# PART 2: CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

## a) CONCEPTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
### The Three Worlds of Human Rights
By Upendra Baxi

"Human rights" is one phrase, but it encompasses diverse realities and these invite many conflicted narratives. HRE must fully acknowledge and understand the many worlds of meaning in the practice of human rights. What is more, it has to present a holistic vision of human rights. This is more easily said than done. Since the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1995-2004), human rights norms and standards have been articulated through various global, regional, and national legal instruments.

> The **first world** of human rights is constituted by the language that articulates international human rights norms and standards, and by the individuals and groups worldwide who craft the framework of human rights legislation, often in immensely complicated ways. This world is populated by various actors who may be justly termed human rights bureaucrats - people who devote their lives and careers to the recognition, articulation and administration of intended human rights. These epistemic communities produce the texts and contexts of human rights, which activists then struggle to implement and improve. In that sense, they define the first labor of human rights education.

The **second world** of human rights is defined by the work of translating international norms and standards for national application, and also transgressing them. Fidelity to these standards entails their incorporation into national law and the careful administration thereof. Transgression occurs when internationally accepted human rights norms and standards are adjusted by local/national authorities to comply with their own perceived needs. For example, sovereign states, as treaty parties, enjoy and regularly exercise the right of reservation to international enunciations. Each and every act of reservation is at the same time an act of transgression against human rights obligations.

The **third world** of human rights arises from the experience of human rights violations, a world bearing the unconscionable weight of human suffering. It is also a world struggling to articulate more authentic visions of human rights. We recognize communities in resistance and peoples involved in such struggles as the first, and real, authors of the human rights agenda. Even so, it remains the case that not all human suffering is necessarily captured by the language of human rights norms and standards. HRE confronts a historic task when it seeks to provide a voice and language for this third world of human rights.

## A Holistic Vision

We articulate here a holistic vision of human rights that ought to constitute the core of human rights education. It is true that human rights declarations come to us in fragments, however massive. It is also true that these declarations prescribe goals without regard to available resources. Further, the goals and values, even when adequately formulated, conflict *inter se*. Much more could be said in this narrative to illustrate the diversity, complexity, and contradiction entailed in the development of human rights standards. Nevertheless, it remains possible, and we believe desirable, to achieve a holistic vision of human rights.

The *whole* of human rights is not just a *sum* of its many parts; rather it is the organic totality of its interconnectedness. Thus, for example, we read the human right to life not just in terms of the prohibition of capital punishment, but also as the right to the dignified fulfillment of material and non-material needs. This is the "whole" of the human right to life. Our attempt to read human rights holistically also *makes* them whole because it summates the totality of human rights as *freedom from humiliation*. It thus affirms dignity, integrity, and people s capability to live life as fully human.

For us, then, the production and realization of human rights norms and standards remain integrally linked, because the struggle for their attainment in real life is also so linked. This, in our view, can best happen when we relate the recognition of human rights to the task of demystifying the sources of human suffering. In sum, we maintain that *taking human rights seriously requires taking human suffering seriously*.

## Varieties of Skepticism

In its profound sense, we understand human rights to signify every human being s *right to be*, *and to remain, human*. It is curious but true that while "ordinary" people living under conditions of material and political deprivation understand this with overwhelming clarity, the "experts" constantly worry about the real meaning of the words and phrases we invoke. Thus, a simple notion such as *human dignity*, for example, poses a problem of definition. Experts and moral philosophers tell us, in many wise ways, that the term means different things to different people such that it provides no "common standard of achievement" of being or counting as human. Far from being an absolute standard, maintaining personal and cultural dignity is not the only worthwhile moral concern people have. The "inalienability" of human rights, the experts say, is a splendid idea in itself, but the reality of life under conditions of mass impoverishment compels cruel choices. Under different conditions of existence, people have constantly to make trade-offs between their survival and their dignity and *an undignified life for them may be better than no life at all*.

