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## Editorial<sup>1</sup>

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Human rights education (HRE) is an international movement to promote awareness about the rights accorded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related human rights conventions, and the procedures that exist for the redress of violations of these rights (Amnesty International 2005; Tibbitts 1996; Reardon 1995). Decades ago, the United Nations and its specialized agencies formally recognized the right of citizens to be informed about the rights and freedoms contained in the documents ratified by their countries - the right to human rights education itself (UNESCO 2005). Since then, numerous policy documents developed by United Nations (UN) - affiliated agencies, international policymaking bodies, regional human rights bodies and national human rights agencies have referenced HRE, proposing specifically that the treatment of human rights themes should be present in schooling (Pearse 1988).<sup>2</sup>

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights defines human rights education as " training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes directed to:

- a. the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- b. the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity
- c. the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups
- d. the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society" (United Nations: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1997).

This definition is not specific to the schooling sector and, in fact, the United Nations proposes human rights education for all sectors of society as well as part of a "lifelong learning" process for individuals (United Nations: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1997). The human rights referred to cover a broad range, including those contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as related treaties and covenants, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, among others<sup>3</sup>. Which human rights are addressed in learning situations, and how, has become of increasing interest as the worldwide human rights movement has grown.

Although still a developing field, there is also increasing evidence that HRE is emerging in the work of non-governmental organizations working at the grassroots level as well as in national systems of education (Buergethal, Torney 1976; Claude 1996; IIDH 2002; Elbers 2000; HREA). The only study on this subject indicated that the number of organizations dedicated to human rights education quadrupled between 1980 and 1995, from 12 to 50 (Ramirez, Suarez, Meyer 2006). These numbers are likely to be much higher as the secondary sources could document only those organizations that had either an Internet presence or were already networked in international circles.

An International Bureau of Education (IBE) study that examined the number of times the term "human rights" was mentioned in their documents, found a mean of .70, .82 and .64 for countries within the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and the former USSR and Latin American and the Caribbean, respectively (Ramirez, Suarez, Meyer 2006). Interestingly enough, the lowest means were for Asia and Western Europe and North America at .11 (Ramirez, Suarez, Meyer 2006), although the range of response rates across regions - from 31% to 74% - suggests that these results are approximate at best. A review in 1996 showed that through the cooperative efforts of NGOs and educational authorities, human rights courses and topics had been introduced into the national curricula in Albania, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Norway, the UK and Ukraine (Kati, Gjedia 2003; Tibbitts 1996). The IBE study and other less formal data gathering suggests that the number of educational systems including human rights in their formal curricula is now higher.

These statistics only present part of the picture, as they do not capture the presence of human rights topics and themes in universities, law schools, and non-formal educational activities carried out with youth and adults. The integration of human rights topics and themes in these other venues has traditionally been higher than HRE in the formal schooling sector.

Hundreds of human rights-related teaching materials have been developed worldwide and many of these are widely available free of charge on the Internet, for example through the On-Line Resource Centre of Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) and other on-line resource centers (IIDH; ARRC). Moreover, bibliographies and descriptive databases of human rights education materials are available through key human rights organizations as well as United Nations-related agencies (United Nations:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Amnesty International 2005; HREA; Council of Europe). HREA recorded 1.4 million downloads of human rights education-related learning materials from its website alone during the year of 2005 (Elbers 2006).

During this same period, non-governmental organizations, which have traditionally spearheaded human rights education efforts, also gathered to develop human rights education action plans that had influence on their own work and cooperation with others (Amnesty International 1996; Netherlands Helsinki Committee 1996). In the last five years, national and regional HRE networks have been established in many parts of the world. In 2005, with the conclusion of the UN Decade for HRE, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights launched an on-going and more focused World Programme with a Plan of Action for Human Rights Education (United Nations: General Assembly 2005), which promises to elicit improved cooperation from governments, as well as cross-cutting support from UN bodies (Amnesty International 2005).

