facilitator of the learning of the others. Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned by the institutions that manage our nations and their relationships with each other is to trust and to truly serve their constituencies, to truly attend to them. Good governance as good teaching requires attentive listening to those being served. Attentive listening, a skill cultivated by peace education as the corner stone of critical pedagogy is fundamental to a politics of learning. A politics of learning would be a politics of dialogue, among citizens and between citizens and government. Educating through dialogue, for dialogue has long been a favored practice of the pedagogies of peace education and human rights learning. All citizenship education should include education for dialogue as preparation to mediate institutional learning. Such dialogue should exemplify civility in discourses of difference,

made imperative by a commitment to the human dignity of all. This quality of civility would most contribute to the transformative possibilities of political dialogue.

Civility, as a personal and social value, stems from actually experiencing the core value of human dignity, receiving and giving respect. What educators and politicians both need to understand is that it takes the experience of being the subject of rights, complemented by appreciation of the rights of others, to be able to exercise the skills and internalize the value of civility. Skills of civility comprise a behavioral repertoire infused with human rights norms, characterized by habitual use of dialogic and reflective approaches to all discourse, but most especially in addressing controversies that emerge from impulses toward change colliding with resistance. It is for such reasons that I advocate learning through creative/constructive contention as a complement to critical pedagogy.<sup>viii</sup>

**Proposition 6: Critical pedagogy is the methodology most consistent with the transformative goals of peace education and human rights learning.**

Throughout this paper, I have argued that the theories and practices we have learned from Paulo Freire are the conceptual and methodological heart of the most effective peace learning and peace politics. I so argue largely because I see his work as the primary model of a process in which learning is politics and politics can be learning. While this perception may be peculiar to my personal views on peace education, that Freire is the founder of contemporary critical pedagogy is widely acknowledged among all who practice critical pedagogy, whether in the field of peace education or not.

Peace educators who teach so as to cultivate the values of civility and reason and the capacity of reasoning see these values and this capacity as basic to education for reconstructive practice of global citizenship; to preparation for participation in global as well as national politics of change.<sup>ix</sup> Peace education's commitment to change toward reducing violence and vulnerability through dialogic critical analysis of political and social structures and relationships distinguish it from standard citizenship education. The political skills of authentic dialogue or civil discourses of difference are not usually cultivated beyond instruction on the general principles and stances of the leading political

parties and the skills of the dualistic discourse of debate, a format in which civility has become the casualty of contemporary pit-bull politics. Neither public discourse nor public education has provided a hospitable environment for reasoned and reasonable political discussion or critical learning, particularly as regards to reasoned reflection on alternatives to the prevailing order. (One good example among others is the controversy in the United States over health care reform.) I believe that it is in some degree reluctance to risk the consequences of open inquiry and the critical thinking it cultivates that leads some to insist that education and learning are synonymous, opting for education (i.e. transfer of information) as the safer terminology and practice. This reluctance exists among educators as well as politicians. We are not always so eager to open our own behaviors and values to the critical challenges that may lurk in open inquiry.

Peace educators who argue for the essential and integral relationship between pedagogy and purpose might summarize the distinction between ordinary civic education and peace education as similar to the distinctions between the generally held notions of the purposes of education in contrast to those of learning as espoused by human rights learning advocates. One very significant distinction is between formative vis-a-vis transformative approaches. The purpose of education is generally held to be formative, guiding formation inculcating information and skills so as to enable the learners to function in the system as it is. The purpose of learning, as peace education seeks to cultivate it, is transformative, drawing from within learners capacities to envision and affect change and helping them to develop the capacity to transform the existing system. The determining factor in most formal education is the intent of the educating agent. In learning it is the intent of the learner. The most influential factor in transformative learning is the conscious, reflective experience of the learner. The cultivation of learning strives toward the development of autonomy of thought, the *sine qua non* of preparation for constructive civic participation in an authentically democratic political system. Learning-centered peace education acknowledges learners as subjects of rights applicable in the learning setting as in all social arenas. Learning directed approaches are consistent with the value of personal autonomy that democratic systems purport to protect, the same value that led

to the articulation of First Generation civil and political rights in terms of the individual person.

