Learning from Reflective Practitioners and Engaged Academics

A Joint Program
of
The Democracy Collaborative
and
The Advocacy Institute

THE DEMOCRACY COLLABORATIVE

THE ADVOCACY INSTITUTE

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

On March 17–19, 2002 The Democracy Collaborative and the Advocacy Institute held a pilot workshop as part of a process of developing an information exchange and problem-solving network involving scholars of democratic theory and democratic activists.[1] The ultimate goal of this program is to create a sustaining forum in which scholars and practitioners from diverse backgrounds and from different countries can learn from the thinking and build upon the experiences of one another. The focus of the dialogue, listening, and learning (which will occur in a variety of formats) will be an exploration of the prerequisites for a vibrant civil society and a healthy democracy.

The topic of the pilot workshop was: "What are the best strategies for building democratic regimes that take the securing of human rights as central?" (This is not the only topic the network will consider over time, but for a variety of reasons it was deemed a good starting place for discussion.) Over a period of 2½ days, 6 scholars from 3 American research universities and approximately 25 practitioners from several countries and representing a number of human rights-related NGOs explored this and related issues.

The pilot provided a wealth of lessons about useful methodologies and processes, fruitful topics for discourse, and possible contexts for productive scholar-practitioner dialogue and engagement on a sustained basis. Perhaps the most important outcome of the pilot was a realization among the sponsors and the participants that it is both necessary and possible for academics and activists to be in meaningful dialogue about [1] large-order structural issues related to prevailing political-economic systems and viable alternatives to them and [2] to derive from this consideration lessons of relevance and importance that can both improve scholarship and improve advocacy and organizing, be it at the community or transnational levels or anywhere in between. What is distinctive about this approach is the attempt to connect analysis of systemic questions to specifics of democratic activism.

This report reviews the underlying rationale, principles and strategies shaping the development of this proposed activist-scholar network and the lessons learned from the March pilot.

1. BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2001, The Democracy Collaborative and the Advocacy Institute entered into a working partnership to

---

[1]Interest in finding mechanisms and processes to bring together activists and academics is growing in many quarters. For example, in January 2001 The Hauser Center (Harvard) and CIVICUS convened a meeting on "Practice-Research Engagement" and issued a report *Practice-Research Engagement and Civil Society in a Globalizing World*, edited by L. David Brown. In November 2001, 48 social justice and human rights activists convened at the "Making Change Happen: Advocacy and Citizen Participation" conference. While the conference was not focused specifically on scholar-practitioner issues, the conference statement is quite consistent with the objectives of our program, and indeed, a number of the participants in the November 2001 meeting were deeply involved in the workshop reported on in this report.

develop programs and processes that bring together experienced practitioners with young and senior scholars concerned with the theory and the practice of democracy. The commitment of the organizers was to discover how to create an environment in which useful and productive dialogue could be held came from a shared belief that

If we are to understand, mark out useful steps, and more broadly help develop the capacity to bring the practice of democracy into greater alignment with the widely shared aspiration to realize it fully, we need scholars and activists who are better equipped intellectually and practically than those presently at work. Crucial to creating better equipped scholars and activists is that each learn from the other on an ongoing basis. Thus, the intent from the outset was to create a forum and network in which scholars and activist leaders from diverse backgrounds and from different countries could learn from the thinking and build upon the experiences of one another.

By "democracy" we mean to distinguish a fundamental human value that extends far beyond the definition often adopted in the United States where elections are thought to be sufficient for democracy's existence. Democracy, as we understand it, is more akin to what much of the world regards as "human rights"—a set of political, economic, and social norms and processes necessary for a just and good society. To establish human rights requires political, economic, and social processes that are the fundamental features of a fully realized democracy. Thus, for example, to realize a right to a minimum level of economic equity requires legislation and regulations that a well-developed democracy also requires, since democracy properly understood cannot flourish in the face of

a significantly unequal distribution of income and wealth.

The primary purposes of the program were defined as: [1] to break down the intellectual and practical divide between activists and scholars; [2] to help develop durable networks that link activists and scholars, and that enhance the work of both; [3] to help the next generations of activists sharpen their capacities to shape democratic theory and practice through writing, organizing, and other forms of public action; [4] to train the next generations of scholars so that they will take full account of and have respect for democratic practice, of the possibilities of significant political, economic, and social change, and how the latter have been brought about; [5] to better enable advocates to help define the public agenda; and [6] to help both academics and practitioners to identify the operational and intellectual challenges they face in carrying out their work.

2. RATIONALE FOR CREATING A SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER NETWORK

Activists and scholars bring different perspectives to the effort to understand and shape the world. Each needs the other for maximum effectiveness, and all who hope for the securing of human rights through a fully realized democracy would benefit from their active collaboration.

Activists, by and large, place a premium on disentangling the complex steps through which political and social change occurs and can be made to occur. They work at making understandable what is dense and in the process make what is hidden less mysterious. For them, the following sorts of questions are crucial: Have they framed the issue in ways that persuade others? Are they getting the

By "democracy" we mean to distinguish a fundamental human value that extends far beyond the definition often adopted in the United States where elections are thought to be sufficient for democracy's existence.

attention of people who are decision makers, or who influence decision makers or who can take ideas, policies, or programs and have them resonate with people who organize themselves for public action? Should they attempt to persuade, or raise the consequences of inaction, or if both, in what combination? If they convince decision makers to act, what stands in the way of their success?

Scholars concerned with political and social change aim at a broad view of the problem of how to alter the workings of political, social, and economic systems. Their task, typically, is to explain how change occurs and might occur through the action of large-scale forces such as an alteration in the distribution of income, the development of group consciousness and cohesion, and the appearance of new sources of social division. Moreover, in evaluating the present state of affairs and the goals at which political action aims, academics look to broad evaluations. They ask, for example, what does a well-ordered democracy require? What is required to realize full human rights, and how far are we from realizing them? Similarly, they ask, of what does social justice consist and what paths are available to realizing it?

Each kind of knowledge is useful on its own, but each alone is insufficient for responding to the massive changes our world faces in this globalizing era. If we are to act in attractive and effective ways, we need the complex detailed knowledge that activists at their best can bring to the discussion. We also need to draw on the best work and analysis of scholars to better understand how these particulars fit into larger social and political processes.

