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We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For: Human Rights and Us/U.S.

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Abstract

Since 2002, SSF, internationally, has been at the forefront of an epistemological revolution within sociology. Specifically, SSF-US has had the difficult task of bringing the United States into a critical dialogue with other voices and perspectives – voices which are much more deeply rooted in human rights than most United Statesian sociologists. In this article, I outline eight ways to underscore the Hopi saying that, “we are the ones we've been waiting for”: 1) remapping our cognitions away from individualism and capitalism; 2) socializing for humanity, not citizenry; 3) recognizing our common needs and common vulnerabilities; 4) creating new identities and respect for new identities rooted in variation; 5) creating human rights spaces, places, and cities; 6) utilizing locally the new UN mechanisms for human rights tracking; 7) revising the U.S. constitution, and 8) creating a new science of liberation – a sociology without borders.

Keywords

human rights, United States, community, identity, citizenship, constitutions, liberation

Introduction

In this article I outline several ideas for the pursuance of human rights in our communities, nations, and world. As *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences* enters its fifth year of publishing critical scholarship on the theories, epistemologies, and empirical realities of human rights, it is important to begin thinking about what all of this means for us – as sociologists, as scholars, as students, as teachers, as activists, as people – and how the U.S. and its people have particularly strong ideological, structural, cognitive, and cultural barriers up that require understanding and, ultimately, change. In this article that was originally a speech I gave at the annual Human Rights Day celebration at Indiana State University, I outline eight ways to underscore the Hopi saying that, ‘we are the ones we've been waiting

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for.’ These are: 1) remapping our cognitions away from individualism and capitalism; 2) socializing for humanity, not citizenry; 3) recognizing our common needs and common vulnerabilities; 4) creating new identities and respect for new identities rooted in variation; 5) creating human rights spaces, places, and cities; 6) utilizing locally the new UN mechanisms for human rights tracking; 7) revising the U.S. constitution, and 8) creating a new science of liberation – a sociology without borders. I believe these can help us envision a journal, as well as a society, that can bolster the realization of human rights for all.

To begin, I have taken some liberties with the following recognizable passage:

‘When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for [a] people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another [...] they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all [humans] are created equal, that they are endowed by their [very humanity, their very existence on Earth] with certain unalienable [human] Rights[...] to secure these rights, Governments are instituted [...] deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed [that Government exists *for the people*, not the other way around] [...] when [...] any [...] Government becomes destructive of these ends [and/or when the State sees its people as serving its needs and not the other way around], it is the [human] Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness [, Dignity and Self-Determination]. [...] when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security [...]’

Of course, this tweaked excerpt comes from the Declaration of Independence. Indeed. Independence from King George III, yes. Yet, the new government that was established – now 234 years hence – has

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simply not worked for the majority of its citizens. This 'Declaration of Independence' takes on new meaning in 2010 – as we enter the seventh decade of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The people of the world, in the wake of 200+ years of American imperialism may hearken the same call, may state the same exact words as articulated in the Declaration, but this time aimed at the United States' economic, cultural, political, and social imperialism. Of course, it was never meant to be a 'Declaration of Individualism,' yet, under capitalism, this is what it has become. And, indeed, the United Statesians themselves, face, again, in 2010, the need to construct new political bonds – a 'Declaration of Independence,' if you will, from the current Political and Civil rights, towards a new collective polity, with bonds rooted in human rights.

As then, so now: 'we are the ones we've been waiting for.' What does this mean? This journal, *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences*, is another manifestation of this call. See its mission:

'One of the main ideas behind *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences* is bringing scholars from different continents closer together by showing their different approaches of the same research material, especially human rights and public goods. Many scholars from developing countries, paradoxically, have utopian ideas that they pursue, whereas progressive US scholars, for example, are more engaged in criticism. *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences* aims at bridging this gap. But there is more to it: *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences* also aims at breaking down the walls between the disciplines of Social Sciences, Human Rights (as formulated in the international standards of the UN-related organizations), Environmental Sciences, and the Humanities. Next to the work of scholars, *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences* includes articles by activists, teachers, and practitioners who understand the importance of collaborative efforts to affect and study change, for the dissemination of knowledge, and for case-based prototypes.'

As we embark on the next phase of the journal and bring together a

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wide swath of international, interdisciplinary, and critical scholars, it is desirable to think about ways that we all can encourage human rights on the ground, in our own lives, and in our scholarship both within and without the pages of *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences*. In this brief article I will outline several ideas concerning the ways that each one of us, all of us, particularly in the United States (but not solely) can be involved in the struggle for human rights – for if all do not have human rights, none have them at all and if one does not have all of their human rights protected, they have none protected. Ultimately, it is fundamentally true: *we* are the *ones* we've been waiting for when it comes to the realization of human rights in our lives, communities, scholarship, and world.

To begin understanding what human rights are, let's go to the source on the issue, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), brought into collective, global consciousness on December 10, 1948. Article 1 states:

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood'

And, furthermore, Article 2 states:

'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty'

So, because one is a member of the human family, because one is a member of this planet, because of one's humanity, because one *is*, so they have rights *as humans*. Not, you are a citizen of country X and therefore, as a citizen of country X you have rights. Yes, these exist, but these are individual rights – the U.S. recognizes political and civil

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rights, but these fall under the rubric of individual rights, what of social, cultural, and economic rights? Human rights are collective. We could assume that people, in general, know what these are – but we would be mistaken. Folks get into definitional quagmires and, while definitions are important, rationalizations and scientific logic (or illogical as the case may often be) stray us from the point laid out in 1948, and indeed before that. Human rights, and the basic doctrines of dignity and self-determination, have deep and long-standing roots in indigenous societies *and* they exist here and now – they are *our* because *we are*. The present global justice movement against globalization and capitalism, which we could both join and constructively critique, has articulated and resonated with a human rights discourse, humanity's chorus against neoliberalism, imperialism, globalization, the IMF, the WTO, 'free trade,' patriarchy, repression, intolerance, racism, and capitalism – a collective desire for human rights. Where were we? Where were our energies?

The reality one must recognize is that the U.S. is a particularly brutal ignorer of human rights – and, coupled with US imperialism, capitalism, 'trade policies,' and general processes of globalization of capital – its outright ignorance of human rights is particularly destructive for the pursuance of human rights. I was recently involved as a co-editor on a book project called, *The Leading Rogue State: The US and Human Rights*, published by Paradigm Publishers in 2008. The aims of this book were to provide an overview of international human rights and to clarify the extent of the United States' disregard that puts its own citizens at risk and impedes global cooperation. This situation is in contrast to most states that embrace international human rights as standards of achievement, including them in their constitutions, and promoting them as programmatic objectives. In this book we showed, blow by blow, chapter by chapter, the extent to which the US not only flagrantly violates the few international human rights treaties it is involved with (either through signature or ratification – neither which mean much for the United States) but the consistent United States distance from the international human rights community and those who struggle for human rights. The United States, as the world's leading economic superpower and dominant global military force, uses its power to undermine international treaties and discredit progress on human rights around the world, to the detriment of United Statesians

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themselves, and, with growing global interdependencies, to the detriment of all people. It is essential that everyone understand the fundamental human rights to which they are entitled under international laws and agreements. Most countries have affirmed these rights, by ratifying human rights treaties and a majority include these as provisions in their constitutions.

As we continue to understand how to both epistemologically revolutionize the social sciences from a human rights perspective *and* how to develop, from our new understanding, a revolutionary sociological practice, I will begin here to think about the contours where we, all of us can begin to craft a human rights reality in one of the Leading Rogue States, the United States, and beyond. It will not be an easy task, but is a vitally important task. I will briefly outline several strategies, starting from the micro-level, our cognitions, up to the collective/macro level – all involving us/U.S.

Cognitive Reorganization: Breaking from Individualism

There is an exciting new field in sociology - cognitive sociology. Its basic premise is this: the ways that we perceive the world, the way we classify the world, the things we attend to versus those we do not, the way we narrate our lives and realities, the way we remember events, facts, etc., and the way we understand ourselves and our relations to other people are fundamentally rooted in our social structures. If we exist in a racist society, we will map racist cognitions, if we live in a homophobic society, our cognitions will be mapped accordingly, if we are constructed as individuals, we will find it difficult to attend to the other (or we will do so in certain ways), and, if we are socialized in capitalism, our cognitions will be capitalist. Thus, the structures of our lives (e.g., inequality) are not just ‘out there,’ they are ‘in here,’ and provide ideological cartographies that allow us to navigate through social, economic, political, and cultural life. Thus, human rights structures (e.g., the distribution of human rights) are not just ‘out there,’ they are mapped ‘in here.’ This makes it exceptionally difficult for United Statesians to even *approach* and even begin to *understand* human rights. As Christof from the film *The Truman Show* says, ‘We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented.’ Of course, Truman also ultimately left that world and, in a similar sense, we must too, doing two things simultaneously: Question and Create.

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Questioning involves a cognitive reorganization, away from cognitive capitalism, away from individualism, away from the enlightenment's 'I think therefore I am' to an 'I am only because we are' – and then we must recognize what we indeed are, and, therefore, who we can become. If those structures are unequal, if they do not protect and buttress the human rights of all people, then we must create new ways to structure our society. Many of these new ways are embedded within the human rights doctrines and protocols from the past 60 years. When I present human rights to my university students, who are products of the public school system by and large, they really wrestle with them. They are always worried about #1 – themselves. They are used to having their personal rights, and their cognitions are mapped accordingly. 'I got my rights' they say. But, what seems to work in my classes so far is something else: looking at your neighbor and saying, 'you have your human rights!' *Period*. Or maybe, 'I will protect your human rights!' *Period*. There is *no* need to go any further with human rights, there is no 'yeah buts,' no rationalizations for why it cannot be, for why things are the way they are, etc. One way forward is to recognize these issues, articulate them to others, and begin *creating* structures that will allow our passions, work, and pedagogies to direct our work towards securing the rights of all people – even if it means giving up liberal notions and so-called individual rights - if all do not have human rights, none do at all. Cognitive reorganization, questioning, and creating.

Educating for Human Rights: Training Humans, not Citizens

Of course our cognitions are mapped with some help from our dominant institutions of socialization: the media, the family, church, schools, etc. Here, I focus on the institution of education. Looking back at the Preamble to the UDHR, it makes things clear:

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures,

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national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction'

In other words, all people need to *know* their human rights. Educating for human rights is a significant part of the puzzle. Perhaps United Statesians do not 'get' human rights, because they have been socialized away from understanding our shared vulnerability and shared brilliance as human beings. We need alternative models to civics, to political science, to social science, to history as taught in our schools and universities. Currently the structure trains and prepares citizens *not* humans. The United Nations has been emphasizing the need for educating for human rights in the last several years. Unfortunately, though, in the United States, at all levels, progress has excruciatingly slow. People could demand courses in high school, in college, start discussions about the UDHR in their communities, work, families. A grounded revolution of knowledge – but a new knowledge.

As part of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the UDHR, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2009 as the 'International Year of Human Rights Learning.' Throughout the year, the General Assembly heavily promoted activities to strengthen and deepen human rights learning on the basis of the principles of universality, constructive international dialogue and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of all human rights. We need human rights principles not only taught in our classrooms, *but* also structured into the relational fabric of our schools – wherever learning to be human takes place – which is everywhere. Away from the banking model of education, towards a liberation curriculum, one that recognizes that the world is socially constructed and shaped by human action or inaction, that all people have a voice, experience, and knowledge, and therefore ideas, practices and relations to each other that can be used, altered, and initiated to alter the structure of the world for the betterment of all – the liberatory scholarship and work of Paolo Freire and Maria Montessori echo here.

Maria Montessori's approach seems to be one model that approaches the desired outcome. Schools create/train citizens in a nation state, schools create/train workers and consumers in a capitalist

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state, schools create/train conformists and people who do not question their reality in a mass-mediated state of social control, schools create people who accept, by and large, the world as prepackaged for them, so they can take the test on those prepackaged facts, and 'succeed.' Montessori instead encourages children to discover the world on their own – grounded in self-determination and dignity. Montessori understands that the fundamental problem of education is the nature of relationships between children and adults, children and children, and thus, adults and adults. Building upon such an approach, Maria Montessori laid out a fantastically human rights-based approach to education: recognizing our shared experience through a recognition of our common vulnerabilities and needs as human beings.