The first three years of the World Programme are focused on promoting human rights education in schools, so allow us to focus on schools for the moment. Several explanations have been proposed for the increased presence of human rights education in schools since the 1990s. One explanation relates to increased globalization, a term still being defined, but recognized as one emphasizing "world citizenship and the strong assumption of personal agency required for global citizenship", which Suarez refers to in her article in this issue. Moreover, authorities are increasingly calling on schools to promote respect among peoples, democratic governance and viable civil societies.

Democratic citizenship, including human rights education, has been seen by regional human rights agencies as a way to "manage diversity", with human rights education incorporated into processes such as the Graz Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe (Council of Europe 2001; South House Exchange 2004). In contemporary Europe, education for democratic citizenship, including human rights education, has been seen as a way of promoting young people's active participation in democratic society, in promoting social cohesion and in fighting violence, xenophobia, racism, intolerance and aggressive nationalism (Froumin 2003).

In 1978, human rights education was already promoted by UNESCO but linked with disarmament (UNESCO 1978). In 2005, human rights education has been linked in inter-governmental circles with a variety of global phenomena, including development and poverty, religious freedom, and globalization in general (UNESCO 2005). Europe's regional human rights agency, the Council of Europe, is working on developing a "culture of religion" subject that takes an "ethics" and "human rights" based approach to religious teaching, in order to provide an alternative to governments that currently offer required religion classes that can be a source of division and ethnic nationalism, as in Serbia-Montenegro (Tibbitts 2003).

Non-governmental organizations from different countries and regions periodically initiate meetings in which they identify strategies for applying the human rights framework to global challenges. One such symposium, which took place in South Africa in 2001 in a meeting organized in concert with the World Conference Against Racism, identified human rights

education in schools as a key strategy for combating racism (Flowers 2001). One could argue that the increasing prospect of HRE is related to both the impulses for democratization as well as globalization, terms which warrant further investigation. According to UNESCO, during the 1990s the number of formal democracies in the world increased from 76 (46.1%) to 117 (61.3%) (UNESCO 2005). UNESCO has presented this as the 'third wave of democracy' related to significant world events such as the ending of apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the democratization of the former communist states in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The organization has drawn a direct connection between these political developments and the expansion of human rights education, and is here quoted at length:

Civic education programmes have become an increasingly important means for countries to educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Increasing pluralism within states has encouraged the development of civic education programmes that go beyond simple 'patriotic' models of citizenship requiring uncritical loyalty to the nation state. By defining 'citizenship' in terms of human rights and civic responsibilities, civic education programmes attempt to avoid concepts of 'citizenship' that define nationality in terms of ethnic, religious or cultural identity. The aspiration is that concepts of citizenship based on human rights and responsibilities may make it more difficult to mobilize political conflict around identity issues. It has therefore become the norm for modern civic education programmes to have a strong human rights values base, to make specific reference to children's rights and address issues related to diversity and the rights of minorities within society (UNESCO 2005).

Inter-governmental, regional and national agencies whose mandate is to promote human rights standards promote the idea that human rights are integral to the democratic discourse and to citizenship education. In practice, there is some evidence that human rights education is increasingly recognized by educational authorities as a special feature of - or inclusive approach to - citizenship education. Citizenship aims to develop a universal model which, in many ways, presumes that the learner is situated in a country that allows for democratic participation as well as political activism on the part of learners. Human rights education has a much more complicated relationship to democratic development. Although universality is a core underlying assumption of the human rights discourse, the strategies for introducing HRE will be quite variable, depending upon the learner group and the human rights challenges found in the social and political environment.

An illustration of this can be seen in the human rights education efforts that have been undertaken in country contexts other than those of developed democracies. In Latin America, South Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, educational practitioners and researchers perceive human rights education as a way to help emerging democracies try to outgrow their authoritarian past (IIDH 2002; Magendzo 1997; Kati, Gjerdia 2003; Education Development Center 2003; Brochmann et al. 1998; Matus 1996). Curricular examples from these regions link human rights education with democratic ways of working in several dimensions: content, pedagogy and in the learner populations targeted. That is, in addition to the treatment of

human rights-related themes, HRE programming promoted participation through pedagogical techniques that were empowering (Magendzo 2005) and through the targeting of specific, marginalized populations.

