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In Memoriam

Nancy Flowers

Human Rights Educators HRE-USA, nancymaryflowers@gmail.com

Stacey C. Ault

Sacramento State University, stacey.ault@csus.edu

Bridget Love

University of San Francisco, bhlove@dons.usfca.edu

Kristi Rudelius-Palmer

HRE USA, krp@umn.edu

Jazzmin C. Gota

University of San Francisco, jcgota1@dons.usfca.edu

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Notes From The Field

In Memoriam



The International Journal of Human Rights Education honors the lives and contributions of the following scholars and human rights advocates who recently passed away: Shulamith Koenig, Linda Garrett, David Weissbrodt, and Asma Eschen.





Shulamith Koenig, (1930–2021)

By Nancy Flowers*

In late 2021, human rights education lost one of its earliest and most passionate advocates with the passing of Shulamith Koenig, whom some have called "The Mother of Human Rights Education" or human rights *learning*, as she preferred. When she founded the People's Movement for HRE (PDHRE) in 1988, no other organization in the world had made HRE its sole purpose and no other activist had envisioned its transformative power. Indeed, she was a rebel and a visionary, seeking what she called a "human rights revolution."

Shula was the driving force behind a campaign advocating for worldwide human rights education that sparked the United Nations (U.N.) Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). As Executive Director of PDHRE, she conducted consultations and workshops with educators and community leaders in more than 60 countries. Under her leadership, PDHRE established "human rights cities" on every continent. In 2003, the U.N. recognized her work with its prize in the Field of Human Rights.

Born in Israel in 1930, Shula Koenig was an industrial engineer and fierce defender of the human rights of Palestinians, activism that led to her immigration to the United States in the 1960s. She grew that passion for social justice to a global vision of human rights as a way of life for all people. She was an inspiration and mentor to many. As activist Loretta Ross said of her, "She was not perfect, but she was perfectly Shula, a sculptress, artist, mentor, and the grandmother I wish I'd had."

As she said many times in many different ways: "It is not enough to have human rights; it is essential that everyone owns them and are guided in

* **Nancy Flowers** is a founder of Human Rights Educators USA. This tribute to Shulamith Koenig also appears in the *Human Rights Education Review* at: <https://journals.oslomet.no/index.php/human/article/view/4594>

their daily lives by the holistic human rights framework, enabling women and men to participate as equals in the decision-making process towards meaningful, sustainable economic and social transformation. There is no other option.”



Linda D. Garrett (1968–2021)

By Stacey Ault* and Bridget Love**

Dr. Linda D. Garrett (she, her, hers) was born in San Francisco, California on August 20, 1968. She attended school in the San Francisco Unified School District, graduating from El Dorado Elementary School, Everett Middle School, and J. Eugene McAteer High School, excelling in honors classes at every level. She completed her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at California State University, Sacramento, and her doctorate in International and Multicultural Education, with a concentration in Human Rights Education, at the University of San Francisco.

Dr. Garrett was a human fact-checker who used her gifts to sift through, analyze, and interpret vast amounts of historical artifacts and then present them in story form. She had this way of telling you what you needed to know in simple language. She was adamant that academic writing should be accessible to the people. As a scholar-storyteller, Dr. Linda told parables - simple stories used to illustrate a life lesson. In 2021,

* **Dr. Stacey Ault** is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the California State University, Sacramento.

** **Dr. Bridget Love** is an Assistant Professor of Communication at Cañada College and an Educational Analyst in the governmental sector of San Mateo County.

she published two essays. The first is entitled, "[It Is Well With My Soul: A Letter to My Nephew](#)," published in the *International Journal of Human Rights Education* in a special issue on Human Rights Education and Black Liberation. The second is a chapter entitled, "A Cautionary Tale" in the book, *Elevating Marginalized Voices in Academe: Lessons to a New Generation of Scholars*.

Dr. Linda D. Garrett was an avid reader and owned many books by Black authors about history, life, and spirituality that comprised the bookshelves in her personal library in her home. Her favorite readings related to her scholarship about the Black Panther Party. Dr. Garrett's family donated all of her books to the Race and Gender Equity (RAGE) Project, where she served on the Board of Directors. These books are now part of the Dr. Linda D. Garrett Community Library and are accessible to the youth and community of Sacramento.

