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This book represents an effort to center issues and discussions of human rights around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as expressed by the United Nations in 1948. The aim is to provide a hub for discussion of human rights and social justice issues. In addition, as a scholar grounded in the humanistic and existential perspective, the author hopes to promote cultural change wherein the “lived awareness” of human rights is thematic in everyday activity. The present work is aimed, as a primary or supplemental text, to students taking classes in such areas as public health, law, ethics, social policy, and social services. The aim is to foster a discussion of social justice issues while also promoting the integration of the health and helping professions as an international vanguard for such causes. Each chapter ends with suggested topics for discussion and a section devoted to taking an active approach to furthering discussion of human rights issues in one’s community, such as writing letters to elected representatives, creating human rights web sites, conducting surveys, and similar proactive ideas relevant to the chapter topics but also pertinent to various helping and health professions.

The book is organized around six chapters. The first spells out the rationale and aim of fostering a human rights culture, and underscores essential features of human rights, as well as the challenges, both external and internal to such ideologies. The second chapter presents the early context and later development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Later chapters focus more on developing action models to incorporate issues of human rights and social justice in areas of health, public policy, and the helping professions. The aim is to integrate human rights ideologies into the everyday fabric of such professional services as well as promote an activist orientation for such professions. Thus, chapters five and six revolve around developing social action research derived from a human rights/social justice perspective. Chapter six particularly aims to summarize key points while providing a kind of pep talk about the challenges of struggling for human rights. It reiterates the value-ideology of the movement while maintaining a realistic attitude about the practice and moral challenges of such work.

The book’s strength is in raising human rights issues that can be usefully discussed and debated in professional and academic circles. The book however, does not address the many practical realities of economic, social, and political differences that represent the hard work necessary for true human rights progress. Little emphasis is given to the importance of scientific knowledge in such areas as psychology, political and economic studies, biology, and climatology. Indeed, the
The author's orientation seems to fit an ideology of humanistic postmodernism where the ideals of objective-analytic categorization are suspect. The idea of research emphasized here is participatory dialog that is affirmable by representative interests. While such an approach may be valuable in the effort to promote mutual exploration and discussion, this writer would have appreciated some recognition of the concrete economic, environmental, and cultural conflicts that need to be addressed. Many of these practical issues revolve around an understanding of economic and political judgment policies where the results of traditional social science analyses are potentially of value. Such issues are not likely to be addressed in the typical social service classes where this book is likely to be used, but perhaps they should. I wonder whether a stronger emphasis on the natural and social scientific perspective might prove especially important in these social service professions, while the emphases of the present text could be a valuable stimulus to discussions in biological, medical, and environmental science classes. At some point we need human rights advocates who actually understand both the social-political dimensions of human behavior and the physical world in which we live. The present book is not aimed at actual problem-solving, but rather is a more basic effort to promote the values and ideals of social justice and facilitate their integration in social service professions.

The lack of concrete analyses of actual economic and social conflicts from a scientific perspective does seem ironic given the emphasis, in various documents such as the United Nations charter, on the rights of cultures to the benefits of (traditional) scientific progress in medicine, educational reforms, political science, social science, and economic study. While the author's humanistic orientation is laudable, it appears predictably tied to an under-appreciation of analytic understanding, and the value of scientific knowledge. While such issues are not the intended focus of the present text, the paucity of references to concrete problems of economics, the global environment, and specific analyses of such issues was striking. As noted earlier, this text is focused more on the effort to imbue the ideals of human rights in social service professions and promote social activism from human service workers. It is more an effort at fostering cultural reform and, as such, encourages criticism of traditional institutional authority while not often looking in the mirror.

For example, while the author stresses an openness to recognizing the challenges of promoting a human rights culture, little attention is given to the assumptions, underlying ideology, and potential dangers of such grassroots proselytizing. Today we see the appearance of passionate movements representing a diverse range of social and institutional interests, all aimed, with differing types of force, at cultural change. These can range from ecological and animal rights terrorism to state-sponsored movements, and include various groups advocating human and