Fully internalized learning (i.e. learning that is demonstrably integrated into the thinking and behaviors of the learners) is not - as I have asserted above -the inevitable product of education originated outside the learner. It derives from within the learner; a circumstance that requires methods and pedagogies very different from those that characterize information based instructional education to live in the world as it is. The true art of teaching lies in the capacity of the teacher to draw out the intent of the learner, to bring it to the consciousness of the individual learner and co-learners in the learning setting, as well as that of the teacher. Effective teaching comprises moments of convergence of intentions, the instructional intention of the teacher with the learning intention of the student. It integrates that convergence into other such convergences to produce common learning for all in the group; to which all contribute and from which all receive elements of their own individual learning. It honors the individual as in cultivates a communal environment. An authentic educator in “leading forth”- the Latin root of the verb to educate - learners helps individuals to form learning communities through dialogues and sharing of intentions and arranging them so as to form common learning purposes. Such a process is what I have taken to be the intention of Freire in his role as educating agent. Such is certainly the essence of what I have come to perceive as human rights learning, and wherein I see human rights learning as pedagogically consistent with peace education.

**Proposition 7: Inquiry is the teaching mode most consistent with the principles and purposes of critical learning.**

Peace educators seek to devise pedagogies that enable them to draw out learners’ intentions, then to discern the point of engagement at which the learner can undertake critical reflection on the subject matter as the basis on which to enter into dialogue with others for shared critique and communal inquiry into responses to the problems being addressed. For example, in human rights learning these responses might relate to how given violations can be overcome or avoided and how to pursue social change to prevent

such violations from recurring in the future; or they may analyze forms of violence and/or explore the structural causes of the vulnerability that underlies so many human rights violations. Both human rights learning and the pedagogies of peace education are diagnostic and prescriptive and frequently speculative processes – raising queries into issue of what, why, how and what if - that call for communal discourse preceded by individual reflection on the substance of the issue under study. While the substance – the issue or problem under study - can be introduced by reading and or lecture, acquisition of the relevant information is the medium for learning as I suggested in the sculpting metaphor. The central learning mechanism is a question, a question that engages the learner with the substance, that which is to be changed; describing, assessing, diagnosing and prescribing. The core question or query formulated from the general problematic which is explored through a series of related queries derived from the component sub-problems that comprise the problematic.

The inquiry comprises this series of queries and the questions that clarify them. In the construction of an inquiry as a learning process, I distinguish between questions and queries. Questions tend to be narrowly direct and call for answers – usually factual or clarifying. They bring a form of closure to a single aspect of the inquiry. Queries tend to be wider and not specific, calling for a range of possible responses. They open the inquiry to deeper reflection and critical analysis.

A learning process of reflection and dialogue is mediated through the formation and consideration of systematically constructed analytic and valuing queries. Critical thinking derives from confronting such queries and clarifying the questions they may raise. Queries are most effective when formed to produce a variety of responses that facilitate the consideration of multiple, often complex possibilities. A capacity for critical thinking encourages learners to form their own responses to the problems confronted, rather than expecting answers to be included in the curriculum or provided by the instructor. The capacity to devise queries that can produce multiple responses is one that peace educators seek to develop so as to perfect their skills of learning facilitation and extend their capacities for dealing with open critical inquiry.



