An Advanced Generalist/Public Health Model and Whole-Population Approaches to Human Rights and Social Justice

Good words do not last long unless they amount to something.

—Chief Joseph

A Helping and Health Profession Model of Intervention

St. Augustine wrote *Ama et fac quod vis*, or “Love and do what you will” (cited in Partington, 1992, p. 37). Joseph Wresinski, founder of the International Fourth World Movement, an organization dedicated to eradicating extreme poverty and responsible for the UN declaration of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty (Vos van Steenwijk, 1996), himself had grown up in dire circumstance and experienced firsthand the indignity of taking handouts, standing in line as a child waiting for free Suchard chocolates. Yet he emerged from these circumstances with the madness of love. In 1987 he placed a stone in front of the Palais de Chaillot, where the General Assembly had endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which read: “Wherever men and
women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty” (International Fourth World Movement, 2007). This commemoration further solidified a burgeoning global understanding of poverty as a violation of human rights. If everyone loved and behaved decently toward one another, simply followed the Golden Rule to “do unto others,” books such as this and a sizeable portion of the helping and health professions would probably be unnecessary. And certainly, this love must, as Martin Luther King Jr. stated, not be “sentimental and anemic” (Washington, 1986, p. 247). Love, said Dr. King, must have “power [that] at its best is love implementing the demands of justice and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love” (p. 247). Such notions may not be much different from Pope Benedict XVI’s Encyclical Deus Caritas Est, which asserted the inseparability of love and truth and urged believers and nonbelievers to come together to fight poverty and injustice (Albacete, 2006). Pope Francis, in his Laudato Si (2015), called for a “profound interior conversion. . . . An ecological conversation” (Article 27) and noted that “reusing something can become an act of love, which expresses our own dignity” (Article 211) and that the media and digital world “can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously (Article 47). All professions, religions, and concerned citizens—every person, everywhere—can fight against injustice for every person, everywhere.

However, as psychiatrist and concentration camp survivor Bruno Bettelheim asserts in the title of his well-known book on childhood schizophrenia, Love Is Not Enough, to love, sometimes madly; to be decent; and to treat others as we would like to be treated are necessary, but listening to the collective wisdom of those who have learned from the scars of experience may also be required (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1969). King, who saw love as the “supreme unifying principle of life” (Washington, 1986, p. 334), was also aware of what he called the “human rights revolution” (p. 280). This book argues that collective wisdom is found in human rights instruments that followed the carnage of World War II and continue to be developed today in response to ongoing injustices like the ever-widening gap between rich and poor countries. An intuitive understanding of social justice could be further solidified by human rights principles that provide adequate definitions and goals to act as frameworks or guiding principles to develop effective strategies in action and service to others.

Broadly defined to include being an example for others, by words and actions, as parents, family members, and professionals; what the media teaches; and learning in schools, colleges, and universities, education plays an important role in this struggle for human dignity and social justice.
But education fails, on many occasions, “to lead” and “to nourish,” as its etymological origins dictate. Before discussing educational and other related strategies in creating a socially just world, it is important to discuss various levels of intervention, consistent with the notion of a systems-oriented approach, a substantive concept in the helping and health professions, particularly advanced generalist social work and public health.

Levels of Intervention

Before discussing the meaning of a whole-population approach to intervening in a social problem, it is necessary to describe three levels of intervention that are generally accepted in the helping and health professions: the macro, mezzo, and micro. Levels may be a misnomer because distinctions among them are often blurred. Furthermore, the concept of levels is hierarchical, largely a Western, if not masculine, way of dividing the world into neat categories, much like floors and cubicles in an office building. Other indigenous or Eastern ways of knowing may be less hierarchical, more concentric, free-flowing, horizontal, and expansive. Language is always limited, constantly evolving. For the time being, the world may be stuck with concepts like levels that obscure the interconnectedness of things. But acknowledgment of this conceptual bias may invite exploration of other venues to tackling such complex issues.

Macro Level

Briefly, the macro level, sometimes called a primary intervention strategy, may be referred to as a whole-population approach. It is a strategy of helping that aims to impact the quality of life of groups as largely as possible. These groups do not have to be pathological or near the pathology that would label them physically or mentally ill, or prone to illness, as in mezzo- or micro-level interventions. Rather, a macro social action strategy aims to prevent people from falling through the cracks and to improve everyone’s quality of life and standard of living, not just monetarily, which would entail economic justice, but also in ways that promote social justice quite literally as friends united, respectful of each other’s developmental capacities and right to participate equitably in community building. Universal implementation of a national graduated taxation policy that taxed the rich proportionately more than the poor and/or fines levied based on ability to pay (for example, speeding tickets issued in parts of Scandinavia) would lessen the gaps between the haves and have-nots. Another example is instituting a national school curriculum that would teach responsible choice regarding
the use of alcohol and drugs, to prevent substance abuse or reduce the harm caused if substances are used. In the first scenario, graduated taxation should help eliminate violence, as tensions between haves and have-nots are reduced; the second might lessen substance abuse, with its attendant complications like an underground culture of unemployment, theft, and trafficking, which are inimical to a young person’s growth and development. The Universal Declaration, with its concern for the right to work at a reasonable wage (Article 23) and a just social order (Article 28), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), with its concern for the protection of children “from illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances” (Article 33), can provide human rights guidance with these interventions.

Mezzo Level

The mezzo level, or secondary intervention, deals primarily with interventions in groups at risk. Given the relationship between domestic violence and lack of collective bargaining in the workplace (Gil, 1992), a stratagem might be to set up an ombudsperson’s office or form a bargaining unit, in which workplace issues could be aired confidentially and possibly resolved before tension in the employment setting gets out of hand and perhaps displaced onto a spouse or child. More selective than the previous approach, it might also target children growing up in abusive households who might be at risk for depression, substance abuse, or juvenile delinquency. The helping and health professional could develop support groups in the school and/or have children learn ways to cope with an alcoholic parent or dysfunctional living situation. The children could learn to prioritize safety, speak with someone they can trust like a godmother or grandfather, and seek peer or professional help. Interventions allowing children to talk about their issues ought to prevent acting out. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration—“Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests”—provides fodder for the first intervention; for the second, Article 39 of the CRC speaks of the obligations of governments “to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse.”

Micro Level

The micro level would basically entail a more or less clinical intervention, generally on an individual, or possibly even group, level. This intervention might entail direct counseling with a substance abuser, depressed child, juvenile delinquent, or domestic violence perpetrator. If working with
people addicted to alcohol, a group might provide support and feedback from other members about possible pretexts for drinking and point out the infamous pity pot. It can be quite revelatory to hear group members say, “I drink because I’m happy; I drink because I’m sad.” Others might focus on such excuses for an obviously maladaptive lifestyle by responding, “So are you saying, poor me, poor me, pour me another one?”

As yet there are no major human rights documents on substance abuse. However, in working with a depressed or acting-out child, a guiding principle for intervention might be Principle 10 of the Principles for the Protection of Persons With Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care, that “medication . . . shall never be administered as a punishment or for the convenience of others.” This would ensure the child’s best interests are central to any intervention, a substantive principle of the CRC. Overmedicating for the convenience of staff would be strictly verboten. Other principles relevant to interventions for juveniles are Articles 31 and 35 of the Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, one of a series of documents on Human Rights in the Administration of Justice: “Juveniles deprived of their liberty have the right to facilities and services that meet all the requirements of health and human dignity” (Article 31), and “The possession of personal effects is a basic element of the right to privacy and essential to the psychological well-being of the juveniles” (Article 35).

Micro interventions do not have to be clinical in a pure sense. Generally, this level deals with symptoms after all else fails, often referred to as direct practice. Opening up a homeless shelter and setting up a job referral and counseling service or peer support groups for men and women would be a micro intervention. Forming a trade union to aid workers at risk of losing their jobs would be a mezzo strategy. Lobbying for a right to adequate shelter and meaningful and gainful employment in the federal constitution would be a macro social action.

These levels can be illustrated with the story of rescuers working to save people on the verge of death as they float downriver, perhaps from a burning or sinking ship at the river’s mouth. After numerous attempts to save the survivors (the micro), someone gets the idea to go upstream to find the source of the problem—a strong current or, farther upstream, that wrecked ship. They could put out the fire or teach the people to swim in the strong currents (the mezzo and macro).

Meta-Macro Level

Beyond these three commonly understood levels, there are other “meta” levels that this book refers to and are still in the process of conceptual
elaboration. First is the meta-macro. Here interventions go beyond the nation-state, sometimes really beyond it. Again using the sinking ship and rescuers example, we look beyond the river itself to its origin. Imagine that much of its water had evaporated as a result of the greenhouse effect. Sandbars would be a much greater hazard to vessels in its shallow waters. An effective intervention would necessitate going beyond the ordinary confines of the ship or river in the first place, or, metaphorically, beyond the nation-state.

For the most part, macro interventions take place on the national level. But considering our growing global interdependence, some have argued the nation-state is a fiction (Davis, 1984), and global interventions may be more fitting. It costs roughly $1.3 trillion in military armaments annually to keep national borders intact. Interventions that aim to dissolve lines between countries might be necessary to move us toward a general consensus of world citizenship, or as Nobel Prize winner Joseph Rotblat (1997) put it, “allegiance to humanity.” Loyalty to Mother Earth, broadly defined, should result in spending money on bread, not arms; as former president Dwight Eisenhower eloquently expressed it, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who are hungry and not fed, those who are cold and not clothed” (cited in Peace Pilgrim, 1991, p. 114).

One could say that state boundaries have already dissolved, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and World Trade Organization (WTO) have largely taken over as prime movers in global policymaking (Danaher, 2004), forcing poor states to adopt structural adjustment policies, like the privatization of health care and education, in exchange for projects such as roads or ports of questionable utility masquerading as aid. Such projects may indeed serve the interests of rich countries quickly moving oil and cheap products through cheap labor. A global culture based on allegiance to humanity and world citizenship should, on the other hand, legally mandate the fulfillment of human need vis-à-vis internationally accepted human rights norms, which are antithetical to treating human need as a commodity traded in the marketplace. As numerous protests at the meetings of these powerful groups—in Seattle (1999) and Cancun (2005), for example—evidence, the vast array of groups that have arisen in the twilight of the last millennium and dawn of the new one, such as the IMF, WB, and WTO, are not likely to be sensitive to civil society. It is true that more recently, such protests against those three groups specifically have lessened, in part because of the global recession, if not depression, in 2008. Many activists are just trying to make ends meet and focusing their energies more locally, such as the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011.
and other local movements that emerged worldwide (Dwyer, 2013). It is noteworthy, however, that the World Economic Forum of which those three groups are major players meets every winter in Davos, Switzerland, a relatively isolated canton in the Alps where protest is forbidden and security is high, thus more than discouraging protests.

Going beyond the nation-state may also require use of a world currency. Although regional currencies in the African Union and the Caribbean, modeled on the Euro, are being discussed, an obvious meta-macro intervention, it may also be worthwhile to consider a basic unit of currency for the entire world, perhaps called the Mondo. Ever stand on a long line waiting to exchange a dollar for Swiss or French francs or a Euro? Not a very good use of time, is it? Some credit card companies are now adding a fee for any purchases made with foreign currency. Couldn’t time and money be better used doing a good deed, perhaps? One might say that the U.S. dollar is already a universal currency, but it is questionable whether this currency reflects social justice concerns rather than consumerism. The currency pays for slightly more than half the entire world’s military budget and has a long legacy of colonialism and imperialism evidenced by slavery and genocide against Indigenous Peoples. The challenge is to develop a currency backed by human rights, dignity, and social justice while keeping in mind a previous caveat about viewing human rights initiatives in overly narrow terms. A world currency will work only if there are mechanisms for equitable global distribution of economic and social wealth within the human family.

Should social activists wish to engage in such a global meta-macro intervention, anticipating a nonviolent yet slow disbanding of the nation-state, it is important to keep in mind that economics alone and a higher standard of living will not entirely solve global malaise due to international distributive injustice. Millennia of wisdom tell us that a person does not live by bread alone. It is an understatement that many children in the industrialized world live in loveless affluence. Yet world citizenship might also create a sense of the importance of sharing cultures, learning from each other’s ways of life and best practices models aimed at enhancing family well-being and unity. Individual well-being and family cohesion are not entirely dependent on economic stability. Strong evidence suggests that the history of ethnic interchange is not one of conflict but rather cooperation (Boulding, 2000). This idea of world citizenship promoted by thinkers from Marcus Aurelius to Cicero, St. Augustine, Dante, Erasmus, Thomas Paine, Jane Addams, H. G. Wells, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as many of the papal encyclicals, has stood the test of time. It will not go away (Heater, 1996).
To summarize, the meta-macro level acknowledges the global interconnectedness of things: The local is connected to the state, the state is connected to the country, the country is connected to the continent, the continent is connected to the world, and the world is connected to the universe. Recall that solidarity rights regard the oceans, mountains, space, and the heavens as the common heritage of humanity, to be used for peaceful purposes. The world, not one country, must be a master of the universe.

Meta-Micro Level

The *meta-micro* level speaks to the realm of the everyday life. Although it’s true problems can get out of hand, requiring clinical interventions with persons diagnosed with a physical or mental illness, everyday life itself may provide tremendous healing power. Still in the process of conceptual elaboration, this level acknowledges that not all problems require clinical professional interventions. This level, pertaining to what existential phenomenologists call the *Lebenswelt*, poses an important challenge to enhance our everyday interactions with family, friends, and even strangers, those thousands of miles away living in dire poverty who are also part of the human family. Conversations with one’s grandmother on the porch on a hot summer day, slowly rocking back and forth while listening to the faint creaking of the chairs, just watching the world go by, may have more therapeutic benefit than an entire army of social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, and doctors combined. So, too, can a smile to a homeless soul—a complete stranger seeking a human connection, however slight—have a tremendous impact. Helping and health professionals have a duty to transcend the professional to relate as humans to other humans.

When doing intakes, triage, or utilization review, it is important to ask for strengths in a person’s environment, which obviously touches on this level. There is an evident acknowledgment that family, friends, peer interventions, and even perhaps kind comments by strangers (especially to some children who may have never heard a kind word in their life) are themselves healing. This level is not that distant from Eleanor Roosevelt’s notion of human rights as beginning “in small places, close to home . . . the neighborhood he lives in” (U.S. Department of State Report on Country Human Rights Practices, 1993, p. xix). Yet the helping professions are replete with studies on the efficacy of clinical interventions rather than the healing properties of everyday encounters. Undeniably, this meta level has relevance for each of us. A smile, a concerned glance, or a “good morning” can have immeasurable curative impact on abused children. How people discriminate in their
everyday lives, failing to afford others the human dignity every human deserves, might be one of the most pernicious forms of human rights violations. Are some people kind only to good children? Do people hold doors open for African American women as much as for white women? Or should women hold doors open for men?

