VALUES EDUCATION for HUMAN SOLIDARITY

© *Lourdes R. Quisumbing*
President, Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education
Former Secretary of Education, Philippines

First and foremost, <u>human</u> <u>solidarity</u> is founded on <u>mutual</u> <u>respect</u> of each other's uniqueness, and a deep sense of <u>appreciation</u> of our common humanity - that we are individuals with intrinsic self-worth, and that we are sisters and brothers within <u>one</u> <u>human</u> <u>family</u> inhabiting planet EARTH, our home and our heritage.

While new trends, particularly globalization, link cultures ever more closely and enrich the interaction among them, they may also be detrimental to our cultural diversity and cultural pluralism. Thus, the need for <u>mutual</u> <u>respect</u> becomes all the more imperative. <u>Dialogue</u> <u>between</u> <u>cultures</u> appears to be one of the fundamental cultural and political challenges for the world today. It is an essential condition of peaceful co-existence. (International Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, Stockholm, Sweden, 1998).

Thus, "To learn how to avoid cultural diversity resulting to the clash of cultures but rather to intercultural harmony and peace," is a challenge to us, peace educators (<u>Our</u> <u>Creative Diversity</u>, de Cuellar's World Commission on Culture and Development Report to UNESCO, 1995).

One cannot underestimate the role of education for international and intercultural understanding, which consists not merely in knowing more about different peoples and their cultures - their geography, history, economy, government, value-systems - but more in understanding and gaining insight into the factors and motivations underlying their behavior and <u>appreciating</u> their cultural patterns, traditions, customs, values and beliefs.

Human solidarity is likewise fostered by the realization and strengthening of the ties that bind us together in our <u>common</u> <u>humanity</u>: our human nature and the human condition, our common habitat and destiny, <u>our</u> <u>universally</u>–<u>shared values.</u>

Indeed, there are VALUES which transcend the barriers of culture, race, gender and creed; of social class, economic status, or political persuasions, because such values are rooted in our common humanity. They are our common treasures, our "birthright". (They could form the core of a new global ethics)

The articulation of human rights has set for the modern world a "common standard of morality," and an appreciation of individual moral claims that are regarded as "<u>universal, inviolable and inalienable</u>." (Antonio J. Ledesma, S.J. "Forging a Culture of Peace: Hope

for Coming Generations, 1998). They are our basic human rights and fundamental freedoms: the worth and dignity of the humans person, our innate human goodness, our capacity for love and compassion, the sacredness of our person and identity; the right to truth and justice, the freedom to choose and decide for oneself, to believe, to love and to act freely according to one's values and convictions; freedom from ignorance, fear, prejudices poverty, cruelty and abuses; the right to peace, happiness and development.

Young people across cultures are in search for the deeper meanings of their existence and for enduring values and roots that provide them with stability and strength, security and hope, happiness and peace to their lives, in these rapidly-changing and confusing times. They look up to their leaders and they feel lost. A crisis of confidence is spreading throughout the world.

"We have but one world, or none at all;" words from Jerry and Pat Mische, founders of GEA, Global Education Associates, when they came in the early 80's and founded the PCGE, Phil. Council for Global Education. I can hear them now and feel their presence among many of us. Their messages of global solidarity, global spirituality and our common humanity, our interconnectednesss (and interrelationships) with each other and with our planet Earth and beyond, reaching the future generations, shall remain with us forever.   "We either work together to build the EARTH or perish together with it." We have only one home, one body of waters, one atmosphere, one environment. We live under one sky. What happens in one place, affects all the rest.

Nowadays, one is apprehensive to turn on the TV/radio, or glance at newspaper headlines, lest we suffer more shock and disillusionment at the sad state of our human relationships, the immense sufferings of peoples all over the globe, the never-ending cycle of violence; religious fanaticism, terrorism, kidnappings, the deterioration of our ecosystems, the disasters of proportions unheard of before: devastating floods, forest fires, haze (brown sky), landslides, pollution. Instead of the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, that we all hoped, waited and worked for, (2000 was declared by the UN as the International Year of the Culture of Peace, 2001-2010 the International Decade of the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World) an Age of Terror and a Culture of Greed have set in.

Despite the dramatic breakthroughs in science and technology, which have brought benefits and progress to our lives, we continue to experience the daily occurrence of human cruelty, misery and tragedy, torture, genocide, violence, displacement and abuse of peoples, mostly the marginalized, women and children; the destruction of the ecosystem and biodiversity; the threat to human life and all other life forms; moral bankruptcy in the wealthiest of nations, the erosion of our human, cultural, ethical and spiritual values; the deepening poverty of the human spirit.