If activists and scholars can learn from one another by drawing on their different outlooks and skills, then each will be more effective. Activists will be more

effective if they understand in some depth the connections between their efforts to bring about change in community practice and public policy, and the achievement of a more or less fully realized democracy. What might look at first glance to be a more or less bounded problem in a community or policy area is, in fact, typically intertwined with the distribution of political and economic power and the incentives to act—in short, with the current political-economic system. Community and policy problems are often the outcomes of the ordinary workings of a given system, and activism is too often reduced to cleaning up after the elephant of society goes marching by. Thus, for significant change to be sustained over a long period, it must become part of an effort to create a substantially altered political-economic system—and it will be central to successful advocacy that activists understand the connections between the particular problem and the larger existing and new systems, and are acute judges of when to move from problem to system and back as circumstances alter.

In the same vein, activists will be more effective if they have embedded in their social and political understanding a working idea of what a more or less fully realized democracy that realizes full human rights might look like, not just in some abstract sense, but in its institutional detail. Such understanding not only can guide action, it can sustain hope.

In the case of scholars, we are of the view that social science as it is traditionally practiced is part of the problem. It not only feeds cynicism about social change, it is also too often indifferent to, even hostile to, thinking about our aspirations for a marked improvement in the day to day lives of ordinary people. Otherwise said, it is not much concerned with practice, and

If we are to act in effective ways, we need the complex knowledge activists can bring to the discussion. We also need to draw on the best work and analysis of scholars.

an engagement with activists is crucial to altering this orientation.

Scholarship and analysis of democracy and human rights will be much improved if academics have a good working sense of the way in which change actually occurs—and of the potential of ordinary people to engineer significant change not only in their immediate environment but in the larger political-economic system. Much social science is macro and structural in its orientation, and just how the structural forces do their work remains for the most part unclear. This focus on impersonal forces, large-scale aggregates, and the like typically leads to skepticism about major change on the part of social scientists: the agency of ordinary people is devalued. We would get better social science—more informed by the actual processes by which change occurs—if there were intensive interactions between scholars and activists.

A social science that is rooted in the propositions that "ordinary" people can and regularly do create new forms of associational life, that they have a good working knowledge of at least some of the forces that shape their lives, and that they have succeeded in bringing about dramatic change in their own life circumstances through organized action is a social science that will take strong forms of democracy more seriously. The most relevant social science has always come out of a mix of extensive engagement with the world as it is and might reasonably become, and from reflection on what such engagement tells us about what our aims should be and the paths to reach them.

We believe, then, that crucial to the success of efforts to secure human rights, achieve justice, and secure a civil society, especially in the world now being born, is extended interaction between activists and scholars focused on enhancing democracy.

There have been few sustained attempts to bring together academics and activists in which all are equal collaborators in the effort to strengthen the practice of democracy. Why have there been few successful efforts to bring scholars and activists together in fruitful interaction? One reason is the very difference in outlook and skills that, if brought together, promise greater democratic understanding and more effective democratic action. Even though both groups may be wedded to enhancing democracy, the abstractness of democratic analysis presented by democratic scholars will often be seen as abstruse and irrelevant by activists—and the detailed, specific accounts of democratic activism laid out by activists will often strike academics as "war stories," interesting but no substitute for more general analysis. Moreover, academics get paid to talk; advocates (if they get paid at all) for acting and producing concrete results on the ground, in campaigns, or in shaping public opinion. The "styles" don't mesh easily. As well, academics infrequently deal with their equals: their principal contacts are with students. Unless the academics are reined in, the project of bringing these two groups together will fail—and since developing strategies for equalizing talk takes a good deal of effort, it has not been done often.

Along the same lines, a format commonly used in bringing scholars and activists together has been one where one set of participants, typically the scholars, lectures the other. Thus, all too often, the occasion is defined as one where academic experts present to activists the fruits of their disciplinary expertise. The underlying assumption is that the academics know what is worth knowing about the matters under consideration, and the task

We would get better social science—more informed by the actual processes by which change occurs—if there were intensive interactions between scholars and activists.

is to impart this knowledge to those who are to act on it. Quite apart from the question of whether academics typically have such expertise, the underlying assumption is wrong: a good deal of what we need to know about democracy and human rights is known, at least in tacit fashion, by people who are engaged in the very effort to do so. They, of course, know that they know, and resent being lectured to. Less commonly, it is activists who do the talking, but that is unlikely to be more successful. Theorists know that unless there is some general framework guiding the work of activists, particular efforts are unlikely to lead to significant democracy- and rights-enhancing practice. They thus grow impatient with a diet made up solely of case discussions.

In seeking to design a program for reflective practitioners and engaged academics, we have identified a set of principles and values from which we will work. Among these are:

- Reflective activism can be more effective than unreflective work; academic work grounded in discussion with activists is preferable to being isolated from the community and the world. Therefore, participants have much to learn from each other.

- Democracy is an intrinsic value that extends beyond the legal, procedural, and structural.

- Public service, public life, and public conversation are valued and are not limited to official bodies and government institutions.

- Though national boundaries create differences between citizens, we believe that learning and understanding can and should be porous.

- Attentiveness to national, local, regional, and international governance institutions is crucial.

We value a "reverse globalization" because we believe other cultures and nations have much to teach us in the United States about human rights, political, economic, and social democracy, what constitutes a vibrant civil society, and ways of organizing sustained public participation.

As noted above, from the outset, the ultimate goal of this endeavor was to develop a network of activists and scholars that would provide the opportunity for both groups to learn from the thinking and build upon the experiences of one another in ways that would strengthen and contribute to the greater effectiveness of their work, be it community activism, transnational organizing, academic research, or teaching.

4. THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY PILOT WORKSHOP

To test our assumptions and to determine whether an environment could be created in which both scholars and activists could derive value and learn from one another, a pilot workshop was organized and held over a $2\frac{1}{2}$ day period in March 2002. Staff from the Advocacy Institute and The Democracy Collaborative jointly developed the workshop. The Advocacy Institute had primary responsibility for identifying and securing the involvement of activists to participate in the pilot; the Collaborative identified and enlisted academics.

After much consideration, it was determined that the topic of the first workshop should not be "democratic practice" per se. This was due, in large measure, to a view among the organizers that practitioners tend not to see themselves as democratic activists, but rather define themselves in terms of issues such as human rights, globalization, transparency and corruption, equity, justice,

The Advocacy Institute had primary responsibility for identifying and securing the involvement of activists to participate in the pilot; the Collaborative identified and enlisted academics.

and so on. These are all issues central to the practice of democracy and it was felt that any one of them could provide a useful window through which participants could make linkages between specific issues and larger order system questions. Thus, the overarching question of the first pilot was: "What are the best strategies for building democratic regimes that take the securing of human rights as central?"