# SURVIVAL OFTEN PRECEDES DIGNITY
# AS A HUMAN GOAL

These truths do not dismiss altogether the notion of dignity.   But we need to appreciate that in itself, the term has no self-evident meaning and the meanings that we choose to confer upon it vary and are often conflicted.    Similarly, the notion of the right to be and remain human that we here constantly invoke remains riddled with deep puzzles.  It may be said that if there was such a "right," it would remain an empty signifier because (a) it does not tell us what rights must be in place for one to be, and to remain, a human being;  (b) reference to our rights may be considered necessary but is not sufficient for being, and remaining, human; and (c) over-privileging of human rights languages obscures the possibility that there are other equally, even more important, ways of being and remaining "human."

### The Term "Human  as an Empty Signifier

The long, dark night of Colonialism amply illustrates this first proposition. Because human beings were evaluated in terms of their possession of the faculties of free will and reason, those "lacking" in it were immediately excluded from the equation. This over-rationalized concept excluded the role of emotion and passion in framing universal narratives of being human and of defining a "good" life.  As feminist thinkers now remind us, this misogynistic exclusion is the bane of the liberal tradition of discourse concerning human rights, which, despite notable struggles, persists even till today.

Moreover, the contemporary movement toward human rights stands defined by cruel practices of social exclusion.  Historically, only Euro American peoples considered themselves fully "human." Therefore they had to carry the unsustainable burden of making others fully "human" by various acts of colonization and imperialism.  The dogma of the White Mans Burden still marks the politics of human rights. That dogma signified in the colonial circumstance "a double moral responsibility, as Robert Young in his *Postcolonialism: An Introduction* explains: "first to exploit for the benefit of 'the civilized world' the available raw materials that would otherwise not be used; and then to extend the culture of 'civilization' to the society being exploited."  Thus, Western humanity claimed the charmed circle of human rights for itself.

In our own lifetimes, the Cold War achieved the same cruel results, placing the "enemies of the people" and "communists" beyond the pale of human rights.   Even today, vast sections of humanity - indigenous peoples, the physically and psychiatrically disabled, child

laborers, people with non-heterosexual orientation, migrant labor, women in sex industries, and any one who may be successfully labeled in the post September 11 world as a "terrorist" - stand excluded from the arc of that which signifies being "human." This despite their theoretical inclusion as deserving recipients of human rights in a framework which affirms the equal worth of all human beings.

Further, we note that contemporary science re-invents the category of "human" in some unanticipated and even unfortunate ways. Experimental use of the human body, traffic in human organs, surrogate motherhood (wombs for hire), organ transplant technologies and the advent of human cloning complicate our understanding of what it means to be "human." For example, some fear that cloned humans would be no more than genetic warehouses or artificially created sub-human slaves, for whom the language of human rights may not apply. Others believe that insistence on human rights may provide a rampart against exploitative human cloning.

### *Human Rights as a Marker of Humanity"*
The common sense animating human rights theory and practice leads us to believe that the most practical way to measure the denial of being, and remaining, human consists in identifying human rights violations and transgressions. Increasingly, expert knowledge, notably in the work of the UNDP, has developed universal indicators for use in the comparison of human rights situations worldwide. This work has led to a common consensus that sees the denial of, or non- availability of the means to satisfy "basic needs," as the denial and diminution of being and remaining human.

Beyond this, we enter stormy waters.

- Though this may come as a rude shock to human rights evangelists, there is no agreement on what constitutes basic needs .

- Concepts of need must be distinguished from all kinds of related phenomena such as wants, "desires' "interests" and claims"We all know from our daily experience that what we need differs a great deal from what we want and desire, and is far removed from our interests and claims'"

- Not all basic needs are material. Some, such as freedom of conscience, expression, religion and opinion, are non-material. Some argue for prioritizing the satisfaction of material needs over non-material ones (the typical 'bread versus freedom argument); others insist that non-material needs are equally, if not more important, than material ones.

- The human rights that satisfy material needs, the range of actors obligated to satisfy these, and the ways in which they can be satisfied (for example, through free market trade or state-regulated capitalism) raise many complex issues concerning which there is scarcely a right, or a final, answer.