We also seek to develop our own capacities for risk, perhaps preparing ourselves for the courageous creative politics of peace, but more professionally relevant, to undertake a similar process in our classrooms. When teaching from open ended queries, and deliberately cultivating multiple and varied responses, the teacher relinquishes sole control over the content and direction of discussion, a situation many educators find intimidating. Yet like many risky endeavors, it also can be exhilarating as the learning experience of the teacher is enriched and extended. Sometimes, especially when totally fresh and new possibilities are proposed by students, it can be down right thrilling. I refer to this pedagogical risk taking of fully open inquiry - as opposed to the assurance of a scripted curriculum - as “teaching without a net.” As high wire performers and their audiences find working without a net thrilling rather than just entertaining, so too, this form of teaching - requiring even more preparation than transfer type pedagogy - is very professionally and personally rewarding. It is also analogous to the joys of playing and listening to jazz. It is communal creativity without limits; but, like jazz, is not without form and discipline; in the case of teaching the discipline and form are the rigorous standards of evidence and reason, central to responsible critical inquiry.

Critical learning has the potential to capacitate learners to live so as to move the world toward what it might become, toward the holistic vision of a social order based on human dignity that inspired the articulation of human rights in the first place. Human rights as the articulation of the characteristics of a world no longer tortured by violence and vulnerability give form to the vision and serve to deepen the understanding of the injustices of present societies. Inquiring into the means to achieve the vision within a holistic framework of human rights enables the learners to hold in mind two or more possible sets of social conditions, what is and what could be. As the zoom lens perspective provides the broader frameworks of holism, open inquiry cultivates thinking in terms of multiple possibilities, a step away from the limits of prepackaged curricula delivered through instruction and also from the reductionism and dualism of political realism. Most importantly, it helps to inspire hope that these limits can be transcended.

Hope is the energy source for all transformative learning and politics. It comes as we see the possibilities for outward change that lay in the inner reflections openly shared in Freirean dialogue. The process of shared reflection contributes to internalizing human rights values, motivating learners to acquire the knowledge and to develop the mastery of the political skills and social strategies to actualize the values in their own lives and societies, as in the larger world. Human rights learning requires the facilitation of active, participatory, reflective and applied learning. It demands raising the hard questions with open minds, exploring them with civil tongues and confronting them with hopeful hearts. Such reflection and questioning is preparation for the practice of the politics of peace, and the source of adherence to human rights as both goals of and guidelines for peaceful politics.

Peace educators cannot claim to know just how to initiate and implement such a politics as a means to peace or the realization of human rights. Neither peace education pedagogy nor human rights learning, though based on sound, well researched substantive knowledge of various aspects of the problematic have any assured resolutions to offer to the multiple and complex issues involved. Nor do they have readily applicable responses to the questions of how to achieve the reduction and ultimate elimination of violence and vulnerability. We have some guiding principles (human rights), repertoires of problem solving skills, methods for reflective, well reasoned dialogue, and nonviolent conflict resolution strategies among other peacemaking possibilities. We tend to believe we can devise more and to assert that where the necessary political and pedagogic alternatives do not exist, they can be invented. We have profound faith in the human imagination and capacity to learn. But we do not purport to “have the answers.” We tend to see the task as one of perfecting the questions, by formulating cogent queries about the human condition, its origins and possible futures. Perhaps we turn from the transfer model because we see that we have little that can be transferred. We do, however, have means to elicit the critical reflection that is essential to perfecting the questions, devising the most fruitful queries.

**Concluding Summary Proposition: Holistic frameworks and critical reflection are consistent with and contribute to transformation toward the actualization of human dignity.**

This International Year for Human Rights Learning is timely in the attention it brings to some of the most urgent political challenges faced by peace educators. It sheds light on the forms of Freirean pedagogy in which our field has been most active in the past few years, calling attention to its ultimate purpose, contributing to bringing about a world in which all can be human.

There may be nothing more human than the impulse to learn, to understand the realities in which we live, to seek the capacity to shape those realities into what we perceive to be conditions conducive to living in dignity. It is just this impulse that I believe leads us to be educators, persons who wish to devote their human talents and energies to clarifying the means to develop the capacities to realize our own humanity and assure the same opportunities for others. It is into this quest that we seek to lead forth the learners entrusted to us.

