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# Educating for Human Rights and Global Citizenship

*An Introduction*

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## INTRODUCTION

IT IS NOW ABOUT 60 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly. With the destructive forces of the two world wars behind us, complemented by the demise (legally speaking) of the evils of slavery about 120 years earlier, and the new winds of decolonization sweeping many parts of the globe, all societies should presumably have been more informed about the need for a stable and just world, and it was, indeed, fitting to see the prospects of upholding the main tenets of basic human rights in 1948. And who could not have welcomed such powerful components of the declaration (thirty articles in total) as Article 1: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*; Article 2: *Everyone is entitled to all . . . rights . . . without distinction of any kind*; Article 3: *Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person*; or Article 4, which prohibits slavery.

These were, of course, the ideals of possible human practices, and they should still remain so, but our actions, in more zones of our world than we can count, tell a different story. Indeed, George Santanya's enduring maxim, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," reflects so much that human beings have been doing to each other since 1948. The above stated articles and all of the remaining twenty-six that comprise the

Universal Declaration have been violated, almost at will, in every continent and such terrible practices as lack of equality, racism, religious persecution, gender-based oppression, torture, and slavery still abound in our midst. As Kevin Bales has stated in his seminal work, *Disposable People* (2002), there are tens of millions of slaves in our so-called postindustrial, technologically advanced world.

Moreover, millions of people have been and are still being persecuted, tortured, and killed based on who they are, or which groups they were born into. The killing fields of Cambodia, the genocide in Rwanda, the blood-stained hillsides of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the tragedy in Darfur, Sudan, and yes, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa (and potentially forthcoming in India and China), among a myriad of other failures, are symptomatic of a global human rights agenda that has betrayed many of the world's citizens. Indeed, Stephen Lewis, the UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS for Africa, could have been speaking for all of us when he told students at McGill University in Montreal that "[In HIV/AIDS devastated countries in Africa], you hear the screams of women mourning their dead, and you feel that the world has gone mad; you wonder how we in the international community have allowed it to come to this." Concerning the Rwanda genocide specifically, Lewis, in his new book *Race against Time* (2005, p. 1) shares these haunting observations with us:

Between 1998 and 2000, I participated in a study of the Rwandan genocide commissioned by the organization of African Unity. Visits to commemorative sites reminiscent of Auschwitz, encounters with survivors, interviews with women who had been raped repeatedly during the genocide—it felt like a descent into depravity from which there was no escape. And yet, somehow, because it came to an end, because the little country of Rwanda is managing to piece itself together, step by painful step, there is a sense that at least the horrific events are rendered unto history. That is not to say that we should ever forget, only to say that it is over.

As should be derived from these horrific problems of diminished citizenship (and some that may be more benign in their effect on human life) that both the conceptual and practical implications and realities of citizenship should, indeed, be considered in as wide a context as possible. And when we problematize the case, we should see that for all pragmatic undertakings, the contours as well as the corners of denatured citizenship (fragmented, even destroyed—assuming that people are born as free and naturally enfranchised citizens) have so many forms and characteristics that all nonlegal deprivations and suffering could be categorized as lack of citizenship. The fact is that beyond the millions who have been killed, there are billions who are still alive but whose fundamental citizenship rights to education, health, and a viable standard of living have been taken away by those who control access

to either state or market resources. In spaces and relationships such as these, citizenship, instead of being created and achieved (see Callan, 1997) is actually being denied, and one can see, as Mamdani (1996) noted, the continuing “subjectification” of so many in presumably decolonized landscapes. Indeed, the overall picture is anything but encouraging. As has been abundantly reported in recent UN publications, close to half of the world’s population lives on less than two dollars a day, nearly a billion people cannot read and write, between eight and nine hundred million lack clean drinking water, and an estimated 350 million school-age children do not have access to education, while, in fact, less than 1 percent of the money spent on weapons could educate all the children in the world.

These sites of struggle are collectively an indication of the multicentric nature of the work that is being carried out to address the realities and effects of marginalization, and they lead us to understand the need for a universal approach to human rights. Where some people argue that human rights are particular, necessarily differing according to group and context, we take as a key position that, at many sites, efforts to universalize rights have been the outcome of oppression and the struggle for liberation. The power of the vision and the enactment of universal rights as legal, political, social, cultural, and economic entitlements enables marginalized individuals and groups in particular contexts to challenge claims to power by oppressors. Therefore, our position is that universal human rights creates a vision of a world of diversity where all humans have an equitable claim to the rewards and privileges of their social, economic, political, and cultural context.

