



Campaign for Human Rights Education

# HIRE

# BUILDING A GLOBAL CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

## the role of education within Amnesty International



Delegates at the 2005 ICM, Morelos, Mexico

Every two years Amnesty International brings together representatives from across its global movement to debate new ideas, tackle policy questions and decide on directions and strategies. In August this year the 27<sup>th</sup> International Council Meeting (ICM) of Amnesty International took place in Morelos, Mexico, and in Decision 16 set out the direction of AI's Human Rights Education (HRE) work until 2010. The new international strategy – Human Rights Education: Building a Global Culture of Human Rights – which is the culmination of two years' consultative work, sets out an exciting and effective framework to guide AI's education work in the coming years.

HRE is not new for AI; it has been used as a tool by AI activists since the 1970s. Today, across the movement, diverse and innovative examples of HRE can be found playing a role in creating an

understanding of human rights and challenging people to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour. Since the early 1990s the AI movement has recognized the significance of HRE as an instrument for change; the 1991 ICM decided it should be a high priority for the movement, and form part of the core work of each section and structure. In 2003 the ICM decided that a review should be conducted of HRE within AI and a new international strategy developed.

The two goals of the new strategy are:

**Goal 1:** Use education to build a global culture of human rights and prevent human rights abuses

- Enable a broad spectrum of individuals, groups and communities to understand and express their personal concerns in human rights terms;

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Building a culture of human rights education in line with our newly adopted strategy includes exploring new and innovative tools to strengthen human rights education. Using theatre and drama is one such example as described below, and Popular Education on page 6, demonstrate how this can help deliver effective HRE.

## PLAYING FOR REAL?

Professor Paul Heritage describes his programme combining educational theatre and human rights

On a Tuesday night at the beginning of June 2004, I stood on a war-torn frontier, knowing that at least 10 men from both sides had their guns trained on my chest and back. For 30 minutes I stood there: my eyes searching out bullet-marked walls, my ears straining to locate the weapons being prepared to fire, my body in tense alert. I was on the shooting gallery that locals call the Gaza Strip. Not somewhere in the Middle East, but on the dividing line between the *favelas* [shanty towns] of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas. I was in Rio de Janeiro, but on one of its battlegrounds rather than its beaches.

I was there to make theatre. To play. But this time for real. Together with a local cultural group called Afro Reggae, I had invented a project called *Amor em Tempos de Guerra – Love in Time of War*. Our proposal was to play Shakespeare in different communities across this divided city. With a cast that included some of Brazil's most famous actors – from stage, screen and soap opera – we planned to produce two Shakespeare plays which are rarely, if ever, performed in Brazil:

*Measure for Measure* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Two plays that deal with love and relationships in times of war and social conflict. And the opening night of the project was to be a performance of *Anthony and Cleopatra* on the frontier between the two warring communities.

Grupo Cultural Afro Reggae made it possible for us to be there on that frontier. They were formed in 1993, after the massacre in Vigário Geral in which the Brazilian security forces murdered 21 members of the community. The subject of two major reports by AI<sup>1,2</sup>, the massacre has formed the background to the success of Afro Reggae over the last 12 years as they built a cultural project that takes young people out of the drugs trade. They make so much possible in Rio de Janeiro that would otherwise be unimaginable.

This project is just one of the explorations and experiments that I have undertaken in Brazil. Each in their way has extended my understanding of what performance can bring about. Brazil has become a place for me to explore the promises and possibilities of art as a social action, in particular in the definition and defence of human rights. Most of this work has taken place in the Brazilian prison system, reaching over 25,000 inmates and guards since 1991. From the Amazonian region in the north to the southern metropolitan regions of Rio and São Paulo, I have worked in partnership with Brazilian artists to establish a performance-based programme known as *Staging Human Rights*. It is based not on denunciation of abuse, but on joint declarations of rights. From the *Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* by the National Assembly of France in 1789 to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN in 1948, the understanding of human rights has been founded on the principle of denunciation. It is within this tradition of creating and declaring rights that *Staging Human Rights* is performed within zones of exclusion.

Paul Heritage at the final presentation of his educational theatre workshop, *Staging Human Rights*, at the Brazilian Ministry of Justice, July 2003.





