

Human Rights Education
From Humiliation towards Living in Dignity
(The Human Rights Cities Model)

© Kathleen Modrowski,
Long Island University

signed by Shulamit Koenig, People's Movement for Human Rights Education

Note prepared for the Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, Columbia
University, New York, November 18-19, 2004

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states in *article 1*, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” The UDHR and its subsequent elaboration in treaties and covenants provide an expression of the profound desire for all human beings to live in dignity. A life of dignity is one that breaks through the cycle of humiliation that is engendered in the patriarchal foundations of our societies.

Human rights education, or human rights learning, is the means through which entire communities explore the structure and the function of their society. Social, economic and cultural dimensions, as well as, political and civil aspects are looked at from the perspective of the critical issues within the local community. Analysis of the situation and finding solutions to problems are presented using the human rights framework. Learning is a process that involves the entire community and is entertained within a dialogical model. Examples of collective engagement by communities in the Human Rights Cities Programs can be studied as illustrations and as practical models of the ways in which forms of humiliation- gender, ethnic and cultural discrimination, poverty, religious intolerance, landlessness, etc. – are recognized and acted upon because they are impediments to the full realization of human rights. Human rights learning have the potential of developing a new political culture that, unlike other political agendas, has the means to permanently disrupt the ongoing cycle of humiliation.

Kathleen Modrowski
Shulamith Koenig