Reporting on the depressing state of the world could continue into many more pages; suffice it to say here that as educators and researchers it is incumbent upon us to seek a permanent platform for the attainment by all of viable citizenship rights. These rights, while they may not immediately accord us the noble guarantees we need to avoid the likes of Cambodia in the early 1970s or Rwanda in the early 1990s, should at least help us reclaim some relief for the hundreds of millions of our contemporaries who are exposed to malaise and suffering. The potential for human rights as a common vision of human dignity to be the catalyst for change is significant. As one small component of that overall project, this book aims to minimally and initially diffuse the meaning as well as the possible practices of the rights of all citizens across the world. To achieve some measure of this, we should not underestimate the role of education in instilling in the minds of people core human rights values and the sanctity of a global citizenship ethic. Global citizenship aims to expand inclusion and power and provides the ethical and normative framework to make this a legitimate and far-reaching project whereby citizenship is a product of diversity rather than an institutional tool serving particular groups. This global ethic should affirm, for all of us, that citizenship is not just a mechanism to claim rights that are based on membership in a particular polity, but that

human rights are based on membership beyond any state or national boundaries, inherent to all individuals and groups in all places and times. Even in global spaces where fragile or nonexistent states (e.g., Afghanistan, Somalia, Zaire) cannot guarantee the rights of citizens, or in the case where refugees are on the move or located in an “in-between” geographical and political status, people must be still protected by the international community from the pervasiveness of structural violence.

It was with respect to these and related issues, especially in response to the theoretical and analytical exigencies of the case, that we brought together a number of prominent researchers and activist scholars to create a multicentric forum that should, in our understanding, highlight the urgent need to educate for human rights and global citizenship. The chapters contained in this book reflect the struggles and complexity of various projects linked to the universal struggle for human rights based on human dignity, and their themes, while not exhaustive, speak to some of the most important areas of human rights and global citizenship. In addition, the aim of the book is not to deal directly with ways of, for example, alleviating HIV/AIDS, or explicit ways to account for and address the cluster of human failures alluded to above. Rather, its main contribution is to focus on analyzing general issues of global citizenship and educational rights, and to suggest ways of educating people about these issues so that they may not only overcome the liabilities in the short term, but also and as importantly, inform themselves about the situation, and acquire a broader set of definitions of the problems so as to consciously create new spaces of social and educational possibility for enfranchising the disenfranchised.

The book contains sixteen chapters that locate the issues of our time within the human rights frame, and by connecting to global citizenship, indicate how the entitlements of these human rights might be accessed particularly by those who are most marginalized. Contributors address topics ranging from general discussions of human rights and global citizenship to how these and related practices affect knowledge formations, charter rights, cultural intersections and relationships, the role of indigenous knowledges, women’s rights and education, governance and politics, and new themes of antiracism education as human rights education. The contributors are mostly university-based researchers and teachers but also include several community leaders whose works are internationally recognized. The analyses encoded in this work should represent an important and timely introduction to the now discursively active but referentially deprived area of human rights and global citizenship education. As should be clear from the contents of the book, there is much that needs to be analyzed and understood in the context of this and related works in the future. Needless to add that beyond the clear expansiveness of the topics under consideration, the saliency of the role of schooling in educating for human rights and global citizenship should be of the utmost

importance if twenty-first-century humans are to achieve a more viable human rights and citizenship project than was the case in the last century. As John Dewey (1966 [1916]) told us many decades ago, education by itself should have that inherent element of assuring the pragmatic project of conviviality where all can achieve a democratic space. In that space, there should be the potential, as Paulo Freire (2000 [1970]) would have it, of the oppressor and the oppressed both freeing themselves from their de-conscientizing amnesia.

Indeed, as Shulamith Koenig, one of the contributors to this work and founder of Peoples Movement for Human Rights Education International in New York and winner of the UN Human Rights Prize in 2003, notes, any project that aims to achieve inclusive human rights has to be a collaborative one with groups and individuals seeing the protection of others as their own protection. That collaborative effort should also involve human beings learning together and from each other, which is one important point of emphasis in this work. This last point actually brings to mind the important philosophical and cultural praxis of *Ubuntu*, a Zulu term, which in the African space speaks of the sacred desire to see our own humanity through the humanity of others. Undoubtedly, such a disposition, if some of us could achieve it, would constitute a powerful prescription which, if inclusively operationalized, would do away with much that sustains human bondage and degradation.

