

The Phillip and Sala Burton Center for Human Rights at the Presidio National Park

(revised 12/23/03)

Mission and Goals

The Phillip and Sala Burton Center for Human Rights will promote the role of international human rights, labor and environmental norms to enhance economic and social justice, locally, nationally and internationally by:

- Providing a forum for examining and promoting the role of international human rights, labor and environmental norms in our increasingly global economy,
 - Promoting education about international human rights, labor and environmental norms to increase understanding of the relevance of these rights and norms in our daily lives through collaboration with local, national and international educational institutions, government agencies and non-governmental organizations,
 - Supporting the training of human rights, labor, environmental and other professionals to monitor and promote international human rights, labor rights and environmental agreements and by developing an international network of non-governmental organizations committed to human rights, labor and environmental awareness and protections, and
 - Supporting research initiatives to investigate the interdependence and interrelatedness of international human rights, labor rights and environmental norms and their role in enhancing security at the local, national and international levels.
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Two-Year Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Phillip and Sala Burton Center for Human Rights is a non-profit organization focused on promoting the importance of applying international human rights, labor and environmental norms in a connected manner to create enhanced opportunities for economic and social justice throughout all levels of society. It will focus on raising awareness through education, applied research and training and the creation of networks both among experts and within communities. During its two-year launch, the Center will focus on (1) outreach to existing organizations in each of these areas ñ human rights, labor rights and environmental rights, (2) broadening awareness at the community level, and (3) facilitating needs assessments in these areas and initiating programs which respond to those findings.

PROGRAMS

- Organize public outreach programs bringing together the community with experts with local, national and international perspectives in human rights, labor and the environment
 - Utilize various media channels through established organizations (e.g., Commonwealth Club) to reach broad audiences
- Organize forums with educators - both at the public school system level and at the university Schools of Education - to identify how education about international human rights, labor rights and environmental norms could be promoted within K-12 and undergraduate levels
 - Start with local San Francisco Bay Area, later expand to include existing national and international programs
 - Utilize information to determine appropriation of funds for applied research in this area
- Organize outreach programs with non-governmental organizations focused on human rights, labor rights and environmental rights to identify research initiatives to investigate the relation of international human rights, labor and environmental norms and their role in enhancing security
 - Organize an international advisory council to identify applied research programs to examine these issues
- Support training of human rights, labor, environmental and other professionals to monitor and promote international human rights, labor rights and environmental agreements and develop international network of these professionals
 - Organize fellowship program for journalists working in the field of international human rights, labor and environmental norms
 - Collaborate with local universities, colleges, institutes and NGOs to select and train fellows

Needs and Opportunities

The international human rights, labor and environmental norms adopted by the nations of the world in the past century provide a powerful framework to enhance economic and social justice at local, national and international levels. Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledged the power of these norms when he announced his Global Compact initiative at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on January 31, 1999. He "challenged world business leaders to embrace and enact" these norms, "both in their individual corporate practices and by supporting appropriate public policies." While this powerful framework exists, its impact is yet to be fully realized. This is the result of a number of factors ñ large and small. For example, around the world an

important critique of the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is that its enforcement mechanisms lack any relationship to international human rights, labor and environmental treaties and conventions. Growing concern about this was dramatically brought to the world's attention at the Third Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Seattle, Washington in November 1999 when human rights, labor and environmental leaders and activists confronted the ministers to have their concerns heard.

On a national level, Americans generally have little understanding of the importance of international human rights, labor and environmental norms in their daily lives. This is surprising because distinguished Americans, like Samuel Gompers, Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt, led the movement to create international norms and the institutions to promote and defend them. President Kennedy made this connection in his famous speech at American University in June 1963. He stated, "and is not peace in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights - the right to live our lives without fear of devastation - the right to breathe air as nature provided it - the right of future generations to healthy existence." Americans, as much as any other people, have fought and died for these rights.

The relationship between security and international human rights and labor rights was recently restated in a Special Report by the United States Institute of Peace, which analyzed efforts made to confront terrorism. Further, in the August, 2002 edition of the United Nations Environmental Programme's Planet magazine, U. S. Secretary of State Colin Powell argued that "sustainable development is also a security imperative. Poverty, environmental degradation and despair are destroyers of people, of societies of nations. This unholy trinity can destabilize countries, even entire regions." The underpinnings of a safe world lie in assuring that economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights are promoted and protected.