We focused on human rights because we believe that the securing and maintaining of human rights is the prime test of whether a political regime can be counted as just. It was also felt that a focus on human rights would encourage a broad outlook of social change that secures justice. In particular, a human rights focus requires looking not just at the political system, but also at the economy and society when strategies for change are being evaluated. Much recent experience, where the focus has been on narrow political matters such as holding elections, tells us that such a focus is indeed too narrow. The link of human rights to democracy is clear: no other kind of regime will, over time, undertake to secure and maintain human rights. Thus, the causes of human rights and democracy are inextricably linked and, therefore, they must be treated together.

The Participants
About 25 practitioners and 6 scholars participated in the workshop (Annex 1). Principally because of the cost of subsidizing international travel, the large majority of the practitioners were US domestic activists. However, their number did include a Central American activist working in Chicago with immigrant populations from the region, the Indian Director of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, a Nigerian currently working from the ActionAid USA

office in Washington, DC, and an Egyptian activist now working in the US with the America's Development Foundation. For the pilot, activists were invited to participate based on three criteria: [1] while they worked on a wide array of US domestic and international issues (e.g., prisoner's rights, children's advocacy, gay and lesbian issues, poverty reduction, race relations, economic development) all considered that their work was in some way part of a larger and more general human rights effort; [2] they were each in leadership positions within their organizations and had substantial experience within their area of interest; and [3] the Advocacy Institute had some previous experience with each of the practitioners and thus could enlist their support in participating in a pilot and in helping the organizers to think through what works best, what is useful, and what meets the needs of activists.

Scholars were selected by The Democracy Collaborative. All were political scientists and each had an area of intellectual focus in their academic work relevant to the concerns of the workshop and the activists: three specialize in transnational civil society issues; one focuses on community-based action research and working directly with community advocacy groups; one is a theorist of democratic practice; and one a political-economist specializing in community-based democratic economic development. Three of the academics are faculty and staff of the Collaborative at the University of Maryland; two are junior faculty members at the University of Pittsburgh; one teaches at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Pre-Workshop Participant Preparation
The Advocacy Institute's experience has been that the quality and intensity of the

interactions with participants before any workshop or training is an important factor in determining the level of success of a working meeting. Accordingly, well in advance of the workshop dates, participants were sent background readings related to the six thematic areas of the agenda so that everyone would begin with a shared base of general knowledge. These readings were primarily selected by the scholars of The Democracy Collaborative, supplemented with published writings from activists who were not participating in the workshop that the Advocacy Institute identified (Annex 2).

In addition, both scholars and activists were asked to respond in writing of approximately 1,000 words to a set of questions about human rights and democracy (Annex 3). These responses were then used by the organizers to help shape the workshop. They were also circulated in advance to the participants so that they would know the perspectives of their fellow workshop participants.

Objectives

The workshop began with a process through which the organizers proposed the objectives of the workshop. These were then discussed and amended by the participants. The agreed objectives were:

- For practitioners and scholars to learn from one another and teach each other.

- To identify the operational and intellectual challenges each group faces in carrying out their work.

- To begin to understand diverse perspectives and build upon the experiences of one another.

- To shape and redefine the workshop processes and content to inform the development of the engaged scholar-reflective practitioner program.

Hopes and Concerns

Participants then engaged in plenary and small breakout groups in a free-flowing discussion to identify their individual and shared hopes and concerns for the 2$\frac{1}{2}$ days together in the workshop.

Hopes included: that fruitful working relationships between activists and academics would be forged and that any artificial divide that may separate them would be broken down; that the synthesis of activism and scholarship would lead to new perspectives; that new understandings of the economic, social and cultural dimensions of human rights work would emerge; that learning would occur that could be applied in the day-to-day activities of activists and scholars after the workshop; that a network would begin to be created that participants could use to build a more cogent argument for and strategies to promote rights-based work; that there would be ample time for reflection; and that participants would leave energized.

Among the concerns: that the very issue of human rights may be too narrow a frame for raising important issues of democratic theory and practice; that scholars and activists might be too "polite" with one another and insufficiently challenging of each other's perspectives, approaches, and ideas; that activists might embarrass themselves by demonstrating a lack of intellect or knowledge in their discussions with scholars; that the scholars might resort to dense and impenetrable academic language and rhetoric; that domestic and international activists might have such different perspectives on human rights that they wouldn't be able to reach a common understanding; and that nothing sustainable would result from the time spent together.

Processes and Methodologies

The strategic selection of the participants, as well as pre-conference communication and relationship building, were key components of the process used to create an atmosphere conducive to participants learning and teaching one another. Deliberate factors, from the physical arrangement of the room, to agreeing to working principles to guide how participants interact with one another, to the use of appropriate and creative "icebreakers" and "bonding" activities, to the use of small group discussions all helped to facilitate an exchange that was open and respectful, even in the moments when interactions were intense and tense.

Agenda

As already noted, the overarching framework for the workshop was: "What are the best strategies for building democratic regimes that take the securing of human rights as central?" Within this context, the workshop was divided into six sessions, each designed around a specific topic (pre-workshop readings were similarly organized around these six themes). To set the parameters for the exploration of each theme, at least one scholar and one activist were invited (prior to the meeting) to deliver brief oral presentations to the group about the key issues of importance from their experience and perspective. Discussions (sometimes in plenary session and sometimes in small groups) built from these presentations. The six themes (see Annex 4 for the complete outline of the agenda) were:

- The experience of human rights and democracy on the ground.

- What are the links between human rights and political and legal structures?

- Which human rights are fundamental and why?

- What are promising strategies for building political and legal institutions that secure human rights?

- What is the promise of a strategy linking locally-based activist efforts to the organizations that compose the emerging global civil society?

- What has been the experience of the opening up or closing of political spaces after September 11?

Having worked through most of this agenda by the beginning of the third day, and true to the learning spirit of a pilot effort, participants "re-railed" the agenda to address other concerns of greater interest, in particular, to the practitioners. After much brainstorming and flipchart work, three parallel small groups were organized around the following topics:

- How can we articulate and communicate societal vision and issues? What are the spaces and resources that are being utilized to connect and build movements?

- Using structural and power analysis, how can activists best choose which issues to take on and which organizing processes and tactics to employ, and having so chosen how can they define success?

- How can we collectively build a structural analysis and power analysis that takes into account but is not limited by the impact of 9-11? How can we engage and operate politically in the context of the immense militarization, and what are believed to be threats to dissent, now underway in the United States?

