

Women, Religion, and Social Change II

PANEL: COMMON VALUES, HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL RIGHTS

THOMPSON ROOM

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2003

10:45 AM - 12:30 PM

DIANA L. ECK: If you could take your seats, I think we'll begin. Let me just say a word of special welcome to those of you who have come to listen to this remarkable group of women this morning. Welcome. It's great to have you here. Great to have your participation as well.

We have another topic, in case we thought we had gotten to the end of controversy. This one is called Common Values, Human Rights, and Civil Rights, all of which raise a certain amount of controversy. And then we have the question, what are the alliances of religious and secular women? And, of course, the very term secular comes to be used in a great many ways in different parts of the world. And what does it mean? Does it mean non-religious? Does it mean separation of church and state? Does it mean in India the equidistance of the government from all religions? The term secular itself has a great genealogy, and we probably misunderstand each other a lot when we use that term. Daphne said yesterday in a remarkable, arresting statement-- Is Daphne here? Where is she? Did she step out? Well, tell her that I referenced her when she comes back. She said that Europe is basically secular and for the first time, a major continent is almost completely secular. Then we have to think of what exactly that means.

But we have a panel of people today who are going to address some of these issues. And I will turn it over to Ann Braude, a distinguished American historian who teaches at Harvard Divinity School and is the Chair of the Women's Studies in Religion Program, a program which brings women scholars from all over the world, really, to Harvard Divinity School as visiting lecturers to teach for a semester and to do research for the other semester. And just by the way, if you happen to be one of those people or know one of those people, you ought to see Ann Braude before the time is up. And it's a great pleasure to have Ann chairing this panel this morning.

ANN BRAUDE: Thank you so much, Diana. It's a real honor to be here. Diana has already done all my plugging for me, but I just have to say as a historian, it's especially thrilling for me to see this group reconvened after 20 years to really give us a chance to mark the changes. It seems that controversy is the constant and something we can rely on however long the time span, and I'm very much looking forward to the lively discussion among this remarkable group of women who will be talking to us about common values, human rights, and civil rights. Shula told me human rights are so important she needs 11 minutes, not 10, so I must be extraordinarily brief in my introductions, which I will, because you can see larger bios of all of these people on the Web. They all have many distinguished publications, some of which are here for you. But I will just say one sentence about each of the five speakers now and then they will each speak without further ado.

It's a great pleasure to have Sissela Bok with us as Senior Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies. Some of her publications are here. I'll especially reference her classic study *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* and the many other works that she has contributed to help us understand exactly this issue we're looking at now of how does the secular world deal with values.

Dorothy Eck, who is here only because of her distinguished career in public service in the state of Montana, her 35 years of service there, including 20 as Democratic State Senator. Incidentally, her relationship with Diana having allowed us to have the pleasure of her presence here.

Grove Harris is the Project Manager of The Pluralism Project, which is sponsoring us this weekend in this gathering, which didn't exist 20 years ago. That's one of the historic changes that we've seen. She's contributed to that both as Project Manager and as the author of the section on Paganism in the CD ROM *On Common Ground* that The Pluralism Project has produced.

The next speaker will be Shulamith Koenig from Israel. She is the Executive Director and Founder of the People's Movement for Human Rights Education, which succeeds the project she initiated, The [People's] Decade for Human Rights Education, that the UN undertook. She has several of her publications available on the back table that I invite you to peruse.

Finally, I get to introduce Sylvia Marcos, whom I just got to meet, although she preceded me in the Women's Studies in Religion Program as one of the program's resident fellows a number of years ago. She is an anthropologist from Mexico who is one of the moving forces behind a number of important scholarly initiatives there focusing on gender, but she also serves as a consultant for a number of international NGOs and funding agencies related to gender issues in that part of the world.

So, without further ado, Sissela.

SISSELA BOK: Thank you so much, Ann. I want to start by saying thanks again to Diana and Ellie and the staff, and this time not just thanks for bringing us here but very much thanks for keeping us all, insofar as it is possible, linked together on the same wavelength. I want to talk to begin with about the possibility of dialogue about common values, in between about what to do when dialogue breaks down, and finally come back to quoting three women that I've been in dialogue with either all my life or much of my life.

And I want to begin, then, to say that as far as I can see, I feel I've learned so much from all of you and had to try to really expand to understand your points of view and where you agree and where you disagree. And also try to understand how we might best be of use. And it is clear to me that the disagreements that have come up in the group over the last few days in a way mirror the disagreements around the world and within societies and within religious and secular traditions. Disagreements about what role democracy should play, disagreements about what role human rights should play and which rights, or all of

them, disagreements about the legitimacy of certain forms of violence. And also, I think, but I may be wrong, disagreements about whether we can have an attitude of hope or perhaps near despair about the chances for progress and for healing in the world.

So, I don't think we can base whatever alliances we may want to found on any agreement on all those matters. And in that case, then, how do we begin and continue the dialogue that we've been having? And, as I say, there are so many ways in which we vibrate completely to one another and, yet, there are these disagreements.

And much more serious, what dialogue is possible for people who are most caught up in hatreds and suffering in so many parts of the world. Are there any values that can be shared at all, any moral values? Because, after all, there are people who seem now to be completely blind to the suffering of others and especially the suffering of people they think of as their enemies. So, is there any common ground for them to begin talking to their enemies and their adversaries? And in many quarters, there is still greater disagreement. On the one hand, we have a number of books and grim pronouncements about the impossibility of reconciling discord and value systems. And on the other hand, we have, I think, glib, sonorous proclamations of a vast array of values that we supposedly all share. For example, one year before 9/11, the United Nations, as I'm sure you know, had a Millennium Declaration. It was signed in September 2000 by prime ministers, presidents, other representatives of over 150 states, some of whom were leaders of the most oppressive and aggressive regimes on earth. Yet, they all agreed to uphold this panoply of values, namely, freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, shared responsibility, education for all young girls. Oh, yes, they all signed on to that. And, of course, many of them don't do anything about those values at all, in fact, go counter to them in their own country.

Well, that Millennium Declaration never rang more hollow than after the September 11 attacks the following year. The reactions to the news of the attacks, not only of horror, anger, and grief, but also sometimes of jubilation and schadenfreude among some, concerned violations of fundamental moral prohibitions on the taking of innocent human life. And these violations are denounced in all major religions, yet were proclaimed by the perpetrators of the attacks and their leaders to have been divinely ordained.

Well, the scale and impact of the September attacks may have been very striking to all of us, but as has been pointed out in these meetings, the violations are anything but novel in human history. And even as the planes hit the twin towers and the Pentagon, campaigns of terrorist killing were underway in conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, excuse me for that word, and Asia in the name of a variety of religions and belief systems. So, yes, I do believe it's important to be skeptical in the face of the rhetoric about the common values we all supposedly share.

There are many values that are held forth as universal that are demonstrably not shared. And even the most fundamental values such as the rudimentary forms of nurturing and caring that all societies do share and the curbs on violence, deceit, and betrayal, those are shared also within most societies, but only in the sense that no society or even family could

survive without them internally. But they are precisely not shared at all in another sense of being recognized as applying to outsiders, strangers, enemies. Still, the very fact that these values had to arise everywhere-- And in my book *Common Values*, I have a few copies here for some, I only have three at this point. But, anyway, I talk about how these common values had to arise everywhere, because otherwise, any tribe, any family, any society would simply collapse. These values do offer a basis for dialogue about how to extend them once you begin recognizing, yes, we don't want to have killing within our family, at least, or our village. So, why, then, should we think of doing it to others? That, I think, offers us a way of rejecting practices, such as, for instance, slavery, terrorism, genocide, and human sacrifice, and for critiquing doctrines that endorse those practices.

In addition, as useful as healthy skepticism about the rhetoric of massive shared values may be, all-enveloping skepticism has dangers all its own. It can lead those disenchanted by inflated claims such as those of the UN to swing over to imagining that societies, in fact, share no values whatsoever. And then it can facilitate, in turn, passivity in the face of atrocities on the ground that there can be no meaningful discourse about shared values or even understandings across cultural and linguistic boundaries. And, yet, we all know very well, for instance, a concept that came up earlier today and yesterday, of people who are "disappeared." We have no problem at all across national boundaries to understand what that means for the families and for the friends of the people who disappear in that way, who are made to disappear.

