

## PART I: INTRODUCTION

### a) A BRIEF HISTORY OF PDHRE

#### THE BIRTH OF PDHRE AND THE PEOPLE'S REPORT

*"It all began in Israel in agonizing conversations with my dearest friend, the late Achi Yotam, an Adlerian psychologist. Achi, my husband and friend Jerry, and I often discussed the questions of **how and why the oppressed turn into oppressors**. One night, we talked until the morning light appeared over the far mountains. We shared our deep distress over recent developments in our community, including abuses of the human rights of Palestinians. With idealism, and perhaps some naiveté, we sought to find Archimedes' Fulcrum, the distinct leverage point which, when discovered, can effect genuine and lasting change. In human terms, we agreed, that point is dignity."*

*"If we take human dignity seriously, we must join forces to reject, remove and fully eliminate the gap of dignity between people in all societies across the globe, beginning with our own community. As a result of this clarifying analysis, I resolved to work with Palestinians for a two-state solution. At the time, while the Intifada pitched stones against bullets, I saw clearly that human rights education may be a way to learn to look at our lives from the perspective of compassion and social justice and with the humility needed to break through the vicious cycle of humiliation in which we all participate".*

*"Humiliation is the enemy of human dignity. Humiliation is a powerful experience, the impasse of being human. In defending our dignity, we refuse to be humiliated. We must recognize this in others. Unless we learn to live a life in which we do not degrade, disgrace, demean, or violate the dignity of the other on any level, personal or communal, the cycle of violence, oppression and abuse will go on and on ad infinitum."*

Shulamith Koenig<sup>1</sup>

With these words, PDHRE's founder threw down the gauntlet to human rights educators worldwide: human rights education requires engagement in the fullest sense.

To communicate this wider message of human rights education, PDHRE requested Upendra Baxi, in the very first year of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) to prepare a 'manifesto,' not in its un-redemptive usage of party politics, but rather as a statement of a radical path in human affairs to guide attempts at social transformation through human rights education. What we reproduce below is Steven Marks's distillation of the principles of the manifesto into ten points, in the light of comments received worldwide, slightly modified for an audience of the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

### *Ten Guiding Principles for Human Rights Education*

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has inspired both a new consciousness and a body of law defining and protecting the conditions of being fully human. This new consciousness includes awareness that all of our human rights are imperiled if a single human being is unable to express the highest potential of what it means to be human
2. The right of individuals, groups, associations, and nations to education in human rights is an individual and collective human right. Human rights education is a collective endeavor of individuals and agencies that is both participatory and exemplary of the virtues it seeks to apply to others.
3. Human rights now constitute the common heritage of humankind; accordingly, human rights education is a means of accessing that heritage through the universal commitment to the dignity and worth of each human person.
4. The evils of injustice, exploitation, patriarchy, impoverishment, tyranny, civil strife, genocide, abuses of power, and catastrophic state failures have plagued humankind from time immemorial and produced humiliation and despair. They also spur action for social and economic transformation, which human rights education helps to define and put into practice.
5. Human rights education reinforces the human rights to peace and to development, that is, the rights of human beings and nations to be free from aggression or other unlawful use of armed force and from mass impoverishment. These rights also include the right of human beings to benefit from the peaceful applications of science and technology and to have the capabilities of exercising choices and participating in decision-making that affect their lives.

In this sense, human rights education can define the framework of a peaceful world and provide a strategy for human development.

6. Genocidal practices and other massive human rights violations are a particular challenge for human rights education. Every human being should be empowered through human rights education to expose and undermine the very possibility of such practices before they emerge and to join with others in ending such practices and holding the perpetrators accountable for their deeds and those who could help accountable for their silence and inaction.

7. Women's rights are now recognized as human rights. Human rights education must empower struggle against all forms of patriarchy everywhere and accelerate the full accomplishment of a world based on respect for the dignity of all women. Such empowerment is not to be achieved by way of preemptive wars for regime change, but rather by acknowledging and supporting women's struggles everywhere against the particular forms of oppression of which they are victims.