The discussions from these three small groups yielded outcomes that led to an unexpected breakthrough in the workshop. The outcomes opened up for

organizers a much larger sense of what could be possible in creating a forum and network in which activists and academics are engaged in large order questions. These questions include the system of the prevailing political economy, alternative visions and how these can directly relate to and help shape a sharpened effectiveness for activist strategies and work. This is further developed in the next two sections of the report—Key Lesson Learned and Additional Important Lessons Learned.

Participant Evaluations

Participants evaluated the workshop in two ways: [1] as a group in a rapid-fire brainstorming session and [2] through a formal written evaluation instrument.

Through the group brainstorming and flip-chart exercise, the following were among the pluses participants found in the workshop: the very idea of convening practitioners and scholars and creating an environment in which they could discuss and reflect upon problems of common concern has value for the long term; bringing together US domestic and international activists to share their own experiences and approaches is critical in a globalized society; flexibility in the program design allowed for participant input and shaping of the agenda; framing each topic of discussion with presentations by selected scholars and activists models useful collaborative listening; and the pre-workshop readings and writing assignments.

Areas for improvement included: providing more "meat" in the readings and in the discussions of the themes; having deeper conversations on the chosen topics; the need for greater racial and gender diversity among academic participants; building in daily evaluations of the workshop; providing brief biographical material about the participants in

advance so that the experiences and potential contribution of each person is more evident; encouraging the scholars to be more assertive in their own views and more challenging of the activists; and creating space for a fuller dialogue about the scholar-activist network that is the ultimate goal of this exercise. It is believed that the positives can be sustained and the suggested improvements substantially achieved.

5. KEY LESSON LEARNED

The key lesson learned and the significant breakthrough in the workshop, as noted above, came as a result of the changing of the agenda on Day 3.

What became evident in the three small groups that convened through this revised agenda was that we could be far more ambitious in focusing the discourse around what was variously called the system question/power analysis/the structural issue/the regime question. That is: [1] an analysis of the present political economy, particularly with an eye to what accounts for the constant reappearance of the same kinds of societal failures (for example, the continuing concentration of wealth in many societies despite various reforms aimed at addressing this problem); [2] a discussion of alternative and realistic visions to prevailing corporate capitalism and to socialism and social democracy that are now on the wane.

These are both very large questions and they are most often treated abstractly and with little relevance to democratic activism. Although many activists have thought about these matters, the experience of many is that it is difficult to get any real purchase on such discussions, at least in ways that inform democratic activism. Similarly, academic theorists

It became evident we could be far more ambitious in focusing the discourse around what was variously called the system question, power analysis, the structural issue.

who work with these questions are often frustrated by the lack of any clear implications for improving democratic practice, that, for many of them, is the deepest purpose of their inquiries.

We came away from the pilot workshop with the conviction that activists would very much like to address whether their aims, organizing strategies and the like could be better focused in light of sustained discussion on the kind of system they are attempting to move and reform. If a serious effort was made to address this aspect of the system question in a way that had strong implications for activism, many of the participants in the workshop were willing to think through how best to pose the question and participate in discussions built around it. Similarly, there was a strong sense among the participants that a grasp of the kind of political-economic order they were hoping to bring into being was important in directing the work of activists. Not least of the reasons, many participants suggested, is that the collapse of state socialism, the weakening of social democracy and American liberalism, and the political pressures generated in the aftermath of 9/11 have all made a vision of what we are aiming to build of the greatest importance. Hope is difficult to sustain without a vision of where democratic activism is meant to take us.

The strong message with which we came away from the pilot was that if these issues are posed and discussed in a way that demonstrates a relevance to organizing and the daily life and work of activists, then there is a great desire among reflective practitioners to engage in these dialogues.

How to design this interaction, of course, is a substantial challenge. (Some of our initial thoughts are contained below in Section 7.) But that notwithstanding, we firmly believe that an intellectually

ambitious and ongoing interaction among practitioners and scholars on large order questions of the system and power would be welcome by both groups and could be enormously productive, particularly in building a shared and enduring set of ideas that can both serve activism and the social sciences.

6. ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED

In addition to the critical and far reaching lesson above, we came away having learned a number of other important lessons that will be instrumental in shaping the scholar-practitioner engagement program as we move forward. These include, among others:

- **The scholar-activist "divide"**: It may not be most useful or even reflective of the present reality to position this program as an attempt to bridge a "gap" separating scholars and activists. While there are clear differences in perspective and experience which do separate the groups, focusing on the gap may produce a false dichotomy. In truth, many activists themselves are thinkers, writers, and analysts (a number in the pilot workshop, had advanced academic degrees and had moved back and forth between the academy and activism); on the other side, many scholars are either engaged in some form of practice in their scholarly life or have previous activist experience (among the "scholars" in the pilot workshop, for instance, one had spent 15 years as an activist on World Bank/IMF issues before joining a university faculty 3 years ago; another had spent his entire career in politics and the not-for-profit sector before accepting an endowed chair several years ago).

An intellectually ambitious and ongoing interaction among practitioners and scholars on large order questions of the system and power would be welcome by both groups.

- **Design, format and methodology**: In conceptualizing subsequent workshops, we should expand the group participating in the design process beyond the staff of the Advocacy Institute and The Democracy Collaborative so that interested workshop participants can directly contribute prior to each session. While we strive to make the content of the discussions "meatier" in substance and in depth, we need also to ensure that we continue to use open-ended processes and methodologies, and allow for plenty of reflective and relationship-building time.

- **Preparation**: In general, the degree of pre-workshop interactions with participants worked well. We drew on the writings of activists as well as scholars. Specifically, we should invite participants to send us examples of their own writings that would be included among the reading selections. Brief biographies of each participant should be circulated in advance. Perhaps participants should be given an even longer lead-time to complete their essays so that we can ensure the maximum number can be circulated in advance.

- **The scholar-activist ratio**: In order to encourage activists to speak and participate fully, we designed the pilot with a ratio of about 4 activists to every scholar. Rather than leading to a balance in the dialogue between the academics and the practitioners, what resulted was in large measure a domination of the discourse by the activists. That the scholars "held back" somewhat in the discussions may have been due to the fact that the workshop organizers urged them in advance not to lecture or dominate the meeting as if it were a classroom. In any event, it became very clear that the activists were not intimidated by the presence of scholars and

did not hesitate to fully participate in all discussions. In the future, we should alter this ratio so that the scholar voice is more prominent and we should more directly encourage the scholars to be more assertive in their participation. We should also make sure that we put on the table what constraints scholars face and what they need in terms of standards and rigor within their own institutional setting; this will set a better level of understanding among the participants.