In addition, the kind of attitude that says we can't possibly share anything across national or other boundaries can facilitate as well blindness to what I think are remarkable and innovative countervailing forces in support of basic values that have sprung up in the past hundred years or so. "Countervailing forces" John Kenneth Galbraith was talking about, industry and labor and government, but I think we can talk about war and peace, forces for war, forces for peace, bringing new institutions and movements and resources of leadership and research and diplomacy. And all the people and all the books that say the 20th century was nothing but murder and genocide tend to ignore. They tend, for instance, not to mention names like Gandhi or a number of others.

So, in the past decade, I think, in particular, we have had a number of new resources that never existed before. The International Criminal Tribunals in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, the Truth Commissions that began in 1974 and especially then, I think, flourished in South Africa, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. And we are learning, however, to recognize how even when those countervailing forces are used, they can also be eroded and violence can still take over the human mind. And here again, new information is coming to us from neurology, genetics, primate studies, public health studies, psychiatry, and politics about the effects of indoctrination into growing tolerance for violence, growing pitilessness toward victims, sometimes sheer pleasure in killing. Well, I don't want to say that anything assures us that the countervailing forces for peace and collaboration will win out. But to neglect them, I think, is to make a real mistake.

Now, if we look around the world, we see that some of the noblest, most humane, ethical conduct as well as some of the most ignoble, inhumane, utterly unethical conduct are carried out in the name of one or other religion, and it is not at all any one, or some one or other secular faith or ideology, sometimes in the name of the same god, as in Northern Ireland, other times in the names of different gods, different aims for humankind. So, the question we have to learn to ask, I think, is how can such things be done in the name of religions or of secular ideologies that also hold such noble aspirations for human conduct? By what ethical standards do we evaluate arguments made to say I do this in the name of my god? Again, I think we can look at those shared values and we can ask moral questions of religious conduct as well as of all other conduct, and we can refer to the most basic and shared common values that have had to be worked out in every community for reasons of sheer survival.

Well, I want to conclude, then, with some quotes from three women that I feel that I've been in dialogue with. One, the French thinker Simone Weil, whom I actually never met but feel I know her because of her books. She took part briefly in the Spanish Civil War and then she wrote her extraordinary book *The Iliad or the Poem of Force* in part as a response to the Nazis. And in this she speaks of the transforming power of violence. She says, "The combatants have to egg themselves on, to keep convincing themselves that what they are doing is right, that it serves the cause of justice as they get carried away," as she puts it, "by a sort of intoxication." And we're learning a lot more about that intoxication, sometimes, unfortunately, from experience. But I think there are ways of dealing with it.

The second woman I wanted to quote is the British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch and especially her book *The Sovereignty of Good*, in this particular case. I also feel I've been in dialogue with her ever since I was a teenager because my last name was Myrdal, and I thought Myrdal and Murdoch, there's got to be something connected there. I came to love her novels and her philosophy. And here she says this quote, "The chief enemy of excellence in morality is personal fantasy, the tissue of self-aggrandizing and consoling wishes and dreams, which prevents one from seeing what is there outside one." Now, she doesn't mean imagination, she who had so much in her novels and also her philosophy, but fantasy, personal fantasy, is destructive, I think she says, to morality.

The last woman is my mother, Alva Myrdal, who conducted a lifetime of campaigns for the rights of women, for improving social conditions worldwide, and for disarmament. I have four copies of my book *Alva Myrdal: A Daughter's Memoir* along with the three copies of *Common Values*, and I thought anyone is welcome to have those, perhaps in the first place people who come from far away, because they're easier to get around here. Alva Myrdal never gave up her belief that reason is preferable to personal fantasy and to unreason. She never gave up her belief in the hope that human beings can fashion a better world if they work together. And she always insisted that it is up to everyone to begin where they are and do what they can. And the following quote, rather to the amazement of her daughters-- There's a Swedish subway station in Stockholm, and here is sort of a picture of her, almost a character, and there is the quote. And many people have taken that quote to live by. She was speaking at a time of great despair about the nuclear balance of terror. She had written a book called *The Game of Disarmament*, where she essentially said that the negotiations at

the time in the '60s and the '70s had become a game to the superpowers. But, we must all begin where we are and do what we can because, and this is the quote, "otherwise, there will be nothing left but to give up. And it is not worthy of human beings to give up." And in Swedish, that worthy of human beings is one word, människovärdigt, human-worthy. Menschenwürdig, I think it would be in German.

So, that's what I would like to close with. Thank you very much.

BRAUDE: Thank you, Sissela. Our next speaker will be Dorothy Eck.

DOROTHY ECK: Thank you. It's a real joy to be here and to see a lot of people from all over the world that I had met 20 years ago. And also kind of see some of the fruits of my daughter's work that I'm very proud of. I come from a different part of the world than most of you also. I'm from Montana, and Montana is a large state of mountains and plains. We only have a little more than 900,000 people for that large space. And many times we feel disconnected from the whole world and from a good bit of the United States as well. I'm especially interested in this topic of common values, human rights, and civil rights. One of the most gratifying things I did in Montana was to help write a new Constitution, where we really did a lot of thinking and good work on laying out the values that we held. I wish I had a copy here, because that is very nicely stated in the preamble. But we also worked with rights, human rights, women's rights, the rights of Native American people, and with civil rights. And a lot of our rights are stronger than those in the US Constitution, which is of advantage to us right now.

But the part I'd like to start with is the idea of forming alliances of religious women and secular women. And I guess that's because now this really fills my life, meeting after meeting and coalition building among groups and coalition building among coalitions. And when you have few people, I live in Bozeman, there are 30,000 people there. And you'd be surprised how many non-profit groups we have that are working in areas of human rights, and we rely on both religious groups and the secular groups in the community. And, for the most part, we work well together. We've just finished a very difficult legislative session. I'm not in the Senate anymore, grateful not to be there.

But on the other hand, we're very much concerned with what's happened, because we have seen not only the rights that we've worked on in the legislature for many years slowly chipped away, but we've seen funding for really important programs chipped away so that, actually, when they ended we know that there's not going to be enough money there to really protect people. And the community is already making plans to gather together to say, you know, how are we going to prevent disaster in our own community? Small area, an area that has far greater resources than most of Montana. But that's what we work with. And we work especially with our Montana Council of Churches. I get e-mails from them every few days, telling us whom we should contact, which legislators, what action needs to be taken. Get the same thing from League of Women Voters and from AARP and from environmental organizations. And they all recognize that there are not enough of us to work separately. We have to work together. And I think that we've developed some rather good ways of doing that.

We also recognize that there are people in our communities that are not with us. And in the legislature, you know, I could just say it's those Republicans. On the other hand, they have a majority, and we have recognized that we can't get anything done without them. And, fortunately, there are those Republican legislators and some of them very fine and skilled, who are willing to work with us and who will sit down and who will talk. Some of them have special reasons for doing that. The President of our Senate I've worked with a lot because I work with mental health issues, and he has a family member or two with mental health issues and recognizes how important they are and is willing to work with us. Past legislators, we used to have a governor, Mark Rosco, who is now in charge of the Republican Party. I was somewhat relieved to hear that, because the Republicans in our legislature used to call him a Rhino Republican, Republican in name only, which meant that he was reasonable on some issues. And I personally feel that it's useful having him as head of the Party, because I can't imagine him doing some of the dirty tricks that we used to see coming out of that body.

We also need to work with those right wing groups that we've been talking about, the fundamentalist church groups. And it's hard, because they're not really willing to sit down and talk with us on most issues. They don't really recognize us as real Christians. But, on the other hand, there are some places we can work together. And I think by working on projects, it helps. I think Habitat for Humanity is one of the great ones, where they're willing to work and our people get out and work. And we have houses that have been built by women. And it's amazing how good women feel about getting out there and knowing that they can wield a hammer and a saw and use the tools to build that house, and when it's finished, it's a real triumph for them.

Another area we found that we can work with some of these groups is on restorative justice. And we have a strong feeling for restorative justice. Some of you remember Charles Colson, who was part of the Nixon fiasco, who went to prison and being in prison he learned something about how the system did not work. And he has brought this back to the conservative community, and they are very helpful in this. And we work together and can talk with one another on it. And that kind of goes into work that we've done for the homeless community. And here the Salvation Army is really the core, and they're able to pull people in from almost all denominations to work on these issues. And I think we have to look towards bridging those gaps.

In looking at what we are doing locally in building coalitions, trying to provide services where the funding isn't available, trying to get the grants we needed, I have never seen a stronger effort towards building collaborations among groups, and I think this is good. Preventing duplicate services, we can't afford duplicate services. And it's gratifying to me to see so many groups coming together to work on common issues, to share the services they have with other groups rather than having the other groups initiate new services. And I think all this is important.