8. Dignity of labor is fundamental to human interdependence, social cooperation, and just development. Human rights education promotes conditions which foster respect for the inherent dignity of human labor and the rights of workers and their organizations.

9. The mission and the mandate of human rights education extends to the creation and development of cultures of rights wherein the basic material and non-material needs of all human beings are met and all victims of historic discrimination, including indigenous peoples, excluded peoples, and ethnic minorities stand redressed.

10. Human rights education builds on solidarities and social networking among participants in the global movement for human rights education, which should benefit from the support of national governments and international institutions, especially the United Nations. The dedication of nation-states and of the United Nations system to human rights education is a first step and the modest efforts pursued during the first United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) must be redoubled to build stronger solidarities through the message of the dignity and equal worth of every human person.

## *The UN Decade For Human Rights Education*

Some of the new organization's board members had been involved with the UN Decade for Women and had experienced first hand the potential of the decade concept in creating focused concern and activity around an issue. So it was that, in 1990, PDHRE proclaimed its own People's Decade for Human Rights Education, (1991-2001) and soon thereafter proceeded to lobby for the adoption of the Decade by the United Nations.

In March 1992, learning about PDHRE's and its initiatives, Sonia Picado, then director of the Inter-American Human Rights Institute in Costa Rica and later the Ambassador of Costa Rica to the United States, convincingly suggested the creation of a UN-sponsored Decade for Human Rights Education to the Costa Rican Ambassador at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The UN Commission on Human Rights later adopted a detailed Resolution (1993/56) on the importance of human rights education and a recommendation was made to the UN General Assembly to declare this decade.

At the urgent request of the director and staff of the Geneva Center on Human Rights, PDHRE's draft for a Plan of Action for the Decade was sent to delegates at the fourth preparatory committee for the Vienna Conference. Following the Conference, PDHRE prepared a resolution for the UN Third Committee on the declaration of a Decade for Human Rights Education and called for meetings of governments to promote the resolution. On December 10, 1994, after PDHRE has lobbied with more than 60 countries, the General Assembly proclaimed 1995-2004 the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

## **INSCRIBING THE LAW IN DAILY LIVES**

### *Focusing on the Grassroots*

To the extent that the Decade was becoming a UN-sponsored process, it seemed essential that its center of gravity remain in grassroots organizations rather than in the intergovernmental human rights establishment. There is an increasing tendency to allow grassroots organizations as the beneficiaries of these programs, as they are a valuable and largely untapped resource for the design and execution of conceptualized HRE programs, evolving out of, and serving, the communities that have most to gain from such learning. But the real meaning and power of human rights are revealed in the context of human lives at the grassroots level. This is where economic and social rights are most visibly relevant. This is where food, housing, access to farmland, environmental integrity, health, employment, and education are unmistakably intertwined with the human rights to political and cultural participation, and with the protection of civil rights.

In the PDHRE imagination, human rights education intends to systematically break down insularities and counterproductive compartmentalization among NGOs and grassroots groups at all levels, though it found it useful initially to address this task at the various UN Summits in order to facilitate collaboration across a broad spectrum of issues. It is for this reason that PDHRE, supported by the government of Costa Rica, the Philippines, Namibia, Norway, and Slovenia, was instrumental in preparing a resolution for the Decade emphasizing the role of NGOs in human rights education and learning and drawing on the importance of their inclusion in the Vienna Declaration statement on HRE.

At the 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen, PDHRE ran four major workshops for more than 120 NGOs (not specifically human rights related) and young lawyers. There, it was informally but unanimously proclaimed that HRE is part and parcel of social and human development. This was the first example of what has become a central strategy in PDHRE's approach: holding human rights caucuses and lobbying NGOs and international agencies to convince them of the gains to be derived from adopting a clear human rights framework.