- **Getting our ultimate objectives on the table**: It would be useful and welcome (according to participants in the pilot) to have a fuller discussion at the outset of the workshop about our ultimate objectives in this program; that is, the establishment of a sustaining network of engagement involving activists and scholars. This network, its purpose, potential activities, and design should be squarely on the agenda and participants should be given the opportunity to give input about it and to help shape it, particularly in the early stages of this program. We should engage participants around the fact that we are trying to create a network of people who converse about the system issue and its relationship to activism; and that these discussions should lead to actions—better activism and better scholarship. In other words, we are trying to create something that changes people and what they do over time.

- **Activists learning from one another**: From the outset, we had been clear that there would be useful and important learning taking place between scholars and activists. We are pleased that an enormous amount of learning took place among the activists themselves. Domestic practitioners learned from international activists (and vice

We are trying to create a network of people who converse about the system issue and its relationship to activism. These discussions should lead to better activism and better scholarship.

versa); activists in one issue area had the opportunity to engage with colleagues working on an entirely different issue, and found that they could derive valuable insights into their own actions and strategies as a result. As we move forward in this program, we expect to keep this activist-to-activist learning squarely in mind. Such activist learning has been a prevailing Advocacy Institute experience. It reinforces activists participating in such endeavors and it helps build communities of practice.

> What is distinctive about this approach is the effort to connect analysis of systemic questions to specifics of democratic activism.

7. NEXT STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

Workshop participants recognized both the promise and the challenge of future actions that include workshop building and intentional network building to begin to delve deeply into political and economic structure system questions. What is distinctive about this approach is the effort to connect analysis of systemic questions to specifics of democratic activism.

Among the items stated in the evaluations were that such workshops and network-building activities can "generate collaborative mechanisms" that lead to "workable and productive relationships;" and "explore common ground for action" among people "willing to take chances."

Clearly there was a strong desire to promote understanding of how human rights activists, along with others who are tackling tough social questions, can move the economic system from a neo-liberal frame to one grounded in economic equity. Building productive relationships comes from those organizing and advancing issues that are locally grounded and cross governance jurisdictions within national boundaries and international

ones. The international organizing and issues cut across regions and continents.

Next steps in the development of this program include collaborations among academics and activists along the lines suggested by workshop participants. Their insights suggest ways to build and strengthen relationships that are workable and productive.

An initial approach would focus future dialogues and interactions around specific examples and from these derive insights and strategies related to system change. This could include:

- Arranging for a serious discussion of alternative system models now being developed both by academics and activists around the world. There is a rapidly expanding literature on democratic alternatives which can be drawn upon. This might provide an opening for the further discussion of the pluses and minuses of the theoretical models—and how specific activist strategies might move in directions related to such models.

- Examining different models of what would be widely recognized as vibrant democratic activism that are breaking new ground on participation, institutional change and confronting power relationships. Some relevant cases here would include the Indian state of Kerala and the Brazilian city of Porto Allegre, where there is evidence of a sustained democratic activism that has produced structural changes in how governments actually operate. Moreover, these changes promise to make a noticeable difference in the day-to-day lives of the citizens of these places. These two cases stand out precisely because there apparently are few such success stories in the developing world, and it will be crucial to understand why. The same might be said of

changes made by Swedish social democratic governments in labor markets.

- Understanding organizational innovations—workable ones and ones that did not reach expectations. The test for inclusion, whether deemed successful or not, is whether the innovations contribute to democratic activism.

- Connecting organizational structures and actions with ideas and movements to show the relationship between organizational structures of democratic activism that lead to institutional change. Here we would examine the relationship between organization and social movements to sustain change or understand what undermines it.

We believe such an approach represents an effort that moves beyond generality and draws on the experience and knowledge of all concerned, both activist and scholar. By moving from specific examples to the larger order questions, we foresee the basis for the kinds of collaboration that can advance a serious examination of ways to effectively raise systemic change as essential in the effort to attain a vibrant and flourishing democratic renewal.

In the short-term, we are now planning to undertake a number of consultations with those who participated in the human rights workshop, as well as other activists and academics concerned with these questions. A memorandum outlining possible approaches to fostering scholar-practitioner interactions that connect analysis of systemic questions to specifics of democratic activism has been prepared for circulation and discussion. A series of smaller follow-on meetings to continue this process is tentatively planned for the fall of 2002.

Annex I. Participants

Gar Alperovitz
The Democracy Collaborative
Department of Government and Politics
University of Maryland

Dale Asis
Director
Coalition of African, Asian, European
and Latino Immigrants of Illinois
(CAAELII)

Sharvell Becton
Programs Director
Advocacy Institute

Oscar Chacón
Director, International Programs
Heartland Alliance

David Cohen
Board Co-Chair
Advocacy Institute

Maja Daruwala
Director
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Tanya Domi
Columbia University

Stephen Elkin
The Democracy Collaborative
Department of Government and Politics
University of Maryland

Barbara Ferman
Department of Political Science
Temple University

Michael Goodhart
Department of Political Science
University of Pittsburgh

Shanon Henry
Angie Martin Fellow
Advocacy Institute

Irungu Houghton
Policy Research Coordinator
ActionAid USA

Ted Howard
Executive Director
The Democracy Collaborative
University of Maryland

Valerie Miller
Co-Director
Just Associates

Paul Nelson
Graduate School of Public and
International Affairs
University of Pittsburgh

Melissa Ness
Director
Advocacy & Education/ General Counsel
Kansas Children's Service League

Richard Paisner
President
Rimbar Corporation

Donna Red Wing
Director of Policy and Special Initiatives
Gill Foundation

James Riker
Associate Director
The Democracy Collaborative
University of Maryland

Carl Roller
Program Assistant
Advocacy Institute

John Ruthrauff
Senior Policy Advisor
Oxfam America

Cassandra Shaylor
Co-Director
Justice Now

Nader Tadros
Training Director
America's Development Foundation

Makani Themba-Nixon
Executive Director
Praxis Project

Lisa VeneKlasen
Co-Director
Just Associates

Nondas Voll
Executive Director
Fund for Community Progress

Laura Wyshynski
Program Associate
Advocacy Institute

Annex II. Background Readings

1. THE EXPERIENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ON THE GROUND

Priority Readings

Kothari, Miloon. (1998). The Global Struggle for the Right to a Place to Live. In: *Development and Rights*. Deborah Eade, ed., Oxford, UK: Oxfam Great Britain, pp. 154–159.

Muzaffar, Chandra. (1999). A More Holistic Understanding of Human Rights. In: *America Needs Human Rights*. Anuradha Mittal and Peter Rosset, eds., Oakland, CA: Food First Books, pp.172–176.

Pandit, Vivek. (2001). Assessing Risks and Taking Action. In: *Advocacy for Social Justice: A Global Action and Reflection Guide*. David Cohen, Rosa de la Vega, and Gabrielle Watson, eds. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press and the Advocacy Institute, pp. 79–80.

Russell, Grahame. (1998). All Rights Guaranteed—All Actors Accountable: Poverty Is A Violation of Human Rights. In: *Development and Rights*. Deborah Eade, ed., Oxford, UK: Oxfam Great Britain, pp. 154–159.

Supplementary Readings

Castaneda, Jorge G. (1993). Democratising Democracy. In: *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War*. New York: Knopf, pp. 358–390.

Ghai, Yash. (1999). Rights, Social Justice, and Globalization in East Asia. In: *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*. Bauer, Joanne R., and Daniel Bell, eds., New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 241–263.

2. WHAT ARE THE LINKS BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL AND LEGAL STRUCTURES?

Priority Readings

Falk, Richard A. (2000). Taking Human Rights Seriously at Home. In: *Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalizing World*. New York: Routledge, pp. 57–66.

Fruhling, Hugo. (2000). From Dictatorship to Democracy: Law and Social Change in the Andean Region and the Southern Cone of South America. In: *Many Roads to Justice*. Mary McClymont and Stephen Golub, eds., NY: The Ford Foundation, pp. 55–87.

Shifter, Michael. (2000). Weathering the Storm: NGOs Adapting to Major Political Transitions. In: *Many Roads to Justice*. Mary McClymont and Stephen Golub, eds., NY: The Ford Foundation, pp. 327–337.

Supplementary Readings

Golub, Stephen. (2000). Battling Apartheid: Building a New South Africa. In: *Many Roads to Justice*. Mary McClymont and Stephen Golub, eds., NY: The Ford Foundation, pp. 19–54.

Hershkoff, Helen, and David Hollander. (2000). Rights into Action: Public Interest Litigation in the United States. In: *Many Roads to Justice*. Mary McClymont and Stephen Golub, eds., NY: The Ford Foundation, pp. 89–125.

3. WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FUNDAMENTAL AND WHY?

Overview

Priority Readings

Falk, Richard A. (2000). A Half-Century of Human Rights. In: *Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalizing World*. New York: Routledge, pp. 87–93.

Ignatieff, Michael. (2001). The Attack on Human Rights. *Foreign Affairs*, November/December.

Mittal, Anuradha, and Peter Rosset. (1999). A Call to Action: Why America Needs Human Rights. In: *America Needs Human Rights*. Anuradha Mittal and Peter Rosset, eds., Oakland, CA: Food First Books, pp.vii–xvi.

Ratner, Michael. (2002). Follow the Geneva Convention. *Christian Science Monitor*, January 29. Web site: www.commondreams.org/views02/0129-02.htm

Sen, Amartya. (1999). Democracy as a Universal Value. *Journal of Democracy*, 10(3):3–17. Web site: http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/jod/10.3sen.html

Supplementary Readings

Falk, Richard A. (2000). Patterns of Global Dominance and Non-western Attitudes Toward Human Rights. *Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalizing World*. New York: Routledge, pp. 37–56.

Franck, Thomas M. (2001). Are Human Rights Universal? *Foreign Affairs*, 80(1):191–204, January/February.

Reardon, Christopher. (2002). Islam and the Modern World. *Ford Foundation Report*, Winter, pp. 18–23.

Sen, Amartya. (1999). Human Rights and Economic Achievement. In: *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*. Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel Bell, eds., New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 88–99.

Case Studies

Priority Readings

Call, Charles T. (2002). A Human Rights Practitioner's Perspective. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 123–127.

Thomas, Daniel C. (2002). Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 71–95.

Supplementary Readings

Ayau, Edward Halealoha. (2001). Native Burials: Human Rights and Sacred Bones. Web site: www.cs.org/newdirection/voices/ayau.htm

Banerjee, Upala, Devi. (2001?). Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of the Girl Child in South Asia: The Most Degrading Form of Child Labour.

Brown-Thompson, Karen. (2002). Women's Rights Are Human Rights. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 96–122.

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). (2001). *Human Rights and Poverty Eradication: A Talisman for the Commonwealth*. New Delhi, India: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Selected Chapters.
Chapter 3: "The Rights Based Approach to Poverty Eradication," pp. 39–45.
Chapter 5: "Making Rights Count for the Poor," pp. 65–89.
Chapter 6: "The Commonwealth, Human Rights and Poverty Eradication" and "Recommendations," pp. 96–110.
Web site: www.humanrightsinitiative.org

4. WHAT ARE PROMISING STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING POLITICAL AND LEGAL INSTITUTIONS THAT SECURE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Priority Readings

Risse, Thomas, and Kathryn Sikkink. (1999). The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practices: Introduction. In: *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink (eds.), NY: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–38.

Sikkink, Kathryn. (1998). Transnational Politics, International Relations Theory, and Human Rights. PS, 31(3):516–521, September.

Supplementary Readings

BRAC. (1995). BRAC's IGVGDP: A Success Case in Advocacy. Prepared for discussion at the Advocacy Institute training on July 9–August 8, 1995.

Keck, Margaret, and Kathryn Sikkink. (1998). Human Rights Networks in Latin America. In: *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 79–120.

Risse, Thomas. (2000). The Power of Norms versus the Norms of Power: Transnational Civil Society and Human Rights. In: *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*. Ann M. Florini, ed., Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Japan Center for International Exchange, pp. 177–210.

Van Tuijl, Peter. (1999). NGOs and Human Rights: Sources of Justice and Democracy. *Journal of International Affairs*, 52(2).

5. WHAT IS THE PROMISE OF A STRATEGY LINKING LOCALLY-BASED ACTIVIST EFFORTS TO THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT COMPOSE THE EMERGING GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY?

