

by Elaina Loveland

Equal Human Rights for All

DURING THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY, there have always been circumstances—like conflict and poverty—that have made people vulnerable to inequality or even heinous human rights violations. Often, those who are most at risk of not having their basic human rights protected are women and children. Even in the twenty-first century, the problem of having basic human rights hanging in the balance for many women and children in regions stricken by war or scarcity of natural resources still looms.

Increasingly, colleges and universities are making the mission of protecting human rights for women and children a global imperative. Some institutions have had human rights centers for decades, like the University of California at Berkeley. Others are starting new initiatives on the issue of human rights and adding this into their mission of academic and philosophical responsibilities, like the six liberal arts colleges in New York that have recently started a consortium (see page 4).

Faculty and students are taking the issue of protecting human rights, for women and children especially, to heart—and it is making a difference. Today, there are more opportunities to do advocacy as a career on behalf of vulnerable populations to protect human rights. As Yasmine Ergas, associate director of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University points out: “It’s become viable to work in advocacy. Governments as well as corporations as well as international organizations realize human rights and gender questions are part of what they need to be able to address.”

There is proof that university involvement in human rights issues is working. Many students who are exposed to human rights issues during their postsecondary education become so passionate about the issue that it launches them into careers that assist with this cause as well as other social justice issues. Just one of many examples is former graduate student Vivien Francis who worked with the Dalits during her peace and justice studies master’s program and now is a program officer at the Joan B. Croc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego (Francis is mentioned in our cover story, “Women and Children First”). Exposure to those issues in college can change lives for countless others as these graduates enter the workforce—showing that universities truly are an agent for social change.

Also in this issue:

The fifth annual intensive language supplement contains two feature articles: one on the growth of English-taught degrees in Europe and the other on the increasing popularity of Arabic language programs at home and abroad.

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