But what I find is that, you know, you spend your life going to meetings. I think you all feel this. And I really feel that while all of these meetings are important, I think that as women, as religious women and secular women, we need to look at the broader solutions. What's

wrong with our system that we have the problems that we have? Why don't we have better prevention up front? What's wrong with our political system? What do we do about campaign finance? And I think this is a major issue. And how we get involved, not only in the human rights issues, the civil rights issues right now. To me, it's most frustrating to see basic civil rights, political rights being chipped away, and this is certainly happening. And I think that in addition to working on good local programs that help us where we are and where I am in a very rural part of the state, we need to look beyond that.

And in the same way, we have to look at what's happening internationally. Now, even in Montana, which, you know, we are isolated and we are a small community, but I'm always gratified by the fact that there are many groups. There are high school groups that continually go to Mexico and Peru and Uruguay to work on projects and to get to know people. And we have a lot of international students who come to Bozeman, not only to the university system, they come to live with families, to have the experience.

And we do support a lot of projects. We have a great guy, a mountain climber who ends up really spending his life building schools for girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan, convinced that educating girls is probably the most important thing they can do. We have a small group that's worked with projects in Mexico for over 30 years, small things. Used to be bringing some agricultural technology to a rural area. I think more recently, we have fewer resources there, it's providing girls in very rural situations, some boys too, with education. We had one medical student who graduated, and I'm always amazed at how you can support a graduate student to become a doctor with very little money.

I guess I'd like to end up just saying that all this networking at the local level is great. But it's not going to amount to much unless we can start building a fair system for our governments, locally, state, nationally, and internationally. And that's what we've all been talking about. Thanks.

BRAUDE: Thanks to Dorothy. And Grove Harris from The Pluralism Project is next.

GROVE HARRIS: Good morning. While I do work at The Pluralism Project, I am here to speak to you today as a Wiccan priestess, so the opinions that I express are my own. And, more specifically, I'm a priestess in the Reclaiming tradition of witchcraft, and this is a tradition that specifically brings religion, spirituality, and politics together. So, there's a powerful thread of activism that's been worked through my community. There are many other different kinds of Pagan groups with different kinds of commitments. So, I'll leave you knowing about that diversity but speak about the thread that is mine.

Environmental concerns are primary for, I think, most Pagans. The earth, air, fire, and water are considered sacred. And now there are very many concerns about the privatization of these elements and what is happening with the environmental destruction of our planet. And I very much hope that these issues can be a common cause across all peoples. Obviously, the indigenous peoples, but people of every religious tradition.

Water concerns have been particularly coming to the fore lately and may be, people suggest, a cause for the next potential round of wars on this planet. So, in terms of solidarity with people of other countries, the Cochabamba Declaration that came out of Bolivia was an uprising of people there who, when their water was privatized, found that all of a sudden they were supposed to pay for water, that it was becoming a market commodity. So, they wrote a declaration that said that water rights are part of our human right and responsibility and that this is not something that can be privatized and that a government and private commerce has a right to regulate for us. It needs to stay in the hands of people, as does the democracy which needs to be in place to effect the governing of these water rights.

So, what happened then is the images of this water and the Cochabamba Declaration were picked up by Pagan activists. And particularly for women's action in Quebec, we designed the concept of a living river. The power of this image has to do with water's ability to transform, to change, to perhaps seep under fences, to hopefully subtly create changes. Obviously, water can be very destructive, but in this case, it was a concept of having a model that would talk about profound change but not about destruction. So, that's one of the ways that Pagan activism contributes to the anti-globalization movement, trying to find images that can work and unify people who are coming together in rage, in despair, in profound desire for change, in frustration that their voices are not being heard in our democratic nation. But to try and provide tools that will help organize, cohere, smooth work with those energies so that change can be effective and that the actions can be sustainable and peaceful. Non-violence is definitely a major proponent. But so that the clashes, instead of being like this, can have more profound and nuanced approaches. And also be sustainable. A lot of people don't want to participate in the anti-globalization movements where it's sound bites and often negative sound bites. This movement as a whole has been accused of not having a positive vision. We know what you're against, but we don't know what you're for. That's actually a problem with the media and of people's actual ability to listen, which we heard some about yesterday. There are many things that this movement is for. Democracy would be definitely one of them. Non-violence is another. People's right to self-determination. As I said, the environmental concerns. So, those are all things that are fairly universal.

One of the problems about Pagan activism is that when you bring the identity piece in, it can create divisiveness amongst coalition building. So, there are times when Pagans choose not to identify as such and to let the values be the common elements. On the one hand, that's an effective strategy in moving toward specific goals. And on the other hand, it's not effective in that it doesn't let people know the truth of where Pagans actually stand. So, there's a kind of invisibility that happens there.

For example, there was a political agenda put together about five years ago throughout communities across this nation that discussed this. And we created a five-point agenda and then had to discuss forever how to name the agenda and finally decided to take the word Pagan out of it. So, those points are peace, which includes community and family concerns, diversity, which is critical for Pagans. If we don't have diversity, we are the people who are labeled "other" and are invited to not participate. Self-determination, for Pagans the locus

of spiritual authority is very much the self, and then on community levels this also means self-determination on a community basis. The environment and then human needs and social justice.

I know a witch who ran on this platform and became elected mayor of her small town, because, of course, we're looking at the Christian right and those political strategies. So, she could run on this platform but she can't say these are Pagan values.

And in terms of this activism, there are specific locations. For example, the Code Pink work in Washington, D.C., where the Pagan Wiccan involvement is specifically invited and negotiated, although that can be difficult. There are also times when we just go and attend ANSWER marches, any other kinds of large political marches that are inclusive and welcoming. And there there's the opportunity to work magical activism. Witches tend to be energy workers. This can be very useful in political settings where the idea is not to develop these spiritual skills to use once a week or in your private setting, but to be able to take these to large political actions.

And, so, I found myself a couple of months ago in Times Square where an unpermitted march-- I don't know if you know, but New York did a really silly thing to not allow a march and they then tried to cram tons of people into a space that was physically absolutely too small. So, there was nothing to do except flow all over those. The police were quite upset about that. So, a lot of people ended up heading towards Times Square. There's this incredible pressure of people, because we were confined to the sidewalk and the dilemma there is if you keep moving, you're not in any violation. But if there are so many people that you're stopped, you are then in violation and can then be arrested. But what we had the opportunity to do is drum and chant there, which helped with the police energies and the blockades and the force of people coming behind to set up a peaceful rhythm, to set up something that's sustaining and essentially smoothing the energy. So, those are the kinds of contributions that we make.

In terms of some of the issues of civil rights, Pagans have been preemptively arrested. This is not legal, but it's been done in D.C. where a whole group-- I think it's one of the measures of effectiveness that the police there knew that there would be Pagan activists there potentially choosing to do civil disobedience. But in this case, they were walking down the sidewalk, and the police corralled people, did not allow anybody to leave, put them on buses, handcuffed them, kept them there all day without any process of arrest. So, it's perhaps not as severe as the civil rights infringements on other communities, but it's still very much a sign. Preemptive arrest is not what we're hoping to have in our democracy. The other piece that's come up is-- I think it was brought up in Boston, and I think also in San Francisco, there are ideas about suggesting that activists must pay for the expenses that are incurred in their enacting their civil rights. So, there are plenty of places for everybody's voice to be raised and say this is inappropriate. Especially if the police state that's coming out in response to these gatherings is not something that we've asked for or think is important.

In terms of some of the other alliances, one particular group I had the chance to listen to outside of Mexico City was a group of punks. Now, being from Harvard Square, I thought that punks was mostly a fashion statement. What I learned is that there is actually an international network, a political statement, and this is disenfranchised youth who are savvy enough to know that being told that they will get computer training and be allowed to sit behind a computer screen inputting data for other corporations for their entire lives, they don't see that as a successful means to a full community-based existence. And they are attending permaculture workshops and learning about magical activism to help them in their work.

So, I think one of the things I'd like to suggest is listening is going to be a strategy for the kinds of coalition building. And listening outside of my own comfort zone to the youth who are reclaiming an area. And in Mexico, one of the concepts they had is water is a critical issue. There are housing areas that just do not have water. And that's where we were able to meet, because people just can't live there. So, these are people on the ground in areas who are having constructive solutions or ideas about what they need to create an alternative viable structure. And we need to be listening to that.

In this country, we've got the Black Bloc, which is youth who are related to the anti-globalization movement. They are stigmatized and the media is reporting them as the troublemakers. Now, these are youth who would think that they morally might feel compelled to throw a brick through a glass window of a business, that that might be a way that they would get media attention and that they would draw attention to their concerns. And it's usually framed that they are the violent ones, whereas huge corporations that are operating, as we know from all the papers, out of incredible greed and are taking millions of dollars from their stakeholders are not being held as anywhere near as responsible as these youth. At the recent actions in Boston, there was a small cluster of these Black Bloc activists. They were surrounded by three times their number of police and eventually just left, because we didn't have the resources to support them and include them.

So, again, we need to watch for any kind of divisiveness and include people even if their participation is different from what we would like it to be. And to not allow the media to rewrite that for us.

Certainly, in the Pagan community, religious rights are part of the civil rights, and that is definitely a struggle that is ongoing. I guess I want to speak for just a moment about the situation of the museums in Baghdad being destroyed. There's a way in which that was also of particular concern amongst Pagans here because this is destruction of artifacts that represent a pre-monotheistic religious reality in the world. And I think it's not coincidental that our current US administration decided that that did not need to be protected in any way, shape, or form.

To tell you a little bit more about the magical working of the Code Pink march. The point of this community is to do some of the visioning work, not just to say what we don't want, but what we do. So, at that march there was pageantry, and when you see pageantry at marches, please don't assume they're Pagans. They may be, but they may not be. They may

or may not care for that label. But we worked with myth and ritual and street theater and spell-casting as a way to try and make every action have an impact. So, there the spell was really about trying to create a web to see ourselves as visioning a new world and to be the change agents that we really so much want to be in this country. It's very challenging for a small and disparate group of people, but I stand -- primarily with Margaret Mead -- who said that the only thing that can change the world is a committed group of people.

__: Can you repeat the quote?

HARRIS: The Margaret Mead quote? I'm sorry I don't have the exact words, but, "Never disbelieve that a small group of people can change the world. In fact, a small group of committed citizens is the only thing that ever has changed the world."

So, it's not to say that I have a great singing voice, but that this particular religious tradition is about participation and everyone coming from their own heart center and contributing to the energies in whatever way they can. So, it's not about skill.

[singing]

And the hands remember how to spin.

We spin justice on the rising wind.

We spin threads of life, the cords of fate.

We spin love into a river that can overcome hate.

We spin justice like a flaming star.

We spin peace into a river that can overcome war.

If you want to know where true power lies, turn and look into your sister's eyes. Break the chains that have kept us bound.

Weave a web to bring the monster down.

In the face of truth no lies can stand.

Weave the vision strand by strand.

We are sweet water, we are the seed.

We are the storm winds that blow away greed.

We are the new world we bring to birth.

The river rising to reclaim the earth.

Thank you.

BRAUDE: Thank you so much, Grove.

__: Can we get copies of that?

BRAUDE: Copies of the song? I bet you can. Shulamith is next.

SHULAMITH KOENIG: Thank you very much. First, I would like to inform you with great pride that I wore my Palestinian jacket today in solidarity with my Palestinian sisters and brothers here and in Palestine. Whenever I am introduced as an Israeli, I always am afraid that people will think that I am a "typical" Israeli. But I'm not, since the 1967 war I have been fighting for a two state solution within the '67 border and I am now ashamed of the

humiliation Israel is perpetrating on the Palestinians which are, in my opinion, war crimes. I can assure you that, even though there are a few of us, we will do all we can to stop Israel. Enough is enough and we are behind your resistance.

I have so much to say, but I will have to speak in headlines using the allotted 11 minutes. I would like to share with you 14 years of a commitment to education and learning about human rights at the community level worldwide. When we met 20 years ago -- an event that was very important for me -- I just arrived in this country. I was working feverishly to tell in the USA about house demolition, deportation and collective punishment of Palestinians, which made me proceed to convince the UN to declare a Decade of Human Rights Education guided by the dream that if all six billion women, men youth and children know human rights we will all join in transforming this a better world, guided by the human rights framework.

At the end of four days of listening to many of you, I feel that I must make a very strong argument about human rights, quoting the Chief of Police in Rosario, Argentina, who said to me after a training: "There is no other option but human rights." There is a long journey ahead of us to fulfill this mission. I may not be able to convince you that awareness and consciousness about human rights is the answer. Many people call me a human rights evangelist, and I've just symbolically joined the "Pagan movement" of which one of our sisters shared with us.

Allow me to tell you a joke, which may enable us to think together: The question is, who is a pessimist and who is an optimist? The pessimist is a person who says, it can't be worse. And the optimist says, yes, it can. After being in 42 countries and working in more than a hundred countries in the last 14 years, bringing the message of human rights as holistic vision for people to claim and a powerful tool for action. I can tell you with a clear voice it can get worse. But the optimism of this discussion is that the human rights framework can help us make it better. Much better.

Now, when I started this work, I actually wanted to go to the UN and speak to them about creating a commission on investigating acts of humiliation. And the idea was that every human being alive, from the most simple, beautiful person walking in the street, to Bush. Forgive me for uttering this horrible name -- the impasse of everybody's life is humiliation. We create our life to move away from being humiliated in any way that seems plausible and often, unfortunately, by humiliating others. In our inner soul we say we did not ask to be born and we do not ask to die but, while we are alive we will not allow anyone to humiliate us. And in that way, we choose one of two modes of behaviors: to move away and break through the vicious circle of humiliation or for our "protection," continue to humiliate others? And I wanted to go to the UN and say let's investigate it at all levels of society. If we can agree that humiliation is the common state of affairs and we all want to move away from it but often make the wrong choices... I looked for what I believe is the right choice, discovering human rights.

And then I came back to my own historic memory as a Jew. I'm not a religious person. I am indeed a secular person. I believe that the Jews survived because learning the law based on

ethical and moral tenets formed the community, and because every boy -- unfortunately, only boys, not girls -- had to learn the law. (Much had changed since. Israel as a Jewish state has given up these moral and ethical egalitarian tenets.) I started weaving a dream: let's have a world that everybody knows human rights. A world where at the age of 12 or 13, young women and men get in front of their community and recite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discuss human rights as relevant to the future of their community. And if we pursue with a commitment maybe six billion people will understand that there is no other option but human rights.

In this voyage I have articulated several concepts and working definitions:

1. Democracy must be a delivery system of human rights. If it is not a delivery system of human rights, it is not a democracy. The people from around the world that framed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the many covenants and conventions understood this very well. They observed that global capitalism is killing democracy, and that Communism is killing socialism. They also believed that both democracy and socialism are important and powerful political ideas that should not be lost...-- and they took the best from both giving us the Bill of Rights, which encodes political, civil, economic, social and cultural human rights. Because the Soviet Union wanted to include economic, social, and cultural rights, and the West wanted to only have political and civil rights, we have two separate Covenants. But pay attention, these are called Covenants. These call for a social agreement, a moral agreement, that are very clear on the sanctity of life. And even though it was artificially divided into two human rights documents, we speak of them as presenting and enshrining a holistic vision for the world... human rights as a holistic way of life.

The notion of human rights is evident historically in all religious thoughts, and in many secular ideologies and political theories. Some people say that human rights come from the North and human rights could be interpreted differently in different places. I would say to you, just as a point of information, 80 people worked on the Universal Declaration of human rights around the world. The people who led this effort were Eleanor Roosevelt, Rene Cassin from Paris and Joseph Malek from Lebanon. The 80 people came from every region of the world, those who at the time were Members of the UN. As the UN membership grew to 180 nation states, these countries are always partners in developing new conventions and resolutions about human rights. If you didn't read at least the Universal Declaration of Human Rights you are missing an important vision that can fortify your lives. I have friends to whom I first introduced the two Covenants in its many exciting details and they literally cried, saying: why didn't I read it before? Every aspiration you've ever had, any hope you have ever wanted for is there. It goes step by step to give us norms and standards that bring justice, peace, lack of discrimination. It tells us what kind of life we need to lead so that we are not discriminated [against] or discriminate [against others] to have dignity, and how can we live in community in equality and in dignity, that so many of our political and religious heroes have spent their lives to bring forth.

Do what is revolutionary about human rights? One and only one convention, known as CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It's the first document in the world that officially recognizes women as human beings -- the

only one thus far. And I suggest that you study it carefully. You can find its many details and also its summary, as well as of all other documents, on our award winning website: www.pdhre.org --and you will say wow!! If you look at the women human rights movement around the world that had started with violence against women, which should be understood as a symptom, [we] are now moving to working on economic, political, civil, social, economics and cultural human rights of women. Women who have accepted human rights as their flag are making a meaningful difference in the world. Many groups focus on different issues and concerns of women in society but now the flag around which they rally is human rights of women moving in force. Nawal spoke yesterday about moving power to people. Allow me to make a small change and say: do so by moving power to human rights.

If we study human rights we can clearly understand that this is not a theoretical, conceptual document. It was so in certain stages. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reflects universal aspirations of people, has no legal value except for quotation and citation. To take the practical step, the political and civil, economic, social, [and] cultural Covenants were framed. Following were several main human rights conventions of women, of children, against racism, against torture, etc. These have been created by nations, by the club of nations called the United Nations. These have no practical value either unless countries ratify them. What does ratification mean? It means that a commitment in the international community had been made and an obligation undertaken to scrutinize, change or add to the laws of the country accordingly. And once these are in place citizens need to know about this commitment and be watching closely and often use the politics of shame examining if indeed there is change in laws, policies, resources, and relationships. These are the four things that must happen for a community to be guided by the human rights framework.

All countries around the world, all countries of the world with exception of the United States and Somalia, have ratified the Convention on the human rights of the child. As of last count, 178 countries ratified the convention of women -- 178 countries!! It should be understood that when a country ratifies they can make "reservations" which means: We, the country, have no obligation to make changes in our laws with regard to one or more specific articles in the Covenant of Convention the country has ratified. For instance, in Bangladesh when they ratified the convention of women, they had four reservations. Women fought in the name of human rights, now they have only two reservations, but the women are not giving up and activism continues. It gives a political and social reason for getting together and saying, we own human rights and the government can not take it away from us!! And this is why we develop, facilitate and organize workshops and dialogues on human rights education: to evoke economic and social transformation.

Finally allow me to define what we believe a human rights educator is. In this where we are now meeting and with the many academicians who are here, you think of the teaching that takes place in the law schools of how to be human rights defenders and human rights advocates. Forgive me for being terribly rude, they will not bring human rights to the world. They have made the field only to be technically legal. Furthermore, the psychologists, the sociologists and the anthropologists, everyone has their little niche in which they may do well in the academic arena, everything being so highly

compartmentalized with out a connecting world view. I believe that human rights are this missing worldview. We could all do better in our research, analysis and activism, bringing new ideas to young minds, if we understood human rights as a way of life and as a political ideology.

I invite all of you to become a human rights educator. "A human rights educator is a person, a woman or a man, who is capable of evoking critical thinking and systemic analysis with a gender perspective about political, civil, economic, social, and cultural concerns within a human rights framework that leads to action" -- that says everything I believe about human rights and human rights education for social and economic transformation. This is our mantra... and the driving energy behind our human rights cities.

To make this argument, we have created human rights cities around the world. We have 12 human rights cities and 20 more will be developed in the coming three years in every region of the world. These human rights cities are a joint effort to prove to the world that human rights is a framework within which we can develop a new horizontal, equal, non-discriminatory society. My Argentinean colleagues developed a human rights city in Rosario, population 1 million, where the police were the worst during the time of the junta. After seminars with the police, the head of the academy -- and he wasn't amongst the worst during the bad times in Argentina. For my sake he learned to say five words in English: "Madam Koenig, there is no other option but human rights." And when I visited the mayor of Kati in Mali and the governor of Thies in Senegal and told them about this statement, they have translated it into French and they have it on the wall in their office.

The human rights cities are self-selecting by highly committed people in the community who heard from us or from others about this initiative. The inhabitants of the city and their managing and governing authorities, via a selected/elected steering committee, are responsible of the education and development action process in the city. Where we are, where people learn human rights, where people document human rights. And very, very important -- they don't only look at violations, they also look at realization -- each becoming a mentor and a monitor. Having human rights realization in the forefront has us all understand that human rights education is about hope. And when I was in a very small room, 40 children in Bangladesh sitting on the floor, beautifully dressed, smiling, wanting to learn about human rights, I said to them: "The fact that you have a school, the fact that you got up this morning and ate breakfast and came here, you have human rights. Because education is a human right. Because food is a human right. Because health is a human right, etc., etc. But, the fact that you don't have enough books and/or enough teachers -- that two of you have to use the same pencil these are human rights violations. And this why we never speak of "rights" but of "human rights." We do not decapitate the "human" from the "rights"; they always go together, beyond legality, as a birth right.

And when I was in Palestine two years ago, just before the Intifadah, a Palestinian human rights activists took me to see the poor conditions in the schools. Boys were coming out of the school holding a very big sign that said -- with a chant that followed -- "We want books, we want books." I said to them: "No, you don't want books. Let's go back and prepare new signs." And they did. The new signs said: "We want our human rights, we want books." Do

you see the difference? Do you see how it really brings the meaning of dignity to these young men in a holistic way? Telling them this that human rights is about their lives. At that moment they wanted books. But it was about dignity, about their dignity to have the books because education is a human right – because the occupation is a human rights violation that robs them of their books. We need to allow the mind to understand that human rights is political, moral, protected by the legal.

I won't say much more, but share with you the hope human rights education brings to women, men and children alike. In Senegal – TOSTAN, a local organization for human rights education going thus far to 1500 villages -- FGC had been stopped, starting with a declaration made by women and men. FGC, as they call it in Senegal, Female Genital Cutting -- known as FGM – [they are] describing it for what it is rather than being judgmental. [FGC] had stopped not because they talked about this custom, but, by learning that health is a human right and by learning that health, food, education, housing, and work at livable wages are interconnected and interrelated human rights. And the men and the women together decided, village by village, to stop this custom. French television came to the first declaration in the village of Malikunda. A little girl was running in front of the microphones and her mother called, "SenSen, come here." The reporter asked: "What is the meaning of SenSen?" "Human rights," the mother answered. "Why do you call her human rights?" asked the reporter. "Because she's the first girl in the village that was not cut." Now, you could see the powerful tool that human rights can give, mostly to insure our dignity and the being in community in dignity.

I could tell you many more stories to encourage you further of how in three years in a population of 250,000 in the city, children between the ages of 10 and 15, after learning that education is a human right, registered close to 4500 children, their peers, whose parents did not register them at birth and where not able to go to school -- now they do. And finally I suggest, if you can find the time, do read these materials, as human rights is about each one of us and about all of us. And I always remember a quote from Emmanuel Levinas who said, "If one person was missing from the world, the absolute truth would be different." And this is what human rights celebrates. Human rights is the absolute truth, but if one person was missing from the world, this absolute truth would be different because of diversity, because we are all so different and because each one of us can make a difference. And finally I would hope that you always remember that no one human right can violate another, which is basically what Article 30 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says. In the human rights cites and in our workshops we make a pledge, which I have written. It says:

We are the human rights generation
We will accept nothing less than human rights.
We will know them and claim them,
For all women, men, youth and children,
From those who speak human rights,
But deny them to their own people.
We will move power to human rights"

ECK: Amen.

KOENIG: Okay.

BRAUDE: Thank you, Shula. And our final speaker this morning, Sylvia Marcos.

SYLVIA MARCOS: Good morning. Diana is not here. I'm sorry that Diana-- Well, I am one of those people that was here 20 years ago. I'm sorry that Diana is not here. Many of you were here with my colleagues. I am so delighted to be with all of you again. And we all know that it was a very generative conference. For me, it changed completely from being an ultrasecular, if I may use this word with whatever particularities you can define it. I was very activist and I became very interested in religion, starting with the conference 20 years ago. This is how I ended in the program.

I want to say to Shula that we have to have a little discussion afterwards. You know, probably personal. Because surrounding the issues of indigenous rights, we have the 169 Convention of the ILO, and we have been forever fighting and, you know, the kind of response that governments have to the pressure of United Nations. It's quite, I don't know, in our case at least. I cannot speak for everyone, but in our case. So, we should take it with a grain of salt, you know, these stories with United Nations.

Now, I have been hearing here on and off and because we have been a group convening for many years, like Dorothy said, we have been bonded by 20 years. So, we are struggling to find-- And I have heard in this conference, I don't know if you are coincident with me, but I have been hearing on the one side there are the women that don't want anything with religion. Religion, that's the end of it. We just want to get free from religion because religion has burdened us. On the other side, you have the fundamentalists that Melanie said, I don't know how quite to deal with that. They accept, they accept the patriarchal religion, they accept the limits, and that's it. And we are getting more and more of those women around to know about this kind of women. And then you have the other women that I think we are here. I mean the women I know, I have known for 20 years, we are women that respect our religious traditions, but we are permanently reforming it. And I'm taking Beverly's words, "Protestant Reformation."

HARRISON: Or any reformation.

MARCOS: Any reformation.

ECK: Permanent rebellion, which is what you said.

MARCOS: Permanent rebellion. And we want to hold onto religious traditions, because they do give us something. I have to recognize that I went through the process of discarding religion completely. And then, through this conference and later networks, I came to see that I could take the good of it and change what was unjust. And this brings me to what I would like to talk to you about today. I want to speak about the indigenous religious

movement, which is not secular and it's not religious and it's something in between. It's both at the same time.

Now, why is it both at the same time? This is the great challenge. This is a philosophical challenge. And I don't know how much you're tired of it, it's the morning, it's the end. I don't know how much I am able to tell you, but I'll tell you little stories that exemplify some of these issues.

I want to cite Walter Benjamin, as he defined traditions of the oppressed, which are not traveling backwards in time ... So, are they frozen in time? I remember yesterday this frozen in time, and I said there must be a response from this indigenous world that's claiming to keep their traditions. And in a certain sense, you know, in the case of Mexico, there are chronicles with designs, the way people used to write. And you find exactly the same ritual designed in ...(inaudible) You find it today performed in a small town near my city. So, it looks like frozen in time. It is not frozen in time. It has been retaken by the people, reconfigured, resignified, and made very contemporary. And this is what many theoreticians that are starting social movements in Latin America are saying about the indigenous movement in the Americas. I hesitate, my sister is here from North America. They have a different situation. I am referring mainly to the Latin American simply because I was with this Summit of Indigenous Women just a few months ago. And I was very close to them, and I really got to hear every one of them and their voices.

So, he says, "They are making the past resonate with the present so neither epoch seems removed and irrelevant to the other." I have called this spirituality of political struggle. The rights of the indigenous are spiritual rights. Now, this is another issue. We'll have to, you know, maybe have a seminar for many months to define how you define spiritual and what do we mean by spiritual. And definitely what indigenous people define as spiritual is not the kind of Pagan urban arrangements that you found even in Mexico at the urban grassroots level. It's not the same, and we must stop trying to homogenize everything we find. I think the first thing is to pay homage to the diversity. Even within the same indigenous group, you can have a lot of diversity.

So, I will tell you now. When I'm speaking of the indigenous movement in Mexico, it's 62 ethnic groups, just to give you a very brief outline of the background of what I am saying. They are being Indian again, very much this kind of born-again Christian, which the Maoris in Australia use for this cultural, "born-again Maori." This is very much what's happening in Mexico. Let's say a woman I met, years ago she would hide that she was indigenous. She would feel ashamed of her identity. The dignity, this is the main issue. So, now they are saying, yes, I am Indian. And we are all Indians in Mexico, 200,000 people marching down the streets after this, you know, the upheaval of the Zapatistas and saying, we are all Indians. I could not believe my ears. Because it had been a shameful identity. Like it is probably here, I don't know. This is not up to me to say.

But in Mexico, I have a grandmother, Indian woman, and I learned-- It has been a whole personal process because she looked very dark and very Indian, and she married a man that was not Indian. So, her children, my mother, did not come out looking Indian. She was

a little blonde. You know, *guerita*, we say in Mexico, which means you are lighter-skinned, you are not really blonde. And she rejected her own mother because she looked Indian. So, in a sense, part of what I am trying to recuperate now is a pride of an identity that has always been suppressed and discriminated against in my ancestor woman. The other ancestor woman is from Palestine. So, you see what kind of mixture I have, and I am fighting on both sides.

So, I tell you the movement is not ethnically based. It means that I'm not the people of this community or the people of that community, of the indigenous people from the North. There is a pan-indigenusness. This is very important because many people, anthropologists. Ines, I wanted to respond to you yesterday. You said, well, you have them studying the language. It doesn't work for us. Because every anthropologist that comes to Mexico, from the US mainly, they learn the language of the particular community where they are going to be working. So, this is no longer a filter for us, you know, like you do in the US. They really learn the languages. So, in this case of Mexico, the indigenous people are linking together. No matter what their differences, they have a political struggle and they have something they want to strive for.

Now, the kind of political struggle they strive for, as I said awhile ago, this I just learned from Rigoberta Manchu and her Foundation. They are emphasizing the spiritual. They don't want to go on reducing their movement to political and economic gains, which they do, they do want them. Don't misinterpret me. It doesn't mean this is not important. It means it's incorporated into a wider, more important issue that's called a *spiritualidad indigena*. Which, *idigena* didn't even exist before the movement. It existed as a [technical term] from the anthropologists, but indigenous people have taken over it and have absorbed it as their own, as the way they are identified, this multiple, ethnic, pan-Indian movement.

Now, let me move on, because I have now very little time. I think I need to tell you this story, because this is very religious. You know, at the summit the women were getting together. And they got a letter from the Episcopal Commission for Indigenous Affairs in Mexico, a letter of the bishops exactly in the same colonial terms of 500 years ago, a letter saying you are not the representatives of our true indigenous people. Who were the true indigenous people? The people in their parishes they have contacted and controlled. So, these women had to make a response and it was so exciting, because I shared with them the drafting. I shared very silently, because I was the only non-indigenous there that became part of the delegation and I usually tried not to overcome them with my learning and whatever. But it was fascinating because they thought, you came here and you destroyed those and you destroyed all our religious traditions. So, you see here that they see very clearly that it's a religion where they have this kind of background in their own indigenous traditions that was wiped out by these bishops. And they wrote a marvelous letter and I can, you know, those of you that speak Spanish, I can share it with you.

But I do want to briefly state, because you can read these further in my articles, I want to state three little issues that make particular this spirituality. First, there is no either/or. You know, remember I said it's not either/or. It's beyond categories. Matter and spirit are not conceptualized as mutually exclusive; death and life are not mutually exclusive. And, thus,

transcendence and imminence, which was another thing that was around here, are not mutually exclusive. They cannot even word it, because it doesn't belong.

Second, there is an ethics of interconnectedness. But it's an ethics that goes beyond what we call mutuality and solidarity. It's something we could not even understand well. Because it means they are all interconnected among themselves, and they are interconnected with nature with the earth, the sky, and it's a very complex concept of the self that you can only start to understand by doing a great effort to go out of your epistemic frame, like Beverly said in her article. I recommend you read every one of the articles.

And the third thing that has a great resonance when we work with indigenous people in Mexico and in Latin America is the concept of earth. Because dust, because we are all interconnected, the earth is conceived as sacred, but sacred not out there. Sacred not in the sense of transcendent religion, that God is out there and is controlling. No, no, no. The earth is very near, at the same time it's part of myself, the earth, we are a part of the earth. So, they are epistemologically very complex issues. I do recommend you pick up my articles back there. I mean these are issues that cannot be talked about easily.

And lastly, since my time is over. I knew it was going to be over, because I speak slowly, because it's not my first language. I cannot speak like many of you. You say 100 things in 10 minutes. I cannot do that.

But I hope that this quick introduction entices you to continue to unravel a spiritual world that can elicit respect and enrich your own. And let's not forget that religious traditions are non-monolithic, nor static. Both fallacies must be debunked if we want to pay respect to the indigenous world. In accordance with the voices of Commandante Esther that resonate with many others in the indigenous women's movement, that insist that they want both to transform and to preserve the culture. So, this story of whether we go back or whether we-- No, no, no. It's both at the same time. Either/or has to be buried forever.

And thank you very much.

BRAUDE: Thank you to all the panel for the wonderful array of perspectives and experiences that you've brought to the issue of human rights. I know there will be questions from the audience. And I understand that I'm allowed to go over because we started late. So, I think we have about 15 or 20 minutes. And who has the microphone? Where's the microphone? Please address your questions to me, and then I will recognize you and one of the microphones will zoom to you right there. And then we have a microphone for our panelists also?

DAS DASGUPTA: This is a question to Shula and perhaps Sissela, or anyone else can also answer it if that's possible. Shula, you talked about human rights and I do understand it as an extremely important issue, but it took the UN so long to even recognize rape as a weapon of war. And half the world still doesn't. And domestic violence, the violence women face within the family, it's still not recognized by most countries as a human rights issue, a human rights violation. And, of course, US being one of the most important ones in there,

because I work in this context. CEDAW has not been signed still by the United States. And gender-based asylum based on the political asylum framework is not recognized by most countries. US, we were kind of sliding through under the radar for a little while on gender-based asylum issues, and it has now been stopped completely. I am very, very suspicious about the human rights framework as something that will work, at least not for awhile. I don't know where we are going to go. But I'd love to hear how you can be so optimistic about it.