Overview

Priority Readings

Barber, Benjamin R. (2000). Globalizing Democracy. *The American Prospect*, 11(20), September 11.
Web site: www.prospect.org/print-friendly/print/V11/20/barber-b.html

Gaventa, John. (2001). Global Citizen Action: Lessons and Challenges. In: *Global Citizen Action*. Michael Edwards and John Gaventa, eds. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, pp. 275–288.

Jordan, Lisa, and Peter van Tuijl. (2000). Political Responsibility in Transnational NGO Advocacy. *World Development*, 12:2051–2065.

Supplementary Readings

Edwards, Michael. (2002). The Mouse that Roared: We're Witnessing the Birth of a New World Politics. *Toronto Globe & Mail*, January 3.
Web site: www.globeandmail.ca

Case Studies

Priority Readings

Khagram, Sanjeev. (2002). Restructuring the Global Politics of Development: The Case of India's Narmada Valley Dams. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 206–230.

Kumar, Chetan. (2000). Transnational Networks and Campaigns for Democracy. In: *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*. Ann M. Florini, ed., Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Japan Center for International Exchange, pp. 115–142.

Nelson, Paul J. (2002). Agendas, Accountability, and Legitimacy among Transnational Networks Lobbying the World Bank. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 131–154.

Riker, James V. (2002). NGOs, Transnational Networks, International Donor Agencies, and the Prospects for Democratic Governance in Indonesia. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 181–205.

Supplementary Readings

Hawkins, Darren. (2002). Human Rights Norms and Networks in Authoritarian Chile. In: *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 45–70.

Lent, Tom, and Roy Trivedy. (2001). National Coalitions and Global Campaigns: The International Children's Rights Movement. In: *Global Citizen Action*. Michael Edwards and John Gaventa, eds. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, pp. 163–174.

6. WHAT HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE OPENING UP OR CLOSING OF POLITICAL SPACES AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH?

Priority Readings

Barber, Benjamin R. (2002). Beyond Jihad Vs. McWorld. *The Nation*, January 21, pp. 11–18.
Web site: www.thenation.com/docPrint.mhtml?i=20020121&s=barber

OMB Watch (2001). Anti-Terrorism Bill Could Impact Nonprofits. Washington, DC: OMB Watch, November 14, 7 pages.
Web site: www.ombwatch.org/npadv/2001/usapatriot.html

Penniman, Nick. (2001). Wealth of Spirit: Will Nonprofits Be a Casualty of War? *The American Prospect*, 12(19), November 5.
Web site: www.prospect.org/print-friendly/V12/19/penniman-n.html

Sikkink, Kathryn. (2001). A Human Rights Approach to September 11. New York: Social Science Research Council, After Sept. 11 Project.
Web site: www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/sikkink_text_only.htm

Supplementary Readings

Gumbel, Andrew. (2002). The Disappeared: Since 11 September Last Year, Up to 2,000 People in the United States Have Been Detained Without Trial, Or Charge, Or Even Legal Rights. *The Independent* (UK), February 26.
Web site: www.commondreams.org/views02/0226-08.htm

Kucinich, Dennis. (2002). A Prayer for America. *The Nation*, February 26.
Web site: www.thenation.com/docPrint.mhtml?i=special&s=kucinich20020226

Annex III. Writing Assignments

Participants—both activists and scholars—were given pre-workshop writing assignments. The majority of participants completed these assignments and they were used by the organizers to shape the design of the workshop. They were also made available to the participants in advance of the workshop so that they would be informed about the expectations and concerns of their colleagues.

Practitioners were asked to write not more than 1,000 words in response to the following questions:

- What are the ways in which the themes of human rights and democracy have been important in your efforts?

- What are the best ways to frame these broad ideas in organizing others?

- Which human rights and democracy strategies work well? Which badly?

Scholars were asked to think through the literature on human rights and democracy—and pick out one or two central propositions or arguments that they thought were of the greatest importance in developing organizing strategies aimed at securing a democratic practice centrally concerned with human rights. Why is it important for activists to understand these propositions or arguments. What will they miss if they do not? What will they gain if they do?

We found the writings by activists to be particularly thoughtful, informative, and useful in shaping the workshop. Below we reproduce a few excerpts from different essays that are illustrative.

We have not highlighted the concept of democracy in our work, even though the values and certain practices and structures of democracy inspire and inform our actions. Highly contested, it has problematic aspects especially for our international colleagues since it is frequently associated with the US practice of democracy, US foreign policy and economic liberalization. We do emphasize democratic processes and values such as those related to decision making, accountability, transparency and democratic leadership but do not describe them in terms of democracy-building. Depending on the context, however, we are beginning to help groups explore and reframe the concept of democracy in their work.

Many tactics and techniques I learned in the United States can be and were applied by myself when working abroad with citizens' and human rights groups in several different countries. While I enthusiastically embraced media and public affairs strategies as a tool to communicate broader concerns to the U.S. public at large that underscore democratic values and principles, I became a much more believer and practitioner of the media abroad. Not only using the media as a tool to communicate critical messages in a transitional democracy, but also educating the media on their role as the Fourth Estate. One cannot overlook the critical importance of freedom of expression and the press in a nascent democracy. We understand the power of images and have used this to our advantage more or less in the United States. But the most significant lesson I have learned from my international work is that "one

cannot eat democracy." It is nearly impossible if not fantasy that organizers can moti-vate a woman head of household to walk 10–12 miles to a community meeting, when she needs to gather up fire wood for cooking and get to the market to sell her bag of melons for 10 cents so she can feed her children an evening meal.

If my argument holds—if, that is, democracy is one of the fundamental human rights—two important implications again follow. First, not only is democracy neces-sary to the realization and security of other rights, democracy requires for its realiza-tion the other fundamental rights as well. That is, without an adequate standard of living, education, and social security—not to mention the more obvious political rights like freedom of speech and assembly—democracy cannot work over the long term. This argument gives us a functionalist response to those academics who are skepti-cal about the philosophical foundations of human rights. Even if there is no universal moral justification for human rights, we can justify them as necessary to democracy (which for reasons too complex to discuss here is not usually seen as similarly in need of a philosophical grounding). To many activists justifications for human rights and democracy might seem like arcane, ivory-tower issues, but philosophical doubts about the origins of human rights are a major obstacle to increased research on human rights, to human rights education, to engagement on human rights issues, and so forth. Overcoming this skepticism will be crucial to building usefully coalitions among activists and scholars.