Helping and health professionals, although obviously supportive of this idea of nondiscrimination, ought not be blind to the curative impact of the everyday life even though it cannot easily be operationalized or measured. Professionals do not have a monopoly on helping and healing. Being able to measure something does not mean one has found truth. Truth may be elusive, but the journey is more fruitful with genuine questioning together, an actual sharing of each other’s perspectives in the world community. The challenge is to have a forum where such an exchange is possible. The paradox is that the answer is in the questioning together; as the clichéd yet profound expression says, we are all in this together.

The Struggle to Implement Levels of Intervention

The demarcation among levels is not entirely distinct. Research, sometimes referred to as a quaternary intervention, is necessary to provide informed knowledge for interventions at each of these levels, however blurred the boundary between them. In turn, these levels impact research questions and methodology. Each level also has its own difficulties, revealing once again that struggle is always involved in working for social justice. None of these levels of intervention offers a perfect solution, and there is no easy answer regarding which to choose. Everyone must meditate on and choose which level or levels to expend his or her energies on to work for social action and service to others.

To illustrate some implementations, on the micro level, activists might set up homeless shelters and soup kitchens to help the chronically homeless or counsel depressed children unable to concentrate in the school setting because of constant daydreaming about troubles in the home situation. On the mezzo level, one could identify persons at risk for homelessness or children for depression, an often neglected group, especially if their anger is turned inward. Yet one must also work on the macro level to change the national and global economic and social structures that result in exorbitant rents, unemployment, and parents needing to work at three jobs just to make ends meet, with the unintentional neglect of their children. Yes, some homeless persons will die in the streets while activists lobby for a right to adequate
shelter in the federal or state constitution (the macro). But success in making these rights constitutional would inevitably help many others on the verge of homelessness. Consequently, attending to the needs of the homeless, by setting up soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and employment referral services (the mezzo and micro) is important; however, as long as the global cultural and economic structures are still in place, the homeless will keep coming. Concerning depressed children, activists could find effective ways to counsel them and elicit peer assistance. In an appropriate forum, other children could share their stories of how they got over their depression (the micro). Yet introducing an amendment to the federal or a state constitution, calling for special protections for children (the macro), as asserted in the Universal Declaration, is also important.

Levels are also fraught with their own difficulties. Macro interventions may take too long. How many centuries did it take Europe to realize that a single currency, if done correctly, might help alleviate the conflicts that have scarred its history? At the mezzo level, professionals attempting willy-nilly to diagnose all children who may be suffering from depression might produce a self-fulfilling prophecy. The clinical face-to-face encounter may be an inefficient use of time and resources.

A basic point is that no matter what helping and health professionals do or at which level they choose to intervene, their actions can always be open to criticism. It may help here to remember Mother Teresa’s wisdom (more on this in Chapter 6) that when you do good, you may “get kicked in the teeth.” Ultimately, each step can be fraught with difficulty, and it’s always a tough call where to spend one’s time working for social justice. Perhaps the only choice is to listen to one’s conscience, or as Joseph Campbell, renowned authority on myth and legend, puts it, “Follow one’s bliss.”

In folk singer Pete Seeger’s well-known song, the refrain “To everything there is a season” popularizes the wisdom of that ancient adage. At various times in our lives, we experience a range of draws in different directions; human rights defenders, using human rights documents as guiding principles, must be fully aware of these conflicting pulls and tugs to make an informed decision about where they want to direct their time and energies. The answer to how to make the best contributions comes by getting in touch with one’s inner soul. Like the mythological character, Sisyphus, human rights defenders must be willing to take up this struggle. In his essay, Camus concludes that “Sisyphus was happy” in this endless struggle. If activists acknowledge that social justice is a struggle, they too can be happy in the broadest sense, experiencing the timeless joy of a good deed that nothing can take away. The Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius (1984) wrote beautifully about this joy in his *Meditations*:
Let every action aim solely at the common good. . . . For a life that is sound and secure . . . put your whole heart into doing what is just, and speaking what is true; and for the rest, know the joy of life by piling good deed on good deed until no rift or cranny appears between them. (pp. 183, 186)

Table 3.1 summarizes the levels of intervention, with examples and select concerns for each.

Based on the definitions, examples, and concerns listed in the preceding table, Table 3.2 presents some select interventions for specific issues in the helping and health professions: alcoholism, mental illness, AIDS, and obesity. But note the table moves from the meta-macro to the meta-micro, then to the research level, for each particular issue. The interventions are not exclusive but merely illustrative of the multiple ways of dealing with individual and social malaises that are interrelated. Without specific mention of human rights principles, one can easily see how interventions, such as creating an open forum to question an economic order that puts profit above human need, destigmatizing the mentally ill, creating awareness of and sharing scientific advancement, and ensuring global access to nutritious foods, are consistent with human rights documents.

Figure 3.1 is a diagrammatic representation illustrating how human rights principles ought to serve as the bedrock of social justice, with implications for intervention levels from the meta-macro to the meta-micro. Research, both quantitative and qualitative, would also provide and receive input from social action and service initiatives.

With these preliminary remarks on the relevance of human rights for social justice from the meta-macro to the meta-micro levels, it is now possible to propose interventions more specifically—a kind of human rights scaffolding to enhance helping strategies. Just talking about such a framework with friends and colleagues can also serve as a teaching tool about human rights instruments, as the helping and health professions have slowly begun to include human rights, and commitments to social justice, in their curricula. Historically this culture has evoked few international human rights principles in the helping and health professions, but these professions in contemporary times have demonstrated an interest in integrating such principles in their interventions. The helping and health professions may also influence the culture in multiple ways. Such offenses as slavery, genocide against Indigenous Peoples, and the Holocaust, for example, may have been committed with the collusion of those in an alleged helping capacity. But now, with an almost global consensus that human rights concern the world community, these professions have a duty, amply expressed in ethical and other professional codes of conduct, not to collude with policymakers and
Table 3.1: Levels of Intervention for the Helping and Health Professions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example(s)</th>
<th>Select Concerns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macro or primary intervention</td>
<td>An approach primarily dealing with whole populations to alleviate an individual and/or social problem</td>
<td>Working for rights to adequate shelter, education, and/or meaningful and gainful employment as amendments to state or federal constitution</td>
<td>Strategy may necessitate massive human rights education, coalition building, and tremendous amounts of time and money; people may be reluctant to deal with ambiguities and lack of immediate results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezzo or secondary intervention</td>
<td>An approach primarily dealing with at-risk populations to alleviate an individual and/or social problem</td>
<td>Employee protections and/or assessment of substance abuse, counselling the depressed person, substance abuser, or person with AIDS; setting up a home-based shelter</td>
<td>Service generally small number of people; homeless, for one, will continue to appear due to structural violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro or tertiary intervention</td>
<td>An approach primarily dealing with populations whose symptomology is full blown</td>
<td>Qualitative and/or quantitative approaches providing input into the perspectives of mothers and/or administering self-image measurements</td>
<td>Questions of size and kind of sample with numerous issues pertaining to a culture of informed consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research or quaternary intervention</td>
<td>Research or intervention transcending at-risk populations to alleviate an individual and/or social problem</td>
<td>Counseling the depressed person, substance user, or person with AIDS; setting up a home-based shelter</td>
<td>Questions of size and kind of sample with numerous issues pertaining to a culture of informed consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-macro</td>
<td>An approach truly global, perhaps transcending taken-for-granted assumptions about entities like the nation-state and a national currency</td>
<td>Nonviolently attempting to create an allegiance to humanity; working toward a world currency constructed from pillars of social justice; attempting to work with supranational organizations like the IMF and World Bank in accordance with human rights principles.</td>
<td>Questions of size and kind of sample with numerous issues pertaining to a culture of informed consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-micro</td>
<td>An approach that transcends professionalism, acknowledging the healing power of family, friends, and everyday life in general</td>
<td>Therapeutic impact of conversations, long walks with significant others; saying hello and smiling to a homeless person or someone in distress.</td>
<td>Questions of size and kind of sample with numerous issues pertaining to a culture of informed consent.</td>
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*Levels of intervention are often blurred, interacting not necessarily in linear but rather concentric ways. Each level, a viable strategy, can easily elicit its own set of expectations and criticisms, once again foregrounding the notion that social justice is a struggle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Alcoholism</th>
<th>Mental Illness</th>
<th>AIDS</th>
<th>Obesity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta-macro</td>
<td>Providing a global open forum on the viability of profitability in alcohol sales.</td>
<td>Global movements to destigmatize those considered mentally ill who, as humans, also have a right to human dignity.</td>
<td>Creating global awareness to share in scientific advancement by sharing medication regimens with poor countries</td>
<td>Ensuring easy access globally to foods that are nutritious, culturally appropriate, and reasonably priced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Teaching responsible choice curriculum to all students at the high school level.</td>
<td>Teaching children to find viable ways to change moods.</td>
<td>Lobbying for a right to nondiscrimination based on medical condition in a national constitution</td>
<td>Lobbying against advertising on children’s television urging the consumption of fatty foods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mezzo</td>
<td>Providing support groups for children experiencing neglect in dysfunctional families.</td>
<td>Creating awareness in schools that nondisruptive children may also need help</td>
<td>Providing education to high school girls, which could lead to adequate employment</td>
<td>Incentives for overweight children to exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Working through rationalizations for drinking in individual or group therapy.</td>
<td>Dealing with adequate coping strategies in group and/or individual settings.</td>
<td>Incorporating the patient in treatment planning to ensure better compliance with medication</td>
<td>Monitoring diets, finding alternative ways to deal with stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-micro</td>
<td>Helping an alcoholic found sleeping on the streets in an extremely cold climate.</td>
<td>Supporting siblings and having an understanding attitude to persons emotionally challenged</td>
<td>Letting a person with AIDS know someone is there to help in case of emergency</td>
<td>Compassion and kindness to an obese person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Determining effective outcomes of above interventions.</td>
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*Levels and interventions are not precise and intersect in multifaceted ways.
Figure 3.1 A multipronged approach to intervention for the health and helping professions based on principles of human rights and social justice. This diagram depicts the multifaceted interplay among human rights, social justice, and the five levels of intervention for the helping and health professions.
others deaf to the cries of the oppressed (Drinan, 1987) and to take constructive social action as responsible members of the human community.

Education Toward the Creation of a Human Rights Culture

Apart from the everyday education people share with their children, family, and others through their words, actions, and examples, formal schooling can play a major role in creating a human rights culture, socializing children to work for social justice. Once values are instilled at an early age, it is very difficult to change them. Various curricula slowly evolving since 1948 consist of exercises, role-plays, dissemination of information, and the like, intended to expand consciousness at all ages about ways to enhance human rights and dignity. The UN declared 1995–2005 the Decade for Human Rights Education but found such education so worthwhile it launched the World Program for Human Rights Education in 2006, now in its third phase.

Human rights curricula and its cousins, violence prevention and diversity training, are not silver bullets, especially if a culture accepts social injustice as a given (Gil, 1995, 2013). A social order that condones vast transfers of wealth through capital speculation (gambling perhaps?) could easily provoke resentment among those not fortunate enough to reap monetary gain in that way. One aim of human rights education is to be open to other venues that will move toward a societal acknowledgment of work—a good day’s work for a good day’s pay that will enhance human dignity—as opposed to wealth from capital accumulation alone. The former kind of society would offer reasonable wages, adequate benefits, and retirement packages for security in old age to ultimately cement a collective commitment to social justice, as defined by human rights criteria. One thing human rights education can teach is that human dignity from work is a communal obligation that is antithetical to an “I’ve got mine” mentality.

Select Examples and Resources

Following are some examples from an emergent human rights literature. There should be more. First, if we take world citizenship seriously, it would be necessary to translate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other documents into as many languages as possible. Figure 3.2 shows Eleanor Roosevelt with a Spanish version.

For educating others about human rights principles, one helpful book is ABC, Teaching Human Rights (United Nations, 1986). One exercise
called “Wishing Well” is appropriate for preschoolers: Arrange students in a circle. Suggest that it is the edge of a wishing well. Propose that each child in turn makes the following wishes (this can also be done in small groups or in pairs):

If I could be an animal, I’d be ______ because . . .

If I could be a bird, I’d be ______ because . . .

If I could be an insect, I’d be ______ because . . .

If I could be a flower, I’d be ______ because . . .

If I could be a tree, I’d be ______ because . . .

If I could be a musical instrument, I’d be ______ because . . .

Figure 3.2   Eleanor Roosevelt with a copy of a Spanish version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is important to translate that and other human rights documents into as many languages as possible to educate others about the true meaning of human rights, their interdependence, and their indivisibility.

If I could be a car, I’d be ______________ because . . .

If I could be a movie, I’d be ______________ because . . .

If I could be a food, I’d be ______________ because . . .

If I could be a TV show, I’d be ______________ because . . .

If I could be a foreign country, I’d be ________ because . . .

If I could be a cartoon character, I’d be ________ because . . .

Afterward, it is very easy to start a discussion about how everyone is different; yet, despite their differences, people all have the same desires, likes and dislikes, and so on. Obviously, this exercise is about unity in diversity, which is fundamental to any discussion of social justice.

This book published by UNESCO, long an advocate for human rights education, includes numerous other activities like (a) washing machine (children pass through a line of other children, who just say good things about them), (b) planning the world community (children speak about how they would plan the world, not knowing whether they would be born male, female, rich, poor, or a member of a particular race, ethnicity, culture, or religion), (c) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in plain English (with examples, teachers read the Universal Declaration in ways that children can understand and ask children what they think), and (d) imaginary friend (with eyes closed, children imagine going to a special place, anywhere in the world, opening the door, and seeing a special friend who is always there to talk to). Such exercises and the viewpoints they elicit are excellent teaching tools.