Human rights education is important because it can penetrate and affect three sensitive levels of society. On a values level, human rights orient the axiological conscience of a people. On the political level, human rights defend the interests of the disadvantaged within society. Finally, human rights become an ideological-cultural spark that empowers people (Magendzo 1997). The article by Suarez demonstrates how the human rights framework facilitates an ongoing critique of society; the Keets' article, in referencing South African experiences, calls for an ongoing critique of the human rights framework itself, in keeping with the critical spirit of human rights.

Human rights educators working in post-totalitarian societies shared their points of view. Practitioners working in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, as well as other post-totalitarian countries, observed that new human rights education courses brought in interactive pedagogies and a democratic classroom climate, which was seen as an antidote to the previous governmental system (Tibbitts 1994; Neacsu-Hendry et al. 1997; Brochmann et al. 1998; Kati, Gjedia 2003). In the article on China, Oud shows that merely the integration of critical thinking in learning environments can be a foundation for HRE in this political environment, one that we hope will be expanded in the future.

In Nigeria and other post-colonial countries, human rights education is seen as a way to bring in transformative pedagogy that "takes up concerns of freedom, democracy, social justice and social empowerment" and try to "overcome the legacy of authoritarianism and selective knowledge production in the schools" (Uwakweh 2000; Claude 2000). Lohrenscheit's article on Freire overviews the central tenets of this approach for HRE.

In keeping with its context-specific use, human rights education has been viewed optimistically by its promoters as a conflict-prevention or peace-building mechanism in conflict or post-conflict societies. The Universal Declaration of Rights recognizes that human rights principles incorporated into many international treaties were designed "to prevent resort to violence" and it is assumed by those promoting the human rights framework that the more human rights are observed, the more just and peaceful the society (Bernath, Holland, Martin 1999; Education Development Center 2003). Smith et al's article on Northern Ireland shares research on the role of HRE in promoting understanding among groups that have traditionally been in conflict.

Because of the recognized problematic between citizens and governments, the acknowledgement of human rights violations and a focus on empowerment, human rights education is considered to be well suited for national environments where large-scale violations have taken place. Not surprisingly, then, HRE is promoted in conjunction with efforts to overcome colonialism, the aftereffects of authoritarian governments, structural problems related to poverty, gender inequality, discrimination and inter-ethnic conflict.

Specifically, HRE should: address violence, the immediate context of fear and personal danger, and sense of personal powerlessness; deal with social

trauma, personal and group animosities, as well as patterns of discrimination and marginalization, through, for example, teaching how to respect other people's rights; be incorporated into other programs of conflict resolution, social rehabilitation, democracy building, rule of law, etc.; and be a conscious choice among varied possible desired outcomes (i.e., is education to be oriented towards legal or social advocacy, or to democracy building, or to conflict-resolution, or to community building, or to empowerment, etc.) rather than being vague or all inclusive (Bernath, Holland, Martin 1999).

Thus the human rights education approach has been promoted at the policy level for addressing 'problems of democracy' in a range of national and political contexts. There is additional data to illustrate the rapid expansion of HRE in certain regions although program and impact evaluations are not yet available. The IBE study referenced earlier showed relatively higher implementation levels of HRE in the regions of Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America. Analyses of the number of human rights education organizations regionally and their expansion during the 1990s also provide additional evidence that the human rights approach is perceived to be especially applicable in certain political environments (Elbers 2000) although these data cannot be entirely separated from the expansion of civil society in general in post-conflict and post-totalitarian societies.

Although developed democracies cannot be characterized as post-totalitarian or post-conflict, challenging political problems appear to have engendered HRE-efforts. In Germany and Switzerland, HRE has been linked with local and national efforts to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and the extreme right. HRE efforts in Germany have also been linked with newly established institutions such as the German Institute for Human Rights, Nuremberg-Human Rights City, and UNESCO Human Rights Education Chair (HREA 2002).