Human rights as a topic has been a natural part of my work in the area of advocacy, either in the course of planning or implementing an advocacy campaign, or through advocacy training workshops in which I have participated. However, human rights is not always discussed in the same way. One human rights theme that comes to peo-ple's mind is about those brave intellectuals who challenge very difficult situations in their governments regarding the status of human rights, especially the political rights, in their home countries. When this model of human rights is presented or discussed, the group usually experienced some ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, people admire the courage of such individuals as they run such a huge risk. On the other hand, people also have this feeling that they are not part of this process. They feel it is rather a debate between the elites or intellectuals on the one hand, and a mighty government on the other. Mainstream citizens do not have much of a role to play in this theme, and therefore, do not identify with it.

Democracy is generally not as popular an issue as it used to be because too many of us are swallowing the hype that national safety requires weakened democracy. Issues of racism further complicate public will with regard to democracy and human rights issues because it's difficult to extend rights to the "others", others that are not considered fully human or capable of self-rule. Here in the District of Columbia, even supposedly staunch supporters of democracy are supporting shifting some school board positions from elected to appointed slots. A lot of what's embedded in this debate is whether the predominantly African American population is capable of choosing. Even with these barriers, human rights and democracy "frames" are help-ing groups combat right wing rhetoric of exclusion and advance more progressive standards for better treatment and improved engagement of others. The best frame-works operate within an applied, "concrete" context (like the IPA example above). The best "frames" lend legitimacy to progressive positions; help people to understand that they are not alone but part of a much larger movement; and that the change they seek is right and reasonable—an important issue as much of public discourse dismisses the disfranchised as "complainers".

Annex IV. Overview & Agenda

The pilot workshop was conceived as having 6 sessions:

1. The experience of human rights and democracy on the ground.

How do you employ the ideas of human rights and democracy in your organizing and policy work?

The first session will be built around the experience of activist-practitioners. Each activist will be asked to prepare a short paper—on the order of 1,000 words. There are three questions we would like you to consider in your writing:

a) What are the ways in which the themes of human rights and democracy have been important in your efforts?

b) What are the best ways to frame these broad ideas in organizing others?

c) Which human rights and democracy strategies work well? Which badly?

We wish you to prepare this short piece of writing for several reasons:

a) We want to emphasize right from the start that the concern of the workshop is with political practice, with the broad effort to strengthen a democratic practice that takes human rights seriously.

b) Along the same lines, one of the most important results we hope to achieve from the workshop is to develop political strategies that show some promise of strengthening human rights and democratic practice.

c) Finally, we want to establish that experience on the ground is crucial to developing general arguments about strategies to strengthen the practice of human rights and democracy—not only with regard to organizing but also with regard to where to focus interventions in the governmental and political arenas.

We would like you to complete this short paper before coming to the workshop so that we may circulate it to all participants. This will enable us to establish some common basis for discussion right from the start of the workshop.

For the academics participating in the workshop, we ask you to think through the literature on human rights and democracy—and pick out one or two central propositions or arguments you think are of the greatest importance in developing organizing strategies aimed at securing a democratic practice centrally concerned with human rights. It may be that one of the propositions or arguments should concern the conflicts among human rights and how these conflicts might be coped with in organizing work. In general, we would like you to consider why it is important for activists to understand these propositions or arguments. What will they miss if they do not? What will they gain if they do?

2. What are the links between human rights and political and legal structures?

We wish to pose this question for two reasons:

a) We suspect it is important for successful activist efforts to take seriously that the pursuit of human rights is at bottom an effort to create political and legal structures. For

a human right to be respected means that political and legal authorities and civil society as a whole behave in particular ways. Given that this is so, the connections between securing human rights and democracy also become apparent: to create and maintain democracy means to get political and legal authorities to act in much the same ways that they must if human rights are to be secure. It means as well that the fabric of civil society respects human rights, thereby solidifying their security.

b) The securing of human rights is not just a matter of getting government and legal authorities themselves to act in particular ways. They must also act to control private and community actors who violate human rights. Among other things, what responsibilities do political and legal authorities have in this regard. In general, we suspect that a useful part of an activist strategy is to broaden the focus from political and legal authorities to private and community actors.

3. Which human rights are fundamental and why?

Although this question might be discussed abstractly and theoretically, we suspect that more can be learned by tying the question to the experience of activist efforts. We believe there are at least two areas worth pursuing:

a) A useful question is likely to be whether activist campaigns to secure a particular human right, say the rights of indigenous groups to pursue their own way of life, have made it more difficult to secure other rights, say the rights of women. If there are conflicts, what can be done about them? In particular, are there organizing strategies that minimize conflicts or that magnify them?

b) The reverse can be asked as well. When has the defense of one right strengthened another? Are there examples of particularly impressive human rights campaigns—and have they been able to avoid creating problems for the pursuit of human rights other than the ones that have been their principal concern?

4. What are promising strategies for building political and legal institutions that secure human rights?

We foresee at least three areas here to explore:

a) Is a strategy of building from the ground up useful here? We suspect that a bottom up strategy is a particularly useful way to enable organizations to begin to engage governmental and civil society institutions. It likely changes the power dynamic in useful ways.

b) We also suspect that a focus on the status of women here will be particularly useful. There is a good deal of evidence that harnessing activism to the concerns of women is a powerful organizing focus in addition to its intrinsic value. The after effects of the Beijing meeting provide many instructive examples, from the importance of women in making a micro enterprise strategy work, to fighting domestic violence, to building campaigns for public office. All these show the importance of harnessing the activism of women and paying attention to their concerns.

c) Also useful as part of choosing strategies to build political and legal institutions is the question of what can be done to get the United States to work to secure human rights and democracy—or at least not to undercut local efforts to do so.

5. What is the promise of a strategy linking locally-based activist efforts to the organizations that compose the emerging global civil society?

We suspect that local campaigns are more likely to be successful if they can draw on the resources of organizations with a global reach. Not only can local organizations learn from the experience of other countries through such linkages. They can also gain local political leverage by showing that their concerns are global, that other governments have

responded in useful ways, and that, if necessary, activists from all over the world may find it useful to help local activists get the full attention of their governments.

6. What has been the experience of the opening up or closing of political spaces after September 11?

We suspect that the effects of September 11 have been significant on local activist efforts to promote human rights and democracy. For some the effects may have been positive: in some cases local groups hostile to the rights of women and religious pluralism have been put on the defensive. For others, we suspect the effect has been largely negative: for instance, an increase in governmental surveillance of "dissidents" of all kinds. Are there activist strategies to promote human rights and democracy that are likely to be particularly attractive after September 11? In the same vein, has September 11 altered the effects of globalization, whether positive or negative, on human rights and democracy efforts?