PDHRE provides a direct link to an expanding network of grassroots communities and groups whose work may be unknown to, or unrecognized by, most formal institutions, be they governments, international aid agencies or private foundations. Often, these grassroots groups identify their struggles with human rights, but lack the confidence and resources, financial and otherwise, to pursue HRE programs. It is essential to nurture these "startup" organizations of future human rights trainers by sharing with them educational materials and HRE expertise. In many cases, PDHRE has raised funds on behalf of particular groups' projects or assisted groups with their own fund raising. PDHRE works on leadership and staff development in the HRE field, sponsoring future trainers to attend international networking events and conferences, and then assists these individuals with program development in their own countries.

The end goal is that groups who have received HRE should become confident as human rights trainers and independent financially, so that they may continue to assist other groups in their region.

These groups have now become the developers of Human Rights Cities and the four Regional Learning Institutions for Human Rights Education where young community leaders join a new vocation: Human Rights education for social and economic transformation.

### *Focusing on Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights*

Even with the amount of public attention and media fanfare devoted to economic globalization and liberalization, economic, social and cultural human rights remain neglected, and education about *economic human rights* is rare. Economics is often considered a 'technical' subject, beyond the scope of HRE, which is considered to be political or moral education.

Arguably, there is also the legacy of earlier decades, when economic and social issues were the turf of labor unions and now weakened Socialist parties. In the absence of strong intervention by these actors, a kind of taboo has fallen on these issues.

For a long time, the international spotlight in matters of human rights was trained on abuses of civil and political rights. Global trends towards liberal democracy since the 1980's, (the fall of socialism in Europe, the return to electoral democracy in Africa and South America) further emphasized this tendency since it now appeared essential to train the citizens of formerly autocratic countries in the skills, habits, and modes of political participation which they had not previously cultivated. Also in line with these developments, HRE for children in formal school settings received attention in funding, with no clear distinction being made between ordinary civics and HRE.

Using the momentum of the UN Decade, PDHRE has been spearheading the movement to equalize the promotion, protection, and realization of the human rights contained within the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This involves the training and support of NGOs that hold training workshops for economic and social justice community groups as well as meetings and training with labor organizations, and participation in meetings at all levels on health, housing, food, nutrition, education, development, and child labor. It also offers training at meetings of the United Nations, including Rio+5, Committees on Sustainable Development, Social Development, Habitat II, UN Youth Meeting, DPI public meetings, WTO Ministerial meetings, and many other useful forums. (It is important to note that a very effective international effort is being undertaken by the Economic and Social Rights network to bring up to par action on ESC human rights.

## THE PDHRE IMAGE OF THE WORLD

What is needed, therefore, is to create the conditions, circumstances, and milieu for *ongoing*, large scale HRE that is also attentive to the details and lived contexts of individual local situations. *Practical* ways must be found to make everyone human rights literate. This means that HRE should be both holistic in terms of learning about central common values and visions reflected in the Universal Decade of Human Rights (UDHR) as reflecting the aspiration of humanity (human rights as belonging to all women, men, youth and children,) and a vehicle for all people to know about the existing body of human rights law - norms and standards - and their governments' commitments made and obligations undertaken. Only then may HRE become in their hands a powerful tool for action. Such education and learning about human rights as relevant to people's daily lives and concerns should:

- *enable people to identify how, in the detail of their daily lives, their human rights are affected by the actions of others and also how their own actions adversely affect the human rights of others.*
- *provide communities at the grassroots a stake in the spread and implementation of human rights legislation, by having them see, in detail, how human rights apply to their circumstances.*
- *provide grassroots organizations with tools to assist others through an ongoing dialogue and exchange of information.*
- *evoke critical thinking and systemic analysis with a gender perspective about political, civil, economic, social and cultural concerns within a human rights framework that leads to action*
- *produce, through that uninterrupted conversation, the blend of ethical thinking, public policies, group actions and individual behavior from which a human rights culture can grow.*