Recognizing Common Needs

The third idea is embedded in the need to recognize our common humanity, something that Montessori teaches. I have found *two* promising educational philosophies over my years of studying the sociology of education and human rights – Paolo Freire and his dialogical method and Maria Montessori and her method. While Freire emphasizes our need to integrate true, honest, open, critical, and speaking truth to power dialogue in our education – away from the banking model of education, Montessori emphasizes our ability and need to discover our own world and to understand humanity's common needs. Montessori teaches history, for instance, through the notion of common needs, which centers the learner in the struggle of humanity, *not* as an individual per se. Humanity succeeds or fails as a *collectivity*. Montessori believed that it was important to focus on *what needs all people, wherever they live, and in whatever time period, have in common*. Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, defense, medicine, art, and religion/spirituality are the common needs in her method.

In this approach, we learn about history (and, therefore, future possibility, and our role in it), not from our individual position first, which then focuses on how we might *differ* from others, but, rather on how the universe was formed, how the earth was formed, through humanity's common struggle to develop ways to meet their common needs. Thus, through this, students have received a lesson in humility: that the greatness of the universe cannot be surpassed by the greatness of humanity. At the same time, teachers can inspire students with

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an appreciation for the universal meaning that accompanies all of humanity's great accomplishments and encourage a sense of wonder and excitement in students about human adaptability and creativity – our shared brilliance is fundamentally related to our shared vulnerability, our shared successes, pillared by our shared action. While I know of no scholarship that solidifies the link, this, what is called, 'cosmic education,' from the Montessori Method, is a good start to human rights education I think, and leads children, and therefore, us to a deeper understanding of peace, conservation, values, hope, gratitude, and openness – a set of recognitions necessary to make human rights real.

New Identities: Pluralism and Variation

Stemming from a new idea of education and the idea of common humanity, common vulnerabilities, common struggles, and common needs *as* humans, there is a need in our lives, work, and social relations to also recognize the pluralistic identities that we develop. We should do well to recognize and value pluralism, to recognize and value difference, to understand them, to work in collaboration and, ultimately to realize that we are indeed more alike than we are different.

A centrally important notion to get across to all people on the planet, and particularly United Statesians, is encapsulated in the following statements: 'constitutions exist for people - people don't exist for constitutions' and/or 'human rights exist for people, people don't exist for human rights' and/or even 'organizations (e.g., schools) exist for human beings, human beings do not exist for organizations.' What I mean to suggest here is a recognition - crucially important - that organizations, for instance, will create the selves/bodies/people that they need in order to do their work (e.g., 'healing people'); states will create the selves/bodies/citizenry they need to do their work (e.g., 'empire building'). This is the reality of most societies on the globe and resistance occurs in flipping this power-laden social construction on its head - in recognizing that the constitution exists for people. That human rights exist for those who are vulnerable, for instance - not the other way around. This is a potentially profound understanding rooted in fundamental sociology and constructionism – towards a sociology of human rights and a construction of a human rights social reality.

In tandem and partnered with this idea is the idea – reality – of di-

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versity. The notion and reality of diversity is *thrilling*. All we indeed have on the planet is diversity, all we have is variation, all there is is glorious, colorful, kaleidoscopes of dizzying and amazing variability - end of story. Just look around. However, our institutions, constitutions, discourses, social constructions, and, thus, our cognitions, seem to do one thing - categorize, limit, bound, silence, mark - and we as people lose out as a result. Yet, *we are the ones we've been waiting for*. We have to learn to *see* differently. With social constructions, *believing is seeing*...not the other way around. Thus, our goal here is to rewrite, renarrate, reconceptualize our lives, institutions, interactions in ways that allow all this variation to flourish and remain centered in the experience of itself.

In order to promote structures of deep democracy and participation, our notions of identity, of who we think we are, must be quite responsive to our experience *as* human, taking into account our multiplicity of identities across an equally dizzying multitude of social spaces in a matrix of human experience. Ultimately we share more than we differ.