Human rights agencies, grassroots organizations and academics continue to promote human rights education as a way to promote democracy and solve social problems. Maitland Stobart, during his tenure as Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport at the Council of Europe, expressed his belief that there are "clear dangers in not preparing the next generation to be full and active citizens in a democratic society". He saw that attention to human rights would help young people to address in a normative way societal problems such as intolerance, a view elaborated on by European academics concentrating on citizenship education.

The concept of citizenship is founded on the notion of individual as actor in a democratic polity and this requires an understanding of and acceptance of human rights. Human rights provide the framework for political and social interaction in democracies...The fact that institutional racism persists, in liberal societies including Britain even today, means that the whole basis of democracy and citizenship is constantly undermined (Macpherson, 1999). It is for this reason that we consider it essential to situate citizenship and democracy in schools within a context of cultural diversity and therefore on the basis of human rights. (Osler, Starkey 2000).

The Mihr article explores the implications of human rights and HRE for minorities in all societies, but in particular those in developed democracies.

In the United States, the National Human Rights Network was launched in 2004; twenty-two caucuses addressed issues such as discrimination, the death penalty and the criminal justice system, with education and trainings seen as a cross-cutting support (USHRN). Currently, efforts to introduce HRE in U.S. schools are promoted by several key non-governmental organizations nationally like Amnesty International - USA, the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center and HREA. A 2000 survey of state curricular standards showed that 40% of the states had some reference to human rights (Banks 2002), although this research did not detail these standards or comment on the implementation in practice.

Some of the authors feel that HRE, alike the human rights framework itself is threatened by the global war on terrorism as well as trends that show a polarization of large regions and cultures of the world against one another. The retrenchment of human rights is a part of the context of the current HRE climate, and is addressed in Rosemann's article.

### Karl Peter Fritzsche

Human rights education is difficult. On the one hand this difficulty is a consequence of well known obstacles for HRE: a lack of resources, difficulty accessing the formal curricula, teaching lacking knowledge and skills to deal with these topics, a lack of political will or will that is only symbolic in nature. Independently of these system issues, HRE is inherently difficult due to the controversial and critical character of human rights and the contrasting approaches human rights educators have to its introduction.

We have a widely different range of contexts to which human rights education is applied and a parallel diversity of models and conceptions. We can see this as enriching the practice of HRE or as creating additional obstacles to implementation by inviting confusion (Georgi, Seberich 2004).

There are different ways to distinguish the various concepts of HRE. The typology of my co-editor Felisa Tibbitts distinguishes between three models of HRE: She suggests that these typologies are distinguished by their learner goals and their strategic roles in fostering the human rights movement. Stacked together, these typologies could be modeled after the "learning pyramid", an image that illustrates three emerging models of HRE.

At the bottom of the pyramid, there is the "values and awareness model" which focuses on transmitting knowledge about human rights and to foster its integration into public values. Awareness campaigns and most school curricula fall within this category. There is little emphasis on skill development, excepting perhaps for critical thinking. The role of this HRE approach vis-à-vis the human rights movement is to create a public consensus around human rights values that can be brought to bear on state officials.

Tibbitts labeled the second typology the "accountability model", which is concerned with training professionals and HR activists in monitoring, lobbying, and the application of legal norms and practices. These learners are directly involved in the promotion of the human rights framework,

either through their legal or political work, or through their professional work as "duty bearers." This HRE, therefore, is quite practical and applied.

The third, the "transformational model" facilitates the evolution of individuals (in particular those that have had their human rights violated) into activists. This HRE pedagogy involves self-reflection and healing and is creatively carried out in an environment that provides many enriching supports and opportunities to choose personal or social change (Tibbitts 2002).