## b) DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPORT

### Context and History

By Upendra Baxi

The People's Report was initially conceived in the early nineties. In its multiple moments of origin, we developed several approaches to compiling a report on HRE. The first approach was to develop a multi-volume work entitled *The Legends of Human Rights*. Shulamith Koenig and I conceived this together during the Permanent People's Tribunal on Hazardous Industries and Human Rights (held at Yale Law School in 1992.) We thought that the retrieval of folklore, legends, and related cultural materials from all human societies would provide a treasure trove of human rights values, experiences, aspirations and sensibilities. We also felt that such an assemblage would facilitate endeavors at HRE by grounding contemporary human rights norms and standards in lived experience and memory. Our aspiration was outweighed by our capabilities to achieve this. Yet we continue to believe that this project is worthy of serious pursuit.

The second approach emerged at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993, when Koenig discussed with some of us (notably Richard Pierre Claude, Stephen P. Marks, Clarence Dias, and myself) the notion of a HRE handbook, which eventually appeared as a full volume (see Andreopoulos and Claude) in 1997. It matured further with a large number of pedagogic materials developed by the PDHRE, which, through its worldwide affiliates, thus placed itself on a continual learning curve.

**First:** *experts began to think of HRE as a way of taking human rights seriously. Their enterprise summoned them to tasks of HRE beyond classrooms, courtrooms, and academic symposia. They began to realize that speaking to people requires communicative competence not readily available in their repertoire.*

**Second:** *activist practitioners learned that they could not perform tasks of HRE without a fuller grasp of the intricacies of international law and diplomacy concerning human rights. HRE poses unusual challenges, even inviting the restructuring of the very idea of [education.] We learn that HRE entails partnership between many learned professions (beyond the merely legal) and activist entrepreneurs.*

While these efforts continue, it was the third approach that persisted. It defined itself in the image of doing a World Report on Human Rights Education. Initially, the idea was mooted by Ambassador Lichem, and discussed with him by Shulamith Koenig and myself.



This report was to be modeled on the Brutland Report, *Our Common Future*, which introduced the concept of sustainable development and made it a common currency of contemporary law, policy, and social movements. Our Report would be endorsed by eminent people and would be prepared in association with the international world of NGOs. Accompanied by the same amount of fanfare, institutionalization, and resources, our Report would make the term HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION a household phrase, establishing HRE itself as a human right.

As we began to discuss this project among the Board members of PDHRE and other friends, our objective shifted from doing a World Report to doing a People's Report. Since then, an endless chain of events has affected its conception, design, and detail, often in creatively unhappy ways. The vision for this Report occurs in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. While this was a moment to celebrate progress in the field of human rights, it also marked new terrains of human rights tragedies. These were epitomized by "ethnic cleansing", whether in Kosovo, Rwanda, Chechnya, Palestine or Afghanistan; by new patterns of United Nations- based legitimated military intervention; by novel formations of superpower hegemony in international relations; and by the wildfire spread of the ideologies and instruments of contemporary globalization. Each of these illustrates once again the fragility of global human rights cultures.

The Report is now being presented in a post-September 11 world, which poses all over again and perhaps in more enduring form, new challenges for HRE, already partially described by Katrina Tomasevski, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Education (2002.) September 11 and its aftermath also usher in new constructs of international law and order that further complicate the future of human rights (see, Chomsky, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2002; Baxi, 2002<sup>a</sup>).

We do not know what further human tragedies await us. Already, the first year- and-half of the Twenty First Century C.E. leads us to dread the anomie and violence to come. The tasks of human rights educators have never been more imperative or so intensely difficult as now. We can only hope that what gets said here may assist understanding and provide a horizon of hope.

## *Fear and Trembling*

We were (and still remain) tormented by doubts and uncertainties.