Indeed, it can be said, that humankind stands at the brink of total disaster. We face a crisis of our own making, a result of our irresponsible and selfish lifestyles, our abusive patterns of production and consumption, the insatiable greed for profit, the drive to satisfy the whims and wants of a few at the expense of the needs of the majority.

Is it not an irony and a tragedy that in these times when instant messages crisscross the globe every second of every day, even reaching outer space, peoples of the world instead of becoming closer and more united, have become more divided and polarized, torn apart by deep-seated animosities and hatreds, prejudices, discrimination and intolerance? That some are still isolated and marginalized? That despite peace talks, negotiations and coalitions, the cycle of bloodshed and violence continues, that despite world summits and conferences on globalization, free trade, the open market, liberalization policies, environment, eradication of poverty and development, human security and human solidarity remain elusive?

This is not the time for despair (but of active faith and resolve), not the time for vacillation or procrastination, but of collective effort and commitment to weave together our spirit of solidarity and towards the vision of our preferred future – that of a culture of peace and non-violence, where people resolve conflicts not through force, but through dialogue and negotiation, where people learn to know and to understand each other, to respect and appreciate each other's identity and uniqueness, to care and to embrace each other as members of one human family.

"Humankind has for the first time, the sophistication to build its future, not on the illusion of a one-sided, ill-conceived ideology, but on a set of <u>universal values</u> which we all share, even if their optimal balance differs from people to people, from religion to religion and from individual to individual, <u>and when there is great respect for such differences</u>.   (de Cuellar, <u>Creative Diversity</u>, World Commission on Culture and Development Report to UNESCO, 1995.)

We need a new revolution, a massive radical attitudinal and behavioral change, if we wish to halt the race towards catastrophe and save the world for the future generations. We need no less than a "re-education of humankind." (Paul Kennedy, in <u>Communicating for Development</u>, Colin Fraser and Sonia Restrepo-Estrada, 1998.)

This calls for a paradigm shift in our educational philosophy and practice. Instead of a rigid and compartmentalized knowledge-based curriculum, we should adopt a more holistic view of education which aims at the development of the faculties and powers of the whole person – cognitive, affective, emotional, aesthetic, volitional, behavioral; a teaching-learning approach which does not stop at knowledge and information at developing skills and competence, but proceeds to understanding and gaining insights, that educates the heart and the emotions and develops the ability to choose freely and to value, to make decisions and to translate knowledge and values into action. <u>The heart of education is the education of the heart.</u>

Modern day education must espouse Scientific Humanism, a new Science with a Conscience, and a new Technology with a heart. Valuing our common humanity, as well as our local cultural traditions, provides challenges and guides for designing civic education curricula towards responsible citizenship for our fast-changing world. (Kenny J. Kennedy, "Searching for Values in a Globalized World" in Values in Education, Susan Pascoe ed. Yearbook *2002* –Australian College of Educators, 2002)

But by values education we do not mean merely <u>teaching</u> <u>about</u> <u>values</u> but rather <u>learning</u> <u>how</u> to <u>value</u>, how to bring knowledge into the deeper level of <u>understandings</u> and insights; into the affective realm of our <u>feelings</u> and <u>emotions</u>, our cherished choices and priorities into loving and appreciating, and how to internalize and translate them into our behavior. Truly, values education is a holistic process and a total learning experience.

In closing, I wish to quote Jacques Delors speaking at the UN Conference on Environment, Rio de Janeiro, 1992:

"The world is our village: if one house catches fire, the roofs over all our heads are immediately at risk. If anyone of us tries to start rebuilding, his efforts will be purely symbolic. <u>Solidarity</u> has to be the order of the day: each of us must bear his own share of the general responsibility. He continues to say: We need a global ethics to guide us in solving global issues, in strengthening our global interdependence and solidarity."

The issues have been raised and the challenges presented in many a forum, but our answers and our plans have yet to galvanize into a determined and collective action. In the last analysis, it is not in knowing alone, but in valuing and caring deeply; not in merely planning but in willing strongly TOGETHER that we can make things happen.

Principles to form the core of a new global ethics:
1. human rights and responsibilities
2. democracy based on H.R. and fundamental freedoms
3. protection of minorities (respect for diversity)
4. commitment to <u>peaceful</u> conflict-resolution and fair negotiation
5. equity within and between generations
   (de Cuellar, <u>op cit</u>)