

Advancing Human Rights Through Science and Scientific Societies

AERA Participates in Coalition Planning Meeting

On December 10, 2007, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) convened a group of scientific societies to consider the formation of a Science and Human Rights Coalition. In developing the framework for this coalition, AAAS organizers aim to facilitate communication and collaboration among scientific and professional societies and between these organizations and human rights practitioners. Participants at this third planning meeting represented a wide range of social, behavioral, physical, and life science organizations, including the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

Key to the formation of the coalition is to establish a framework to allow scientific societies to share scholarly work and information about human rights, academic freedom, safety and well-being concerns of researchers, and other activities within associations that engage their members. Equally important, this network of professional scientific organizations intends to work collaboratively to improve the dissemination of scientific knowledge to human rights groups; provide information about scientific approaches, methods, data, tools, and technologies to human rights

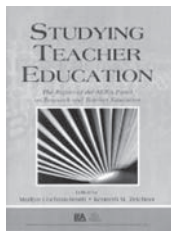
organizations to enhance their work; and form partnerships with human rights groups to learn from them what specific issues they face that may benefit from research and scientific analysis. The overall approach is to promote a two-way exchange of benefits and learning.

The Science and Human Rights Coalition is still in a developmental stage, with a fourth meeting scheduled for March 3, 2008. The participants in the initial planning meetings examined the current work of scientific societies in the human rights area and considered possible approaches for organizing as a coalition that would leverage limited resources. Underpinning this work are the international human rights instruments, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948), which articulates many fundamental rights and freedoms.

The AAAS Program on Science and Human Rights has played a leadership role on issues related to human rights of scholars worldwide for many years. Social science societies already active in coalition planning include the American Psychological Association, the American Political Science

Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the Association of American Geographers. Among the other scientific societies involved are the American Physical Society and the American Chemical Society. In recent years, several scientific and professional societies—namely, the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association—have either passed resolutions or issued reports on human rights.

As part of the work of developing this coalition, AERA has been asked to facilitate consideration of how a human rights framework could enhance professional societies' codes of ethics and protections for human participants in research. Taking on this task is consistent with AERA's commitment to research ethics and to facilitating research consonant with appropriate protections for research participants (see http://www.aera.net/AboutAERA/Default.aspx?menu_id=90&id=717). For further information and updates about the Science and Human Rights Coalition, see the AAAS website (<http://shr.aaas.org/scisocs/>). AERA is an affiliated organization of the AAAS.



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