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Impact Report 2015: University of Dayton Human Rights Center

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IT IS TIME FOR NEW THINKING ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY. THIS IS THE CHALLENGE FOR THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY COMMUNITY.

A VISION FOR CHANGE

The University of Dayton Human Rights Center creates positive change through research, education and dialogue. As a leader in the global human rights community, we search for transformative solutions to systemic patterns of injustice that will bring about real change in the lives of poor people. We are committed to addressing the gap between theory and practice, between scholars and practitioners.

Advocates need information to be able to develop evidence-based strategies that bring about real change. We provide this research as we build on the legacy of the University’s innovative Human Rights Studies Program and Catholic social tradition.
OUR PRINCIPLES ARE THE DIFFERENCE.

We are the advocates’ advocate. Research is necessary for challenging prevailing assumptions and practices in the fight for human dignity. Quality research can only improve the global human rights movement.

The most effective advocacy strategies address the systemic causes of human right violations. They are directed at bringing about transformative change to entrenched patterns of social injustice.

In dialogue with the Catholic social justice tradition, the Human Rights Center will:

- Promote communication and collaboration between human rights researchers and advocates.
- Conduct critical research to advance the theory and practice of transformative human rights advocacy.
- Prepare human rights researchers of the future with the knowledge, skills and values to effect real change in the lives of the poor and persecuted.
- Partner with human rights nongovernmental organizations, learn from them and provide them with the analytical support to strengthen their capacity to respond to existing and emerging threats to human dignity.

EVEN OUR EVENTS CREATE CHANGE.

Since 1997, we have held global conferences on emerging human rights and humanitarian issues. These events not only facilitate dialogue, they are making a direct impact on human rights issues.

- After we created the first undergraduate human rights studies program in the nation in 1998, our 1999 conference, “Education for Action,” fostered dialogue with other universities who then established their own programs.
- The 2003 conference, “Bring Durban to Dayton,” focused on racism and xenophobia. The result was the creation of the Welcome Dayton Plan — the area’s immigrant-friendly city initiative.
- The 2008 Campaign to Ban Torture: American Voices for American Values, in partnership with The Center for Victims of Torture, led to University of Dayton President Daniel J. Curran becoming the first Catholic university president to sign the petition calling for an executive order to ban torture. In 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order 13491 — Ensuring Lawful Interrogations.
- The 2009 conference, “Trafficking is Slavery,” led to the New Abolitionist Movement on campus, a student organization actively combating human trafficking and raising awareness through community presentations, lobbying efforts and victim assistance.
- In 2010, we hosted a meeting of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking. This led to the creation of Abolition Ohio — a dynamic, regional anti-trafficking coalition that championed the passage of a bill making trafficking a crime in Ohio. The bill was signed into law in December 2010.
The Human Rights Center is founded on education. We created the nation’s first undergraduate program in human rights studies in 1998. Since then, we have educated human rights and humanitarian professionals who are working on the front lines of advocacy all around the world.

McGrath Fellows

Peter McGrath ’72 funded the McGrath Human Rights Research Fellows Program to facilitate student and faculty research. The center has awarded grants to UD faculty to conduct research on a range of human rights issues, and all of the McGrath fellows have published their work in leading journals.

One fellowship recipient was Natalie Florea Hudson ’01, director of the Human Rights Studies Program. Hudson’s research on the UN Security Council strategies on the role of women in conflicts and peace processes was presented to a group of global experts at a UN technical meeting and was subsequently released by UN Women — the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Hudson now serves as a consultant to the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues.

Advocacy and Research

Matt Maroon ’06, founder of Determined to Develop, serves as in-country coordinator for UD’s Malawi Research Practicum on Rights and Development. Each student participating in the practicum designs and conducts research on a critical human rights or development issue with local community and NGO leaders.

After only two cohorts, students can point to how their projects produce community-driven solutions to local problems. For example, Andrew Lightner ’16 assessed how local risk management institutions affect vulnerable populations using the World Bank economic measures and multiple human rights frameworks. The local community leaders and NGOs draw upon his work to minimize inequalities and inefficiencies in the rice, cotton and livestock sectors.

“We’re able to give our UD students a really practical, hands-on research experience that is meant to complement their classroom experience. As it started out, [the practicum] was an experiment to see whether this could work. We’re at the point now where yes, it does. It will,” said Maroon.

Associate Professor Rick Ghere, a scholar in the Human Rights Center, also traveled to Malawi with a group of students. Ghere’s team conducted a workshop with NGOs working in the field. His book NGO Leadership and Human Rights proved valuable for NGO leaders and is taught by other human rights studies programs globally.

SCHOLARS

Mark Ensalaco — Research interests include human rights and human trafficking, Middle Eastern terrorism, and U.S. and Latin America relations.

