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## **THE TRANSFORMING DISCOURSE: Human Rights in the New Millennium**

*Ryan E. Harden  
Stacy R. Sandusky*

The 1998, inaugural issue of the *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review* was sent to over two thousand non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and governmental organizations around the world. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. As Editors-in-Chief of the *BHRLR*, we are pleased that the first issue has been well received, specifically, that our journal has been a conduit for debate of some underdeveloped, non-traditional areas of human rights.

Since the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the focus has been primarily on civil and political rights. Now, in light of the new millennium and both the achievements and the shortcomings of the international human rights movement, the *BHRLR* seeks to address the human rights that, while essential in their own right, have often been overlooked.

In this issue, the *BHRLR* covers a variety of topics. In *The Principle of Non-Refoulement*, Weissbrodt and Hortreiter discuss the need to constantly consider and reconsider traditional issues that involve the most basic human rights - in particular, the right to be free from torture. Makau wa Mutua's article addresses limitations on religious rights. At first glance, this is seemingly a traditional, non-controversial area of human rights. However, Professor Mutua argues that it is necessary to place limitations on the right of Messianic religions to invade non-universalizing cultures.

In *Good Governance as a Counter Insurgency Agenda to Oppositional and Transformative Social Projects in International Law*, by James Gathii, it is obvious that the author has purposefully blended the civil and political rights with emerging rights issues. This article perhaps best epitomizes the approach embraced by the *BHRLR*, that issues such as economic and social rights need to be addressed along with the civil and political rights in the context of international institutions.

Bertelli's article, *Impoverished Liberalism: Does the New York Workfare Program Violate Human Rights*, is an excellent example of a current human rights issue which expands the

boundaries of conventional human rights in that it explores subject matter not originally envisioned by the human rights community. This article reflects the *BHRLR's* commitment and desire to incorporate domestic issues as part of the *Review*, recognizing that U.S. domestic questions constitute human rights concerns as well. It is important that the U.S. address its own human rights concerns in the context of the international community to further the legitimacy of the human rights movement and demonstrate U.S. acceptance of these ideals. In overview, this illustrates how the *BHRLR* aspires to move beyond the ethnocentric perspective so pervasive in the United States.

The University at Buffalo School of Law's dedication to human rights is reflected in its curriculum and its renowned human rights scholars. The strength of the program is evident in the progressive and critical manner in which students are taught to think about and analyze human rights concerns, focusing especially on non-traditional concerns. Both student notes in this issue confront the issue of marginalized groups in human rights such as women and children. The inclusion of the concerns of marginalized groups furthers the *BHRLR's* commitment to a more inclusive movement.

The *BHRLR* recognizes that the concept of human rights is often promoted through discourse and that such discourse occurs through various forms of media. Books and the publications of non-governmental organizations comprise an essential part of the discourse. We have included reviews which analyze and critique some of these other sources. In particular, a special review article addresses economic and social issues in human rights.

As Editors-in-Chief of the *BHRLR*, it has been our pleasure to work with the authors published here. Their articles are pertinent and thought provoking, and we thank them for sharing them with us. We would like to thank the University at Buffalo School of Law for its support of the *BHRLR* and commitment to human rights. A special thanks to Professor Makau wa Mutua who has been, and continues to be, a great inspiration to his students and the human rights program. It is our sincere hope that the *BHRLR* fills this critical niche of addressing non-traditional issues in human rights law to challenge and advance not only existing thought and the discourse of human rights, but ultimately the comprehensive promotion of human rights around the world.