From top:

A prisoner plays the lead role in *Anthony and Cleopatra*. In the background are Afro Reggae as soldiers and musicians.

Prison inmates attend a theatre workshop.

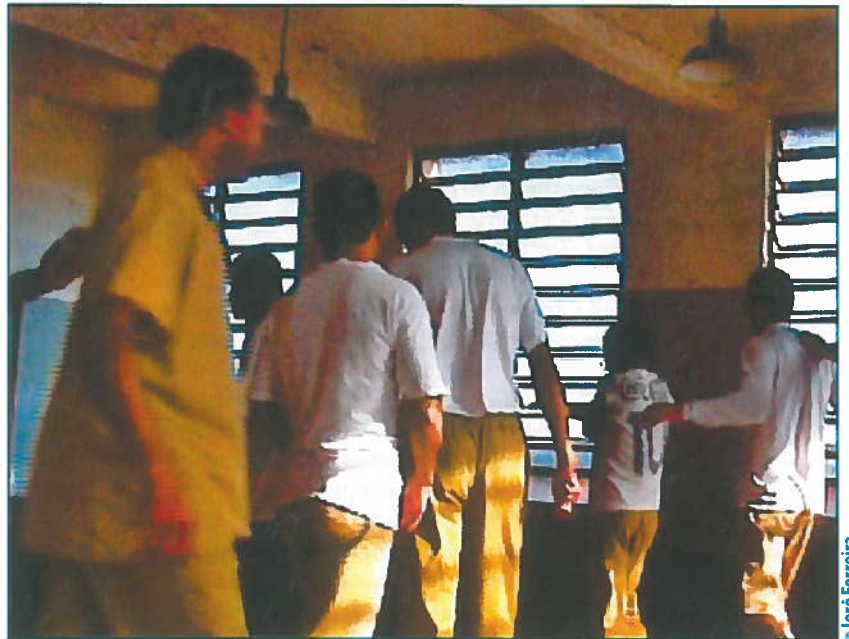
Prison guards play the role of prisoners in a theatre workshop.  
July 2003.



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When I enter prisons I do so with official sanction. The current *Staging Human Rights* programme is sponsored by the Brazilian Ministry of Justice and is used for the training of guards, and this inevitably affects and contains what can be achieved. With the Shakespeare performance on the frontier of Vigário Geral I was acting outside civic and legitimate spaces, just as Shakespeare's own theatre was constructed outside the city walls. To make these performances happen I met men with guns in shadowy hideouts. I climbed *morros* [hills] at night and stood above the Cidade Maravilhosa ["Marvellous City", common description of Rio de Janeiro], talking Shakespeare with young men carrying AK-47s and grenades. For years I had met the men of violence inside the prison. Now I was with them on their terms not mine.

Five months after the performance, two young girls were shot playing in that space we had sought to make safe. Theatre exists in the present tense and is never permanent. The audience and actors together imagined a future that could be different with their presence in that space. Because theatre insists on our presence. It is an act of witness. And to be a witness is the greatest act of civic responsibility.



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Paul Heritage is Professor of Drama and Performance at Queen Mary College, University of London. To find out more about any of this work, go to [www.peoplespalace.org.br](http://www.peoplespalace.org.br) [click on flag in top right corner for English language version]



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<sup>1</sup> Brazil: Rio de Janeiro 2003 – *Candelária and Vigário Geral 10 years on* (AI Index: AMR 19/015/2003)

<sup>2</sup> Brazil: *Candelária and Vigário Geral – Justice at a snail's pace* (AI Index: AMR 19/011/1997)



# HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES:

## Learning about a holistic and practical vision of human rights

by Shulamith Koenig, Founding President of People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE), and recipient of the 2003 UN Human Rights Award. email: [pdhre@igc.org](mailto:pdhre@igc.org)

I will never forget the story of a ceremony held in Malicounda Bambara, a Senegalese village, to mark an end to the practice of female genital cutting. As a little girl ran on to the stage, her mother called her: "San San!" A curious journalist asked what the name meant. "Human rights," answered the proud mother. "Because she is the first girl in the village who was not cut."

This pride was the result of human rights education in the village. Since then there have been 19 declarations of 1,571 communities in Senegal to abandon female genital cutting and child marriage, all as a result of women, men and children learning about human rights as a way of life. Learning that human rights are relevant to their concerns and towards the realization of equality, non-discrimination and belonging with others in dignity.

The facilitators of this learning process are a Senegalese human rights group called Tostan,

which has been supervising the development of a human rights city in the town of Thies. This is an initiative ongoing in several countries including Austria, Argentina, Canada, Ghana, India, Mali, Senegal and South Africa through which community members learn, monitor and take actions that will weave a human rights way of life into their community and bring about economic and social change necessary for sustainable development. Members of the human rights group Tostan know that learning about the universality, indivisibility and interconnectedness of human rights, and overcoming "cultural obstacles", is the way to have women and men join in stopping female genital cutting.

However, most of the six billion people in the world do not know about the relevance of human rights to their lives. They are not aware of the commitments made by their governments to implement human rights in their country. This presents serious obstacles: on the one hand to the realization of human rights as a way of life; and on the other to the promotion of human rights as a proactive strategy for economic, social and human development with a gender perspective, conflict prevention and human security. These goals and concerns cannot be made a reality without people consciously claiming them as their birth rights. It has to be said that in order to achieve economic and social transformation, we must learn with humility and conviction about non-compartmentalized, indivisible and interconnected human rights through all sectors of society. It is a global challenge and an imperative for the future of humanity. There is no other option. In the words of Nelson Mandela, we must weave a "new political culture based on human rights". The practical, holistic vision of the human rights framework

Up to 2,000 people march to declare Thies, Senegal, a Human Rights City. December 2000.







presents a guideline for people's moral, political and legal concerns which should be discussed in schools and in communities.

When some poor women in the human rights city of Rosario in Argentina learned that health is a human right, they confronted doctors and nurses who they believe have mistreated them, bringing about significant change including a course in human rights at the medical school. The ability of educators to develop and elucidate the holistic vision of human rights enabled the learners to understand all aspects of their lives within a human rights framework and chose it as their guideline for changing their lives. (We at PDHRE never speak of "rights" but always of "human rights" to underline the holistic understanding and its expressed horizontality.)



© pdhre

**Demonstrators call for an end to female genital cutting and early marriage. Some 1,570 communities in Senegal have abandoned the practice of female genital cutting through 19 public declarations since 1997 thanks to a human rights-based education programme developed by the non-governmental organization Tostan with funding from UNICEF/Senegal.**

As educators we have several choices: on the one hand, whether to school people in human rights, or on the other to have our students discover through dialogue and learning the true meaning of human rights for their future. Is it not the case that simply rehearsing articles, norms and standards and focusing only on violations has the effect of compartmentalizing the vertical aspects of human rights? Rather, should we not enable our students to imagine human rights as the road they must take to overcome violations if long-term social transformation is to be pursued? (As I often say: human rights are the banks of the river in which life can flow freely. And when the floods come, HRE and learning strengthen these banks.)

**Participants at a workshop on "multiple poverties" at the Law School, Rosario National University, coordinated by the Paulo Freire Institute.**



**Activists publicize the Human Rights City in the main street in Rosario, Argentina.**

© pdhre

And last but not least: it is important that our students know that human rights are about the indivisibility of civil, cultural, economic, political and social concerns. In Rosario, Argentina, some 200 children aged 10 were helped to understand human rights through traffic regulation. In roleplay they discovered that we "need to know when we can go and when we need to stop ... so we don't get hurt." The children were able to understand that human rights enable free and democratic movement in the world where men and women as equals can fulfil their needs for food, education, housing, health and work at a livable wage. They also discussed the fact that the freedom to move in the world needs to be protected by international law. Women in the village in Senegal approached their husbands asking for land to grow vegetables, arguing that "land is a human right". They got it!

This is just the beginning of the discussion. I do not claim to have all the wisdom but I do have some experience which I have accumulated, much of it through our work in the human rights cities. You can find out more about them at: [www.pdhre.org/projects/hrcommun.html](http://www.pdhre.org/projects/hrcommun.html)

Realizing that HRE and learning is about real people's lives and their dignity, we will know that we have no other option. As human rights educators, whatever the mandate of our organization, we have a responsibility: our audience needs to understand the holistic vision of human rights.



# What is ‘popular education?’

**Popular education means literally education by the people, with the people and for the people. As an educational practice, educators help people to learn through analysis and discussion of their own situation in the face of problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and environmental destruction.**

**Carlos Núñez Hurtado – Coordinator of the Paulo Freire Chair at ITESO University, Guadalajara, Mexico; ex-President of the Conselho de Educação de Adultos of Latin America (CEAAL); and founder and ex-member of the Alforja Popular Education Network in Mexico and Central America – gives a brief summary of the main elements of popular education.**

For some people, the term “popular education” (PE) is associated only with the use of “participatory techniques” to further the process of education. This type of practice is usually very voluntarist, lacks rigour and has no precise course or direction.

Others identify PE with “workshops”, that is, intensive educational “events” that do not concern themselves with methodology, logic or genuine participation. In these cases, the practice is reduced to the holding of such events, but without a strategy or programme to guide them.

Then there are those who identify PE with working with “the people”, but this does not necessarily mean that they do it in accordance with the principles of PE. On the contrary, they frequently work in a way that is the opposite of those principles. We who have adopted PE principles and methods find many other practices that claim to be PE but which often appear far from being so.

## What defines genuine PE?

PE is characterized by the rigorous and integrated handling of four fundamental aspects:

### its ethical framework and commitment

As in all education, PE has and accepts an ethical option. We identify PE with “the ethics of life”. Consequently, we reject and distance PE from “the ethics of the market”, which are dominant and hegemonic, and produce human beings

By contrast, the ethics of life proposes and leads to the construction of a social and development model based on justice, truth, freedom, autonomy, respect for nature and so on.

### its political position and options

Popular education “takes sides”. It adopts a political position in favour of the poor, the oppressed and the excluded. All education, without exception, also takes a political position, consciously or unconsciously. Those who choose the neoliberal educational model adopt a political position that favours the powerful, whether this is what they want or not. They are forced to be accomplices of its policies, actions and predatory culture, in a competitive and dehumanizing world. Neutrality does not exist, either in science or education, or in its social, economic, cultural and political consequences. PE unambiguously makes an

explicit choice to work on behalf of the poor of the earth. It works with them and their interests to try and build a just and human society for all.

### its framework based on dialogue between bodies of knowledge

Any act of education is characterized and defined by how it deals with knowledge. Knowledge is its raw material, its nature and its objective. But in a model based on the ethics of life, the dignity of human



All photos: Delegates participating in a popular education workshop in Alforja, El Salvador, in September 2003.

who may have skills, but who may also lack a sense of solidarity and use lies. In brief, this is a development and social model that has a predatory attitude to the environment, produces serious injustices, and generates wars, abuses and discrimination.

PE questions, criticizes and distances itself from that model. Instead, it absolutely insists on the ethics of the educational act. And it does so from a humanist and sustainable position.





beings (and therefore the students) is not in question. Every human being is a dignified, free, responsible and autonomous person. They should be treated as such. The theme of knowledge is no exception.

In traditional education, knowledge is considered to be something that already exists prior to the students and the educational act itself. Knowledge “exists”. Consequently, the task of education is to “transmit knowledge” to whoever lacks it. The teachers are mere transmitters of a static, generalized body of knowledge that is normally alien to the reality, culture and real interests of the students. The students passively receive what is being taught and transmitted to them by the teacher. They must memorize it and repeat it. There is no creativity, participation or analysis.

With PE, in contrast, knowledge is considered to be a continuous social construction. Everybody, in some way, has knowledge. Everybody knows something. Nobody knows everything. The act of education consists of a rigorous “dialogue between bodies of knowledge”. The students have to learn what the teacher is teaching. But the educational act is not a passive and memory-based transmission of knowledge, but is collective and guided within a context. The starting point is the cultural level, the objective and subjective perception and the level of knowledge of the students.

This is the major difference with traditional positivist educational proposals, which are based on theory, abstractions and distant ideas. They are alien to the practice of the students.

### And finally:

#### its proposal to further develop pedagogic processes

Dealing with the process of knowledge as outlined above (participation, creation of knowledge, etc.) implies the development of a methodological, pedagogic and didactic proposal. Only the use of pedagogic processes that involve participation, dialogue, analysis and the construction of knowledge can make it possible to be coherent with the ethical framework we have described. Dialogue, tolerance and educational democracy are encouraged and promoted.

PE is committed to the four areas above being connected and integrated to all education. We can say that we are working within the perspective of PE in any kind of social educational task.

The following article provides an example of creating an ethos of human rights education not only with the curriculum but also within the entire school environment. This approach to education reflects the goals of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education, that focuses on primary and secondary school education and calls for quality education within the first phase of the Action Plan (2005–2007).

## Teaching about human rights to primary school children



Knights Enham Junior School, Hampshire, UK

eKnights Enham School

by Anne Hughes, Head teacher at Knights Enham Junior School in Hampshire, UK

In 2002 an article appeared in the UK newspaper the *Times Educational Supplement*. It reported on a school experiment in Canada and stated: “A significant drop in bullying and raised self esteem through teaching the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was noted...” This led to a team of teachers from Hampshire undertaking a research trip to Cape Breton in Canada. Two of us from Knights Enham Junior School were fortunate enough to be a part of the team to visit Canada.

On our return to the UK we decided to immerse one Year 6 class [children aged 10] in the whole ethos of children’s rights, keeping the other Year 6 class as a “control group”. Before we started, both Year 6 classes were of similar abilities and attitudes. Initially seven lessons were planned. After we gave these lessons we decided to broaden the work as the impact was so profound. Poetry was written, art was fostered and even maths and history work was started from a rights-based approach. The children also explored the websites of organizations such as UNICEF and Oxfam. The creative as well as the academic and social aspects of learning and teaching about the rights of the child were explored.

Within two weeks we noted that the children became more tolerant of each other, were more aware of “whole world issues” and would use terminology as a tool to prevent or resolve conflict issues. They also empathized with others more readily. As the war in Iraq was taking place at this time, both Year 6 teachers took newspapers to their classes to discuss the effects of the war. The class that was not doing the human rights work immediately focused on the machinery of war, the planes and the bombs. The class which was doing this work, however, was much more interested in the rights which the children of Iraq had lost, such as homes, water, medicines and education.

At the end of the school year a child from the rights-based class said to me: “...this is a class where I want to be...want to learn and am proud of...specially when my friends ask me to help them...this is the best year ever...”

We decided we would use this approach with the whole school from September 2003. We are situated in a high area of deprivation. Although we had developed a good whole school pedagogy, vision and ethos, nevertheless we always felt that we were missing that “something”. We suffered from sporadic anti-social behaviour where children were often in conflict with each other. There was a lack of motivation and understanding that they were an important part of the community and the world, and deprivation often led to low expectations.

All the teachers were keen and enthusiastic having seen the impact in the Year 6 class. In September 2003 we started teaching a rights-based curriculum. In December of that year we had our Ofsted inspection [Office for Standards in Education, responsible for the inspection of all schools in the UK]. Ofsted were interested as they had not heard of this approach, and they commented on it enthusiastically throughout the report. Here is just one quote: “A clear and positive school ethos which is supported and enhanced by the Rights of the Child”.

Since then, the school has gone from strength to strength. The children have been involved in developing class charters, the school vision statement, lunchtime charter, home/school agreement, the school’s anti-bullying policy and even the school strategic plan.

I firmly believe this whole initiative is about informing children to empower them to shape the next generation. A change will only happen if tomorrow’s generation are rights-aware, motivated, articulate and empathizing citizens who demonstrate respect and understand responsibility.

Finally, a child said this to me: “All children must have rights, because all children are the same, whether coloured, big, small, everybody’s the same and if they didn’t have rights, they may not grow up nice.”



continued from page 1



Anja Mihr (Vice-Chair of AI Germany) and Mariam Lam (former IEC member with responsibility for HRE) at the HRE fringe meeting at the ICM, Morelos, 2005.