While a substantial body of research exists demonstrating the relationship between democracy and peace, a need remains for greater examination of the relationship among international human rights, labor and environmental norms and peace. The Phillip and Sala Burton Center for Human Rights will focus on developing awareness of the importance of this relationship and promoting the role of international human rights, labor and environmental norms with a goal to expand the positive impact of these norms and conventions around the world.

The need to promote these norms is particularly urgent in California, now the seventh largest world economy. More than 25% of the state's economy is tied to international trade, there are more than 2.5 million union members in California and more than 25% of its population was born in foreign lands, many seeking refuge from the scourge of war and human rights abuses.

The placement of the Center in California, and more particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, is strategic to leverage the wealth of local resources - both individual and institutional - that currently exist. San Francisco has a proud history of promoting and protecting human rights, labor and environmental norms. It served as the host city of the

1945 United Nations Conference on International Organizations that drafted the Charter of the United Nations - the first international treaty that included human rights as a fundamental principle. It is the birth site and national headquarters of the Sierra Club, the site of historic 1934 General Strike and the site of the historic 1960 demonstrations against the House Un-American Activities Committee. San Francisco has demonstrated international leadership in such areas as: children's rights, the rights of the disabled, environment justice, the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, labor, immigrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, migrant workers and women. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the promotion of social, cultural and economic rights has been as important as the promotion and protection of civil and political rights.

The San Francisco Bay Area has a wealth of expertise in world-renowned universities, institutes and its vibrant non-profit and business communities. The Center plans to draw on this expertise to achieve its mission and goals. The Center will work to enhance the capacity of existing organizations focused on these issues by providing forums for them to learn from each other, from others throughout the world and to reach new audiences.

Phillip and Sala Burton's lives and achievements embodied this heritage. They represented San Francisco in Congress for a combined twenty-six years and worked to make San Francisco's heritage national policy. It is appropriate to locate the Center at the new Presidio National Park. As Chairman of the House Interior Committee, Congressman Burton sponsored the legislation that created the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and ensured that the Presidio would become part of the GGNRA.

The Presidio represents the legacy of servicemen and women who have protected this country and the concepts of fundamental international rights. During World War I, the men and women of our armed services fought to “make the world safe for democracy”. During World War II, they fought to achieve President Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms - freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. The Phillip and Sala Burton Center for Human Rights will work to help see this vision fulfilled.

Background

The project to establish the Phillip and Sala Burton Center for Human Rights at the Presidio National Park began in 1998 by the then Presidio-based Resource Center for the United Nations when it joined a coalition of San Francisco Bay Area human rights organizations, initiated by Amnesty International, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Working with the coalition brought an understanding of the wealth of talent and resources that existed in the San Francisco Bay Area that could form the basis for an international center for human rights. In November 1999, Mary Robinson, then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, accepted an

invitation from the Resource Center to meet with representatives of San Francisco Bay human rights organizations at the Presidio. She was very impressed by the level of knowledge, talent and commitment of those attending the meeting. A follow-up meeting of local human rights leaders was held in February 2000 to consider steps to establish an international center for human rights at the Presidio.

In February 2001, under the leadership of Walter Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the Executive Committee of the Council adopted a resolution in support of the proposed center. In the spring of 2002 the Sierra Club, under the leadership of John Rizzo, adopted a resolution supporting the Council's initiative. After a series of meetings the Council and the Club adopted a "statement of points of agreement" in the summer of 2002 including the agreement to seek federal funding for the proposed center. In December 2002 the Council and the Club invited over 100 representatives of human rights, labor and environmental and business organizations to a meeting to present and discuss the proposed center. Twenty-seven people attended the meeting and the following individuals volunteered to draft a two-year development plan for the center:

Alan Benjamin, Co-founder Open World Conference
Connie de la Vega, Director, International Human Rights Clinic, University of San Francisco
Glen Galaich, Director, Human Rights Watch, Northern California
Bill Hough, Human Rights and the Environment Committee, Sierra Club
Walter Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer, San Francisco Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Michele Leighton, Director of International Programs, Natural Heritage Institute
Audrey Ogawa-Johnson, a Director, Global Compliance Department, GAP, Inc.
John Rizzo, Chair, San Francisco Group, Sierra Club
Harvey Weinstein, Associate Director, Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley