
CCHRR EDITORIAL DECEMBER 2019: 'A Spark within the Human Rights Discourse'

We are proud to present the first three issues of the new *Cross-cultural Human Rights Review*. This multidisciplinary peer-reviewed international review aims to fill a gap. The cross-cultural approach of human rights is a rather new branch of learning. In simple terms, by cross-cultural approach we mean the following. We engage with discourses on human rights found within the context of different countries and cultures. The authors, editors, and boards of the *Cross-cultural Human Rights Review* (CCHRR), attempt to position themselves within these contexts and look from new, and sometimes opposite perspectives to *what is thought* to be human rights in mainstream discourses. Such assertion does not reject the tremendous work which has been done and that is happening now within the field of human rights. However, the CCHRR recognises that there is more than one way of understanding what is human rights and it provides a platform where this can be voiced.

Strikingly, the CCHRR has emerged at a time, where there is a rise in decolonial studies and voices on human rights. One example is the recent expert seminar with keynote address by Professor Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im on 'Decolonizing Human Rights,' organised jointly by the Cross-cultural Human Rights Centre and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, in May 2018. This challenged the extent that a consensus on the universality of human rights exists within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which he noted reflects a liberal interpretation. Whilst this might seem ironic, given that the theme of this publication is based on the 70th anniversary of the UDHR, the underlying objective of Professor An-Na'im's presentation still resonates with our work. This he summarised in one key question: what is missing in human rights? His answer rightly pointed to what was crucial about this question, that he himself could not answer this, and nor can we, who are writing this editorial. Rather, voices which *should have* and *did not*, and (we add) *still do not* have a say in what is human rights must be given the chance to answer what is missing in human rights. It is these answers which the CCHRR brings.

The review provides the opportunity for scholars from the 'Global South' to bridge this question with scholars from the 'Global North', through publications. An excerpt from our 2018 Mission Statement is apt in demonstrating just how far-reaching this is:

'[The CCHRR aims] to facilitate a proper universal exchange of views... Broadening the discourse on human rights means that our focus will not only be on law but also on how human rights are implemented through social institutions – i.e., through cultural norms and moral rules, in particular relating to religion, family, governance, education, and the economy, which are at the core of society. In this sense, the review will build necessary lines of communication between the Global South and the North'.¹

Considering this, the Review facilitates a platform for dialoguing between these varying views. It must be emphasised that the objective is not to seek an agreement on human rights, but rather, as stated, to dialogue. It is through this that the Review hopes, first, to answer burning questions on the broader discourses within human rights. Secondly, to build understanding amongst stakeholders in different regions of the world on the diverse perspectives within the field of human rights. Thirdly, to deconstruct the 'other' when thinking about human rights in the 'Global South'. We put forward the question: can human rights truly exist outside the cross-cultural? Bearing this in mind, the CCHRR does not shy away from contentious, challenging, and thought-provoking scholarship. In exchange, the CCHRR aims to cause moments of self-reflection, development of cultural sensitivity, and recognising the need for inclusivity within its readers and audiences. Such conditions of thought are crucial in any pluri-ethnic, multicultural, and multifaith society, which we see in many regions in the world. Thus, the CCHRR hopes to achieve dialoguing on three levels: between the diverging and diverse discourses within human rights; internally within readers and audiences of the Review; and in lived experiences.

The theme of these issues, the 70th anniversary of the UDHR, is particularly telling of the strong statement which the CCHRR wishes to make at its beginning. That is, we are looking back to the 70th anniversary of the UDHR in order to look towards the future of human rights. As a document that has stood the test of time, shaping human rights laws and policies around the world, it is worthy of study. More importantly, it would be a serious setback to cross over this 70th year threshold without examining how cross-cultural approaches have been necessary in building human rights protection in different contexts and will also be necessary in sustaining the future of human rights. The issues are split into four subthemes: the drafting history of UDHR; its influence in the years after its publication; its significance; and the future of the UDHR. The diversity in scholarship is demonstrated by the varied topics under discussion including, for example, the principle of fraternity, African women's rights, media rights in Africa, and freedom from fear in China. It is also reflected in the background of our authors, who hail from different corners of world, and range in levels of seniority within their respective profession. The first three issues prove to be a

¹ Cross-cultural Human Rights Review, <https://www.cchrreview.org/scope> [Last accessed 28/11/2019].

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a monumental step in the direction of the CCHRR's aim to broaden the discourse on human rights.

Finally, as to the Review's future trajectory: this can be summarised through its aims. This includes to highlight underrepresented voices and make scholarship particularly from the Global South more accessible. It will continue providing access to publications on human rights which may not reflect the status quo, as well as opportunities for publication for rising scholars. It will build a global platform for open discussions and debates. The CCHRR is also taking a more interactive and sustainable approach to scholarship, through the various activities on its website, such as blogs, features, and our social media platforms. Through this it hopes to ensure that ideas published within the Review are sustained beyond their publication date. In so doing, it will build more sustainable relationships with those who participate in the Review. Overall, it is our ambition to contribute a more global approach to the human rights discourse. This is represented by the CCHRR logo – a tent with space for diverse components and for the whole – and its motto, to 'include all nations in the human rights dialogue'.

Thanks for getting involved!

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