**Goal 2:** Build the competence of AI to conduct effective human rights education.

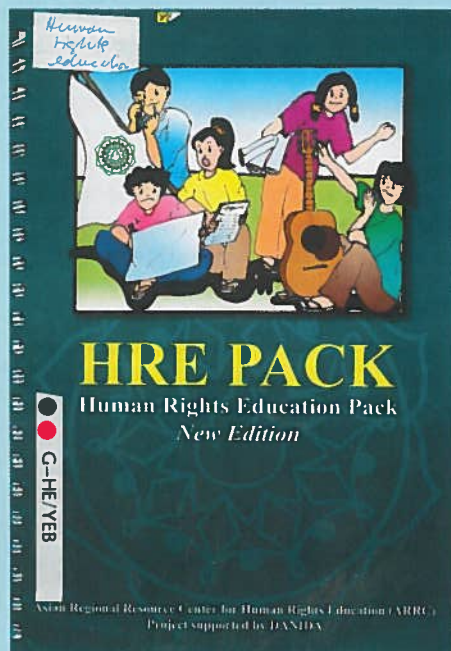
These were adopted by consensus at this year's ICM, amid much interested discussion and enthusiasm.

Throughout the next few years AI will strengthen its competence and a capacity within the field of human rights education and create ever more dynamic and effective programmes for change through education. We believe that HRE can assist people to understand the theory of human rights and integrate it into their everyday lives, and that it can play a role in protecting their own rights and enable them to take action to defend the rights of others.

We look forward to exciting times ahead and to making a real difference to people's lives through all our educational work.

- Inspire people to integrate human rights principles into both their individual lives and their social institutions;
- Challenge and enable people to act to demand, support and defend human rights and use them as a tool for social change.

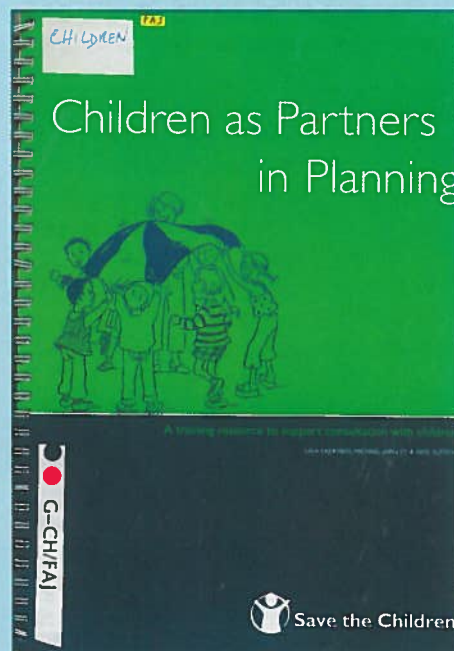
## Some HRE resources



**Authors:** Yeban, Felice  
Limpin, Theresa  
**Title:** HRE pack: human rights education pack: new edition  
**Publ:** Asian Regional Resource Centre (ARRC), 2003

**Summary:** A revised edition of a comprehensive manual outlining all aspects of human rights education, with particular emphasis methodological approaches in Asia including ADIDS (Activity/Discussion/Input/Deepening/Synthesis) and popular theater. Includes lesson plans and a CD-ROM.

Cover of a revised edition of an HRE manual by the Asian Regional Resource Centre. © ARRC



**Authors:** Fajerman, Lina  
Jarrett, Michael  
**Title:** Children as partners in planning: a training resource to support consultation with children  
**Publ:** Save the Children, 2000

**Summary:** Contains suggestions for workshops of varying lengths, case studies, and some activities to use when consulting children. The case studies cover a wide range of subjects, including holidays, having fun at the disco, a children's council and acquiring the confidence to choose.

Training resource by Save the Children, 2000. © Save the Children



**Author:** AI Italy  
**Title:** Il quadernone di Amnesty International. Per scoprire cosa sono i diritti dei bambini  
**Publ:** Amnesty International – Italian Section, EGA, Turin, 2003

**Summary:** A picture book for colouring, that makes use of cartoons, easy didactic activities and games to be played alone or in small groups, for primary students (aged between five and seven) introducing children's rights: what they are, who established them and why.

Resource book for school children. © AI Italy