Tibbitts developed these typologies to underscore what was already apparent in the HRE field - that different approaches were in play - but also to emphasize the need to undertake HRE in a way that was truly strategic for promoting the human rights movement. Thus, she was ultimately dissatisfied with the limitations of the "values and awareness" approach which she saw as prevalent in the public domain.

The typology of Nancy Flowers (2004) underlines three different definitions of HRE:

- Definitions by governmental bodies are mainly devoted to national and international legal documents with a focus on 'rights'. "Not surprisingly the formulators of these definitions are usually diplomats and legal experts for whom education is usually auxiliary and popular education totally unfamiliar" (107). The outcome orientation of these definitions is almost directed to the outcome of the preservation of peace, order and democracy.
- Definitions by NGOs are more directed to the outcome of transformation and social change. They are more critical towards the violations of human rights and stress the potentials of the oppressed victims or vulnerable groups to become empowered through education and to eliminate the conditions of human rights violations (112),
- Definitions by educationalists focus more on values, norms and standards which lead to a specialization in human rights rather than on outcomes.

The idea of the Flower's typology is to highlight the impact of different political and educational areas involved in HRE on the conceptualization of HRE.

In understanding the varied typologies of HRE we finally need to take into account the academic background of the educators involved in the field. The question is not just if they are involved in human rights education but rather through what disciplinary lens do they look view HR and HRE. Educators of HRE do not always have a pedagogic background; they also come from the fields of philosophy, the humanities, the social science as well as jurisprudence. These are the implications I see for these disciplinary approaches.

- The philosophical perspective lays the focus on ideas, moral standards, human dignity and competing approaches for legitimizing human rights.
- The legal perspective concentrates on rights, legal instruments, institution building, knowledge orientation, the state, law enforcement, and reference to the international documents.
- The political and social science perspectives focus on conflicts, development, change, publicity, critique of violations, the civil society, and the culture of human rights.

- The pedagogical perspective includes the focus on values, "implicit HRE", individual behavior, the prevention of violations, and human rights as a way of life.

Another reason for the difficult character of HRE is the ongoing controversies within the human rights field itself. Many educators find these controversies to be both confusing and disturbing. This can lead to a general reluctance towards addressing human rights. Numerous authors (Fritzsche 2004; Krennerich, Stamminger 2005; Haspel, Frech 2005) have identified these controversies, which may be already familiar to the reader:

- about the economic, social and cultural rights and the possibilities to protect them in the same way like the political rights. The doctrine of the indivisibility does not overcome questions about human rights that are "protected" versus human rights that must be progressively "realized;"
- about the so called "western bias" of the HR and again the doctrine of the universality does not calm these debates;
- about the collective character of some HR like the right to development and about the way how to protect them;
- about the "architecture" of HR: do they determine the relation between the state and the citizens or do they influence also the relationships within the civil society;
- about the applicability of HR: when a minority is a minority that deserves the protection of HR, when a minority is politically recognized as a minority belonging to the protected national minorities;
- about conflicting HR (see the debates on the headscarf and those on the cartoons)

The critique of power and the encouragement of change (see Ramirez article) are not appreciated by everybody. Human rights are often perceived as political and even subversive, threatening for those who would defend their interests, their power positions and/ or their privileges. If the teachers are not educated and empowered sufficiently they will tend to avoid such hot topics.

We are facing a very special controversy following the events of September 11th. This is the controversy about freedom and security where a position has been developed that human rights are not a solution but the problem itself, as these norms are an obstacle for the "war on terrorism". We are now confronted with a new "wave" of global insecurity produced by international terrorism as well as by the "war on terrorism" itself. These feelings of insecurity can cause a deep hesitation towards accepting the human rights framework and can even foster processes of denying or "unlearning" human rights-related standards amongst citizens (Fritzsche 2006). Citizens who had supported the principles of unalienable and equal rights before September 11th now seem willing to restrict human rights, to legitimize discrimination and to permit torture in the interest of promoting "security."