- The ways in which human rights norms and standards convert human needs into human rights remain highly problematic. Most expressions of social and economic rights (such as the right to food, shelter, health, literacy, education and work) remain fuzzy concepts. Of course, continued attempts to make these concrete are of great value. But at the end of the day such rights, and all endeavors to perfect their framework, emerge mostly as policy exhortations pressing upon national governance rather than as enforceable individual or group rights. In addition, it is not clear what constitutes failure in meeting these rights and responsibilities and indeed, who may be said to be actually responsible. In particular, it is not clear whether, and to what extent, Euro-American societies have any responsibilities towards the fulfillment of these rights elsewhere in the world, or indeed how such obligations may be viably constructed. Any reference to the possibility of transnational corporations and international financial institutions being bound by such obligations invites a cynical response.

### The Argument for Diversity

From the perspective of diversity and multiculturalism, many suggest that the definition of universal human rights reduces human diversity to a common essence. They suggest that universal constructs of being and remaining human might diminish cultural diversity, abate authentic human agency, and create the "End of History," at least in so far as human beings everywhere could become schooled as avid consumers of the processes and products of global capitalism. From this perspective, human rights theorists, practitioners and educators need to translate the right "to be and to remain human" as a human "right to be different." We cannot here visit the various versions of politics *for* human rights that celebrate the politics of identity as a sure path of resistance to the invisible hand of global markets that impose a dull, degrading, and even deadening, definition of the good life on all societies. The current anti global capitalist protest movements, from Seattle to Genoa and beyond, provide one vision of this new form of politics *for* human rights. Nor do we explore here, in the space available, the lesbigay, transgender human rights to sexual orientation, conduct, and identity that resist homophobic conceptions of human intimacy, family, and dignity.

### *Being and Remaining Human Outside Human Rights*

HRE needs to fully understand the contention that values and belief systems other than those crystallized in human rights norms and standards also define, and often more satisfactorily, ways of being, and remaining, human. It is true that often such arguments are advanced wholly in terms of advancing the interests of the powerful, such as those who extol cultures which emphasize human duties over human rights. This attitude simply enables those who have power to extract passive obedience, in the name of duty, from the dominated. Patriarchal domination, in almost all its forms, has thrived on the affirmation of human duties over human rights. The impatient and passionate rejection of such dogma marks the human rights agenda.

At issue is the notion that human rights languages may not exhaust concepts of "good life" and "society." In particular, communitarians of many hues find unsatisfactory and problematic the emphasis on the "sovereign individual" in liberal human rights theory. That emphasis not only finds it difficult to accommodate the idea of collective or group rights but also leads to "social indifference" towards the right-less others. Thus the moral philosopher Annette Baier has acutely said:

> *The liberal morality, if unsupplemented, may unfit people to be anything other than what its justifying theories suppose them to be, ones who have no interests in each others' interests A moral theory cannot regard concern for new and future persons as an optional charity left for those with a taste for it.*

Annette Baier
**'The Need for More than Justice' in** *Science, Morality, and Religion*
**(Calgary; Calgary University Press; Marsha Haen and Kai Nielsen Eds.)**

A constructive way out of this dilemma is to move to a concept of good life that expands "the concept of identity to include the experience of interconnection." From communitarian perspectives, as Chantal Mouffe reminds us, we need to reconstruct the idea of "a non-individualistic conception of the individual," not identity as such but multiplicity of identifications and collective identities that constantly subvert each other. One way to collate these insights is to say that human rights, far from being the instruments of social predation, should emerge as the means of human solidarity. This perspective could bring to us new ways of enriching human rights, and our efforts in human rights education. As of now, frankly, HRE practices fall short of meeting the challenges thus posed. These criticisms must be taken seriously by would- be human rights educators, for HRE that fails to take these into account merely remains a species of collective hypnotism, a postmodern magic that might leave the human condition worse off than ever.

## b) THE GLOBAL AGENDA AND THE NEED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND LEARNING

By Walther Lichem

### *The Priorities on our Global Agenda: Peace and Security*

The Millennium Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations and, in adopting the same, the Millennium Declaration of the Millennium Summit clearly identified the key challenges facing the community of nations during the forthcoming decades. Translated thereafter into the Millennium Development Goals for the UN system of organizations, they represented the first broader-based political approach to global governance through management by objectives. As central goals they reiterate again the core values of the United Nations.

