

Responsible for Equality And Liberty (R.E.A.L.)

-- Love is More Powerful Than Hate - Love Wins

Human Rights Day Remarks - Responsible for Equality And Liberty (R.E.A.L.) December 10, 2009

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Why December 10 Matters

December 10, 1948 was an important date in the history of humanity. On that day, the nations of the world came together amidst the global crimes against humanity during World War II, and were determined to create an international declaration of our most basic rights as human beings to be respected by the nations of the world - universally. Their efforts became known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In many ways, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the world's way of saying "Never Again." Those who would stand defiant against the forces of apathy, hate, and hopelessness to defend humanity's most basic rights as human beings took courage in this international declaration. As the years went by, other declarations of human courage continued around the world.

"Never Again" was followed by "Ich bin ein Berliner," then "I Have A Dream," then "There is No Such Thing as Part Freedom." From person to person, from city to city, from nation to nation, there has been a continuing march for human freedom. In every step, the advocates for human equality and liberty share a common message to those who would deny such human rights - "We Shall Overcome."

The true context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not just about the times in which it was created, but by the human beings that have dared to stand for it.

They are the human beings who recognize the truths that we hold self-evident that all men and women are created equal and that all deserve the inalienable human rights of equality and liberty. They are the human beings that understand that we are one race... the human race. They understand there is truly one omni-culture of shared humanity. They understand there is just one home that we all share - where our universal human rights extend to every part of that home - of our planet Earth.

December 10 was designated as "Human Rights Day" by the United Nations in remembrance of the December 10, 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But not only do we recognize our declaration in support of such universal human rights, but also we remember those who have denied them, including the totalitarian and supremacist nations and ideologies of the world that seek to continue to deny such universal human rights today.

But in challenging those who would deny our universal human rights we do not offer an upraised fist, but instead we offer an outstretched hand from the family of humanity. Our human rights are their human rights. We urge those would use their hatred of others to justify denying their human rights, to drop the burden of hate from their hearts, and join their brothers and sisters in humanity.

We believe that...

Love Wins.

Our Goal to be Responsible for Equality and Liberty

Too many hearts are hardened and numb by the endless stream of human tragedy that is broadcast around the world on a daily basis. Too many ears have been shut to the cries of anguish of our suffering fellow human beings, and have been focused instead on our differences and our quarrels, rather than on what brings us together as a single and as a singular human race. Too many minds have become closed to the infinite possibilities of peace, dignity, and human co-existence grounded on a consistent approach to defending our universal human rights.

We come here today to rise above such numbness, such indifference and divisions, and such inflexibility on this December 10, "Human Rights Day," to join the chorus of past declarations of courage and declare our support for our Universal Human Rights for all of humanity.

Our volunteer group, Responsible for Equality And Liberty (R.E.A.L.), seeks to reach out to the public to rebuild a culture where our universal human rights are a priority, not an afterthought. We believe that our standard of living as human beings -- begins with our standard of human rights for one another.

In a world where compromise has become a way of life, R.E.A.L.'s mission is to focus on consistency in human rights, and to offer a consistent vision on the largest threats to human equality and liberty. While we celebrate our diversity as individual human beings, we must recognize that a culture of co-existence is dependent on our shared universal human rights around the world.

Among the nations that did not adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948 were the Communist bloc nations and the Islamic Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Communist leaders who took control of China in 1949 led to the creation of one of the world's worst human rights abusers in Communist China, with 1.3 billion human beings whose liberty and human rights are routinely denied today. Communist China is a nation with over 1,000 forced labor camps. Saudi Arabia set the standard for rejecting universal human rights among "Islamic" nations, which led to a rejection of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights among such nations, replaced by a Sharia-based Cairo Declaration of Human Rights, under which all human rights are solely dependent on Islamic Sharia law. The Sharia-based Cairo Declaration was formed by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), which continues to refuse to accept unqualified universal human rights for women, children, non-Muslims, and even other Muslims.

But the challenge to our human rights does not only extend to those nations that have rejected the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the spirit of such universal human rights. It has extended as well to too many of those nations that adopted the UDHR as well. That is why we have seen the continuing global threat of misogyny, the global threat of child abuse, the global problem of racial supremacism, and the global issue of anti-freedom ideologies based on hate.

In the Congo, 1,100 rapes of women are reported every month, and in Uganda, Sudan, Liberia and other parts of the world - hate crimes against women continue to rise. But it is not just the misogynist violence of rape or "honor killings" that remain the only threat to women's human rights. Even in the United States, women still are waiting for Constitutional equality. If we ever hope to be consistent on human rights, we must be determined to end the human rights abuses of women - representing half of humanity - whether they are in Communist China, Saudi Arabia, the Congo, or even the United States. This must be a consistent priority to restore a standard of human rights to our world. We must recognize that misogyny - hate against women - is a global human rights abuse.