#### CHAPTERS IN THE BOOK

The book brings together expressions from many sites where people's struggles for dignity are located and frames these in the context of human rights and global citizenship. After this short introduction, the second chapter of the book has two important qualities that make it unique in the context of this work. First, the chapter does not rely mainly on the generalizable scholarly research that other segments of the book employ. Here, Hilaria Supa Huaman, a Quechua (Peru) indigenous leader, and Shulamith Koenig, a New Yorker who is the founder of the People's Decade of Human Rights Education, relate their experiences, concerns, and aspirations for the achievement of global rights projects that impact and benefit all. As their own experiences inform their aspirations in this regard, representing a kind of yearning for more humane perspectives, we present this contribution both as a valuable experiential program and an instructional celebratory project. Indeed, even when human achievements are short of our expectations and needs, the individual and community desire to strive for better possibilities is itself worthy of celebration.

In the third chapter, Derek Evans engages, both descriptively and analytically, the historical transactions as well as the qualitative shifts that have characterized the emergence and operationalization of the human rights project. To

do so, Evans addresses the enactment of the key principles of universal human dignity and what he terms the “four generations of human rights practice,” prospectively and powerfully analyzing such issues as the establishment of the “original” human right principles and other developments that have been achieved since then. In chapter 4, Nigel Dower poses the very important question: Are we all global citizens, or are only some of us global citizens? Dower pursues these points by focusing on the educational implications of the issue and how select learning programs, primarily in the form of citizenship education, should address the questions. Central to Dower’s analysis is the desire to deploy global citizenship possibilities that aim for the achievement of a global ethic, which could transform the way people, across national boundaries and continents, relate to and care for each other.

In chapter 5, George Richardson, in speaking about global citizenship in the presence of persistent national realities, starts his analysis with an anecdote that relates to his own teaching in Ukraine and locates that simple story within the contours of a national space that refuses to cede too much currency to the outside world. Following this introduction on nationalisms and citizenship, Richardson poses select questions on the issue and addresses them in the remainder of the chapter. In the sixth chapter, Ali A. Abdi undertakes a select historical investigation of the origins of subjecting non-European populations, and how this has established a global project wherein the majority of the world’s populations were deliberately “de-citizenized” via the combined programs of conquest, slavery, and colonization. Abdi points out that despite the termination of some or all of these practices, the damage that has been done to people’s citizenship has become of *longue durée*. To deal with the handicap this has imposed in these times of rapidly globalizing spaces, Abdi proposes new educational arrangements and possibilities that aim for the mental and material decolonization of subject populations.

In chapter 7, Ratna Ghosh presents a short history of women’s rights in the context of globalization and presents the challenges that women face in their efforts for equity. She points out that while there has been significant acknowledgment of women’s exclusion from political, economic, and social power in international conventions, progress has been slower than hoped as select regimes of oppression have prevented the long-awaited recognition of women’s rights. Ghosh emphasizes the potential of human rights education, complemented by fully entrenched legal statutes that directly protect the rights of women, as a key mechanism for addressing the continued violence, poverty, and exclusion that limit the life possibilities of women across the globe. In the eighth chapter, Carl James problematizes notions of racism as these are presented in public discourses in Canada. James points out that while general discussions on racism may focus more on select historical or currently observable practices, racism that is inherent in institutional settings, or institutional racism, is one form of racism that poses the greatest

challenge to effectively dealing with the issue. In addition, James emphasizes the role education can play in lessening the destructive platforms of racism, and in achieving more inclusive and equitable sociocultural and institutional spaces for all Canadians.

In chapter 9, Dip Kapoor focuses on problems of development and related institutional oppression that negatively affect the lives of Adivasi (original dweller) movements and counterhegemonic struggles in India. Kapoor discusses the role education might play in establishing a viable project in which Adivasis could have a stake, not only in their own educational and social development, but as well in the formation and operationalization of a public discourse that, at the end of the day, might serve as transformational processes to improve the lives of this group of indigenous people. When that is achieved, Kapoor indicates, tribal peoples will be able to appropriate viable praxes of rights and citizenship that will offset the hegemonic forces that impinge upon their lives. In the tenth chapter, Lynette Shultz, in addressing the pressing issue of contemporary slavery, introduces us to the highly problematic and multidimensionally painful world of child slaves, who are subjected, in almost all continents and countries of the world, to levels of exploitation and oppression that cannot be acceptable under any circumstances. In addition, Shultz points out that as both local communities and international institutions have apparently failed these children and with the practice of child slavery increasing in recent years, the freedom as well as the rightful protection of children should become a new global priority for all. Shultz presents a project of education for liberation that serves as an inclusive type of human rights education that aims to dismantle, once and for all, the networks of child slavery in all parts of the world.

