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A 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948-1998

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ARTICLES

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS 1948-1998 DECEMBER 10 THROUGH 12, 1998

The Association of the Bar of the City of New York,¹ together with thirteen area law schools² and the Union Internationale des Avocats, celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration with a three-day program from December 10-12, 1998.³ The celebration commemorated the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration and the advances in human rights law and practice since then.

Human rights issues are of paramount importance in the world today. With the continuing existence of human rights abuses such as “ethnic cleansing” in various parts of the former Yugoslavia and genocide in Rwanda, the widespread jailing and torture of political activists and innocent civilians, and the purposeful denial of such basic necessities as food, water and shelter, the basic tenets embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are just as relevant today as they were when the Declaration was adopted 50 years ago. The Universal Declaration has provided the basis for many positive changes throughout the world, including conventions and treaties prohibiting these abuses, and the establishment of means of redress for the victims of mistreatment. The Universal Declaration commands our respect and careful study.

¹ This program was co-ordinated by the ABCNY Committee on International Human Rights, David E. Nachman, Chair.

² Co-sponsoring law schools included Brooklyn Law School, Benjamin Cardozo Law School, Columbia Law School, CUNY Law School, Fordham Law School, Hofstra Law School, New York Law School, New York University Law School, Pace Law School, Rutgers Law School (Newark), Rutgers Law School (Camden), Seton Hall Law School, and St. John's Law School.

³ This program was made possible by a generous grant from the Reuter Foundation.

The celebration commenced with the keynote address by Senator George Mitchell on Thursday evening, followed on Friday and Saturday with panel discussion by noted scholars, judges, lawyers and advocates. The proceedings have been transcribed and published herein, together with papers by the panelists. With the active participation of lawyers, professors, students and other members of the human rights community from around the world, the conference presented a unique opportunity to share thoughts and concerns about global human rights issues. It was a gathering of ideas and a time of learning, with a focus on what the future holds, and how that future can be bettered by the actions we take today.

The Editors, Associates, and Associate Candidates of this Review were honored and pleased to be a part of this historic celebration and to have the opportunity to share with our readers the encouraging, honest and often disturbing formal presentations made over the three days. Following each of the six collections of formal presentations we have included the enlightening and impassioned question and comment period engaged in by each panel with its audience. We trust you will find this collection informative on the history and development of the Universal Declaration and are hopeful that by our actions the state of human rights will improve for future generations.