Another resource with examples of educational approaches is Reardon’s Educating for Human Dignity: Learning about Rights and Responsibilities, a K–12 Teaching Resource (1995). In the first grade children learn the importance of a social contract, in which limits are set for the common good. After the teacher reads certain class rules, children decide which rules they feel are most important. In the second grade, students reflect through visual imagery what needs children have when born. Both of these exercises can prepare children to understand the importance of human rights instruments as social compacts, historical-philosophical compromises, and legal mandates (what must be done) to fulfill human needs. Examples of exercises for Grades 3 to 6 are drawing a tree of life describing the roots as children’s human needs and the branches as principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and discussing the relationship between the Universal Declaration and the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. At the junior high level, emphasis is on the relationship between rights and
duties. Students read the Universal Declaration and discuss duties necessary to implement each article. At the senior level, students learn in depth about other human rights instruments, such as the Genocide Convention and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, reflecting on such issues as apartheid in South Africa, the Holocaust, and how the domestic situation compares with rights enunciated in human rights instruments.

Amnesty International, a major human rights organization, also has excellent materials, including visual aids, which are also listed in this book’s Annotated Media Resources. Worth noting is their quarterly periodical *Fourth R*. The website www.amnestyusa.org/education is an excellent portal for further information about Amnesty’s outstanding materials. Another resource is the UN’s *Teaching Human Rights: Practical Activities for Primary and Secondary Schools* (2004).

At the postsecondary level, resources that incorporate human rights into various disciplines have also slowly evolved. Of note are Libal, Megan Berthold, Thomas, and Healy’s *Advancing Human Rights in Social Work Education* (2014); Hokenstad, Healy, and Segal’s *Teaching Human Rights: Curriculum Resources for Human Rights Educators* (2013); Link and Healy’s *Teaching International Content: Curriculum Resources for Social Work Education* (2005); and Aspel’s *Teaching About Human Rights* (2005), which also have numerous resources for the creative human rights educator. Another good resource is Fisher and MacKay’s *Gender Justice: Women’s Rights Are Human Rights* (1996), published by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. This book examines, among other things, the Beijing Platform of Action drafted after the World Conference on Women and summarizes eight major U.S. commitments to its implementation: (a) establishing a White House Council on Women, (b) the Department of Justice launching a 6-year initiative to fight domestic violence, (c) the Department of Health and Human Services launching a comprehensive battle against threats to women’s health, (d) the Department of Labor launching a grassroots campaign to improve working conditions for women, (e) the Treasury Department promoting better access to credit for women, (f) the Agency for International Development increasing women’s political participation, (g) the Department of Education removing barriers to quality education for girls and women with low incomes, and (h) continuing to speak out without hesitation on behalf of human rights of all people. Reichert’s (2006) exercise book on understanding human rights compares social work ethics codes with human rights principles. A good training resource specifically for economic, social, and cultural rights is *The Circle of Rights* by the International Human Rights Internship Program (2000). For those interested in implementing human rights locally, an excellent training manual is *Human Rights*
An Advanced Generalist/Public Health Model

for All (Northeastern University, Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy, 2007). My website at http://humanrightsculture.org/Links.html also provides information on adequate human rights resources.


Sometimes it is good, if not exciting and inspirational, to read about the stories of human rights/social justice activists who have taken risks for what they believed. Examples that come to mind are Jimmy Carter’s *A Full Life* (2015), Mary Robinson’s *Everybody Matters* (2013), Malala Yousafzai’s *I am Malala* (2013), Huston Smith’s *And Live Rejoicing* (2012), and Robert Lifton’s *Witness to an Extreme Century* (2011).

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the General Assembly’s endorsement of the Universal Declaration, the Jacob Blaustein Institute (1998) came out with an excellent action kit with such ideas as national letter writing campaigns and community organizing to form local human rights groups. Amnesty International also launched a Global Campaign for Human Dignity in 2008, which dealt substantively with economic, social, and cultural rights, a more recent concern of this pioneering human rights organization. See Amnesty International (2015) for further ways to get involved.

Human rights reports discussed earlier, and the Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, are also excellent educational tools on both secondary and postsecondary levels. These reports were written primarily with the cooperation of governments, NGOs, academics, and researchers. Whereas no report is perfect, the United States ought to be commended for its open acknowledgment of the “legacies of racism, ethnic intolerance and destructive policies relating to Native Americans” and that “issues relating to race, ethnicity, and national origin continue to play a negative role in American society” (United Nations, 2000b, p. 4). In response, the Human Rights Committee noted “the persistence of the discriminatory effects of the legacy of slavery, segregation, and destruction policies with
regard to Native Americans” (United Nations, 2001, p. 1). Such documents containing the humble admissions by a powerful country to a small committee of independent experts can be extremely powerful teaching tools. This kind of interchange between a government and independent committee offers an excellent springboard from which to launch open and frank discussions about directions to pursue together toward social justice.

Commemorating Major International Days

One way to move toward a lived awareness of human rights principles that eventually may influence cultural values and crystallize into legally mandated rights is to commemorate major international days. Following is a select list, with commentary (Human Rights Education Associates, 2007, p. 1). Social justice advocates may wish to have community events in their schools, town commons, places of employment, or any public place. Often there is not much to celebrate, which is why commemorating (literally, a “remembering together”) may be preferable.

1. **Good Morning and Mean It Day** (January 2)—Although this should be an everyday greeting, this commemorative day, approximating the beginning of the new year, symbolically illustrates the profound impact of simple words in everyday transactions.

2. **Martin Luther King Jr. Day** (January 15)—In the United States, this is celebrated on the Monday after the birthday (January 15, 1929) of the civil rights leader, who challenged racial discrimination through boycotts, marches, and a commitment to nonviolence.

3. **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** (January 27)—To commemorate all the victims of the Nazi genocide.

4. **International Day of Social Justice** (February 20)—Proclaimed by the General Assembly in 2007, this day urges the promotion of social justice, constructed from the pillars of human rights, as fundamental to peaceful and prosperous relations within and among countries.

5. **International Women’s Day** (March 8)—Celebrated for the first time in Europe in 1911; in December 1977, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming this day in recognition that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women.

6. **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** (March 21)—Commemorating the killing by police of 69 people who were peacefully demonstrating against apartheid, on March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa.
7. **World Water Day (March 22)**—This day is to raise awareness of the importance of water and sanitation in our everyday lives, to celebrate its importance and find ways that this ever-diminishing resource can contribute to sustainable development.

8. **World Day Against Child Labor (June 12)**—Result of a global movement creating awareness of the forced induction of millions of children to work under some of the worst conditions imaginable as scavengers in small-scale mining and quarrying and in grand-scale textile and agribusinesses around the world.

9. **World Refugee Day (June 20)**—A global movement drawing attention to the plight of refugees and their enduring courage and contributions to host societies despite continuing dangers.

10. **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (June 26)**—I mention this day with some trepidation because it was originally meant to create an honest and open dialogue about the prevention and treatment of drug abusers. However, it has become misused as a pretext for severe punishment. We need to get the original conversation back, one reason, among others, for the additional chapter in this book.


12. **International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade (August 23)**—A global movement remembering that day in 1781 in Santo Domingo, which saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

13. **International Day to Commemorate Victims of White-Collar Crime (September 17)**—Coinciding with the start of Occupy Wall Street, which helped spawn global movements toward the eradication of extreme inequality, this day brings to mind those oppressed through a range of structural abuses from foreclosures and bankruptcies to even the disappearance of blue ink on receipts and voice-mail hell.

14. **International Day of Peace (September 21)**—Declared by the UN General Assembly in 2001, this is a call for all nations and peoples to observe a day of global ceasefire and nonviolence.

15. **International Day of Older Persons (October 1)**—In this fast-aging world, in which one third of the population is expected to be older than 60 in this millennium, this day commemorates the contributions of the elderly in caring for sick persons, transmitting their knowledge and experience, and participating in the workforce and urges a society incorporating people of all ages.
16. **World Day Against the Death Penalty and World Mental Health Day (October 10)**—Initiated by the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, the World Day Against the Death Penalty brings attention to, among other things, the capriciousness of the death penalty along regional and racial lines, legal costs above and beyond life imprisonment, the culture of violence it produced, and its intractability, as well as the possibility it will provide a perverse incentive to those seeking to be immortalized for a cause. It may not be coincidental that this day also commemorates the struggles of those considered mentally ill, who continue to be disproportionately represented in prison populations.

17. **International Day of the Girl Child (October 11)**—Adopted by the General Assembly in 2011, this day recognizes girls’ rights and the unique challenges they face worldwide, such as gender discrimination and violence, and promotes their empowerment.

18. **World Food Day (October 16)**—Bringing attention to the day-in-day-out hunger that roughly 700,000 people suffer every day and its related preventable diseases, this day also urges policies consistent with sustainable development and a just global distribution of food.

19. **International Day for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty (October 17)**—Initiated when International Fourth World Movement founder Joseph Wresinski placed a stone in front of the Palais de Chaillot, asserting that where men and women “are condemned to live in poverty,” their “human rights are violated,” this day calls for a just social order in which everyone lives with human rights and dignity.

20. **International Day of Tolerance (November 16)**—Initiated by UNESCO, this day emphasizes the role that education, including modeling of adults, plays in teaching children tolerance toward others, rooted in genuine friendship, a commitment to learning about other groups, demystifying of stereotypes, and examination of exaggerated self-importance and group pride.

21. **World Toilet Day (November 19)**—In a world where close to 3 billion do not have adequate sanitation and millions engage in open defecation leading to airborne diseases and other illnesses, this day calls for sanitation for all.

22. **Universal Children’s Day (November 20)**—Commemorating the day that the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, this day brings attention to the need for global fraternity and sorority among the world’s children, urging the world to promote the welfare of all its children.

23. **Mondo or World Currency Day** (November 23)—In anticipation of major holiday spending in many parts of the world, this day is intended to create awareness of not only the ease of monetary transactions with one world currency but the savings in time and wealth, which should and could be transferred to those less fortunate.
24. **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25)**—Commemorating a General Assembly resolution on this day in 1999, this day promotes global recognition of gender violence, recalling the assassination of the Mirabel sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic.

25. **National Day of Mourning (On Thanksgiving in the United States)**—Observed generally on the third or fourth Thursday in November, this day commemorates the legacy of genocide that took place after the landing of Columbus in what today is almost universally referred to as the Americas.

26. **International Day of People With Disabilities (December 3)**—Estimating 600 million people with disabilities, or alternative ways of being, the General Assembly proclaimed this day to increase awareness and mobilize support for practical action to allow persons with disabilities to live with fundamental freedoms and human dignity.

27. **Right to Development Day** (December 4)—Alternatively called Open Forum Day, this day commemorates the endorsement of the Right to Development on December 4, 1986. It calls on all the people of the world to engage in open and creative dialogue on structural changes and economic and social reforms needed to ensure equality of opportunity and the eradication of all social injustices. It is an excellent lead-in to International Human Rights Day.

28. **International Human Rights Day (December 10)**—Commemorates the endorsement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly with no dissent in 1948.

29. **International Migrant’s Day (December 18)**—Originated by Filipino and Asian migrant organizations on December 18, 1990, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was adopted by the United Nations.

30. **International Human Solidarity Day (December 20)**—This day calls for a global equitable distribution of wealth and equitable obligations among countries to tackle such global problems as climate change, environmental degradation, and extreme poverty.

Human rights issues are also commemorated with various internationally recognized weeks, years, and decades. Select international weeks celebrate interfaith harmony (February 2–8), solidarity among peoples struggling against racism (March 21–27), immunization (April 24–30), breastfeeding (August 1–7), and space (October 4–10).

Select years recognize pulses (leguminous plants, like lentils, beans, and peas, that can contribute to soil fertility) (2016); light-based technologies and soils (2015); small island developing states and family farms (2014); water cooperation and quinoa (2013); forests (2011); biodiversity and the
rapprochement of cultures (2010); human rights learning (2009); languages (2008); deserts (2006); and microcredit (2005).


These commemorative days, years, and decades provide excellent opportunities for the human rights defender/social justice advocate to create awareness of major issues facing the world today, debate them, and arrive at collective decisions to implement social actions and service that promote a socially just world.

Proclamations, Resolutions, Declarations, and Bills

One social action strategy to commemorate these days is simply to issue proclamations and resolutions, as depicted in Practice Illustration 3.1.5

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**Practice Illustration 3.1**

*The Issuance of Proclamations and/or Resolutions*

The Amherst Human Rights Commission, in order to create awareness of December 10 as Human Rights Day and March 21 as the International Day to Eradicate Racism, held a reading of the Universal Declaration in its Town Commons on December 10 and of select portions of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21. They also issued official proclamations. Following are these two proclamations that may serve as an example to create awareness of internationally recognized values.

**Proclamation of Human Rights Day**

*Whereas, the General Assembly of the United Nations endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with no dissenting vote, on December 10th, 1948, under the able leadership of an American, Ms. Eleanor Roosevelt; and*
Whereas, the Universal Declaration asserts the dignity of the human person; nondiscrimination based on race, color, sex, age, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, social origin, birth, or other status [medical condition, sexual orientation, disability]; civil and political rights, such as freedoms of thought, speech, belief, and the press; economic, social, and cultural rights, such as rights to employment, food, shelter, and health care; the solidarity of the human race; the notion that every right has a corresponding duty; and the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights; and

Whereas, the Universal Declaration is referred to as the authoritative definition of human rights standards and increasingly referred to as customary international law, which all countries must abide; and

Whereas, the Universal Declaration gave birth to a long train of other declarations and covenants further defining human rights standards, such as the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which have the status of treaty and are to be considered “Law of the Land” in accordance with the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution, Article VI(2); and

Whereas, the Universal Declaration avows legal mandates to fulfill human need,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Select Board of the Town of Amherst does hereby proclaim

December 10, 2002, and every December 10th hereafter as Human Rights Day in Amherst and the Select Board encourages all Amherst citizens to be mindful of human rights principles and urges all municipal, state, federal, and international bodies to incorporate said principles into their laws and policies as a means to move toward the creation of a human rights culture, which is a “lived awareness” of human rights principles.

Voted and signed this 2nd day of December 2002.

Proclamation of March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the Town of Amherst

Given that the Secretary General Kofi Annan and the General Assembly of the United Nations recently declared March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;

Whereas on that day on March 21st, 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people in the township of Sharpeville, South Africa, who were peacefully demonstrating against apartheid;

Whereas the United Nations has called upon the international community not only to commemorate that tragedy, but also to work together to combat racism and discrimination wherever they exist;

Whereas the United States signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the authoritative definition of human rights standards, increasingly referred to as customary international law;
Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights and prohibits all forms of discrimination, including race;

Given that the United States has ratified the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1994, a progeny of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and submitted its report on racial discrimination to the United States in 1999, and according to Article VI of the U.S. Constitution that Covenant is considered a Treaty thereby being Law for the United States and the “judges bound thereby”;

The Town of Amherst, thereby, recognizes the importance of an international day to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and recognizes the efforts of the United States for attempting to eliminate racial discrimination and urges the United States to continue with these efforts,

Hereby declares March 21st, 2003, as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and urges the community to commemorate this day to take constructive steps to advance human dignity for all, the essential thrusts of human rights instruments, and, if possible to attend a reading of select portions of the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination to be read in the Town Common on 7 PM on March 21.

Following is a Warrant Article, which is still in discussion.

Town Human Rights Warrant Article 25 as Amended for Town Meeting on June 1, 2005

Whereas human rights principles represent the highest aspirations of the human race and their violation has resulted in acts that have outraged the conscience of humanity;

Whereas such principles can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ultimate standard of human rights and a document increasingly referred to as customary international law;

Whereas such principles are further elaborated in its progeny, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Rights of the Child; Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons; and Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide;

Whereas everyone is entitled to the rights found in these documents, including, but not limited to health care, security in old age, meaningful and gainful employment, rest and leisure, adequate shelter, education, participation in the cultural life of the community, and peace;

Whereas being human is the only criterion for such rights, which have corresponding duties, no distinction shall be made on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, political or other opinion, culture, social origin, property, birth, military or any other status,

Town Meeting in Concert with the Select Board and the Human Rights Commission for the Town of Amherst resolve that it will commit itself to the
progressive realization of human rights principles within the resources of the
town, state, nation, and world community and urges all municipalities, states,
nations, the international community, that is, every person, everywhere to work
together in a spirit of cooperation and harmony to realize human rights for all.

It is noteworthy that in the town of Amherst, run by a select board and
town meeting, the general consensus was that everyone’s human rights
should be guaranteed. The problem in guaranteeing all those rights, includ-
ing health care, is it could easily bankrupt the town, which was having
enough difficulties financing school programs. The sentiment for universal
human rights obviously existed, but concerted national and international
efforts are necessary to guarantee them.

Declarations and Bills

More forceful are other social action strategies that declare human rights
documents law for a city, state, or nation. Passing bills is also a way to assert
the viability of human rights principles. Practice Illustration 3.2 depicts two
such action strategies.

Figure 3.3  A banner reading “Human Rights for Every Person, Everywhere”
hanging over the Amherst Town Commons, Human Rights Day,
December 10, 2005.
Practice Illustration 3.2
Asserting Human Rights Principles as Laws Through Declarations

The Coalition for a Strong United Nations (CSUN) in concert with the mayor and city council of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, issued the Cambridge Declaration of Human Rights, initiated by Jock Forbes and written by this author with Prof. Winston Langley of the University of Massachusetts. The document declared the Universal Declaration of Human Rights law in that city.

The Cambridge Declaration of Human Rights

In City Council  
September 28, 1998
Mayor Duekay  
Councillor Born  
Councillor Davis  
Vice Mayor Galluccio  
Councillor Reeves  
Councillor Russell  
Councillor Sullivan  
Councillor Toomey  
Councillor Triantafillou

WHEREAS continuing disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of humanity; and

WHEREAS the advent of a world, where humans can live with dignity and enjoy their civil and political rights, such as freedom of thought, speech, belief, and the press; economic, social, and cultural rights, such as rights to employment, food, shelter, and health care; and solidarity rights, such as rights to peace, self-determination, development, and clean environment, is the highest aspiration of humanity; and

ACKNOWLEDGING the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved in 1948 without dissent by the UN General Assembly, including the United States, and today increasingly referred to as customary international law,

RECOGNIZING the necessity to mandate legally the protection and enforcement of these rights in the promotion of human development, without discrimination of any kind such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, social origin, birth or other status,

INVOKING the spirit of our time which calls upon the peoples of the world to rededicate themselves to the global task of promoting and protecting human rights,

DETERMINED to take new steps in a recommitment to sustained efforts to ensure cooperation and solidarity in the promotion of human rights,
The Cambridge City Council, hereby
DECLARES the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the Law of the Land, urging its implementation in accordance with the Will of the People and by all executive, legislative, judicial and other public bodies;
ENDORSES the development of a human rights culture, which is a lived awareness of these rights and principles, entailing corresponding duties;
COMMENDS all previous and future efforts that are in compliance with the Declaration;
URGES other municipal, state, national and international bodies to move toward implementation of the Declaration; and
REACHES out to the people of the world in a spirit of cooperation, certain that together we can create a just social and international order in the effective realization of human rights for all.

In City Council September 28, 1998.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest: D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

Bills, which often have more force than declarations, are also a good way to initiate discussion to develop talking points. Practice Illustration 3.3 has some talking points I wrote prior to the development of House Bill 706.

Practice Illustration 3.3
Asserting Human Rights Principles Through Bills

Soon thereafter CSUN, the U.S. chapter of the International Fourth World Movement (IFWM), and the Massachusetts chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILP) initiated a Human Rights Bill, now known as Human Rights Bill 706. It was constructed in part from the following talking points, which, more or less, are brainstormed ideas that might be included in more formal statements. It is often a good strategy to have group members individually and collectively think about what points they wish to include in more formal official documents.

1. The United Nations drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the authoritative definition of human rights standards and a document increasingly referred to as customary international law, under the able leadership of the chairperson of the drafting committee, an American, Eleanor Roosevelt.

2. Given the early leadership in the field of human rights, the United States ought to continue as a leader and be on the cutting edge of providing for human rights for all people.
3. The Universal Declaration, while endorsed with no dissent by the General Assembly in 1948, was first declared *customary international law* in a federal court in *Filartiga v. Pena-Irala* (1980) 630 F.2d 884–885, which ruled against a torturer, living in the United States, for an act committed in Paraguay.

4. The *Filartiga* decision appears to have spearheaded a global movement resulting in other cases worldwide, such as *Pinochet v. Spain*, based on which it can be said that in the future torturers may have no safe haven, a major goal of the noted human rights group Amnesty International.

5. In addition to the right not to be tortured (Article 5), however, the Universal Declaration declared other rights that should be guaranteed, such as rights to employment at a reasonable wage and under favorable working conditions (Article 23); rights to health care, shelter, security in old age, and special protections for children and motherhood (Article 25); and the right to education (Article 26).

6. The Universal Declaration asserts that every right has a corresponding duty, for example, the right to health care also requires the duty to eat healthfully, exercise appropriately, not overconsume, and produce food sustainably—lifestyles to which we all generally aspire. Government must also assist in providing the necessary opportunities for this to happen (Article 28).

7. In addition to the Universal Declaration, the United States has also ratified other major human rights treaties, including the Convention Against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. According to Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, these documents, which have the status of treaties, ought to become “law of the land and the judges bound thereby.” In brief, these documents describe the Universal Declaration articles in more depth.


9. The United States has a rights-based culture, as evidenced by its Bill of Rights, which the UN monitoring committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights referred to as a “beacon of hope for humanity,” and the state of Massachusetts’ Patients’ Bill of Rights, drafted by the late senator Jack Backman.

10. The state of Massachusetts also has a traditional commitment to international human rights initiatives, as evidenced by its official declaration of October 24 as United Nations Day (when the United Nations was founded) and December 10 as Human Rights Day (when the UN endorsed the Universal Declaration). Enacting House Bill 706 into law would continue that tradition.
11. It was Eleanor Roosevelt's dream that "one day school children would know the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as much as the Bill of Rights." Sadly, her dream does not yet appear to have become a reality, and this bill would help assist educating others about what human rights actually are.

12. Enacting Human Rights House Bill 706 into law would be one step toward what has been called the creation of a human rights culture, which is a "lived awareness" of human rights principles, where every person, everywhere can live with human dignity, as asserted in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration.

Following is the bill that emerged, initially written in concert with Massachusetts state representative Ellen Story.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the Year Two Thousand Five Human Rights Bill 706

RESOLVE to establish a special commission to investigate the integration of international human rights standards into Massachusetts state law and policies.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has an interest in ensuring the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of all its residents; and

RECOGNIZING that respect for the inherent dignity of all people is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world; and

ACKNOWLEDGING that the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved in 1948 without dissent by the UN General Assembly, including the United States, establishes a baseline standard for human rights both domestically and internationally; and

REMEMBERING the leadership role that Eleanor Roosevelt and other prominent Americans have played in articulating global human rights standards and in establishing United States' commitment to honor and protect human rights in this country; and

RECOGNIZING the progeny of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including, but not limited to: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the Convention on Civil and Political Rights; and the Convention Against Torture; and

INVOKING the spirit of our times which recognizes the increasingly global nature of our society and calls upon the peoples of the world to rededicate themselves to the task of promoting and protecting human rights and providing opportunities for freedom, liberty and opportunity in all corners of the world,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate and the House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, to take steps to review international human rights standards and evaluate integration of such standards into
Building From the Foundation

the policies and laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by establishing a special commission for the purpose of making an investigation and study relative to the integration of international human rights standards in the commonwealth’s laws and policies. This commission shall be composed of nine members, two of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the Senate, one of whom shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; two of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House, one of whom shall be the chairperson, and one of whom shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House. In addition, the chairperson of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, the head of the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General’s office and the executive director of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women shall serve on this commission; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the special commission shall hold hearings and take testimony at such places as it deems necessary in this Commonwealth; and be it further

RESOLVED, that said commission shall report to the general court the results of its investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry its recommendations into effect by filing the same with the clerk of the House of Representatives on or before the 30th of September, 2006.

Practice Illustration 3.4

Town of Amherst Warrant Article: Toward the Creation of a Human Rights Culture

In May 2015, I submitted the following warrant article before a town meeting in Amherst, Massachusetts, which passed almost unanimously.

WHEREAS, Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution asserts, “All treaties made or shall be made... shall become the Supreme Law of the Land and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby”;

And WHEREAS, the UN Charter; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as the authoritative statement of customary international law; and major UN human rights conventions have the status of international treaty,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: The Town of Amherst calls upon all federal, state, and municipal legislative, executive, and judicial bodies to sign, ratify, and implement such conventions as they presently exist and evolve. This warrant article will be deposited with U.S. senator Elizabeth Warren; President Obama; Samantha Power, U.S. Ambassador to the UN; Senator Bob Corker, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Charlie Baker, governor of Massachusetts; and other policymakers as appropriate in order that they take positive steps in that direction. Doing so would be a step toward creating a human rights culture among the general populace, a “lived awareness” of human rights principles in our
minds and hearts and carried into our everyday lives, ultimately resulting in socially just policies, where every person, everywhere can live with dignity and have their human rights realized.

Presentation in Support of the Warrant Article

Please note that often (especially in international forums) one is allowed only 2 minutes to get across major points that could impact the audience. Operating under this constraint requires some talent perhaps but certainly practice to be succinct yet persuasive. Here is my 2-minute presentation.

Hello. My name is Joseph Wronka from Precinct 6. You may wish to go to my website humanrightsculture.org to assess my qualifications for writing this Warrant Article 28, “Toward a Human Rights Culture.” In brief, I am Professor of Social Work, Springfield College; Representative to the UN in Geneva for the International Association of Schools of Social Work; and Fulbright scholar in social justice and human rights having recently returned from Pakistan and Austria in that capacity.

In brief, this warrant article asks the Town of Amherst to call upon key policy-makers, including but not limited to President Obama, U.S. senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, and Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, to sign, ratify, and implement UN human rights conventions as they presently exist and as they evolve. Sadly, the United States has a rather poor record here, having ratified only three of the nine major conventions, which can be found in the PowerPoints posted on the Internet, that is, those pertaining to racism, torture, and civil and political rights. A major case in point is U.S. failure to ratify the Rights of Children, which the president has said is “shameful.” He needs a nudge. Pakistan and Austria have ratified eight of the nine conventions and many other countries have similar records.

An impetus for this warrant article is in part to assist in regaining U.S. leadership in the realm of global ethics, as after all, President Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech in 1941, immortalized in the paintings of western Massachusetts’ Norman Rockwell, called upon governments to guarantee freedom of expression, the right to worship, and freedoms from want and fear. These principles were major pillars, which formed the United Nations.

Another impetus is that this article serves as a kind of educative function in this World’s Third Decade of Human Rights Education. Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution states for instance: “All treaties made … shall become the Supreme Law of the Land.” All UN conventions have the status of treaty. Ramsey Clarke, former U.S. attorney general, has stated that lack of knowledge of that fact represents a failure of the legal system. It is important also to know about the human rights triptych, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the center, flanked by the conventions following it on the right and implementation measures like human rights reports on the left. Implementation measures include UN concerns about racism in the United States, like racial profiling; an increasing
militarized approach to immigration law enforcement; and Hispanic children particularly facing harsh conditions in forced agricultural labor.

Finally, all human rights instruments, as former pope and now saint John Paul II stated as pertaining to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, need to be “lived in letter and in spirit.” Thus, human dignity, nondiscrimination, and an ethic of human rights for every person everywhere, to mention a few principles, need to be “lived” and in our minds and hearts and dragged into our everyday lives, often referred to as a human rights culture.

We may not see the results of this warrant article now, but should we believe in intergenerational solidarity, eventually our children and their children might be able to reap the fruits of a human rights culture. Thank you.

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Providing NGO Input

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) provided input (see Practice Illustration 3.5) into the Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, March 22–23, 2007, sponsored by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, Dr. Arjun Sengupta. NGO input is very important in developing and implementing socially just policies.

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Practice Illustration 3.5

International Federation of Social Workers Statement on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty


The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) wishes to thank the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, Dr. Arjun Sengupta, for convening this Expert Seminar on Extreme Poverty and asking for input from select academics, NGOs, and policy advocates. We also wish to thank Mr. Xavier Verzat, Special Representative of the International Fourth World, for eliciting input to be submitted to the Expert Seminar for creative dialogue with other members and organizations. IFSW feels that social work from its inception was a human rights profession and looks forward to providing input into this extremely important meeting.

In response to Dr. Sengupta’s emphasis on experiences and programs that “could contribute to eradicating extreme poverty as a human rights entitlement,” IFSW wishes to make some preliminary comments, followed by specific examples that it views as ways to eradicate extreme poverty. Unfortunately, such poverty still persists after the General Assembly’s unanimous endorsement in 1948 of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights and this despite the considerable economic and social progress witnessed during the past decades. Indeed, as the Human Development Report (2005) asserts, at present roughly 40% of the world lives on less than two dollars per day, and the ratio between the wealth of the world’s richest and poorest country is roughly 1 to 103! Such realities are unacceptable, and, once again, we welcome any attempts to change such a distressing scenario.

The Importance of Choosing a Human Rights Culture

In brief, despite the world’s continuing inability to provide for the poorest of the poor, we feel that given the means, both financial and technical, that are at the disposal of governments, and despite the setbacks caused by diseases and armed conflicts in some regions, we can and must choose a world where human needs can be met satisfactorily. Human rights constitute the legal mandate to fulfill human needs. Whereas knowledge of human needs is imperfect, it can be said perhaps that the human condition is such that humans have spiritual needs to be treated with human dignity and respect as they live their lives according to meanings they have derived from fundamental religious, spiritual, and/or philosophical beliefs and systems. Humans also have cognitive needs, to have access to knowledge and information and to engage freely without fear of retaliation in dialogue with others about ways to create a socially just world. They also have physical needs for adequate food, water, and shelter, as well as social needs for affiliation with others in cultural and ethnic groups as well as the family and, ultimately, self-actualization needs to live up to one’s potential. Such needs, like human rights, are interdependent.

IFSW feels, therefore, that the aims of all poverty reduction programmes ought to be the creation of a human rights culture, which we see as a “lived awareness” of human rights principles that ultimately mirror human needs. Such awareness ought to exist not only in a cognitive sense, that is, one’s mind, but also in literally a “heartfelt” sense where such principles are lived and dragged into one’s everyday life. Research repeatedly asserts that only chosen values endure. One cannot force such a culture on anyone. It must make sense to the entire global community and be chosen on its own merits.

Thus, using the Universal Declaration as the authoritative definition of human rights standards, a document fortunately and increasingly referred to as customary international law, such a culture would acknowledge the interdependence, indivisibility, and equality of all human rights. Roughly, the Universal Declaration stresses five crucial notions: (1) human dignity (Art. 1); (2) nondiscrimination, based on race, property, religion, or other status (Art. 2.); (3) civil and political rights like freedoms of speech, the press, and peaceful assembly (Art. 2–21); (4) economic, social, and cultural rights, like food, medical care, adequate shelter, meaningful or acceptable work, and security in old age (Art. 22–27); and (5) solidarity rights, such as the right to a just social and international order, which scholars have argued to include, for example, rights to peace, development, humanitarian disaster relief,
and international distributive justice, that is, the right of the poorest of the poor to the wealthiest of the richest nations (Art. 28–30). Freedom of speech, for instance, is meaningless and hardly dignified if a person lacks adequate shelter, is hungry, and lives in a world at war.

IFSW views the primary challenge in the eradication of extreme poverty, therefore, as moving the global community toward an acceptance of values and interrelationships among rights that reflect human needs, found in the Universal Declaration, as well as its “long train of declarations and covenants,” as stated by Pope John Paul II. The chairperson of the drafting committee of the Universal Declaration, moreover, Eleanor Roosevelt, had a dream that every schoolchild would know about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, much as students learn about their own country constitutions. In order for such values to endure, learning must begin at an early age. Furthermore, after the laying of such a foundation, human rights ought to continue to serve as “guiding principles” for socially just policies.

The Need for a Multipronged Approach

With these comments in mind, IFSW would like to offer the following comments in a spirit of creative dialogue with other members of this group with the aim to free humanity from the scourge of extreme poverty. We have chosen to adopt a public health medical and advanced generalist social work model, calling for multipronged interventions, with human rights serving as guiding principles. Thus, we need strategies that may be effective with “whole populations” (also referred to as “macro” approaches) and “at-risk populations” (“mezzo” approaches) and “direct practice” (“micro”) levels of intervention. To be sure, distinctions among levels are blurred, yet they may provide the necessary contours to assess and then act upon strategies to eliminate extreme poverty. Briefly, then, homelessness could be dealt with by perhaps adding a right to adequate shelter in a state constitution (a macro approach, getting its sustenance primarily from Article 25 of the Universal Declaration); organizing workers to engage in collective bargaining to assist in the prevention of job loss or, if that is not feasible, to be assisted to acquire further skills for other jobs (a mezzo approach, with sustenance from Article 23); and setting up a homeless shelter and soup kitchen, if previous measures had failed (a micro approach directly dealing with symptoms when other measures have failed). As the above example demonstrates, programmes such as the setting up of homeless shelters are certainly necessary but are only one aspect of a need for a multipronged approach to dealing with extreme poverty that also takes into account the interdependency of rights. Thus, while obviously it is important to help the poor through programmes, the poor must also “stop coming” so to speak. Ultimately, there should be no poor to help. The homeless, moreover, need to have equal access to education, medical care, and meaningful work at reasonable wages so they can live becomingly and with human dignity. With these levels in mind, additional suggestions to deal with extreme poverty are offered.
Additional Strategies With Commentary

Interventions ought to impact not only everyone in a particular country but throughout the world. What is needed is a major spiritual transformation, broadly defined, that will place human need before profit with human dignity at its core.

A major macro strategy thus is to add rights found in human rights documents to national constitutions worldwide. The word constitution is from the Latin consti-tare, meaning “to choose.” As such, these rights represent societal choices, and the values they represent, in regard to enhancing the quality of life. In the United States, for example, with estimates of 3 million homeless, there is no right to adequate shelter in its federal or any of its state constitutions. In fact, the only economic, and social, right asserted in the majority of state constitutions is the right to education.

But in order to have these rights in the constitutions, which must be chosen, it is necessary to acknowledge that socialization processes play a major role. Thus, IFSW concurs with the Second World Decade for Human Rights Education (2005–2015) and encourages education about human rights documents not only in the postsecondary levels but the primary and secondary as well. (See particularly UNESCO, 2006, for additional teaching materials.) Furthermore, recognizing that education must go beyond formalized institutions, IFSW encourages the media to inform others about human rights documents. In that regard, we recall an “MTV like” skit where in France actors and actresses danced to music as they recited Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, calling, among other things, for human dignity and a spirit of brotherhood among all the peoples of the world. We also note that in select Scandinavian countries at times a right from a human rights document like the Rights of the Child, asserting for example that no child shall be physically or emotionally abused, is flashed on a children’s show followed by discussion. Such practices are necessary in order for values ultimately to be chosen, then later reflected in constitutions, and therefore implemented. Ultimately, if children learn about doing duties for others, anywhere in the world, they may later come to a realization that the richer countries of the world have abnegated their responsibilities to those in extreme poverty who may live in their same countries.

Such practices in Europe appear totally different than in the United States where advertising on children’s television encourages children into consumerism, rather than a spirit of fraternity and sorority, paving the way for a society to value profit instead of human need, thereby leading ultimately to extremes in wealth. Fortunately, movements have evolved that commemorate international days, such as October 17, the International Day to Eradicate Extreme Poverty, and the International Day to Eradicate Racism.

In the United States chief executive pay is roughly five hundred times higher than the average worker’s pay. Yet there are burgeoning movements to add human rights to state constitutions, such as Massachusetts House Bill 706, an act relative to incorporating human rights standards in Massachusetts laws and policies. Presently, 60 NGOs in the state support that bill, and a similar bill was passed
unanimously in the Pennsylvania legislature. IFSW encourages bills in legislative bodies and declarations as means to educate others about human rights, which ultimately ought to move people to action.

When engaging in such macro strategies, it must be kept in mind, furthermore, that such strategies must transcend domestic sovereignty. IFSW recognizes, therefore, that the one and one half trillion dollars spent on defense to keep lines on the map intact is a questionable enterprise, as such monies could be spent on alleviating the plight of the poor, and the poorest of the poor. Consequently, we urge broad-based social movements emphasizing world citizenship and allegiance to humanity, in the words of the late Joseph Rotblat, a former Nobel Prize winner.

Finally, considering the acceptance of Guiding Principles for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty, IFSW encourages the development of an International Convention on the Eradication of Extreme Poverty, legally binding upon all member states, taking into consideration the need for a global redistribution of the earth’s wealth and resources.

For populations at risk, we also offer human rights as guiding principles to prevent job loss and symptoms of job insecurity. Thus, IFSW urges that states encourage workers to engage in collective bargaining and the formation of trade unions to protect their interests as enunciated in such documents as the Universal Declaration and the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Mothers and children are particularly vulnerable to poverty, and IFSW encourages states to provide for paid maternity leave before and after childbirth with government-sponsored day care as enunciated in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Should all of the above attempts fail to halt extreme poverty, we would need to have recourse to programmes such as shelters for the homeless; distribution of food that is nutritious, easily accessible, culturally appropriate, and at a reasonable cost; provision of loans at reasonable rates; and even the handing out of at least minimal amounts of money to those in dire straits. We should also never forget that education is one of the major means to overcome poverty and extreme poverty.

Certainly, all levels of intervention have different issues and approaches. They often require vast amounts of time with scarce immediate results forthcoming. Furthermore, we need to remind ourselves that extreme poverty, at least poverty in spirit, may also exist among the affluent, as according to a recent State of the World, instances of alienation are highest in some of the world’s richest countries. Thank you for your consideration of our viewpoints. We look forward to listening to other approaches in the hope that together we can advance on the road toward the elimination of extreme poverty.

This paper was drafted by Joseph Wronka, PhD, Professor of Social Work, Springfield College; Principal Investigator of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Project, originating in the Center for Social Change, Brandeis University, Heller School for Social Policy; in collaboration with Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol, the main IFSW representative at the United Nations office at Geneva.
Practice Illustration 3.6
Select Oral Statements of the International Association of Schools of Social Work Before the 30th Session of the Human Rights Council

As mentioned, I had represented IASSW in Geneva in varying capacities since 2008, grateful for their trust in me not only to present interventions, or what might be called policy briefs, before the Human Rights Council (HRC) and to “schmooze” with elites and nonelites, governmental and nongovernmental representatives. Whereas the following interventions may have had some impact, I am convinced that, should we see “schmoozing” not in a pejorative sense as merely wanting to get something from someone by any way possible but from its etymological origin as making a “heart to heart” connection, forming and having relationships in informal ways, it can have a strong impact, often more than that found in formal venues.

I recall having discussed with a member of the human rights monitoring committee to the ICCPR the fact that the United States did not bring up childhood poverty in its report to the human rights committee. To be blunt, this was over a few beers at a tavern across the street from the UN. The next day she brought it up to the United States, and to my surprise and chagrin she said, “There … put that in for you … that really upset me when you said that … I had been undecided about mentioning that.” Would a formal statement have worked better? Perhaps not. Thus, please keep in mind that human rights is a way of life that if lived, can have the potential to emit what Gandhi and King referred to as “soul force” to meet injustice. For as French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas has stated, “Eyes don’t shine … they speak,” more perhaps than formally and carefully constructed words and phrases. I am anything but perfect at that, but the preceding is one example of that approach.

Be that as it may, formal statements in this digital age are now often posted on the Internet for the world to see, such as at the UN website, which telecasts live and archived oral statements before the Human Rights Council at http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/c/un-human-rights-council.html. Such statements can have an impact, necessitating that the human rights activist learn how to write and speak (see Chapter 5), let alone learn about the processes necessary to give a policy statement. (Initially, it took me about one day to figure that one out.) The following are select statements I submitted before the HRC in September and October 2015.

I. On the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants

The International Association of Schools of Social Work strongly supports the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and unequivocally endorses statements in state constitutions that reserve places in their legislative bodies for peasants or,
for that matter, those in extreme poverty, a sizeable number of whom are peasants. A case in point is the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, where I recently returned as a Fulbrighter, which reserves places in their legislative bodies for peasants. There, according to UN data, the ratio of wealth between the highest 10% and the lowest 10% is less than one half that of some countries, like the United States, which does not have such a provision. In the United States, roughly 0.1% of the population has as much wealth as the bottom 90% according to 2016 presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. True, the United States has enacted an affirmative action policy for its legislative bodies, based on race, but it is minimally implemented it seems. For that country and others, the time is now to have affirmative action programs based also on class, making up for centuries of discrimination if not stigmatization against those who lived in extreme poverty and also rural areas, that is, peasants, generally far away from urban centers, where policies are often formulated, legislated, implemented, and evaluated. We also wish to recall that rights are interdependent and call for further debates and best practice models pertaining to the right to self-determination, violated often in regard to what has been referred to in UN bodies as the “special situation” of Indigenous Peoples. We also call for the right to peace. According to the New York Times 90% of the victims of war are civilians, often thrown into a world of suffering and poverty merely by most unfortunate circumstance. Thank you, Mr. President.

2. On the Outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for the United States

The International Association of Schools of Social Work welcomes the report of the United States of America and especially appreciates its humility when it says, “While recognizing there is more work to be done, we are constantly striving to create a fairer and more just society.” But the United States indicated that “human rights are embedded in our constitution.” Whereas it is true that civil and political rights are stated forthrightly there, indeed the monitoring committee for the ICCPR referred to the Bill of Rights as a beacon of hope for humanity. Yet the U.S. Constitution barely mentions economic, social, cultural, and solidarity rights. States are to act as “laboratories for democracy … to extend rights not found in the federal constitution,” as stated by former Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis. But where are rights to health care, security in old age, special protections for the family, reasonable wages, rest and leisure, and self-determination? Presently, it takes by and large three incomes to support a family, and parents rarely have time to spend with their children.

We ask the United States to take more seriously the words of former president Eisenhower, who said that every bomb made is theft from the poor, and question why the country spends roughly 49% of global expenditures on armaments. Also, why is it that reportedly 2,500 individuals who committed crimes when children are in prison for life without the possibility of parole, which is close to 10 times more than all other countries combined that implement such a policy.
We also express sadness, yes sadness, that President Obama said that it was “shameful” that his country has not ratified the Rights of the Child, but he has not followed through. President Obama, please ratify that important document.

We also ask the United States and all governments to take seriously the words of Pope Francis that “unbridled capitalism is the dung of the devil” and “human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that create huge inequalities.”

Thank you, Mr. President.


The International Association of Schools of Social Work applauds the recent study on the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights and urges all governments to distribute it widely in their policymaking bodies. Although the document is not perfect, we find it written very well in nonelitist terminology, in educated layperson’s language as advocated by Eleanor Roosevelt for human rights documents. In this second decade of human rights education, we urge that it be incorporated in secondary (yes, high school), postsecondary, and professional curricula for robust debate. And we thank this council for eliciting NGO input.