- ▶ *To whom might we speak?*
- ▶ *Of what might we speak?*
- ▶ *How might we say what we ought to be saying?*
- ▶ *In a world rapidly being transformed by processes of economic and cultural globalization, how were we to construct visions of human rights education?*
- ▶ *How might these speak to the new forces of production B digitalization and biotechnology?*
- ▶ *How might human rights education address its principal agencies - transnational corporations, international financial institutions, and the emerging global middle class?*
- ▶ *What messages might human rights education carry for the politics and ideology of identity and difference?*
- ▶ *How might human rights education relate to new social movements, or to education systems still conferring formal credentials as a means of evaluating and self-perpetuating their own product?*
- ▶ *What kinds of links might human rights education establish between non-formal, adult, and continuing education programs?*
- ▶ *How might human rights education be re-tooled and re-crafted to speak to situations of radical evil, which Hannah Arendt described as those ensembles of political performances which we may neither wholly forgive nor can fully punish?*

Such questions also challenged our wellness and constantly re-composed it. People involved in the ongoing work of the PDHRE (and their numbers kept growing) came from diverse backgrounds. These included high-profile academicians, ambassadors, and members of the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies. They were grassroots and Astroturf activists, and assorted public citizens from many cultures and countries. Our backgrounds brought baffling diversity and occasional bloodletting, to our concept of progress towards the formulation of this Report. All too often we agreed only to disagree! Our tasks continued to redefine themselves and our agenda became almost unmanageable.

What has *not* changed is the *vision of a just world in which all human beings know and own human rights*. Shulamith Koenig remained steadfast in that vision; and those of us who floundered from time to time were saved by her rock-like faith and ceaseless evangelism.

No one who has had the privilege to know her remains untransformed. She transmits a radical energy, an incandescent consciousness, and the resilient courage of conviction. She embodies and exemplifies the mission of human rights education. In every sense of the word, she is the real author of this Report. At the same time, it is dedicated to her, as our way of celebrating her luminous presence among us.

### **WHY A PEOPLE'S REPORT?**

The work in your hands is named a People's Report because, in the main, it narrates how people's human rights consciousness has altered their politically, socially, and culturally imposed fate. It represents a new genre of reportage, different from those written by experts in which a few eminent human beings remain entrusted with the task of deciphering the human situation and of envisioning our common future." Rather, it is a narrative of organic, experiential knowledge, generated by communities in resistance and suffering people in solidarity with one another. We believe that the erudite academicians who develop the theory and practice of human rights can learn much from ordinary people's wisdom, generated by communities in resistance and people suffering in solidarity.

We name this a People's Report because it is produced under no official, national, international, or United Nations auspices. Indeed, the lack of such auspices provides us critical space for fresh starts in thinking through the social meanings of human rights.

This is a People's Report because it resists the bureaucratization of human rights cultures and highlights the fact that peoples are, through their myriad struggles against power in state and civil society, the first authors of human rights norms and standards. Legislators at national, regional, and global levels appropriate their historic work. This appropriation creates consensus around binding obligations of governance and social transformation, which then reinforce people's struggles against human rights violations. At the same time, it is destructive because it alienates people from a radical awareness of their own acts of authorship.

We remain aware that a small group of human rights educators may not arrogate unto itself the name of peoples of the whole world.

That is not, and cannot be, a sin of pride for us. We speak of what we know. And what we know is this: *not a single human being in this world enjoys being deprived of human dignity and the resultant humiliation arising from human rights violations*. Everyone, we believe, cherishes the right to be, and to remain, human. This includes those who for a while enjoy the might of state, social, and economic power.

These perpetrators of human rights violations do not want to suffer loss of respect, dignity, and self-worth entailed in the experience of humiliation. We take this as a given about the human condition.

For us, "peoples" is not an *abstract*, bloodless, trans human category. It is a shorthand description of multitudes of individuals and groups who co-exist within societies, cultures, religions, and civilizations that give them a sense of identity, belonging, history, and future. By birth, domicile, or migration, people belong also to politically organized societies, the imagined communities of nation-states. As citizens, claims of loyalty and patriotism and the duties of civic pride often define their identity in relation to other peoples. But as John Rawls reminds us in his *The Law of Peoples*, a government as the political organization of its peoples is not, as it were, the author of all its own powers." Human rights norms and standards furnish a corpus of normative restraints on state power. The principal task of HRE is to devise methodologies that translate normal restraints into living law.