KOENIG: I'll tell you where I take my optimism. Then I'll answer your direct question. It's from a statement that Nelson Mandela made when he was inaugurated. He said, "We need to build a new political culture based on human rights." And I all of a sudden saw it that it's not just a legal paradigm or a do-gooder paradigm or charity, but it's political and it's based on human rights.

Now, let's just understand. You were mentioning, Sylvia, at ILO. The country has to ratify the ILO convention.

__: It's ratified.

KOENIG: Okay. Now, the United Nations is a club of nations. What happened in the last 50 years is a real miracle, in my opinion. For these 50 nations that are so diverse and so much contradiction to one another in their philosophical, religious, social, anthropological, everything you want to say about them, that they came up with this body framework, to me, is a miracle. And what we are doing now in the next 50 years is really to answer the questions you are asking. To really see how, when a government ratifies-- First of all, to see the government that didn't ratify, to create a lot of public tension for the government to ratify it. Then to ratify it without any reservations. And then for the people to know it. Because when the people don't know it, there is nobody there to claim. So, our optimism and from some very good results that we have around the world, is training people at the grassroots level for them to claim human rights. And it's absolutely amazing. I don't want to take the time to tell you some stories of what happened with the Dalit people in India, for instance. And you could find a lot on our Website.

But the optimism for me is that we have this framework. But not too many people know it and claim it. So, I'll give you optimism, one optimistic thing. You know that because of Amnesty, most people think of human rights as political and civil. And this is what it is, and very few know that it's economic, social, cultural. But more and more people are learning. And there was a meeting in Istanbul on housing. And we came there with a very big delegation to really make a statement that housing is a human right. And we had the delegation of the Americans, who said under no circumstance will we have a statement that housing is a human right in the Declaration of Istanbul. And I got in front and I said, "Listen, if you are not allowing this statement to be, I'm going right here to CNN." Don't forget, it was eight years ago. It wasn't now. Now I couldn't do it. I would go next door to CNN and tell them that the Americans, the US is a human rights violator. Because here the documented proof that all the nations signed on to, that housing is a human right. And they signed on to it.

And you know where I learned it from? Right in the workshop that we had. A Zambian woman told us the following. She was 100 miles out of Lusaka and as a social worker she was working with people who learned that 17,000 of them were going to be deported from the land. And she said, my God, it can't be. It was to build some kind of a park. So, she went back and stood in front of the Ministry of Housing and had a big, big sign, this is the story she told us in the workshop, saying "Zambia is a human rights violator." And, you know, they rescinded. And they called it off. Why? From a negative thing came a positive thing. Because the North says, we will give you money only if you follow human rights. I mean they're saying that there's this conditionality, which very often its very false. But Zambia at that moment and at that day took it as, "My God, you're going to say that we are? Maybe we won't get money from the IMF or the World Bank or whatever it is."

So, these are the little things. Like in Senegal, 4500 children were registered, who were not registered before, to school because they learned that education is a human right.

SYLVIA MARCOS: I just want to respond. I mean I want to support your enthusiasm, but with a little reality in it. I am sorry to say so, but no. Look, I have been working with this, exactly what you say. I have been doing good indigenous organizations I have worked for. You know, education, so they know, ILO 169. If you can ever pick up this document, it's impeccable concerning the human rights of the indigenous populations. ILO 169, ratified, perfectly ratified by our government 20 years ago, ratified, signed, everything. We have been giving or working for growing awareness of this among the indigenous population so that they know their rights.

And this is what I want to emphasize. It's true, if you don't know there is a document that supports you, that has been ratified by your government. Of course, it's an asset but it's not the solution to everything. I mean even if you keep fighting and struggling like we have done. Let me give you an example. If the United Nations did not accept the war in Iraq and the war took place, what can we expect? I mean now the United Nations' value and power, I don't know. It's very diminished. So, it's even less possible to do it locally. I'm sorry, I don't want to be defeatist. But I do know by my own experience that we have been doing this education and using this kind of document and ratification.

ANN BRAUDE: Thank you. Elizabeth and then Dorothy.

ELIZABETH AMOAH: Thank you very much. When we were asked to stand up and make a declaration, I stood up. But after I stood up and listened to Diana giving us the "Amen," my mind went to my people back home, their villages, their rural areas... And I asked myself, if I go back and say, "Please, I'm educating you, know your rights, you have this right," and I don't have the backing of the protection that Dorothy Eck was talking about, I don't have the resources, the money, whatever goes with having the power to stand up for your rights. You know, back home in Ghana, a lot of people are educated. They know the courts are there, they know their rights. But even for educated people, they know that it takes money, energy, knowledge to go through the courts. There are other places where there are no courts. They haven't even seen a courtroom before. So, my worry is if this campaign, and the campaign that you are doing is very good, but are they backed with practical things?

Their needs, their day-to-day needs. Because when you go through some of the rituals, harmful rituals that women still go through, it is not because they don't know it's wrong, but sometimes the economical is so... they are so powerless. ... People go through it because it's related to inheritance to property.

So, I don't know whether I should feel good declaring here. And what am I going to do practically when I go. Thank you very much.

BRAUDE: Okay, Dorothy and then Jean Zaru.

BOK: Well, I don't want to take time from you and the audience, but I'll just say I thought that the distinction you brought up is very important. On the one hand, there is the question what new rights should be included in one or the other documents, and that's an important one to think through, I don't think has been done yet enough. And another is what about the rights, and this has come up, what about the rights that governments have signed on to and are doing so little about. I will take just the example of torture. Every single government, indeed, has signed on. Well, that, obviously, is not enough. And the governments that exercise torture, carry it out, will always say, well, in principle, of course, we don't think there should be torture, but, unfortunately, we are in such a crisis that we have to do it and then that can go on for decades. So, I think that's a very important distinction that you brought up.

I guess I'll just say one more thing. With respect to a number of the declarations and the conventions, it's not just the signing on. For instance, the covenant on the rights of the child, many countries signed on to that and then said, you know, we know we can't do all of this yet, but come and inspect us in five years. And every year, certain countries are being inspected from the point of view of how much they are living up to it, and in some countries like, for instance, Sweden, there are so-called ombudsmen for that particular covenant for the rights of children. And the children do know what's going on. But there are those distinctions that you mentioned are very important.

JEAN ZARU: I'd just like to say that first of all, I would like also to include when we discuss human rights, community rights. Because often this is neglected. Another thing, it's one thing to have all these principles. I mean, I am an advocate of human rights, so don't misunderstand me, I'm not disagreeing with that. But we have also these values whether in scripture-- And we hear sometimes preachers telling us something and not doing what they preach. So, we say listen to my words but don't do what I do. And we have these nations that ratified these, and there is no mechanism for implementation.

Another thing, education is very, very important. But I always say, I have been invited to speak about violations of human rights in Lund in Sweden, elsewhere. They ask me if I am an expert on human rights. I say no, it doesn't take an expert to know that your basic human rights and community rights are violated. So, education, yes, is important, but we have to find a mechanism of implementation and respect and advocacy when these human rights are violated in our own communities, in our own families, in our neighborhood, for our colleagues in work. And sometimes involvement in any action has a price. Are we

willing to take that price to really see to it that the rights of our fellow human beings, wherever they are, should not be violated and advocate against that and find a mechanism to implement?

BRAUDE: Thank you. I have Jackie and then Brigalia and then Beverly.

(Audience Member, Jackie): First of all, I want to say that I really appreciate all of the things that the panel has said. I think about the whole issue of diversity that each of you brought very important contributions to our thinking. And where I am is, as I listen to you, I feel that without a doubt we need common values. I think we need frameworks, clear frameworks, and to know what they are. But what I really am hearing, and I really resonate with what you just said, is beyond the values and the frameworks I think we need to be both clear about the practices that we think are going to translate those principles and values into reality, and we need to have the mechanisms of accountability. And we need to be connected as a community.

All of us may be from all over the place, but I think where we are in human history right now, and I think a lot of what you've said says this is also part of our history, we're at a point where we need a human community of people who care about these values, want to see these things move forward, and can stay connected with each other so that we are sharing what we are learning. I mean I find this valuable, but there are so many people who weren't able to get here. I only found out about it at the last minute. And there's something very valuable about this conversation and about this kind of conversation not only continuing but being made available to a wider number of people.