We especially like its commitment to ethnic and cultural diversity with its support, as appropriate, for the use of coca leaves among Indigenous People in Bolivia and the use of peyote in the Native American church in the United States. We are reminded of the failure of the “Just say No” campaign in some indigenous communities, where avoiding conflict is a value. But it was effective when teenagers handed over letters to those pressuring them, letters from their elders urging them not to use. The pressure would stop. Such instances are consistent with the human right to self-determination, terminology absent in that report.

We also view substance abuse as a function of isolation and trauma. We view the war on drugs as an absurd metaphor. If we need a war on anything, it is on isolation and trauma. It may be no coincidence that heroin use appears to have grown worldwide, consistent with studies that have indicated increased loneliness over the last few decades. In that regard, we feel that the right to employment as a proactive strategy needed more emphasis in the report. That human right was enshrined initially in the UN Charter; and, according to human rights law, jobs that are socially useful, contribute to the development of the human personality, and increase purchasing power might be a way to curb this growing sense of isolation. Unlived life leads to destruction. And unemployment and underemployment have been found to be major predictors of child abuse and domestic violence, such trauma having long-lasting, if not disastrous, consequences, drug abuse being one of them.

We ask finally that this august body take into consideration the fact that the etymological root of the word addiction comes from the Latin addicere, meaning “to surrender.” The most obvious example in this forum is a kind of surrender to...
certain drugs, generally illegal ones as described here, but perhaps we need to emphasize in the debates other forms of addiction, such as addictions to tobacco, alcohol “junk food,” sugar, excessive computer viewing, and pornography, kinds of escapism to the stresses of the 21st century.

Thank you, Mr. President.

NGOs can also provide written statements to the HRC, which tend to be more thorough yet perhaps less heard. The following are excerpts of a written statement on Agenda Item 3, as described. The entire statement can be found online at http://humanrightsculture.org/uploads/IASSW.written_statement_.pdf.

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**Practice Illustration 3.7**

*Written Statement of the International Association of Schools of Social Work Before the 24th Session of the Human Rights Council*

**Eradicating Extreme Poverty**

IASSW feels that extreme poverty “shocks the conscience of humanity,” as asserted in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is a gross and massive violation of human rights. Select data are that roughly 1.4 billion people globally go to bed hungry each night, some from developed countries. More than 80% of the world’s population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. Indeed, the wealthiest nation on earth, the United States, has the widest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized nation. The poorest 40% of the world’s population accounts for 5% of the world’s income; the richest 20% accounts for three quarters of world income.

According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. These children “die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death.” Roughly 28% of children in developing countries, most notably South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, are underweight or stunted, seriously calling into question whether the Millennium Development Goals target of having that proportion of underweight children halved by 2015 will be missed. Nearly a billion living today cannot read a book or sign their names. Infectious diseases continue the blight of the poor, with an estimated 40 million living with HIV/AIDS and 500 million cases of malaria.

Access to clean and potable water also affects roughly half of humanity. Roughly 1.1 billion in developing countries have inadequate access to water, and roughly 3 billion lack basic sanitation, the majority of those living on less than
$2 per day. The nearly 2 billion in developing countries who do have access to water within 1 kilometer of their house consume 20 liters per day, whereas those in the United Kingdom consume an average of 150 liters daily and those in the United States consume the highest average, at 600 liters per day. There is indeed massive economic waste associated with water and sanitation deficits pertaining to health spending, productivity loss, and labor diversions. Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, loses about 5% of their GDP in that regard or $28.4 billion annually.

There are approximately 500 billionaires, that is 0.000008% of the world’s population, who are worth an estimated $3.5 trillion; there are 2.4 billion people in low-income countries that account for $1.6 trillion of the GDP. Approximately 51% of the world’s 100 wealthiest bodies are corporations. For every $1 spent in aid in developing countries, $25 is spent on debt repayment. Just 1% of what the world spent on weapons could effectively be used to put every child into school, a scenario that has never happened. (Data for the above are from http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats.)

But it is not just statistical data that recall to mind “the world’s most pitiless killer,” as asserted by UNICEF. It is also the “lived suffering” of those in extreme poverty. They may be under constant threat of losing their homes; unsure where their next meal is coming from; lying homeless, barely clothed in frigid weather; constantly dealing with health problems throughout their lives that could have been prevented; and/or are victims of environmental catastrophe.A case in point is the voice of 15-year-old Michelle Collins who during Hurricane Katrina stated, “While walking to the Superdome, there was water almost all the way up to our stomachs. We saw a lot of people just dying...it was terrible. It was like a hospital mixed with hungry people...people getting raped and hurt. We were sleeping on the floor and it was wet...I didn’t know where my mom was. Not until eight months or a year later, I was able to communicate with her” (ATD Fourth World Movement, 2012, “Not Meant to Live Like This,” pp. xiv). As a way out of this global pogrom, IASSW asks all governments in concert with all structures of civil society, such as NGOs, businesses, financial institutions, and educational institutions, to endorse and implement the Final Draft of the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

Such proclamations; resolutions; declarations; talking points; bills; NGO input, both informal and formal; and written statements are excellent means of engaging in creative dialogue, which human rights monitoring committees urge. It is important to stress that no government today would dare say it is against human rights. Government officials often issue proclamations during human rights week, usually the days preceding and following December 10. A proclamation by President George W. Bush in 2002 asserted, “We cherish the values of free speech, equal justice, and religious tolerance... The United States is a country where all citizens have the opportunity to voice
their opinions, practice their faith, and enjoy the blessings of freedom” (U.S. Department of State, 2003, p. 1). Such statements are commendable, but they overlook other rights like health care, shelter, security in old age, special protections for motherhood and children, and peace, not to mention a social and international order in which those rights can be realized. Rights are interdependent. The challenge is to work with governments to expand on their knowledge of rights, as commonly understood, to include economic, social, cultural, and solidarity rights in their discourse.

The Arts, Human Rights, and Social Justice

Undeniably, the arts can be a powerful force as a macro intervention for social justice. This section considers the arts broadly defined to include not only art, per se, but also music, literature, poetry, storytelling, sculpture, dance, theater, film—that is, any creative means of expression, an activity apparently unique to the human species. The term art comes from the Latin ars, meaning, in part, “skill, way, and method.” A lesser-known meaning, in a bad sense, is “cunning.” Taking this etymology to heart, then, art can be used both positively and negatively. The challenge is to choose the former.

On the negative side is the whole notion of art as cultural facade. That is, by praising the art of an oppressed group, an entire culture is able to hide behind beautiful pieces of art while continuing its exclusionary practices. Airports worldwide often rather ostentatiously display indigenous art, like majestic totem poles or carved tusks. Yet, not far away, extremely high unemployment and poverty rates among the Indigenous Peoples may exist. Praising the artistic work of a culture might subtly obscure more substantive issues. Oppressors are not deliberately trying to con the public into thinking everything is fine among an oppressed group. Quite the contrary, the general consensus may very well be that it is important to display and extol cultural art in the spirit of dialogue and mutual admiration. The point, however, is that people ought not blind themselves to the complexity of issues involved in producing and displaying art. These issues are anything but transparent.

The lack of prominent displays of Judaic art during the Renaissance and the newly industrialized Europe may have played a major role in the Holocaust. Did Europeans display African art before and during the transatlantic slave trade or indigenous art while colonizing the Americas? Excluding the art of groups from the mainstream is a sin of omission, subtly teaching that one culture is better than another, creating an out-group ripe for scapegoating. On the other hand, Leni Riefenstahl’s pro-Hitler film, Triumph of the Will, deliberately attempted to stir up hate, while presenting
efficiency arguments that following the Fuehrer would make Germany
great. Acknowledging that social justice means struggle, when it comes to
art, one must move with caution. It may be a “way, skill, and method”
to promote social justice. But artists and displayers of art are not immune
to the human condition, and their creative attempts do not necessarily guar-
antee social justice.

Revisiting this powerful idea of human rights, it is one thing to say the
arts are important for human development and it is therefore foolish to
abandon art programs in the educational system, increasingly a reality in the
struggle for funds among forces for war, peace, and social justice. More
powerful, however, is asserting that participation in the arts is a human right
as guaranteed in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration: “Everyone has the
right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the
arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” Acknowledging
the interdependence of rights, with economic and social rights equal to cul-
tural rights, it is necessary to make the arts available for all—not only the
art of the powerful but the art of the powerless, too. Has humanity pro-
gressed in complying with Article 27 of the Universal Declaration? Seats for
Broadway plays and movie tickets appear to have outpaced inflation, such
that only the well to do may have the opportunity for such luxuries. Complying
with Article 27 would mean having museums, films, concerts,
and the like culturally appropriate and readily accessible, if not free on some
days, possibly subsidized by graduated taxes. Subsidies requiring people to
pay their share is directly consistent with the clause to “promote the general
welfare” in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution. Unfortunately, the
Supreme Court has ruled that that clause cannot be invoked to justify a right
(Wronka, 1998b).

The Role of the Media

Now more important in this third phase of human rights education, as
discussed, the media could also play a major role in making the arts more
readily available. MTV skits can alert viewers to human rights and their
violations. In France, for example, one relatively short skit has actors and
actresses dancing to music as they speak the words of Article 1 of the
Universal Declaration: “All [dancing continues after each word] . . .
human . . . beings . . . are . . . born . . . free . . . and . . . equal . . . in . . .
dignity . . . and . . . in . . . rights. . . . They . . . are . . . endowed . . .
with . . . reason . . . and . . . conscience . . . and . . . should . . . act . . .
toward . . . one . . . another . . . in . . . a . . . spirit . . . of . . . brotherhood.”
Then, dancing a bit more, they join hands and say, “Réfléchissez-Vous!”
(“Think about it!”). On Norwegian TV, between cartoons, a right specified in articles of the CRC is flashed onscreen, followed by a brief discussion in language a child understands, for example: “Every child has the right to read books which will benefit the child” (Article 17) and “Every child has the right to a decent life with dignity and to take part in decision making” (Article 23). This is quite a difference from the United States, where the media bombards children with the importance of possessions and encourages eating foods of dubious nutritional value! This does not mean that France or Norway can sit back and relax, having created a human rights culture. It only illustrates that some countries, whose quality of life appears more consistent with the Universal Declaration, have engaged in teaching and learning about human rights principles at an early age. When attending the Human Rights Defenders Conference in 1998, I saw the entire copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the front page of Air France’s magazine. Given the role of the media in values formation, the social activist should learn how to use the media to promote responsible citizenship and common human decency as mirrored in human rights principles, the essential thrusts of social justice.

Practice Illustration 3.8
Public Service Announcements as a Viable Strategy to Create Awareness of Human Rights Principles

Public service announcements (PSAs) are also excellent ways to create awareness of a particular human rights issue. In the last few years, I have been doing a number of them for Amherst Media at Amherstmedia.org. Should you wish to see some of those and other media projects I have done, please go to Amherstmedia.org, enter my last name “Wronka,” and projects will appear. Here are two examples of those PSAs, one International Day of Persons With Disabilities, December 3, and World Social Justice Day, February 20.

International Day of Persons With Disabilities—December 3

December 3 is International Day of Persons With Disabilities. Estimating at least 600 million people with disabilities, referred to at times as differing abilities, that is, alternative ways of being, the General Assembly proclaimed this day to increase awareness and mobilize support for practical action to allow persons with disabilities to have equal opportunity and live with fundamental freedoms and human dignity. In 2007 President Barack Obama also signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People With Disabilities (CRPD), calling
it “an extraordinary treaty.” Among other things, the CRPD emphasized the cultural and evolving nature of disabilities and paid particular attention to those in “multiple jeopardies,” that is, those discriminated against not only on the basis of disability but, simultaneously, by race, gender, age, national origin, and other status. A girl with a disability, for example, is at least three times more likely to be physically or sexually assaulted on average. Urge your federal and state legislators now to ratify that international treaty, for according to Article VI, the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution, it must become “law of the land . . . and the judges bound thereby.” In lieu of ratification, at least discuss its principles comparing it with the important, beautiful, but at times limited American With Disabilities Act (ADA).

World Social Justice Day—February 20

In 2007 the General Assembly named February 20 as World Social Justice Day to commemorate and urge all efforts to combat unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty. From the Latin roots socius, meaning “friends, allies, partners,” and in another context sociare, meaning “to unite” and justia, meaning, “just, equitable, fair, mainly of persons” and “what is fitting, what is right,” social justice is to treat others fairly as friends, partners, and allies as a way to unite every person, everywhere. To achieve such a society for all, governments must commit themselves to fundamental principles of social justice and frameworks for social action to provide for the human rights as enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as elaborated upon and implemented by various policymaking bodies both globally and locally. With 80% of the world’s people lacking adequate social protection and global inequalities growing, let alone 1 billion, often called the “bottom billion,” who go to bed hungry each night, some of whom exist in the United States, the UN is calling for a new era of social justice that offers basic services, decently paid jobs, and safeguards for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. “Social justice is more than an ethical imperative; it is a foundation for national stability and global prosperity,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a message for World Social Justice Day. As he said, “Equal opportunity, solidarity and respect for human rights, these are essential to unlocking the full productive potential of nations and peoples.” Indeed, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “All humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and education must teach “friendship, tolerance, and peace” among nations and all the peoples of the world.

When scrolling down the list of public service announcements, human rights shows, and interviews at https://amherstmedia.org/search/node/Wronka, if you want a little “fun,” I would definitely look at the public service announcement on World Toilet Day, November 19. It begins: “I know this is a shitty thing to talk about and the whole thing stinks, but doesn’t it get you pissed off to know that three billion people lack adequate sanitation.” Listen further, if you dare.
Other Artistic Venues

Paintings, films, plays, dramas, comedy, street theater, and documentaries are all excellent tools for responding to the clarion call of social justice, to move toward public sentiment in accord with the timeless values that human rights documents often assert. Norman Rockwell’s Four Freedoms paintings—Freedom From Want, Freedom of Worship, Freedom of Speech, and Freedom From Fear—reflect President Franklin Roosevelt’s vision, discussed earlier, and Rockwell’s Golden Rule—given to the United Nations as a gift from Nancy Reagan, wife of the late president—bring awareness of human rights principles. Lysistrata, the hilarious play by that dramatist/jokester Aristophanes, which opened the 2004 Olympics in Greece, is another example. Lysistrata, a committed and savvy community organizer, organized women in Greece to go on a sex strike until the men agreed to stop fighting in wars. Absolutely hilarious! As a social action strategy, prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) organized a global reading of that play in cities and campuses around the world. Not very effective, perhaps, but better than doing nothing. Leaving one’s comfort zone to take risks for social justice is perhaps the greatest challenge facing any social activist.