Our children are our future. But in Communist China, 400 million children are never born, through abusive and coercive measures against women that have included forced abortions. Communist China claims to be proud of its role as a signatory to the November 20, 1989 UN Convention on Children's Rights, while it ignores horrific practices in promoting the death of infants. Many of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) nations also claim to be signatories to the November 20, 1989 Convention on Children's Rights, which is dependent on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that such OIC nations reject. Not surprisingly, these OIC nations also have numerous "reservations" on the Convention of Children's Rights as well, based on Sharia law. We have seen the growing problem of child marriages, arranged marriages, and "honor killing" violence in many of these nations that claim to be advocates of children's human rights. One of the OIC nations that is not a signatory to the Convention on Children's Rights is Somalia. Somalia is a nation where a 13 year old girl has been publicly stoned to death as punishment by an Islamic Sharia "court" for being the victim of gang rape. But an epidemic of violence against children is also found in many other OIC nations. The other country that is not a signatory to the Convention on Children's Rights is the United States. We take this opportunity on Human Rights Day to demand that the American government end the international disgrace in not being a signatory to the UN Convention on Children's Rights.

We cannot begin to build a culture of human rights without an international prohibition on human slavery. But too many are part of the global slave trade that continues around the world today, including children and women, with significant abuses in Africa, in Communist China and other Communist nations, and in many of the OIC nations. The next time you buy a product "Made in China," shouldn't you ask yourself when it is time to be responsible for calling for an end to Communist China's forced labor camps? In the June 2009 U.S. State Department report on human trafficking, 17 of the OIC nations are among the nations on the State Department's watch list as not meeting the Trafficking Victim Protection Act's (TVPA) minimum standards. They are: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritania, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Afghanistan, Jordan, and Turkey. In some nations, such human trafficking is linked to religious supremacism and abuse toward religious minorities. In the Sudan and Egypt, religious minorities are kidnapped and often forcibly converted to Islam. In Egypt, such kidnapping of girls and young women is part of a larger abuse toward Coptic Christian religious minorities. In Pakistan, a recent news report describes how de facto slavery was continuing in Pakistan, and rights activists have urged the Pakistan government to acknowledge "internal human trafficking" as a crime in Pakistan. Ending slavery must be a priority in defending our universal human rights.

But such slavery -- physical, spiritual, and mental -- flourishes in those areas where human rights are not viewed as either unqualified or universal. We are here today on this Human Rights Day to defy those who would view our brothers and sisters as something less than human beings, having something less than human rights. But in challenging such ideologies of hate, we must recognize the pervasive nature of such hate against human rights.

Even in America, we see a growing intolerance against individuals of other races, ethnicities, genders, and religions. When America has over 900 racial hate groups, we know that hate remains a pervasive problem. When churches, mosques, and synagogues are attacked in America, we know that intolerance remains a pervasive problem. We must challenge this by denying the view that there is "the other" that is used to justify hate in America and around the world. There is no "other" - there is only us - our brothers and sisters in humanity - anywhere and everywhere in the world. Human rights are our rights, and it is our obligation to be **Responsible for Equality And Liberty.**

The Supremacist Challenge to Human Rights

Being responsible for our inalienable human rights begins within each of us as individuals. If we can't be responsible for human rights, how can we expect our governments, our nations, and other nations to be responsible? The change we seek comes first from within. The change we seek comes from our friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. The change we seek comes from members of our identity group - whether it is our race, our religion, our ethnicity, our gender, or even our political party.

America offers a historic lesson on the need for personal responsibility in confronting the supremacist challenge to human rights. America was once home to the largest known terrorist organization - the Ku Klux Klan. At one point, the Ku Klux Klan boasted 4 million members. But in the 1950s and 1960s, Americans came to realize that something had to change. We came to realize that we cannot have liberty without equality. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. challenged Americans to take personal responsibility for confronting the ideology that he called "white supremacy."

Dr. King did not attack or condemn all white Americans, but he did challenge all Americans to recognize that we had a white supremacist challenge to human rights in America that we needed to put behind us to live in support of the truths that we hold self-evident. While we still have a problem with racial supremacism in America today, in 40 years there has been a sea-change of thought, action, and policy in this country. We have a black president in a nation where black Americans once were denied the right to vote. That is what taking personal responsibility for equality and liberty can do.

The ideology of supremacism is dependent on the lie that some identity groups are inherently superior to others and therefore deserve preferential treatment and preferential rights. On Human Rights Day, and every day, we must defy the supremacist challenge to our universal human rights. We believe in equal rights for every man and every woman.