Dr. Linda D. Garrett passed away on April 1, 2021; her love, wit, sass, humor, kindness, and bigger-than-life presence will forever be missed.



David Weissbrodt (1944–2021)

*By Kristi Rudelius-Palmer**

Back in 1987, I phoned David Weissbrodt for the first time, and, within 12 hours, I was sitting with him at the Advocates for Human Rights board meeting. David taught me the urgency of becoming a human rights

* **Kristi Rudelius-Palmer** is a Human Rights Educators USA Curator and served as the Co-Director of the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center from 1989-2016.

advocate, innovator, educator, and activist both in Minnesota and beyond. Before long, I like so many of his University of Minnesota Law School students, were walking the halls of the U.N. in Geneva and writing letters or directing campaigns with Amnesty International. He co-founded the local Amnesty Group 37 in 1976 ([Tribute video](#)) and served internationally as a trial observer and on factfinding missions. David was gifted at linking volunteers to human rights projects locally, nationally, and globally.

David was a networker and diplomat *extraordinaire*. He modeled how determination and dedication can change the world through drafting human rights declarations, principles, and amicus briefs to scholarship, teaching, and collective action. David breathed life into human rights dreams and careers, always providing guidance on how to navigate often politically turbulent and dangerous waters. He built institutions, such as the Advocates for Human Rights, the Center for Victims of Torture, and the International Human Rights Internship Program. In 1988, David founded the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center and later launched the world's largest university online Human Rights Library. Through the Center, he facilitated and funded more than 700 student internships, mentored hundreds of global Fulbright Humphrey Fellows, visiting scholars, and students as well as advised on the establishment of the national human rights education clearinghouse (a vital function now assumed by Human Rights Educators USA).

David became Regents Professor at the University of Minnesota, the first from the Law School to be so honored. From 1996-2003, he served as a member of the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and was the first U.S. citizen to chair a human rights body since Eleanor Roosevelt.

I am grateful for David's teachings, mentoring, and coaching. The extended human rights family that he nurtured sends its loving support to his wife, children, and grandchildren.





Asma Eschen (1955–2022)

By Jazzmin Chizu Gota *

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. ~ Eleanor Roosevelt, 1958

One of those small places was the home of Asma Nazihi Eschen, a longtime resident of San Rafael, California, United States. Asma was a profile in courage, tenacity, and community. She co-founded the [Bare Roots Project](#), which brought both tree saplings and water systems to her home country of Afghanistan; was an active board member of Afghans4Tomorrow, and a co-founder of the nonprofit educational organization, Equality Works. In 2016, she was featured in the documentary film “[National Bird](#)” and supported the filmmakers in coordinating and communicating with families impacted by American drones in Afghanistan.

Asma was a mother, scholar, friend, human rights educator, bridge builder, and valued member of her communities. Born in Afghanistan in 1955, she emigrated to San Rafael, in 1970, she studied at San Rafael High School, completed her bachelor’s at California State University, San Francisco, and earned her Master’s degree from the University of San

* **Jazzmin Chizu Gota** is a doctoral student in International and Multicultural Education with a concentration in Human Rights Education at the University of San Francisco. She works with the national human rights education network, HRE USA, as a regional representative for Northern California, and multimedia consultant. jcgota@dons.usfca.edu

Francisco in International and Multicultural Education (IME), with a concentration in Human Rights Education. Her thesis was entitled, “Water Rights and Afghan Culture.” She was kind, supportive, and always ready to give her all to causes and members of her community—and she was equally fearless. Always one to live in the moment and, as fellow Equality Works co-founder and IME alumna April Harlo describes, “she lived her life the way she wanted, without regrets, without judgement.”

A lesson learned by those who knew her: We are capable of facilitating change and sometimes we are the people we have been waiting for—so it’s best not *to wait*, but *to do*. From her local and international work to her support of scholars in critical education, to her days as a preschool arts teacher, Asma enlivened the lives of everyone she met.