In chapter 11, Shibus Guo discusses minority rights and inclusive citizenship in the context of immigrants. He focuses, as a case study, on one voluntary organization in Vancouver, Canada. Guo highlights the role such organizations can play in multicultural and multiethnic democracies such as Canada, and how their contributions are commonly misunderstood. Indeed, based on their familiarity with the history, culture, and language of immigrants, this and similar organizations can enhance not only the quality of services provided to new immigrants, but also the all too crucial understanding and coexistence that is needed among groups. In chapter 12, Makere Stewart-Harawira critically examines how prevalent political systems and institutions construct notions of citizenship that, by and large, fit globalist imperial endeavors that continue to marginalize the rights as well as the needs of indigenous peoples worldwide. Drawing on historical and social notions of citizenship, Stewart-Harawira calls for the immediate recasting of how we understand and practice citizenship, which should help us reshape current anomalies in human rights and relationships.

In chapter 13, Jerrold Kachur continues the theme of citizenship as a project of empire and looks at what he terms “human rights imperialism.” Here, Kachur describes how the meaning and, by extension, the possible practice of human rights have been diluted, even corrupted, so that in recent years Western powers have invaded a number of countries under the false pretext of protecting human rights. Kachur problematizes the proliferation of such interventions and proposes what he calls “critical realist humanism” to address current violations of human rights in our world. In the fourteenth chapter, Cora Weber-Pillwax focuses on citizenship and its exclusions in the history as well as the current context of Métis peoples in Canada. Using mainly the story of a family living in Alberta, complemented by her own experience and socio-legalistic understanding of the issues, Weber-Pillwax weaves together personal narrative, theoretical perspectives, and close-range analysis of the lives of people to delineate the problems, and calls for the “righting” of historical wrongs that have continuously been committed against the Métis.

In chapter 15, Toni Samek discusses the importance of creating and defending public spaces as human rights arenas and invites us to view libraries as one of the few remaining open public spaces where the critical work of democracy can be carried out. She links attempts to control and destroy ideas with similar attempts to control and destroy groups of people and their cultures. She challenges learners of all backgrounds and levels, educators and educational managers and other stakeholders in institutions, to reconceptualize their understanding of the important role librarians play in learning spaces and outcomes, and in the wider society. She adds that this process should not be necessarily a one-way street. Samek notes that, through libraries and their attached information study programs, communities can benefit from learning projects such as democratic education, the politics of the textbook and the curriculum, and much-needed platforms of human rights education. In all, Samek proposes to achieve librarianships for human rights, the project has to be a collective one undertaken collaboratively by educators and librarians. In the final and sixteenth chapter, Graham Pike discusses how the idea of global citizenship education has been around for at least a century, and how different areas of education and educational institutions have all contributed to its formation and characteristics. Pike then questions why there is so little global citizenship education on the ground. To achieve more, there may have to be a new kind of schooling and indeed education, which assumes a wider view of life, a type of schooling that cannot be born out of the institutional and policy rigidity that now characterizes most institutions of primary or higher learning.

In sum, therefore, to achieve more inclusive, socially responsible, and pedagogically transformative spaces of schooling (to use Deweyan and Freirean perspectives), the global ethic project that Nigel Dower calls for, in

his chapter, should permeate the lives of all people. After all, schools are reflections of the communities that create them in the first place, and it is these communities that continually set the agenda of learning and, when deemed useful, change the policies and relationships that pertain to learning and the attendant possibility for social development. Schools are places where people learn inclusiveness, civil courage, and how to live in communities encompassing diverse relationships. While the aim of this book is not to itemize the articles constituted in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and prescribe institutional or socio-legalistic remedies, its authors desire more than what has been harvested for humanity thus far. It is in the spirit of that noble desire, therefore, and via the collective findings, analyses, and propositions of its contributors, that the reader is invited to pursue a more inclusive and intelligent understanding of human rights issues, complemented by new ways to deploy educational programs to alleviate the currently unpleasant but expansive pressures that affect the lives of so many people who still await that elusive promise of humanely located, livelihood possibilities.

Finally, we hope that the book will be useful for students, teachers, and researchers in all areas of education and international development. It might also have some pragmatic value for those in the social sciences, to legal and public policy researchers and practitioners, as well as to specialized interest groups and the general public. At minimum, we expect this book to energize the debate on human rights and global citizenship. More ambitiously, we hope it contributes to the shaping of a more humane global agenda in the coming years and decades.

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