> **Freedom from Want**
> **Freedom from Fear**
>
> **a sustainable perspective for the future under global governance through a strengthened United Nations**

Challenges were conceived as not relating primarily to matters affecting the well-being of states but rather to the security and development opportunities of the individual human being. It also stated clearly that the international public domain must be opened further to the participation of the many actors whose contributions are essential to managing the challenges of global governance. And yet there was no direct linkage established between Human Rights Education and Learning on the one hand and achieving the objectives of the Summit's Declaration.

In spite of significant successes and progress in some regions, the challenges for achieving freedom from fear and freedom from want have not dwindled. On the contrary, disintegrative forces in our societies and between them have even been accentuated. The reasons are manifold. One development is that the challenge of achieving these goals has increasingly moved from focusing on the *state* as key actor to considering the capacities of *citizens and of society*.

## *From a Society of Command and Obedience*
## *to a Society of Choice*

The East-West confrontation was sustained by the idea that it is primarily a question of military prowess as to which system of societal organization might prevail on a global scale. When it rather abruptly came to an end it unleashed a process of change and reorientation not only in the societies immediately affected but also in practically all regions of the world.  As it now turns out the withering away of Marxist-Leninist verticality is only one dimension of the long-term processes of change that have taken place, in some cases over centuries, in practically all our societies, regardless of national, cultural, geographic or religious contexts.  They have had a significant bearing on the cohesion within societies, on their identities and their internal sense of belonging and community.

These societal changes concede a new sense of sovereignty to the individual person.  They include a narrowing of vertical command and obedience relationships which have characterized not only patriarchal feudal, clan and tribal relationships, but were also prevalent in the various aberrations to which Western societies fell victim during the 20th century, including fascism and the Marxist-Leninist version of command economies and command societies. This process can be called **de-verticalization.**

> De-verticalization represents the
> structural dimension of the liberation
> of human beings
> by moving from
> subject to citizen.

Societal order, security and peace are no longer sustained by effective command structures enforcing obedience and submission but by the capacities existing within societies to relate to each other, to the public space in general and to the state.   The absoluteness of the identities of command societies had to give in to individual choice, to capacities for dialogue, compromise and cooperation, as well as to the fundamental ability to relate to diversity and to the other.

A major portion of the crises we are currently facing in almost all of our societies with regard to economic, social and cultural development as well as with regard to peace and international respectively human security, can be seen as the result of structural deficits in the capacity of societies to cope in coping with the new challenges of de-verticalization.

- Can we leave this transformation to the good luck of history?

- Can this transition from vertical to horizontal societies be the subject of development strategies?

- Is there a need for developing new thinking and new policies at local, national and global levels?

- Does a democratic government and good governance encompass the entire society?

If we perceive the new sovereignty, empowerment and responsibility of the individual as the crucial element of our societal transformation towards de-verticalization, capacity building through human rights education and learning has to provide the basis of our new societal order.

## *Human Rights Education and the Peace and Security Agenda*

Societal command structures in vertically structured societies, with the police state as its ultimate form of organization, enforce public order, peace and security through obedience. They also generally imply a clear demarcation of identity and the sense of belonging through ethnic, tribal, and national boundaries or socio-cultural borderlines, allowing limited scope for relating to the world beyond. The enemy – and threats to security - begins where the "national" vertical order of command and obedience terminates.

Peace and security depend on the international relations of states with their neighbors and the world at large. The primary task of the United Nations has been defined as maintaining peace and security through a system of collective security on an interstate level, while Article 2.7. of the Charter of the United Nations clearly excludes the United Nations from intervening in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.

# NEW DEVELOPMENTS

▸ The historical development of the past decades has blurred the classic distinction between international and domestic.

▸ The role of the state in international affairs and as the central frame of reference for public goods and services has seen the emergence of new, external actors and actions.

▸ Internal affairs are increasingly also determined by external developments and influences.

▸ The citizen is becoming both victim of and perpetrator against a global agenda that increasingly ignores national boundaries and the segregation they once projected.

▸ Society has become relevant to both the peace and the development agendas and is increasingly invited into the policy discourse as a partner in local, national and global public space.

> **Human development has been defined as a process of change towards a broadened spectrum of choice.**

The evolution of the concept of civil and human rights can be understood as the very basic legal framework within which de-verticalization is being most effectively transacted. In fact, one might well understand human development as that societal process towards de-verticalization, towards ever less determination from above and ever more personal autonomy in deciding the multiple dimensions of individual and societal life. The concept of human security complements this new understanding of the focus on the individual instead of the state.

A review of the United Nations Security Council's Agenda of the nineties reveals that the vast majority of crises evolving over the past ten years was the result of internal security issues, of societal collapse, of the "privatization of violence", of civil wars, human rights violations, governmental failures and state disintegration, with the resulting consequences

for the security of citizens and in particular of its weakest elements - women and children. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 placed the societal dimension of peace and security even more blatantly on our agenda. The different capacities in relating to diversity, to otherness, tend to define another important cleavage in our societies prone to serious disruptions, violence, even terrorism.

Our new security agenda is thus closely linked to people's perceptions of society, of justice, of human dignity, of how conflicts are to be resolved.   The new challenges thus appear primarily related to human security and not so much to the protection of state sovereignty and the inviolability of borders.

In addressing the human security agenda, governments recognized the direct link with the human rights agenda.   In 1999, in Bergen, Norway, the foreign ministers of Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa/as observer, Switzerland and Thailand founded a Human Security Network pledged to cooperate in the promotion of an international human security approach.  An International Workshop organized by the Human Security Network at the European Training Center for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) in Graz, Austria, (July 2000) concluded that:

> ▸ *human rights, human development and human security are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing*

> ▸ *there can be no human security without a societal and political culture based on the protection of human rights*

While vertical societies strive to guarantee peace and order through command and obedience the freedom of a democratic society depends on the capacities of its citizens to relate to each other and to the state in a new partnership of governance

Any security agenda that wants to avoid reverting to authoritarian rule and police state practices will have to develop the skills required in democratic societies by each and every citizen through broad-based human rights education and learning.

## *Entering the "Operational Phase" of the Human Rights Agenda: Education and Learning*

In the institutional evolution of international cooperation three key phases can be discerned.

- **The phase of standard- and norm-setting**
  It provides for general principles, a certain degree of predictability in mutual relations yet is sustained by the idea of national sovereignty without external control. In the field of human rights the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represent that first phase.

- **Adjudication**
  adds the possibility of strengthening the effectiveness of standards by passing judgment on a government's performance in relation to these shared norms and standards, of denouncing gross violations through specific country related resolutions, country related reports, court procedures (see European Convention of Human Rights), the appointment of Special Rapporteurs etc.

- **The operative phase**
  of institutional evolution, finally, provides for the conscious creation of a desired state of affairs. The operational programs for development cooperation, humanitarian assistance or other operational programs of cooperation are examples for concrete activities undertaken with this purpose. In the field of human rights, human rights education and learning represents the respective operational development approach. It has the advantage of combining the universality of values with the cultural, religious and development specificities of each society concerned.

The time has come in the field of human rights to bolster the efforts in making human dignity a universally shared standard and value by entering the operational phase of human rights development through education and learning.

## Human Rights Education as a Key Tool in the Deverticalization of Society

The traditional development discourse over the past thirty years has been characterized by a growing recognition of three pillars of sustainability:

**economic**
**social**
**environmental**

There has been no mention of *societal sustainability* even though the history of development of the past half century has underlined the essential role that societal skills and capacities have played for attaining any of the three-pronged objectives.   Many of the economies which have failed in granting their societies the dynamics of development are those which are unable to free themselves from authoritarian verticalism and to establish democratic societies on the basis of the protection of human rights.

The societies which have difficulties dealing with their ethnic, cultural and religious diversity and plurality are often also severely handicapped in their economic growth, in adopting social development policies and in achieving sustainable development and use of their natural and environmental resources.  "Good governance" is not only an objective for building more effective governmental structures, but also depends largely on the society being governed.  This is why the affirmation of human dignity and an effective system of human rights is of central importance in market societies.

The application of new technologies also has a major impact on societal structures, identities and cohesion.   It is no coincidence that the preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva (December 2003) has heard the insistent claim for a human rights-based approach to the evolving structures of our trans-national societies with the application of information and communication technologies.

In the economic sector, societal development should provide the capacity building for a horizontally interacting market economy, with regard to social development on the basis of human dignity and the understanding of social interdependence and with regard to the development and use of natural resources thus better understanding the challenges of the societal dimension of sustainability.