Natalie Florea Hudson ’01 — Specializes in gender and international relations, the politics of human rights, human security, and international law and organization.


Rick Ghere — His books include Ethics in Public Management, NGO Leadership and Human Rights, and Rhetoric in Human Rights Advocacy: A Study of Exemplars.

Theo Majka — Conducts applied research projects for the city of Dayton and area social service agencies to assess the integration of migrants and refugees in the community.

Joel Pruce — His research explores the role of mass media and popular culture by advocacy organizations in the service of outreach, fundraising and mobilization efforts.

Alexandra Budabin — Research investigates nonstate actors in human rights conflicts and explores the impact of, and alliances across, social movements, NGOs, celebrities, diasporas, private military firms and humanitarian agencies.
TO BE A BETTER ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE, CHANGE THE WAY YOU ADVOCATE.

The University of Dayton Human Rights Center’s innovation is in our approach. Our research on advocacy improves strategies by providing practitioners with critical and effective methods to advance human rights.

Dialogue makes a difference. Abolition Ohio is a network of networks. When we began this advocacy group, we found numerous groups working on human trafficking and related human rights issues. We built a bridge — bringing dedicated people and organizations together. We improved awareness, training, outreach and service based on international best practices for prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. We also successfully advocated to make human trafficking a crime in Ohio. That’s advocacy in action.

Research for change. We reached out to Catholic Relief Services to help address expected increases in labor trafficking during the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil. Our research identified, and continues to uncover, products made through forced labor such as beef, leather and hardwood that end up in American homes. Our ongoing research, findings and recommendations will help U.S. companies’ efforts to remove products that use forced labor from their supply chains.

Educating each other. Our biennial human rights conference is our signature event. The 2013 conference, “The Social Practice of Human Rights,” brought together 80 researchers and 15 advocates from 10 countries for three days. We presented research and critically assessed the human rights movement. The goal for our conferences is to produce concrete proposals to strengthen the human rights movement’s capacity to confront emerging threats to human dignity and rights.

ROMERO AWARD
Our Archbishop Oscar Romero Human Rights Award, established in 2000, honors an individual or organization whose work has contributed significantly to the promotion of the inherent dignity of all persons and the alleviation of suffering. The award mirrors the harmonious spirit of Christian humanism that animates the University of Dayton.

Award recipients
2015: Cardinal Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga
For his work in the global fight against poverty as the Vatican’s spokesperson to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank

2010: USCCB Department of Migration and Refugee Services
For its work with migrants, refugees and trafficked persons

2007: Bernard Kouchner
For his work with Médecins Sans Frontières

2005: Juan Guzmán
For his prosecution of Augusto Pinochet

2004: Radhika Coomaraswamy
For her work as special rapporteur on violence against women

2001: Casa Alianza
For its work with street children in Central America

2000: Juan Méndez
For his work with the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights
Forced Displacement and Exploitation

The forced displacement of persons due to natural disasters, ecological destruction, conflict, poverty and a host of other factors is a global reality with grave human rights and humanitarian consequences. Uprooted from their communities, the poor are forced to migrate or flee and almost invariably face discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, class and immigration status. Exploitation, through abusive labor practices, forced labor and sex trafficking, is a fact of the lived experience of many forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

For more than a decade, University of Dayton faculty members have been engaged in research and advocacy projects concerning migrant rights, refugee resettlement and trafficking in persons. The Human Rights Center will build on this expertise and experience by conducting research on the root causes of displacement and exploitation, and formming academic, NGO, government and corporate partnerships with a view to developing and implementing evidence-based advocacy strategies to assist migrants, refugees and trafficked persons and prevent the exploitation of these groups.

I WILL NOT TIRE OF DECLARING THAT IF WE REALLY WANT AN EFFECTIVE END TO VIOLENCE WE MUST REMOVE THE VIOLENCE THAT LIES AT THE ROOT OF ALL VIOLENCE: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, SOCIAL INJUSTICE, EXCLUSION OF CITIZENS FROM THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRY, REPRESSION. ALL THIS IS WHAT CONSTITUTES THE PRIMAL CAUSE, FROM WHICH THE REST FLOWS NATURALLY.

—Archbishop Oscar Romero
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Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporations exert powerful influence in our global economy and often in the political affairs of countries where they operate. This influence is frequently positive. Corporate investment and expanding trade creates employment and lifts living standards. However, during the past decade the human rights movement has given more attention to the potential for “corporate-related harm” particularly in states with weak governance and regulatory frameworks. In response, the international community has articulated a set of principles for corporate social responsibility, embodied in the United Nations Global Compact, the “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework created by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, and the International Labour Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Together these frameworks seek to promote socially responsible corporate policies and practices in the areas of human rights, labor rights, the environment and anti-corruption. These frameworks are premised on the notion that corporate compliance with domestic law is not enough to prevent corporate-related human rights harm. Beyond mere compliance, corporations must include human rights due diligence measures into their operating principles. For example, corporations can responsibly manage their supply chains to ensure that raw materials and products produced by forced labor are prevented from reaching market. Because of their immense influence, corporations should seek to be proactive in promoting human rights through their policies and practices.

The Human Rights Center’s research in the area of corporate social responsibility focuses both on corporate accountability for corporate-related human rights harm and best and promising socially responsible corporate practices. Our project on forced labor in Brazil exemplifies the Human Rights Center’s commitment to engaging the corporate community in a productive dialogue about corporate social responsibility.

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER
Climate Justice

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) convened in Brazil to address issues regarding the environment and development. However, the recommendations were not asserted in a way that clearly related these issues to human rights. Later that year, the University of Dayton hosted a conference on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development issued at the conclusion of the Earth Summit in Brazil. The conference framed the issues of the environment and development as distinctly human rights issues, issues that went largely unsaid at UNCED.

In the decades since the UNCED conference, the human rights movement has focused more intentionally on the human rights impact of environmental degradation. In 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution calling for detailed analytical studies on the relationship between climate change and human rights. The grave threat of climate change has deepened these concerns. The 2014 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) cast these concerns in stark terms. Speaking at the University of Dayton the day after the publication of the IPCC report, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson stressed the importance of climate justice for the full realization of human rights. In 2015, the global community will adopt an agreement aimed at reducing carbon emissions among other measures to reverse the effects of climate change.

The Human Rights Center, working closely with the Hanley Sustainability Institute at the University of Dayton, will actively engage the issue of climate change from a human rights perspective. More specifically, the center will seek to promote interfaith dialogue on the issue, and will monitor and evaluate the implementation of future agreements under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change from a human rights perspective.
Poverty and Integral Human Development

The persistence of extreme poverty in a multitrillion-dollar global economy is a grave human rights concern as well as a root cause of maternal and infant mortality, conflict, forced displacement and a host of other critical problems. The adoption of the rights-based approach to development in the 1980s led many of the NGOs to address systemic patterns of injustice, including government and corporate corruption that perpetuate poverty. By bringing universal human rights standards to bear on governments’ economic policies and multilateral agencies’ corporate practices, the rights-based approach creates important synergies in the work of development and humanitarian and human rights NGOs.

The Human Rights Center, as an academic center of a Catholic university, applies the Catholic social justice approach to questions of poverty and integral human development. Our partnership with Catholic Relief Services is an expression of this affinity.

Poverty and development is one of the principal themes of the Human Rights Center’s advocacy research. More specifically, the Human Rights Center will monitor the implementation of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals the global community will adopt to replace the UN Millennium Development Goals set in 2000.
Conflict, Peace and Justice

Conflict prevention and transformation, peacemaking and peace building, and post-conflict justice and reconciliation are common concerns of humanitarian and human rights NGOs. In the wake of the genocides in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and other violent conflicts, the international community recognized the duty to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide as a principle of justice and articulated the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. Similarly, after the democratic transitions in Europe, Latin America, South Africa and other settings, governments and civil society established truth and reconciliation commissions and similar bodies to achieve important social and political objectives that criminal prosecutions alone could not achieve.

In 2002, the University, in collaboration with the United States Institute of Peace, convened a conference on peace and justice to explore the intersecting research agendas and educational programming of scholars in the fields of peace and conflict resolution and human rights studies. That conference led to the creation of the peace and global security concentration in the University’s International Studies Program. The Human Rights Center will build upon our faculty expertise in peace and global security, as well as human rights studies, to conduct research into the root causes of conflict as well as strategies to establish peace, justice and reconciliation. The Human Rights Center gives special attention to acts of sexual violence against girls and women in situations of conflict and mass atrocity.
Media Advocacy and Digital Freedom

New technologies are transforming human rights advocacy. The Internet, social media, Skype, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are fixtures of a globalizing world that were hardly imaginable a few decades ago. Technology, especially mobile, is amplifying information about human rights abuses and humanitarian crises. Compelling messages and powerful media together can mobilize action quickly. Technology has demonstrated the potential to create a truly global human rights community.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the fundamental right to seek, receive and impart information through any media regardless of national frontiers. Despite this, authoritarian regimes around the world are seeking to strengthen state control of communication infrastructure and engage in censorship and surveillance of electronic communications. The same technology that enables political dissidents to speak truth to power has strengthened surveillance by authoritarian regimes, enabling them to identify and detain prominent bloggers and citizen witnesses.

The Human Rights Center’s research on advocacy recognizes the fundamental importance of digital freedom for democracy and the protection and promotion of human rights. Effective media advocacy depends upon timely, accurate and reliable information, powerful messaging and free access to all media regardless of frontiers.