The history of all that is good in education can be interpreted as the efforts of society to improve and make more effective the ways in which we lead forth to the benefit of the learners and the societies in which they experience their humanity. Throughout most of what we know of human experience these efforts have been made the more difficult by conditions of both unavoidable and imposed ignorance, an oppression resulting from the correlative obstacle of the denial of the humanity of many by the few. The genius and the great contribution of human rights is that it (i.e. human rights taken as a whole) vindicates our rejection of this notion of limits to humanity, to human potential and to the members of the human family who may claim and enjoy their full humanity.

We are becoming aware of ways in which we may - even in the face of these limits imposed and upheld by structures of power – lead forth our own and our students' capacities to shape new realities. Paramount among these ways are holism and critical learning: the holism that enables is to see both the full dimensions of the limits and

obstacles to our full humanity, as well as the range of multiple possibilities to overcome them; and the modes of critical learning that can cultivate our capacities to affect transformative change.

It is holism, critical learning and a commitment to transformative change that distinguish critical inquiry based human rights learning from information based human rights education, making human rights learning integral to peace education. The possibilities opened by these three attributes of human rights learning call us to risk undertaking the politically sensitive task of entering into authentic and transparent dialogue with power, so that we may learn together the ways to transformative change. Such a dialogue would be fully sensitive to words such as education and learning and how they affect our thinking and shape our actions and control our politics. Transformative politics would understand that education per se does not necessarily produce socially constructive learning, so that all means available must be used to engage ever wider populations in critical learning.

Above all, we as educators must reclaim and redefine the language of education, from that of an instrument for the communication of limited, selective, standard knowledge, to one for the creation of multiplicities of new knowledge, toward a potentially transformative understanding of the world. As peace educators we can approach this process through the Freirean mode of human rights learning. As Martin Luther King said in his statement denouncing the Vietnam War, we live in a time of “the urgency of now” (1967). There is much at stake and much to be gained by the way we work in what remains of this International Year of Human Rights Learning.

I thank you all for attending to my propositions. I give special thanks to the UNESCO Chair for Peace Education for this opportunity to engage with your community of committed peace educators who inspire hope that what has been advocated here is possible, because it is so evident in your work.

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## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Organic thinking is similar to what I have referred to elsewhere as ecological thinking, in B. Reardon and E. Nordland, eds. *Learning Peace: The Promise of Ecological and Cooperative Education* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994).

<sup>ii</sup> I have elaborated this analysis in two recent essays, "Toward Human Security: A Feminist Challenge to Patriarchal Militarism" in A. Hans and B. Reardon, eds, *Human Security: Challenging Patriarchal Violence*. (New Delhi: Routledge, forthcoming, 2010) and "Toward a Gender Theory of Violence: Exposing the Patriarchal Power Paradigm", a lecture to be published by University of Granada in 2010.

<sup>iii</sup> The Pastor of Riverside Church in New York City in a program commemorating Dr. King's speech denouncing the Vietnam War attributed this statement to MLK.

<sup>iv</sup> OWAMM organized in response to one especially egregious case of sexual violence, the kidnapping and rape of a 12 year school girl by three US military members stationed on Okinawa, is active in an international anti-base movement that also involves protest groups from Vieques and areas around foreign military bases all over the world.

<sup>v</sup> I have dealt in more depth with the concept of the problematic and its function in peace education in *Education for a Culture of Peace in a Gender Perspective* (UNESCO, Paris 2001) 128.

<sup>vi</sup> Further information about the Peoples Movement for Human Rights Education may be found on their website <[www.pdhre.org](http://www.pdhre.org)>

<sup>vii</sup> There is a major international movement emerging to encourage and prepare publics to use dialogue for addressing many issues of human and social relations. Among them is the Network for Peace through Dialogue <[www.networkforpeace.com](http://www.networkforpeace.com)>

<sup>viii</sup> This way of learning is elaborated upon in *Education for a Culture of Peace in a Gender Perspective* (UNESCO, Paris 2001) 168.

<sup>ix</sup> I should like to acknowledge as well John Dewey largely as interpreted by Lawrence Metcalf whose work on reflective teaching has had significant influence on my own concepts and practice of critical pedagogy