And, so, what I'm thinking about is I'm wondering-- And this is a question both for the panel and for the room, and maybe it's a question for another day, but I would love us to take up the question of what is it going to take for us to be connected. What are some innovative ways we can continue this conversation? And to share what we're learning about the practices that are needed to translate these values, how we hold ourselves and others accountable for it so that there starts to be-- And I think it was Sissela who said this, there need to be new mechanisms in the world and I would say in addition to the United Nations because it is a club of nations. There isn't yet a club of citizens, of people in communities around the world whose voices are equal to the voice of nations. And I can think of no group more powerfully able to lead that than women who embrace the values we've all talked about, women across the world truly coming together to model what that could look like.

So, yes, the law, the values, the frameworks, but the community. And it's a community that stays together, that talks together, that shares what it's learning together. And I'd just love to hear what anybody is learning about. Is there anything already going on about that?

BRAUDE: Thank you. Brigalia.

BRIGALIA BAM: Forgive me for repeating what has been said already, but I just want to say this panel is fantastic. In my country, people would use phrases I don't like to say, you

are talking about soft issues. And I get angry that people refer to the kinds of issues that have been raised by those panelists as soft issues. So, thank you very much for making them tough issues.

I want to make a confession to you that if I had known about this lecture before I was interviewed for an hour and a half when I was being appointed as a commissioner on human rights I would have sounded so clever. And simply saying that there is a problem. And the problem, and I speak with limited experience as a South African where I served on the Commission for Human Rights in a small country, the biggest problem we are facing-- I know education is important. I agree with you, absolutely. But my experience says you have five obstacles. The first obstacle is an economic one, which has been already described. The second has to do with religion. And if there was time, I would say where you are confused about what is considered human rights and the churches and religious organizations violate so many of these human rights. And the contradictions we have. I won't go into that. I think most people here can back that up with their studies. The third is this thing called patriotism. Where you have certain beliefs as an individual, but because of your government and your society, then you begin to be silent because there is this big thing of patriotism and policy and so on.

And the fourth has to do with the power, the power game. I think it's the biggest game. And I'm not going to mention countries, because these are problems across the world, but some of you who were in Durban for the racism consultation might remember things I will never forget, that big nations of the world who claim democracy, who have been there for years, unlike us who are so new and alienated to this idea of democracy, we don't even have it in some of our languages the word democracy. And they had signed a number of those countries who really were so difficult for long hours. So, there is something that's not working. And all those men, without exception, knew what they had signed in the United Nations and they knew exactly which articles. And they kept all night long, day long, and finally, as you know, of course, the Americans walked out. And they didn't walk out because they didn't know. But these are some of the realities that we are facing and I think must keep fighting.

I only have one final word to say. I believe that the women in the world, and I don't mean to exaggerate, but it's my own commitment based on my little life, have so much to do on common values. To me, that's fundamental. And those values, we are the people, I believe, who can put those values at an early stage with our kids. Religion, with all its contradictions, with all its contradictions is still to me a pillar and maybe I speak for myself, because it's too late now not to be religious. [Laughter] Really it's too late. If I went home and arrived in Johannesburg and I said, listen, this nonsense of religion, not a single South African would vote next year with the elections.

BRAUDE: And this will be our last comment. We'll have one more after.

HARRISON: Well, I just wanted to say thank you. I hope you'll all write your books on this topic. But we'd better talk to each other about what it is we need to hear from each other. I just wanted to say that I think some people were hearing you, Shula, as saying "Use my

framework or to translate it into religious language, join my denomination." And you aren't, of course, saying that. And you aren't suggesting that we have to speak the language of rights.

I wanted to insert one caution. You are absolutely right. Everywhere people are talking about human rights, they just don't have the framework for understanding that. But I think it's very important for those of us from North America to be very careful about this. I keep saying I will write that book on reimagining human rights from a feminist perspective. Because I think we're in big trouble. I hope you would do it, Sissela, but you've done all we could hope for from one great feminist ethicist sister. But we've got to realize that in North America, there has been a deconstruction on the category of rights, a theoretical deconstruction, which is very dangerous and very mischievous. And if anyone in this room who has ever used the words in talking about anything will find out the minute you open your mouth, they will say to you that you are bourgeois white North American, if you use that language. And our teachers and wise guys have been telling us that rights is not a religious category. And, so, Christians have been deconstructed into using it and other such people. The Jews get this in a different way. And, so, be very careful because this is a very complicated question. And like all the brilliant things we're hearing, we don't have time to talk about it.

BRAUDE: Dorothy can respond, and then we'll have Sharifa for the last question.

DOROTHY ECK: We've talked about power and the fact that, you know, maybe in the US we have a better opportunity to grasp human rights. But also, I think we have to recognize the fact. Sissela mentioned John Galbraith's statement of the dangers of the large corporate structures and their power and that maybe they could be balanced by-- He was thinking about labor at that time, and, of course, countervailing. We know that that hasn't worked. But where the power is now, and I, as much as I support the United Nations and I think if they could gather strength, they could be effective. But on the other hand, I think the possibility of them doing that, unless the corporate structure supports it, isn't going to happen. Which means that it's really the people's power that has to be the countervailing strength. And unless we recognize that, we're going to fail. And I think that putting the onus really on our people's groups working together is the solution.

BRAUDE: Sharifa.

SHARIFA ALKHATEEB: To Grove, I wanted to say I would love to join hands with you in trying to fight against privatization, and I really appreciated the sentiments and the values that you espoused. And I agree with all of them. And I find it interesting that I as a practicing Muslim agree with all the values that you as a Pagan espouse. I think there's a lot of commonality, as I said before.

I was going to say, do you think we could make a world movement on the issue of country-by-country constitutional amendments nationalizing natural resources and never allowing privatization? Could it possibly be part of an international movement? It's a question. Maybe it's answerable, maybe it's not. I don't know. But it's a question.

And to Shulamith, I was going to say you are so passionate about human rights, and I felt the strength of your passion. And you're just as passionate about your framework of human rights as any religious person would be. So, for you, it is a religion. It is a religion. And I felt your passion and I wanted to tell you that. I felt your passion, and it's a good passion. And I wanted to say couldn't we possibly put together a chart of all nations on the basis of whether or not they do deliver a system of human rights, including all the powerful nations, including the US, and circulate that on the Internet worldwide and have it printed up and to say are they actually delivering human rights or are they not, and how do we value them based on that.

KOENIG: The mechanisms are not full, but they are getting stronger every time. And there is on the UN, and I could tell you in a moment, you could find. Nations come who have ratified X, Y, Z and come to report to the UN and come and give shadow reports. There is a way. It's accountability, but yet not an enforcement. And this is the way it's going there. And so few of you know about it. If you want to know, as we eat--

And one more thing about community. Human rights is about individuals and about communities, because people live in communities and, therefore, human rights is in communities. Okay, just that.

DIANA ECK: Thank you very much. Just a word as we break up now. You know, we have thought about how one can actually make a movement on human rights and, of course, there is at the international level, although the United States is not a signatory, there are sort of world court systems and tribunals, alas, as ineffective as they may be. But since we have a very good friend who works with one of these tribunals in Rwanda, I think there are at least possibilities in that venue for bringing nations and people to account.

In the United States, of course, we have a court system for the violation of civil rights. And though that is not always the most effective way, it is one of the ways in which Sikhs and Muslims and people of minority communities in the US have begun to bring the influence of the documents we profess to reality in society. And I'm thinking of Grove saying that her friend who was elected mayor of the small town able to run on a platform but not say that she was a Pagan. I mean this is the stark reality of a country that professes religious freedom and the non-establishment of religion. And I should at least say that Grove and I worked on a court deposition a little earlier this month brought by a Pagan woman in Virginia who had been told by her city council that she could not join the list of religious leaders who could offer invocation at the city council meetings because we had a civil religion in the United States, it was monotheistic, and those Pagans were not monotheistic. And they didn't get around to talking about the Hindus or anyone else.

But the very idea that there is a court system that eventually can take this case and perhaps bring it to the highest court in the land to say have we really an established monotheistic religion, a civil religion that's monotheistic. So, there are some ways of leveraging some of these civil and human rights issues into reality if we have the instruments to do so. ...Anyway, we have an opportunity for some rest and leisure, which we've taken very little of in the last few days except late at night. And we have lunch available outside. We invite

you to sit in groups however you want and have some vigorous discussion over lunch. And then there is a booklet around here on the Arts First Program. I think you heard as Sissela was beginning to speak a band playing out in the street, which was definitely the parade that began the Arts First Program. And there are all over the campus various concerts and plays and outside performances and inside performances, and that certainly is an option to occupy you and give you some leisure from now until 3:45 when we convene again.

END OF PANEL