More contemporary plays are in Howard Zinn’s (2010) trilogy Three Plays: The Political Theater of Howard Zinn: Emma, Marx in Soho, Daughter of Venus. Briefly, they are stories about the anarchist Emma Goldman, quoted often when she said, “If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution”; a contemporary take on Marx if he were alive today; and a reminder that the way we live our lives in our families and communities has repercussions for the world.

Music can also be a potent tool for social action. Songs like “We Shall Overcome,” “Imagine,” “From a Distance,” and “He Ain’t Heavy... He’s My Brother [or Sister]” “hath charms to soothe a savage breast,” to tame forces that encourage what Nietzsche called a herd mentality, which tram- ples the world in near-wanton abandon. Singing and dancing to other people’s ethnic tunes—dancing the Macarena, a polka, a tarantella, or tango—can teach appreciation of different cultures, while acknowledging our common humanity expressed in the universal language of music. Beethoven’s classic, “Ode to Joy,” can serve as a siren call of hope, yet alone his “Turkish March,” symbolic of his urging for a rapprochement between Christians and Muslims, a concern that echoes today. The heaviness of the lyrics from “Ole Man River”—“Body all achin’ and racked with pain”—create quite a powerful image! And the eerie theme from the movie Schindler’s List can imprint the stamp of “Never Again” on man’s inhumanity to man. And the song...
“Strange Fruit,” a haunting evocation of public lynchings in the South, sung by such luminaries as Billie Holiday, Diana Ross, Pete Seeger, and Sting, is a powerful clarion call to end such atrocities committed in full view of the public, who often perceived them as entertainment! It is noteworthy that Billie Holiday, an African American who also had a heroin addiction, was arrested in her final days, while in a hospital, chained to her bed (Hari, 2015). Judy Garland, child star of the Wizard of Oz, who had a similar addiction, never received such treatment. The moral of the story in part is that if you act on your conviction, which goes against the status quo, you may pay for it, dearly.

The Third Reich may have wanted to hide its atrocities behind walls, but public lynchings were carried on openly and unashamedly. Jumping to the meta-micro level, everyone can attest to the power of the arts and music as an outlet, an alternative mood enhancer to psychotropic medication. “Smile tho’ your heart is aching, smile even though it’s breaking, when there are clouds in the sky, you’ll get by” go the lyrics to the theme song from Charlie Chaplin’s Modern Times, a classic commentary on workers’ stresses in these days of automation. The comedian and filmmaker dared, while Hollywood looked the other way, and making the most of his strengths, to take on Hitler in his farcical The Great Dictator, and in part for his courageous mockery of the McCarthy era in A King in New York, he was not allowed back into the United States until 1972.

On the other hand, music can cause harm even at an early age. There is the line in that children’s song “Three Blind Mice”: “She cut off their tails with a carving knife.” Really! Isn’t it easy to socialize children into accepting the banalities of evil at a very early age? Should visually challenged people be so dispensable? Did Mendelssohn’s powerful “War March of the Priests” play a role, however minor, in the Holocaust? Does the theme to Star Wars encourage youth to resolve conflict only through violence, totally inimical to the thrust of the Universal Declaration? Shakespeare was right: “Music oft hath such a charm to make bad good, and good provoke to harm” (Measure for Measure, 1604, act 4, scene 1).

The power of sculpture, particularly in memorials, should not be dismissed lightly. War memorials dotting the landscape dull our sensibilities. It is not uncommon to pass at least one war memorial while commuting to and from work. Honoring veterans is important, but civilians killed in war should also be honored; both groups have been caught up and victimized in a vortex of classism, racism, ethnic, and religious strife. But where are the peace memorials? There is at least one of a vulnerable-looking Gandhi, at the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, Massachusetts. Another is the Boston Irish Famine Memorial. Sculptures are one way to symbolically admit a culture’s
failures, a form of reparations, however minimal. The sculpture of Crazy Horse in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota and the sculpture of Jose Marti in Havana, Cuba, are other examples. Most recent are sculptures as tributes to human rights activists who have dedicated themselves to rights, such as freedom of expression. One is called Anything to Say? It is of Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning, whistleblowers who dared to speak the truth, calling for government transparency, especially in regard to citizens’ privacy and declarations of war. It was unveiled in Alexanderplatz, Berlin, in May 2015. We need others.

Museums can help us remember the horrors of the past so that they are not repeated. In Greek mythology, the Muses were the daughters of Mnemosyne, whose name means “memory.” They were the inspiration of poetry, music, dance, and other intellectual activities (Cotterall & Storm, 2003). Elie Wiesel (2006), survivor of Auschwitz, has it right when he states in his poignant Night, “In the end, it is all about memory, its sources and its magnitude, and, of course, its consequences” (p. xv). In the Czech Republic, there is Terezin, a holding tank where people waited to be transported to larger camps of extermination. There is also the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, where visitors can view actual apparel of concentration camp inmates and read stories of immeasurable horror.

Whereas the Museum of the American Indian and Alaska Native in Washington, DC, does to a large extent celebrate the culture of Indigenous Peoples, it did not speak to genocide in my view. I joked with the librarian that the only thing missing was playing the “one little, two little, three little Indians” refrain as one walked through the rooms. She smiled and agreed. Mentioning that to some of my indigenous colleagues in Geneva, I was told with a few laughs, “Yeah, that’s about right.” Nevertheless, in Massachusetts, the Deerfield Museum and the Plymouth Plantation, not far from the actual Plymouth Rock, both openly testify to the genocide of Indigenous Peoples, recounting kidnappings and massacres as they were often caught in the middle of religious wars between the English and French, who viewed them as expendable pawns.

An important development is what could be considered street theater, more accurately perhaps a global theater (broadly defined), initiative begun by the People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning (2015) called the People’s Torch/Torch of Dignity Initiative: Learning Human Rights as a Way of Life. Briefly, the first phase coincides with the Olympic Games in Brazil (2016) then continues in other phases: 2016–2018, learning activities leading up to the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration; 2018–2023, a sustainable human rights learning platform to coincide with the 2020 Olympics and the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration; and
2023–2030, a more closely assessed and monitored progress toward the sustainable development goals. There will be selections of torch bearers, chosen by various human rights groups throughout the world, with the particulars to be worked out over time. There will also be vigils, awareness raising through the media, and perhaps a synchronized lighting of dignity torches throughout the world. Key slogans are “I am dignity, we are dignity. No one can take it away from us,” “Human rights are ours to embrace as a way of life,” and “Human rights as a way of life, the road to dignity.”

Recall that the torch is symbolic of the Titan Prometheus’s giving, out of his compassion, fire to humanity for warmth and the cooking of food. For his insolence, Zeus chained him to the Ural Mountains, but never giving up hope, he was eventually freed by the mythic hero Hercules. Whereas particulars need to be worked out in public and global forums, such a symbolic statement can help provide hope for a beleaguered world. This initiative ought to continue until 2048, the 100th anniversary of the Universal Declaration. Although decades away, should we take intergenerational solidarity seriously, the time may be now to begin thinking and planning for such an event and/or series of events on a global scale (see Boyd, 2010).

Art should lead to action. The philosopher and concentration camp survivor Emmanuel Levinas writes that, if the artistic experience says do not speak, do not reflect, admire in silence and in peace, [as] such are the counsels of wisdom satisfied before the beautiful. There is something wicked and egoist and cowardly in artistic enjoyment. There are times when one can be ashamed of it, as of feasting during a plague. (Ayer & O’Grady, 1992, p. 254)

Other Select Direct Nonviolent Strategies

Nonviolent strategies for social change do not always need to mention human rights. But integrating this powerful idea can enhance them. A human rights culture calls for vision, an idea directly consistent with what has been called the spirit of Crazy Horse. Tashunkewitko (his Native American name), an “uncommonly handsome man . . . a gentle warrior, a true brave who stood for the highest ideals of the Sioux . . . [such as] big-heartedness, generosity, courage, and self-denial” (Indigenous Peoples’ Literature, 2006, p. 2), said, “A very great vision is needed and the man who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky” (p. 1). Limited definitions of human rights in opposition to such violations as torture in Guantanamo Bay, the death penalty, and the imprisonment of people of conscience are extremely important, but keeping the vision, what may be called a vision of hope as enunciated in the Universal Declaration, is still vital. If all people had
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jobs with reasonable wages allowing them to support their families with dignity, a fundamental concept in human rights documents, surely there would be more hope for a brighter future. We hear much talk of terrorism and suicide bombers today, but the world population is currently experiencing a youth bulge and a burgeoning global economic system that places profit before need. Given that hopelessness is a major predictor of suicide, one aim of social justice is to create structures where people can engage in peaceful rather than warlike activities, to give them a sense of affiliation and ultimately human dignity, which is fundamental to human rights. Hope is a spiritual-philosophical concept, often camouflaged perhaps within medical rubric. Yet the creation of hope is also fundamental to engagement in therapeutic relationships with clients and patients. Creating a human rights culture entails vision and should provide hope by converting socially unjust structures to structures more amenable to the fulfillment of human need.

The noted peace activist Gene Sharp (2005) discusses a number of social actions to enhance strategies in the service of social justice. This book is not meant to be a primer on all social action strategies. Nevertheless, mention of some, in addition to those focused primarily on human rights, ought to provide a sense of the importance of any direct nonviolent strategies. Such strategies, however, require tremendous courage, the courage of the eagle Crazy Horse talks about. The eagle is notorious for flying straight into the storm and may well serve as a model.

Sharp covers the following strategies: (a) actions to send messages, (b) actions to suspend cooperation and assistance, (c) actions to suspend economic relations, (d) actions to suspend political submission, and (e) methods of nonviolent disruption. Formal statements include declarations by organizations and institutions and group petitions. Truth commissions bring public attention to social injustice. Communications with a wider audience include banners, skywriting, earth writing, slogans, and symbols (written, painted, drawn, printed, in gestures, spoken, or mimicked). There are also group presentations such as mock awards, picketing, and mock elections; symbolic public acts such as the wearing of symbols, signs, and names, symbolic re clamations, reminding officials of an unjust policy; drama and music through the performance of plays, music, and humorous skits; processions such as marches and parades; honoring the dead, as in paying homage at burial places; and public assemblies like teach-ins with several informed speakers. Finally, there is withdrawal and renunciation, like renunciation of honors, walkouts, and turning one’s back. Sharp’s discussion of methods makes a good read, which can be enhanced by integrating human rights principles. His work has inspired activists throughout the world, most recently in Tunisia and Egypt (Stolberg, 2011).
Martin Luther King Jr.’s life, wisdom, and direct nonviolent social actions can serve as bases for socially just actions. An excellent summary of his suggestions for a socially just world, often called the Beloved Community, can be found in a compendium of actions in a brief but succinct paper called The People’s Campaign for Nonviolence: The Way of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Fellowship of Reconciliation, 2015). A rather inspirational two-page document, it speaks of nonviolence as a way of life, not dissimilar from the notion of human rights as a way of life. In brief, it says that nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. It does not seek to defeat the enemy but to win friendship and understanding. Nonviolence is directed toward evil systems, not persons. That “way” offers a number of direct actions that ought to pose a “creative tension” into conflict such as “boycotts, marches, rallies, rent strikes, work slowdowns, letter-writing and petition campaigns, bank-ins, property occupancy, financial withdrawal, and political denial through the ballot.”

Some students in the social action class here held the first Hispanic Human Rights Conference in Hartford, Connecticut. They had music and guest speakers and came up with various human rights declarations on health care, security in old age, and the like for every person, everywhere. In fact, they were so successful that officials came to them! That is quite different from going to the politicians to convince them of an idea, as is often taught in policy classes. But the idea of human rights is already convincing. Practice Illustration 3.9 depicts a National Truth Commission, part of the excellent work of the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, a loose affiliation of human rights and social justice groups such as Arise for Social Justice (Springfield, Massachusetts), Center for Economic and Social Rights (New York), Kensington Welfare Rights Union (Philadelphia), Social Welfare Action Alliance (national), Southerners for Economic Justice (Durham, North Carolina), People Organized to Win Employment Rights (San Francisco), and Youth Action Research Group (Washington, DC). This vast array of organizations, as well as those mentioned supporting Massachusetts Human Rights Bill 706, are a few examples of how human rights can easily assist in coalition building.
commissions in Africa and Latin America, it brought people together from across the United States and the world to bring to light the actual suffering of people living in extreme poverty, a human rights violation. Many social leaders throughout the world were there, including the UN Independent Expert on Extreme Poverty for the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, people from the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, a member of the Indian Parliament, and one of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo from Argentina.

People presented testimonies detailing economic human rights violations on various panels: (1) right to health care panel, (2) living wage struggles panel, (3) right to housing panel, (4) right to water and basic utilities panel, (5) right to education panel; and (6) unjust child removal panel. Lori Smith, from Tennessee, spoke of being dropped from her health insurer after she was diagnosed with lupus; Donn Teske, from Kansas, talked about the experiences of small farming families struggling against corporate agriculture; Mailon Ellison, from Pennsylvania, spoke of struggling to make a home for himself and his family; Dawn Fucile, from Ohio, spoke of her child being removed from her home simply because she is deaf and poor. This commission was also unique in that it provided an important venue for artists, musicians, dancers, and poets to discuss and display their work, trying to shine a light on economic human rights violations in the United States. Survivors of Hurricane Katrina, artists from Rock-a-Mole, and soulful songs in general reminded the roughly 500 who attended the event of the importance and power of the arts.

In brief, PPEHRD urged other communities to hold truth commissions. Following are some of their suggestions. First is gathering information, that is, collecting stories from people who have been downsized, outsourced, cut off welfare rolls, evicted, or denied health care. Then, it is important to organize, build membership, and develop leaders. Such processes must be widespread, including a press strategy, because it is important to break isolation and gain wide acceptance. Central to setting up a truth commission is educating communities, raising their political consciousness about human rights. Another issue is logistics—setting the time and date for the hearing and making sure you have recording devices, both audio and visual if necessary, that work. Human rights monitors must engage in outreach, knocking on doors in the neighborhood, visiting health centers, welfare offices, schools, labor pools, hospital waiting rooms, immigrant organizations, labor unions, emergency shelters, and the like. Then, persuasive testimonies must be chosen. It is also important to have high-profile people at the hearing, like clergy, city councilmen, professors, labor leaders, and entertainers, who might influence policymakers. Obviously, a translator/interpreter may be necessary, and it is important to incorporate the arts into the event. A follow-up report should be submitted to the press summarizing the event for publicity. This report may also serve to attract possible future funding, enhance credibility for the organization, and educate others about the conditions in the community.