Peoples are formed by several histories. We name them when we speak of slavery, apartheid, colonialism, racism, impoverishment and patriarchy. Contemporary human rights norms and standards speak to these histories in naming specific human rights constituencies to which are owed specific human rights obligations. Male domination and rape cultures, for example, endanger the promise of human rights everywhere. All societies remain "undeveloped," and not even "developing" when it comes to combating gender-based discrimination, violence, and aggression. We assert that the future of human rights depends on the prowess of its theory and practice to unfold and usher in a post-patriarchal, global society, and we remain aware of the need to translate the Beijing truism that women hold half the sky" into languages that authorize their holding the whole of the Earth. In our endeavours to promote human rights education, we remain guided by the need to go beyond gender-based culture wars, the need to empower men and women to work together to accelerate the advent of post-patriarchal, just and humane politics worldwide.

We also realize that the ethical languages of yesteryear (whether these be of redistribution or of equity) are being steadily supplanted. Human rights languages and logics are *all we have* to empower stigmatised and marginalized minorities, whose range entails diversely situated peoples. To lump them into one descriptive category, we stress, constitutes in itself a human rights violation. This having been said, we describe these communities of the violated in the terms of extant regimes of human rights norms and standards.

Thus we name among them various vulnerable communities: indigenous and First Nations peoples, migrant labour, labouring children (including child soldiers), lesbian, gay, and transgender communities, religious minorities, immigrant communities, environmental and political exiles, peoples living under conditions of civil war and strife, and violated women in all contexts. This Report remains informed also by the unnameable, socially vulnerable peoples caught in the web of globalisation. For understandable reasons, it does not quite fully reflect all our human rights concerns.

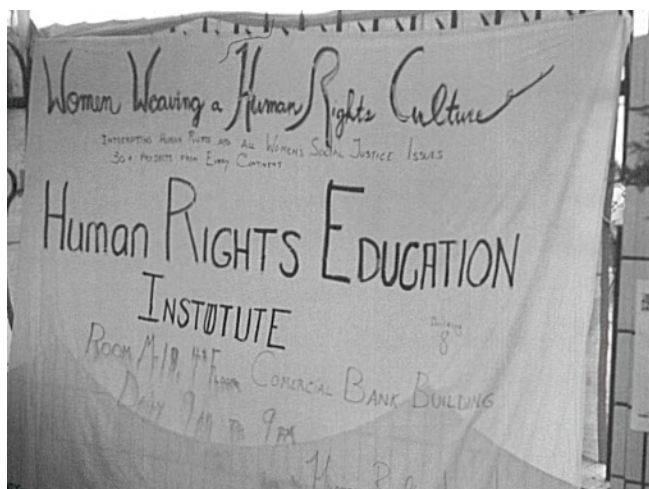
We believe that all peoples are citizens of the world. Some thinkers find this expression worrisome or vacuous. Vacuous because citizens are defined only in relation to governments and none exist at the global level; worrisome because they find the notion of a world government, even in its embryonic forms, undesirable. We acknowledge these anxieties. We also recognize that there are very few authentic *citizens of the world* who will sacrifice their national identity, civic pride, material well-being, or cultural comfort for the sake of providing a secure human rights future for the dispossessed, disadvantaged, and deprived billions of other human beings.

We refer to the ever-growing worldwide consciousness against human rights violations. Human rights languages are constantly helping to create transnational bonds of solidarity, even amidst an abundance of constraints. We do know from our experience at spreading our message that there exists a culture of empathy, a treasure trove for human rights education. Solidarity is nascent; human rights cultures remain fragile; citizenship in the world of human rights is always imperilled. HRE makes historic sense in this context only to the extent that it fosters ties of human solidarity and a global culture of empathy. In this sense, our Report signals our commitment to the belief that human rights languages constitute the only symbolic capital (to evoke Pierre Bourdieu's fecund phrase) that we now share. These are the only languages that still remain possessed of the incremental power to make power accountable, governance just, and state ethical.