Human Rights Cities: Spaces and Places of Human Rights

In 1948, the UDHR gave formal, global recognition to the voices of the people of the world by buttressing the fundamental principles of human rights: dignity and self-determination. Since this time, the international community has come to consensus on numerous protocols and conventions which state members could sign or ratify to ensure the human rights of their people. Parallel processes of globalization and economic neoliberalism, in the intervening 60 years, have garnered structural, cultural, economic and political currency, and policies emerging from such paradigms have undermined the very core principles of human rights. Such global structures have exacerbated the difficulties inherent in a state-based human rights delivery system as implemented via United Nations mechanisms - the links between the global and the local, while vitally important, are not being realized in practice for the protection of the basic human rights of people within nation states. Global violations of human rights (e.g., poverty, housing, violence, etc.) demand innovative approaches to governance at all levels of the global system, including, importantly, the local level. Human rights realization in the 21st century requires multilevel interven-

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tions and new structures of cooperation. Each level of governance, including the participation of citizens and of communities through local democratic processes, bears a degree of responsibility for component elements of the global agenda, defined primarily as peace and security, economic and social development, environmental sustainability, societal cohesion, and good governance. Cities, towns, and communities can mediate the reciprocal relationship between globalization and human rights realization. The state-based delivery system of human rights may be necessary, but insufficient. People all over the world are beginning to experiment with democracy as the delivery system of dignity and self-determination, which have emerged out of humanity's collective desires, and begun to re-build, re-imagine, and re-constitute the central institutions and pathways of social, economic, cultural, and political life – Human Rights Cities (HRCs) are one of these grounded initiatives.

We need to craft Human Rights cities. We need to design city spaces for justice and human rights to flourish. We need to envision and implement new visions and realities of city governance. We need to construct cities where the public sphere actually exists, *for people*, where they can build spaces of justice, where they can eliminate the incessant footprint of injustice in their spaces and create spaces that support, bolster, and expect human rights – first and foremost. Where they can *belong*, with *dignity* and engage in *self determination* in their own spaces. The Human Rights Cities initiative emerged out of the work of the People's Movement for Human Rights Education (PDHRE). PDHRE was founded in 1989 and is entering its third decade. According to PDHRE (2007):

‘A human rights city is a city or community where people of good will, in government, in organizations and in institutions, try and let a human rights framework guide the development of the life of the community. Equality and nondiscrimination are basic values. Efforts are made to promote an holistic vision of human rights to overcome fear and impoverishment, a society that provides human security, access to food, clean water, housing, education, healthcare and work at livable wages, sharing these resources with all citizens – not as a gift, but as a realization of human rights. A human rights city is a

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practical viable model that demonstrates that learning about human rights and applying this insight can improve society – a viable structure that can offer various experiences that can revitalize development programs around the world.’

The PDHRE has been involved centrally in the development of these human rights cities. Its Human Rights Cities Program works to develop and implement a structure with the inhabitants of the city and the local authorities to: 1) Instill a sense of ownership of human rights as a way of life, leading to action for the realization of all human rights in the city, to benefit all its inhabitants: women, men, youth and children; 2) Enhance actions that promote democracy as a delivery system of human rights in order to achieve sustainable development, peace, economic, human security, and social justice; 3) Capacity building to strengthen activities that ensure community development and accountability guided by the comprehensive human rights framework. Individuals and groups taking part in the action; 4) Become a beacon of light for communities all around the world to witness practical ways the human rights framework can make every citizen a creative partner of sustainable change (PDHRE 2008).

In 2010, there are numerous Human Rights Cities around the globe, and the notion is being tested in a variety of U.S. cities as well where United Statesians are given the chance to experiment with *living human rights* and understanding their collective responsibility for the realization of human rights *in their own spaces*. The current Human Rights Cities are progressively fulfilling the original objectives and goals that PDHRE had set forth. The most recent are Chapel Hill, NC Carrboro, NC and Washington, DC – the capital of the problem (having adopted the UDHR – it’s a start), others include Eugene, OR and Richmond, CA. There are human rights cities throughout the world: in Bosnia, Bolivia, Kenya, Taiwan, Senegal, Canada, Columbia, Brazil, etc., and others are pursuing this status, like South Bend, IN. The human rights cities offer a structure for locally-run investigation, evaluation and analysis of what is needed to prevent violations and promote realization of human rights. Each member of the community becomes a mentor and monitor as they move relationships, laws, policies and resources from the vertical to the horizontal with respect and trust. Together, they develop a new vision of the world.