> *Societal development refers to those processes of change, which affect the value systems, behavioral patterns and relational skills, and capacities of a society, and requires objectives, time frames and the allocation of resources for their achievement. It includes the recognition of the central role of women in both societal cohesion and peace and with regard to the development agenda; societal development focuses on the encouragement of citizens to move into public space as partners of the state thus becoming civil society.*

Managing the transition from vertical command and obedience to horizontal interaction has become a key challenge. While human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Covenants are universal the learning processes of human rights must reflect the specific socio-cultural conditions in each society concerned. It is furthermore very important to recognize that human rights education and learning must not be limited to the formal processes of knowledge acquisition in schools or universities but must engender all processes of socialization and value acquisition. In short, without human rights education and learning there can be no societal development and without societal development there will be no sustainable development in the economic, social and environmental sectors.

## c)    THE HOUSE OF MEMORY
By Marcela Chiarotti

The context of this story is Argentina in the 1970s - years that were the gloomy forerunners of the sustained struggle for human rights, which reached its peak after the fall of the military dictatorship.   1969 was the critical year when urban guerrilla activity began to intensify, activated by various groups whose main objective was socialist revolution, incorporating armed fighting as a possible strategy against the violence exercised by the illegitimate regime.

Everything happened in a humble house  at Santiago 2815, in the city of Rosario that, with the passing of time, stopped being an ordinary house in the neighborhood to become the one that now, more than ever, is distinguished among the others.   It is not because of its walls, covered with plenty of colorful drawings of faces, eyes, mouths, hands, but because of the event that took place in it on September 17th., 1977.

The house was the home of Maria Esther Ravelo, aged 23, and Emilio Etelvino Vega, aged 33.  They were both blind.  That night, an action was carried out against them by the combined efforts of the Gendarmerie, the Army and the police, in an effort to repress those considered "subversive", a term

> *"A group of twenty armed people entered the domicile… backed up by a machine gun situated on the roof of one of the houses opposite.  They entered after lifting up the metallic shutter. .."*

applied to every person suspected of being a militant revolutionary.   There is another name that echoes the first two: it is Ivan, the couple s son and the only survivor of that violent procedure.

From that moment on, everything is blurred.  There are various versions of the story.   In some people s memories, Etelvino was killed instantly, whereas Maria Esther (Cuqui) was first arrested and later apparently killed by Agustin Feced, the commander of the operation.   What is certain is that one or both of them were detained without a judicial order.  In other words, they were abducted.

Abductions were characteristically carried out in the small hours of the night or at dawn, and generally on days near the weekend, allowing a lapse of time before relatives could act.

The next step was to ransack the couple s home. It is common knowledge that all of the blind couple s belongings disappeared: furniture, clothes, a machine to produce sparkling water and a truck Etelvirio used to deliver it were all loaded onto an army truck. They also removed a German shepherd which was the couple s guide dog.

This procedure was common practice during abduction operations, which were repeated over and over again in different parts of our country. The blind couple s house was occupied by the Command of the II Army Corps and became the headquarters of the Center for Retired and Pensioned Subofficials and Gendarmes. The usurpation lasted 17 years.

Dr. Manuel Blando, who was President of the National Committee for Missing People from May to November, 1984, was amazed at the impudence of the operation, which was carried out in public with no attempt at secrecy and was thus different from other similar operations where officials tried to maintain some basic appearance of legality. In this case, the house was still the property of Maria Esther Ravelo - a fact that became highly significant because it gave the victims relatives some hope that they could eventually reclaim it.

## THE CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT RESTORED JUSTICE

> *"Ivan, the son - now 20 years old - and his grandmother entered the house at Santiago 2815 and discovered the results of the ransack. They could not avoid crying. They had no reasons to restrain their tears. Nobody is able to answer who will pay for those tears."*

The struggle against impunity, against arrogance, against crime, publicly began on December 5th., 1992, when the writer Osvaldo Bayer denounced the atrocious event on the back cover of the newspaper *Página 12.* Ignoring the negligence to which the judicial system had accustomed us, the journalist Carlos del Frade, in a series of articles in the newspaper *Rosarlo 12,* added to the denouncement and to the investigation that discovered that Mrs. Ravelo had a title to the house, the title deed being held at the Land Registry of the City of Rosario.

With such revealing information, the only task to be carried out was to return the "stolen house", as it was called by the neighborhood, to its legitimate owner, Ivan, the blind couple s son. There then followed an appeal to the federal and provincial justices, headed by the lawyer Dr. Norberto Olivares, who stated that this outrage cannot be left unpunished.

Osvaldo Bayer and Maria Esther s mother decided to create a public awareness campaign. Bayer approached Hebe de Bonafini, president of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, to organize a demonstration on May 24th., 1993, the 17th. anniversary of the 1976 Military Coup D etat, which took place in front of the house at Santiago 2815, still occupied by the gendarmes. The case had earned a national profile.

- ■ **The first link** *of this chain is made up by Etelvino and Maria Esther s ideals. They belonged to a generation that dared to want to modify the status quo, the character and essence of the exercise of political, economic, cultural and social power in our country that dared to want to change it for a new one. A generation that had courage the enemy never forgave.*
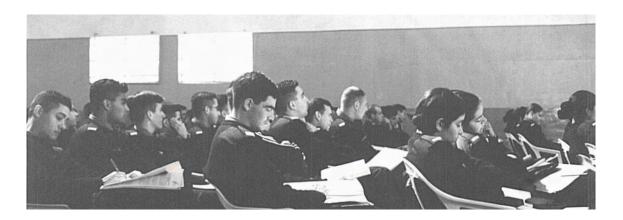
> **fear insecurity distrust**
> *are feelings which leak from every story, and which are caused by the anguished uncertainty of Maria Esther and Etelvino s destiny, the uncertainty of their death, the location of their bodies, and the reasons for such cruelty.*

- ■ **The second link** *is Maria Esther s mother and her search from the very first moment. Soaked in desperation and tenderness, she joined another white handkerchief to the many others that constitute that row of white handkerchiefs united by pain and hope. That image of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo dancing inconsolably but without resignation before the world, is an international, everlasting symbol.*

- **The third link** *was the people who testified at the trial on December 28th, 1994.   Laura, one of the couple s neighbors, known as la Gringa, gave her testimony before the Court of Law of Rosario.  Another neighbor, Graciela, told the judges that the whole neighborhood, with no prior arrangement but in spontaneous solidarity, preferred not to establish any sort of relationship with the illegal occupants of the house, to the extent of denying them any help they asked for.   She allowed her memories to come to her and told us that sometimes, when she was cleaning her house, she would open a window  opposite the blind couple s house and play records of protest songs to annoy the gendarmes living there.*

- **The fourth link** *was the never yielding attitude of an intellectual (Bayer) and a journalist (del Frade), true instances of commitment to the popular cause.*

- **The fifth link** *was the public participation  in the claims that continued for two years. Thanks to each of those instances, justice was done and the house is now occupied by its rightful owners.*

**Our intention is to make many
"houses of memory"
against all kinds of injustices that are buried in the history of
ARGENTINA**

# HOW THE HOUSE OF MEMORIES WAS BORN

> *Let us make a house of unity, a house for the popular movement, to allow all those who want to keep on fighting, resisting against all this, to gather… all those who fight for what happened in the past but also against the impunity of the present day. The house is not intended to be a museum of the memory, but a symbol of a memory.*

The idea was to make this house

- *an active center…*
- *a place of interest for students*
- *a national memorial*
- *a memorial to the personal, cultural, political and ideological identity of its owners*
- *a distribution center for the ideals that were conceived in the house and that were supported by it*
- *an educational center where concepts of human rights could be discussed and broadened to include new problems of the settlements, the homeless, the unemployed, the illegally repressed youth*

The house is now the headquarters of the League for Human Rights, and of different youth groups.  A workshop was created to discuss the constitution of a movement which starts to question the issue of repression seriously, an organization with a system of lawyers, telephones, denouncements, an organization that sheds light over situations…"

In facing a society that has been silent for decades, the fight for the exercise of human rights goes hand in hand with information, memory and an awareness which is made evident when a human being gets involved in any case that may attack his or her rights and integrity.   When people gather to repudiate an unfair act, whatever its nature, we can see the degree of awareness a society has acquired and continues acquiring, as well as the level of demand that increases as a result of human rights education.