We face a complex problem in the world today where religious freedom is under attack by religious supremacists. Certainly, every religion views that its perspective is right, and even directed by a higher being. But when individuals, groups, and nations use their religious views to rationalize denying the universal human rights and freedom of conscience of others, then we are faced with a challenge of religious supremacism. We don't like to talk about this issue today, any more than in the 1960s many Americans wanted to talk about white supremacism. But we really need a human rights dialogue on the challenges of religious supremacist threats to our universal human rights.

In its 1990 creation of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights to replace the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that we celebrate today, the Organization of Islamic Conference made a conscious decision to deny our unqualified universal human rights, other than those rights allowed by interpretations of Islamic Sharia law. We continue to see the consequences of this decision by those with an Islamic supremacist view around the world daily, with untold acts of violence, abuse of women, abuse of children, denial of human rights, and denial of freedom of religion -- all rationalized by Islamic supremacist claims.

Like Dr. King addressed "white supremacy" without attacking or condemning all white Americans, we do not attack or condemn Islam or all Muslims, but we do challenge all human beings to recognize that we face an Islamic supremacist challenge to human rights in the world today. We cannot continue to ignore this global threat to our universal human rights and simply wish that it would go away. We cannot be consistent in our defense of universal human rights and ignore such global issues.

Thousands of women are murdered around the world in so-called "honor killings," where many of its perpetrators rationalize their actions based on Islamic supremacism. We see such atrocities on a regular basis, which happen even in the United States, with the November 2009 "honor killing" in Arizona of a young girl named Noor Almaleki. Such Islamic supremacist rejection of universal human rights has become a global phenomenon, and this is much more than isolated incidents of criminals and "extremists." On August 13, 2009, the Pew Global Research organization conducted a poll in Pakistan which showed that 78 percent believed in the death penalty for those who chose freedom of religion to leave Islam. (Pakistan has a population of 170 million.) But widespread rejection of the universal human right of religious freedom and freedom of conscience is not just limited to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, or others. In the United States on July 2009, I stood in a conference with 700 others in Chicago at a Hizb ut-Tahrir event, where Islamic supremacist Hizb ut-Tahrir leaders denounced democracy and distributed pamphlets supporting the "death penalty" for "traitors" who leave Islam. The challenge of Islamic supremacism is truly a global threat to human rights.

But the challenge of Islamic supremacism does not justify hate or discrimination against Muslims, any more than white supremacism justified acts of violence against white Americans by black separatists in the 1960s. Two wrongs do not make a right. If we are in support of religious freedom and challenging religious supremacism, then we must be consistent in our support of human rights for all people. Those who would harass, intimidate, and discriminate against Muslims make the same mistake as those who believe that Islamic supremacism would justify denying our universal human rights.

Furthermore, I implore the religious communities of the world to recognize that religious supremacism is not limited to Islamic supremacism. In the Christian churches of the world, there must be condemnation of those who would rationalize hate and denial of our universal human rights based on Christian supremacism. In Uganda, there is an ongoing problem with a group known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that rationalizes its violence, hate, and terrorism based on its Christian supremacist views, while killing other Christians. In New York, the Westboro Baptist Church conducted hate rallies in front of Jewish synagogues in September. In Texas, renegade Mormon leaders have been convicted for child abuse, as has another anti-Catholic "evangelist" in Arkansas. In California and Arizona, Christian pastors have called for the death of President Barack Obama.

So I urge the Christian community to be vigilant and active in challenging those who justify hate based on their religion as well. Christians cannot ask Muslims to challenge Islamic supremacists, if they are not willing to challenge those who would use Christian supremacism to rationalize defying our universal human rights. Our commitment to our universal human rights must be demonstrated by our actions and example.

I have first-hand experience with such Christian supremacist hate in Ohio. Five years ago, as a former Presbyterian Christian, I was stunned to discover that a group affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA held a meeting at Wooster College where the anti-Semitic screed of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion was presented as a fact. This was the result of individuals who allowed their challenges with policies in Israel to rationalize hate against Jews. Once again, this demonstrates the pervasiveness of hate. Along with leaders from the Simon Wiesenthal Foundation, I went to Wooster College to ask such leaders to reject such hate. Five years later, I have yet to see a well-publicized apology from the Presbyterian Church USA on this issue. One response I did get was from a pastor, who asked why I was so concerned, and if I was Jew-lover.

I can answer that here without reservation. Yes, I love Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, whites, blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and people of all religions, races and nationalities. They are my brothers and sisters in humanity. It is because I love my fellow human beings that I cannot deny my responsibility to defend their universal human rights.

On this Human Rights Day, I ask my fellow human beings to have confidence that "Love Wins."