We know that human rights norms and standards remain fashioned by contingencies of power. We acknowledge that the power of social activism remains equally contingent, in ways that deeply affect the imagery and future of human rights. Thus, if the world is today a better place because of Amnesty International's indefatigable efforts to promote civil and political rights, it is also a poorer place because there arose no counterpart to it (with the exception of the recent Ford Foundation supported ECSR- net) for the protection and promotion of social, economic, and cultural rights. We also know that the charisma of human rights languages has a finite future and that each generation needs but will not necessarily be blessed with a Mahatma Gandhi, a Nelson Mandela or a Martin Luther King Jr. We accept what Martha Nussbaum has termed "the fragility of goodness."

Thus, the tasks of human rights and justice are never done; they need to be always and everywhere pursued, as Julius Stone reminds us in *Social Dimensions of Law Justice*, "with the courage to realize the vision of Isaiah - that on the day of human redemption, Justice shall dwell even in the wilderness."

This Report marks merely the first step in a journey of a million miles. We hope that it will generate many more People's Reports that both build upon and transcend our first stepping stone.



### c) FOSTERING HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURES

By Upendra Baxi

*How may we develop the means and methods of human rights education to foster human rights-oriented social and political cultures? The very naming of the problem situates human rights education and activism across multiple minefields.*

Human rights education remains inseparable from and integral to the formation and sustenance of human rights cultures. By "culture" we mean here the values, beliefs, symbols and sentiments increasingly shared by all

human beings, which represent *ways of living and being in this world*. But, as Lila Abu Lughod reminds us in her precious work *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*, one must also learn to "*write against culture*." For narrative tasks, this means framing representations of the subaltern voices for the struggle for human rights within the constructs of culture developed and imposed by the dominant majority. It also entails the task of "*writing against the law*," that is, the subversive form of story-telling in opposition to narratives developed by a dominant power.

Shulamith Koenig has always reminded us of the Judaic notion of the Law, whose injunctions are transformed into a way of life. Of course, that Law can never be unethical or exploitative. Put another way, she insists that human rights consciousness can only be said to exist when it permeates everyday consciousness and behavior and that for us, in this Report, marks the understanding of human rights cultures.

Mature human rights cultures are rooted in a permanent ability to engage with violations of human rights and the consequent suffering. HRE is more than trading in symbols: it entails here-and now ways of network formation, institution-building, resource redirection and mobilization that significantly address the life-projects of the violated and create capacities to overturn obstacles to the exercise and enjoyment of human rights. *It is, in a true sense, a continual collective search for the plenitude of life, for meaning that confirms individual and collective dignity, and for the resources for human coexistence*. In this sense, HRE symbolizes a secular, or multi- religious equivalent of liberation theology.

HRE celebrates the enormous significance of the universality of human rights that insists that all human beings have a right to be acknowledged as such and to remain fully human. Nevertheless, HRE still needs to ponder the ways in which contemporary digitalization and biotechnology redefine what it may mean to be human.

It has to transform all human beings into *human rights beings*, that is, persons who do not just claim these rights for their individual existence but who also affirm, and practice, humanity as a vibrant *community of human rights*.

In our belief, the mission of human rights, and of HRE, goes beyond the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of human rights norms and standards by individuals and associations, crafted by the politics of intergovernmental desire. In any case, consumers of human rights norms and standards exclude, overall, people living under conditions of extreme impoverishment. To reverse this unfortunate circumstance, we subject the notion of human rights to constant improvisation. The *dramatis personae* come into being because there is a text or a score, but every actor in a drama, and every conductor of an orchestra or opera, uniquely lends agency and voice to its production. Human rights education, then, reinvents the very meaning of *being human and having human rights*.

