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AMI/USA
International Human Rights Day
December 10, 2021

On behalf of AMI/USA, I welcome Christine Mein as our guest writer for International Human Rights Day. She offers her perspective as a Montessorian, social worker, and global citizen.

– Sheri L. Bishop, AMI/USA Human Rights and Social Justice Advisor

About Christine Mein

Christine has worked as a primary Montessori Directress in Canada and Denver, CO. She holds a Bachelor of Arts & Sciences degree in Philosophy, French Literature and Spanish Studies from the University of Toronto, an AMI Montessori Casa Training diploma from The Foundation for Montessori Education, and a Social Service Worker Diploma and Global Citizen Certificate from Humber College, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Christine is dedicated to supporting children in every way. She is passionate about global human rights initiatives that address inequalities and injustice. Christine is excited about becoming involved in AMI/USA Human Rights and Social Justice efforts and taking this first step to start this work by sharing this encouraging message. She reminds us that we are a part of a global organization and there are ways we can, even as individuals, live out the theme of this important day.

A Reflection on Rising Above Adversity and Injustice

Today is December 10, 2021, is International Human Rights Day. On this same date in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created, only three years after the United Nations (UN) came into existence. The declaration spurred by World War I and II, was written within the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It underlines the importance of equal human rights, international peace, and the connection between one's individual freedoms and social responsibility. (Trindade) Twenty years after it was signed, the first International Conference on Human Rights was held in Teheran, Iran. The work at the conference created a deeper meaning behind the declaration and it reached a higher level of influence. International court systems and national decision makers were able to interpret and recognize the International Declaration of Human Rights in a new light. (United Nations)

The 2021 theme of International Human Rights Day is **“EQUALITY: Reducing Inequities and Advancing Human Rights”**. Long-term, the UN is focusing on its 2030 Agenda: **“Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development”**. (United Nations). The UN is seeking to find solutions to help address what they believe is the major obstacle to equality in the world: **deeply rooted discrimination**. The UN offers the following criteria that will be the litmus test by which world-wide changes, and success will be defined. Global equity will be realized when societies:



- Have a human rights-based economy
- Rebuild social contracts
- Provide equal opportunities for youth
- Reverse vaccine inequality
- Address climate change
- Prevent political conflicts
- Build resilience through equality, inclusion, and human rights

How do we achieve such grandiose goals? Are they large, new, and profound ideas? Not exactly. The goals simply articulate what is just and moral. Doesn't every human being have the right to have their fundamental needs met? Though we are making progress world-wide, we still have a long way to go. I choose to be optimistic and believe that we can rise above social adversity and injustice. Urgent action is needed. The speed at which the progress happens will be determined by the slowest society. Transformation will take collective work, however, it will only happen if each of us, as individuals, assume some personal and social responsibility to eradicate discriminatory systems and personal practices.

We have tried to legislate policies and practices to dismantle institutional and structural racism, but this is not enough...this has not worked. The first step in making a personal commitment to change is to begin honest and critical self-interrogation, including naming your personal biases and identifying how they inform your social behavior, especially toward marginalized groups. What discriminatory practices were you taught and what practices are you striving to unlearn? As you show up in life situations and circles of influence, how are you complicit with discrimination? Do you turn a blind eye to injustice...when you see something, do you do something? Are you consciously striving to listen, validate, and understand fear-based messages and your response to them? The "you" work can lead to transformation of your heart, thoughts, and actions. It has been quoted many times that "[the guide] must acquire a moral alertness which has not hitherto been demanded by any other system, and this is revealed in her tranquility, patience, charity, and humility. Not words but virtues, are [their] main qualifications" (Montessori, M. p 160)

It will serve each of us well to make ourselves aware of and study the thirty fundamental human rights. (Youth for Human Rights) Educating children to respect these rights and freedoms is a major component of rising above adversity and injustice. In addition, implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist (ABAR) teaching approaches and practices within our classrooms will support the transformation for our future leaders. "*The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core. We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones. We seek to sow life in the child rather than theories, to help him*

in his growth, mental and emotional, as well as physical, and for that we must offer grand and lofty ideas to the human mind.” (Montessori, M. p 8-9) This is how we achieve grandiose goals!

Change requires action. Some of you may decide that advocating for higher quality and greater access to healthcare and vaccines is important. Some of you may support efforts to protect human economic, social, and cultural rights. Still others may want to support the advancement of innovations and strategies that are vital to save our planet. Together we can rise above adversity and injustice and stand against inequality and discrimination. Let’s celebrate International Human Rights Day in solidarity and respond with action. *“We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole family.”* (Montessori, M. p 3)

Citations

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Humanitarian Causes

International Rescue Committee: Vaccinations for People in War-Torn Countries

https://help.rescue.org/donate/covid-vaccine?ms=gs_ppc_fy21_covid19_dmusa_may&initialms=gs_ppc_fy21_covid19_dmusa_may&gclid=CjwKCAiAqIKNBhAIEiwAu_ZLDnqoFkPK1YPtOX7SO_iqFAf_pFzYHDpS-1rQ0IIIypQhFDWDoN3_hxoCtBsQAvD_BwE

Human Rights Foundation: Protection of Human Rights

https://hrf.org/about/mission/?gclid=CjwKCAiA78aNBhAIEiwA7B76p-uIVrasCNbPJ02I5eIjNm5XEOCD6_2ycm5Zn20ChTkFKF04cNhshBoCLoIQAvD_BwE

Equal Opportunity Community Initiative: Disproportionate Childhood Poverty

<https://equalopp.org>