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The Local and The Global: The Human Rights Council

Recently, the idea of local implementation of human rights doctrine, treaties, protocols, conventions, etc., has become more possible with the strengthening of the Human Rights Committee into the Human Rights Council in 2006. We need to study this new entity in order to understand its utility for creating human rights realities on the ground.

The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of some forty-seven states responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. The Council's accepts reports of human rights situations and will, as a body, make recommendations. There are several important, but little understood, new mechanisms of the Council: 1) the Universal Periodic Review which assess the human rights realities within all member states of the United Nations; 2) a 'think tank' of sorts within the council in the Advisory Committee; and, 3) a new and revised Complaints Procedure mechanism which allows individuals and organizations to bring complaints about human rights violations to the attention of the Council (HRC 2010).

Like the Kyoto protocols, which the United States turned its capitalistic back to, many communities throughout the United States have signed the Kyoto Protocol. These new mechanisms within the United Nations, particularly the Complaints Procedure, encourage us to think big: why not locally sign the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and hold the United States accountable to what the rest of the world is awakening to? Why not sign any number of the human rights protocols and treaties? We could, as individuals, as families, as communities, as NGOs, as students, write reports, complaints, briefs, summaries, letters, etc., to the Human Rights Council to discuss the vast human rights violations occurring right here in our own backyards – calling us to remember two things: *you* have your human rights, I will protect *your* human rights, end of story *and* we are the ones we've been waiting for.

A New Constitution?

As stated previously in this article, because one is a member of the human family, because one is a member of this planet, because of one's humanity, because one *is*, so they have rights *as humans*. Not, you

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are a citizen of country X and therefore, as a citizen of country X you have rights. Yes, these exist, but these are individual rights. The United States recognizes Political and Civil Rights, but these fall under the rubric of individual rights, and, furthermore, their grounding is in the United States Constitution – ‘the oldest constitution in the world.’ Given the human rights record in the United States - this is nothing to boast.

We need to revise the U.S. constitution. United Statesians have a ‘right’ to call for a Constitutional Convention. There have been meager attempts throughout history to do this. President Roosevelt (Roosevelt 1944) attempted to get us a Second Bill of Rights that was more rooted in human rights in 1944, he said:

‘It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure. This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty...As our nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness. We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. ‘Necessitous men are not free men.’ People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.’

And then he proceeded to list an emergent list of rights that would

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appear in the UDHR in four years time. It came to nothing.

Several colleagues in Sociologists Without Borders have begun thinking about revising the U.S. Constitution – indeed, Judith Blau and Alberto Moncada did so in their book *Justice in the United States*. The U.S. Constitution has never been updated as other constitutions have to encompass what we understand to be fundamental human rights, such as the right to education, labor rights, the rights of women and minorities, and so on. Besides, the Supreme Court has ruled that corporations have constitutional personhood rights making the Constitution a vehicle for the protection of wealth and capitalist enterprises. A simple way for this to occur is for us to call for a new Amendment that states that the U.S. Constitution embraces the UDHR and recognizes all the UN Human Rights Treaties.

A New Science of Liberation: Sociology Without Borders

In 2007, I published a dialogue with a student of mine, David Overfelt, in this very journal. In it we discuss the need for a new science of liberation – for a sociology, indeed, a social science without borders. We do need a new model of science. We can no longer be content, within science, to documenting dystopia, and pursue knowledge for knowledge's sake, cease dehumanizing our very subjects, and cease continuously documenting a dystopia that we succeed in reproducing for our own needs. It is abundantly clear that the world still needs changing, it is also very much clear that in order for science to be a significant part of that process, that it must change. Karl Marx said, 'The philosophers have interpreted the world, in various ways, the point is to change it.' This is certainly true, but science and its methods need to change too. The masters house may not be able to be dismantled by the masters tools. If 'another world is possible,' 'another knowledge is necessary.' Science should recognize *explicitly* issues of social justice, equality, peace, human rights – the scholar activist—something that non-United Statesian sociologists have engaged themselves in for decades – United Statesian science's epistemic and disciplinary isolationist tendencies are killing us and others softly with its song.