It might be interesting to find entities accountable for economic violations, as was done in South Africa’s commissions. Torturers in apartheid South Africa were
easily recognizable and confessed to their atrocities. But responsibility for a person dying from lack of health care insurance or shelter is more amorphous. Are insurance companies, governments, or corporations to blame? The appearance at hearings of those possibly responsible for violations could be an extension of such commissions. Most would probably deny any accountability, a point that perhaps would need publicity in the press. Has the world progressed any from the government officials at Nuremberg, who, after viewing pictures of atrocities in concentration camps, said, one after the other, “I am not responsible…I am not responsible…I am not responsible” (Resnais, 1955). Who, then, is responsible?

When people speak of human rights, the world listens. The struggle for human rights is a people’s movement, to which the helping and health professions must pay attention to make “the will of the people”—a phrase found in all 50 U.S. state constitutions—the basis of government policymaking (Wronka, 1998b). A true human rights culture will not be duped by the powers that be, if Hermann Goering’s words at the Nuremberg trials are correct:

After all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country. (cited in Peace Pilgrim, 1991, pp. 114–115)

If done correctly, nonviolent direct action strategies like truth commissions may be a tool for getting governments to follow the people, rather than vice versa. The challenge is huge, but it is worthwhile to keep in mind Gandhi’s famous words: “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, and then you win.” Martin Luther King Jr., a devotee of Gandhi’s nonviolence, was successful in eventually making government listen to the voices of the disenfranchised. In Figure 3.4, he stands not far from President Kennedy, who felt society lavished too much praise on the warrior rather than the peacemaker.

Summary

This chapter defined macro, mezzo, micro, and quaternary levels of intervention as whole-population (macro or primary), at-risk (mezzo or secondary), clinical (micro or tertiary), and research (quaternary), which, although somewhat distinct, are interrelated. It also introduced meta-macro or global interventions and meta-micro interventions that use the healing power of helpers in everyday life. It described whole-population approaches in which actions based on human rights principles can benefit nations, such
as educating people about human rights from the preschool to the graduate level with exercises from major human rights resources like UNESCO and Amnesty International. Other actions are the drafting of local proclamations and declarations about days meant to commemorate human rights, such as December 10, Human Rights Day. Also mentioned were World Currency Day and Good Morning and Mean It Day, in addition to more generally acknowledged international days like International Women’s Day.

Figure 3.4  Martin Luther King Jr. (third from left) with President Kennedy (fifth from right) and others during the 1965 March for Jobs and Freedom, more commonly known as the Civil Rights March.

Governments are often reluctant to implement human rights principles, unless vast social movements demand it.

(March 8) and Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21). Defenders may also wish to draft actual human rights bills, which they can craft from talking points, such as Massachusetts House Bill 706, which would set up a committee to monitor in a positive yet direct way how a state is doing in meeting its obligations as defined by international human rights criteria. The arts are another means of bringing attention to human rights documents and violations. The song “Strange Fruit” helped end public hangings in the United States. Singing it, however, was not without risk, as the arrest of Billie Holiday demonstrated. Focusing particularly on truth commissions, this chapter concluded with a discussion of other select non-violent strategies such as symbolic public acts, processions, withdrawal, and renunciation.

Questions for Discussion

1. What other international days should we have? Why are there no days acknowledging rights to self-determination, humanitarian disaster relief, international distributive justice, or respect for common heritages of humanity (e.g., space, oceans)? Are such days too scary for governments, perhaps creating a consensus of the feasibility of debt relief for poorer countries, if not peace and international cooperation in space rather than mastery? Should we have days for health care, education, meaningful and gainful employment, rest and leisure, and freedoms of speech and the press? Or do such days exist already? If they do exist, have they somehow lost their meaning? What was the original meaning of Labor Day, for instance? Should there also be a multiple jeopardy day commemorating those discriminated against on the basis of any combinations of characteristics, such as age, race, gender, class, national or social origin, and sexual orientation?

2. McDonald’s at one point had a spurt of advertising acknowledging the importance of Universal Children’s Day, November 22. In the 1990s the New York Times ran a series of articles concluding that fast-food hamburgers were not only bad for the environment but led to obesity among children. McDonald’s threatened to withdraw advertising dollars should the articles continue, a threat the New York Times publicly acknowledged. Do you see a contradiction between McDonald’s touting of Children’s Day and its use of intimidation? What does that say about the viability of human rights documents and the media in general? Can human rights documents be used as mere facades, behind which the powerful can hide? Or do they speak truth to power, urging the powerful to the bargaining table, if not bringing them down?
3. Whereas it is commendable for a community to make international human rights law legally binding, can this be said to be impractical? The Universal Declaration, for example, asserts medical care is a human right. Given the lack of a one-payer system in the United States, couldn’t one person’s illness bankrupt a town? If legally binding international human rights are impractical, what can be done to guarantee human rights for every person, everywhere? Should we have a graduated tax system, for example? Should less money be expended on the military-industrial complex, a term popularized by former president Eisenhower, a Republican? Does our educational system really graduate peacemakers? Or does it educate the populace, subtly or not so subtly, to see violence as the major strategy for conflict resolution?

4. Comment critically on the following statements:

(a) Establishing a commission to examine how a state’s laws and policies compare with international human rights standards is nothing but fluff, hot air, nonsense on stilts, an initiative with no teeth, something academics, or people lucky enough to have the opportunity to work on such proposals, do to keep themselves employed, wasting a lot of time and energy.

(b) Establishing a commission to examine how a state’s laws and policies compare with international human rights standards will create a meaningful nonviolent forum, calling for community participation in the policy debates, which will help expand people’s awareness of what their human rights are and possibly the hypocrisy of their governments. Such an expanded consciousness ought to result in socially just policies in accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

5. Given the blocking in 1992 of a UN resolution, largely by the African countries, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus Day and the more recent observation by Indigenous Peoples of a National Day of Mourning in lieu of the traditional U.S. Thanksgiving, is it practical to do away with those traditional holidays? Indeed, there is a movement today to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. Should any other holidays take the place of traditional ones in your country? If so, what should they be?

6. Think of historical and contemporary music and songs that bring us together and those that tear us apart. Now think of children’s songs that may have influenced a desire to work for social justice and human rights. Why do you think Picasso’s Guernica, a painting depicting the horrors of war, was shrouded during the February 2003 UN hearings called by the United States
before the war in Iraq? What does that say about the power of art to influence policy? Do you feel that the media encourage a culture of social justice? What type of culture do they encourage? What can you do to change it?

7. Comment critically on the following statements:

(a) The greatest issue facing humanity today is finding alternatives to structural violence. However, our educational system teaches nothing about peaceful conflict resolution and thereby puts humanity on the verge of global catastrophe. Nowhere does it emphasize tolerance, respect, and friendship among nations as stressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(b) Major transfer of wealth through capital speculation in the stock market, the primary socioeconomic system in the United States and much of the world, is a good way to enhance human dignity and provide human rights for all.

What would a socially just economic system based on fundamental human rights principles look like? How could it be constructed and maintained?

8. React to the following: The minimum age for voting in at least six countries is 16; in Japan CEOs are disgraced if they downsize; in Europe, by and large, health care and education, from preschool to the doctorate level, are provided at minimal cost, paid for by taxes, and paid maternity leave is a customary practice. If you have never heard of such things, what does that tell you about the education system and the media in the United States? Does general reference to the 1965 March in Washington as a march for civil rights, rather than for jobs and freedom, mirror a culture that rather narrowly defines human rights standards? In a classic work on anti-Semitism, Jean-Paul Sartre (1995) asks why the concentration camps were not in the news during World War II. Do you feel that oppressive practices, if not pogroms, that one never hears about still exist in contemporary times? Why do you think that is so? How could human rights education and the media effectively teach policies that appear more consistent with human rights principles, particularly their interdependence and indivisibility?

9. A major theme of this book is that attaining social justice is a struggle that helping and health professionals must undertake. One must learn to live with ambiguity while working at various levels of intervention at different times, depending on circumstances and individual and group proclivity. But are things really that complicated? Shouldn’t one just counsel an AIDS patient, open up a soup kitchen, administer to a sick child, or release a political prisoner? Why all this talk about macro, mezzo, micro, and the other meta levels? Comment on the following: Any comparison, even by innuendo,
of the helping and health professions today to those in Nazi Germany is absurd. Present-day professionals are dedicated and caring people, whose education and training have prepared them to intervene responsibly with those in need.

10. What would a document look like that portrays the Universal Declaration and the documents following it (CEDAW, the CRC, CERD) in ways and words that children can understand? How could the arts enhance this exercise? Would painting, music, and poetry help? How could children’s input be enlisted? Now begin writing those documents in ways that children understand. Elicit their input before and after the writing of those documents.

Activities/Actions

1. Commemorate one, two, three, or more of the international days discussed in this chapter. Draw up a proclamation that your town or state might endorse and/or have a public reading of portions of a relevant human rights document. Get support from sympathetic community groups and have the appropriate bodies endorse your proclamation. After the readings, have fun, if you are not having fun already.

2. Write a resolution declaring that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and any of the covenants ratified by the United States should become law for your municipality or state. Bring it to your appropriate legislative body for official endorsement. Have your municipality or state draft a non-binding resolution submitted to the president that urges the ratification of all human rights documents with an eye toward their ready implementation.

3. Write a law similar to Massachusetts House Bill 706 that will set up a commission to examine how your municipal, state, or federal body’s laws and policies compare with international human rights law. Present it at the appropriate legislative hearing and begin developing a broad community base to support it. Persist, if you can, until the law is passed. Then write a grant (see Chapter 5) and publish newsletters and a daily column in the newspaper monitoring in a positive way any developments being made toward compliance with international human rights instruments. Also form a monitoring committee to assess progress toward compliance with the bill. Should one be positive or confrontative as the state moves toward compliance with human rights principles?

4. Begin to incorporate human rights instruments into educational curricula and your profession. Go to various websites and readings referred to
in this book and present a proposal to the dean, local school administrator, school board, and/or head of your professional organization. What are their reactions? How can you engage in creative dialogue with them?

5. Make up human rights skits similar to the one described in this chapter. Create, for example, a “mini-MTV” parody emphasizing some articles from a human rights document. Go to a radio and/or television station. Ask to perform the skit or read an article or two from a human rights document. Push the envelope a little. Ask if it’s okay to show the skit (or another, perhaps with the station’s input) as an alternative to advertising junk food or toys of questionable value on children’s television. If the answer is no, perhaps the skit can be performed in class.

6. Have a policy conference and/or poster session at your school. Or, if you want to go for the gusto, have such a policy/poster session at a regional, national, or even international setting that incorporates the principles of human rights and social justice discussed here, as well as the multipronged levels of interventions constructed from these foundations to promote well-being and eradicate social and individual malaises. As a general rule, most policy conferences tend to view social policies as involving discrete solutions, often on the mezzo and micro level. Hunger, for example, could be “solved” by providing adequate food stamp programs and increasing welfare benefits. Whereas there is some truth to that assertion, hunger can also be dealt with using a multipronged approach advocated here. A poster, for example, could simply illustrate the various levels: meta-macro (have the country sign, ratify, and implement CESCR), macro (advocate for a right to food in the state constitution), mezzo (advocate for workers organizing, so parents cannot easily lose jobs, thereby being plummeted into poverty), micro (offering lunch programs), meta-micro (peer support groups on ways to eradicate hunger), research (incorporating insight and best and even worst practices [we learn from mistakes] models). Refer to Tables 3.1–3.2 with their struggles, examples, and a pictorial diagram of multipronged approaches as possible guidelines to intervene in the promotion of well-being with a human rights/social justice framework. Please make sure to note that where one spends his or her energies within that paradigm is an entirely personal decision.

Notes

1. One shouldn’t underestimate children! Sometimes they enjoy pronouncing big words like that. The terms can easily be explained as, in this case, “Historical-philosophical compromises are simply agreements among a lot of people who dress
differently, eat different foods, listen to different music, and the like but who all want peace and social justice in the world.”

2. Although this day, Commemoration of the Victims of White-Collar Crime, Mondo Day, and Right to Development Day are not on official lists, they may be worthy of consideration. Good Morning and Mean It Day is a meta-micro level intervention highlighting the importance of decency in the everyday life, which transcends professionalism, by every person, everywhere toward every person, everywhere. Why not? Imagine Jew, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, believer and nonbeliever, rich and poor, humanist and nonhumanist, loser and winner, theist and atheist, friend and foe alike wishing each other a good morning and really meaning it! I found it also amazing that despite extensive searches on the Internet, I did not see any formal Commemoration of the Victims of White-Collar Crime, so massive, yet somehow unnoticed. Indicative of the meta-macro level, Mondo or World Currency Day and Right to Development Day might be steps toward a world in which allegiance to humanity and globally agreed-on economic and social arrangements among rich, poor, young, old, black, white, and other groups become reality in a society of all ages and colors. “Dream dreams and say why not?” said Senator Robert Kennedy. That is the recipe.

3. See Note 2.

4. See Note 2.

5. Except as noted, the following proclamations, resolutions, declarations, bills, and talking points were initially drafted by this author.

6. Actually, the former president wanted to use the term military-congressional-industrial complex, given that appropriations for arms must come from Congress. Famed expert on communicating with children, Haim Ginott (2005), observed that, in concentration camps, learned engineers built gas chambers, educated physicians poisoned children, trained nurses killed infants, and high school and college graduates shot and killed women and children. Lifton (2000) even comments on gassing of innocents in medical school curricula during Nazi Germany. The question becomes whether one could not add “educational” as well to the term. That is, some of the best schools in the nation have educated our political representatives, yet they continually give priority to military rather than social expenditures. Or perhaps you think that is fine? This makes the efficacy of our educational system to graduate human rights and social justice advocates questionable. In that regard, please note that, although I may disagree with their way of doing it, I in no way want to criticize those who in good conscience put themselves in harm’s way. Keep in mind also that Lifton (2011) comments about strong elements of pacifism among the military who dedicate their lives to minimal casualties, particularly women and children on both sides of the conflict, let alone sacrifice their lives to help colleagues in the battlefield.