In the current political environment in some Western countries, therefore, human rights has lost some of its currency in setting standards for the treatment of minorities, immigrants and human beings in general. The debate on torture of (suspected) terrorists has revealed how the threat of terrorism even leads to - or is instrumentalized in - a regression in moral

and human rights standards (See the Rosemann article).

HRE after September 11th means awareness building under conditions of extreme insecurity and fear. What is needed is a new empowerment of learners in order to enable them to recognize and better cope with the challenges of insecurity, to counter their feelings of powerlessness, and to convince them that there is no human security without human rights. After September 11th, human rights educators are challenged to create new paths towards sustainable human rights awareness.

Human rights education is difficult because human rights are critical. Article 28 of the UDHR reads, "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized". Human rights aim to change. People who are oriented toward an idea of equal human dignity and rights and who trust in their competence and power will defend themselves against discrimination, oppose tyranny and step up to support the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In order for this to happen, human rights education is critical. It elucidates conditions under which human rights are violated and also enables us to measure policies and actions against human rights standards. HRE also remains critical where human rights conflicts occur within democracies - as after September 11th. Human rights education is about education for taking action.

In spite of all these difficulties we see many indicators, that HRE is becoming more and more a powerful approach and is going to become "a success story" (Lohrenscheit 2004; Fritzsche 2005; Lehnhart 2003):

- It is increasingly recognized that HRE is structurally needed for the development HR and that HRE has preventive potential against discrimination.
- The way in which the "war on terrorism" has been practiced has lead to an increase of critique and to a revival of HR issues.
- HRE is becoming a networking international movement.
- There is a growing global, national and local communication between HR educators.<sup>4</sup>
- Research is beginning to develop within the field of HRE.
- The idea of world citizenship includes a new perspective for HRE overcoming the narrowness of state-centered citizenship education.
- Children's rights education is developing as a helpful bridge to (and part of) HRE; children are seem as the first holders of rights and the first target group of HRE (See Krappmen article in this issue).
- The idea is gaining ground that HRE with its core values of human dignity, self-determination and non-discrimination could become an umbrella approach for all the other educational approaches like peace education, tolerance education, intercultural education and citizenship education.
- Critical thinking is directed on HRE itself in order to avoid a kind of romanticization or reification of human rights universal, and in order to keep the focus on alleviating the conditions for those who are suffering (See Keet's article).
- Holistic concepts of an "indivisible HRE" are gaining ground in overcoming cleavages of one-sided approaches.

Therefore, beyond all the different approaches to HRE and the challenges that we face in implementing it, we find that a common ground is developing.

- The critique (and analysis) of human rights violations.
- The intention to struggle against discrimination and for equal human rights.
- The empowerment of the learners in order to facilitate their claiming their rights.

Shulamith Koenig, founder of the Peoples Movement for Human Rights Education is most eloquent on the topic of empowerment, and I quote her at length:

Human rights education is a way of clearing and preparing the ground for reclaiming and securing our right to be human. It is learning about justice and empowering people in the process. It is a social and human development strategy that enables women, men, and children to become agents of social change. It can produce the blend of ethical thinking and action needed to cultivate public policies based on human rights and opens the possibility of creating a human rights culture for the 21st century (Koenig n.Y.).

In this issue, we give you a taste of a range of contexts and approaches to which human rights education is being applied. In addition to HRE in schools, we address HRE with the police (Sganga) and even human rights promotion in an online environment (Verstappen). We hope that you will find these articles inspirational, thought-provoking and, of course, even a little unsettling.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Portions of Ms. Tibbitts' section of this editorial have been published in Tibbitts 2006.

<sup>2</sup>During the 1990s, several important international documents on human rights education were elaborated. These were the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal 1993), the Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (UNESCO, Paris 1995), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993), Guidelines for Plans of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education 1995-2004 (1995). These refer to the relevant education articles of international treaties and place informal pressure on national governments to co-operate.

<sup>3</sup>The full set of human rights documents as well as related General Comments can be found on the website of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org).

<sup>4</sup>See the Global Human Rights Education listserv, hosted by Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) at <http://www.hrea.org/erc/forums/>.

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