This journal, and its mother organization, Sociólogos Sin Fronteras/ Sociologists Without Borders (SSF), has been at the forefront of encouraging another knowledge, another practice. Since 2002, SSF has

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been at the forefront of this epistemological revolution within sociology internationally most generally, but, specifically, SSF-US has focused on bringing the United States into a critical dialogue with other voices and perspectives – all much more deeply rooted in human rights than most United Statesian sociologists. The International Sociological Association has had a thematic group of Human Rights and Global Justice for some time now (paralleling the fact of more international recognition of the importance of human rights), while the American Sociological Association has only recently recognized the Section of the Sociology of Human Rights. Beginning, as we are trying to do here at *Societies Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences*, to craft a human rights-sociology requires a critical scholarly and human pursuit to understand the social, political, cultural, and comparative constructions of human rights histories, institutions and actors, discourses, and futures as well as the social structures, relations, and practices that will most fully support the realization of human rights in the world – the social sciences are best poised to reach these goals. The pages of this journal should be filled to the brim with our collective attempt to understand these issues outlined in this article and myriad other issues—the time is now.

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For

We are the one's we've been waiting for. We must create a human rights reality. We must, as McNally offers: oppose all forms of oppression; develop radical democracy from the roots of social life; oppose all forms of imperialism and war; support the self-determination of all people; create communal ownership of social-economic resources; promote a social ecology with biodiversity and sustainability as central goals; overcome localism and nationalism; encourage a creative, non-authoritarian culture of freedom; and, demonstrate the power of direct action, mass mobilization, and participatory democracy.

Like the forges that ushered in the systems of capitalism (that work for the few), we must forge paths towards another world, another structure (that works for all). Like the energies that have been expended in defense of structures of capitalist exploitation, imperialism, and globalization, we must expend equal amounts of energy in defense of human rights, self-determination, and freedom for the oppressed. Our brothers and sisters around the globe demand this of us.

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Such work recognizes and grounds itself in intertwined human destiny, the power of the poor, because the anti-capitalist, anti-globalization, freedom struggle is not new – it is real -- and it is growing. US, capitalist, business-as-usual, is affluent complacency – and patently destructive. It is clear where hope lies – on the side of the movement – and where despair lies – on the side of capitalism and those who preach its destructive sermon whether in print, in the classroom, or in the everyday of their own lives.

The time has come – it has not passed. The local, national, and global impacts of doing nothing (or doing the same thing and expecting different results – the definition of insanity) are disastrous! While there is a lot of catching up to do, it is essential that United Statesians, indeed all, understand their entitlement to collective human rights, and that the ruse of individual rights coupled with state sanctioned inequalities based on false notions of meritocracy, etc. in an increasingly interdependent world leads nowhere. We must raise the status of human rights discourse in the press, national politics, in our communities, writing, and lives. We must organize and write reports to the United Nations on the United States' status regarding human rights *here and everywhere*. Such a way forward is more likely if we deeply democratize our universities, communities – if we are willing to break our destructive habits. How we enter the discourse and practice of human rights is *crucial* – our old models of seeing the world *will not work*, our cognitive capitalism *will not work*, the ideological contours within which we operate and interpret the world (via civic and political rights, individual rights frameworks) *will not work*.

Hear the words of the Hopi Elder:

You have been telling the people that this is the
Eleventh Hour.
Now you must go back and tell the people that this is
The Hour.
And there are things to be considered:
Where are you living? What are you doing?
What are your relationships? Are you in right relation?
Where is your water?
Know your garden.

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It is time to speak your Truth.
Create your community. Be good to each other.
And do not look outside yourself for the leader.
This could be a good time!
There is a river flowing now very fast.
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid.
They will try to hold on to the shore.
They will feel they are being torn apart, and they will suffer greatly.
Know the river has its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water.
See who is in there with you and celebrate.
At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally.
Least of all, ourselves.
For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.
The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!
Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary.
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.
We are the ones we've been waiting for.

(The Hopi elders of Hopitutskwa)

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