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The year 1988 marked the 40th anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international awakening of public opinion to human rights violations. But just what makes up human rights? In simple terms, they are the right to live, to have sufficient food, to obtain an education and to exist in a safe environment. And these basic rights must be accorded to all, regardless of race, sex, language or religion.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. . . ." A winning poster by Jessica Low (age 13).

By calling for common criteria that all peoples and nations should seek to achieve, the declaration has influenced both international treaties and national legislation. It not only embraces all the most widely acknowledged civil and political rights, but extends even to basic social and economic concerns.

The world is entering a new era in awareness of the fundamental importance of human rights and of national commitments to promote them both at home and in the international community. Since 1976, Canadian diplomacy has been at the forefront of the efforts by the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other UN agencies to develop new mechanisms for the defence and promotion of these basic rights.

Although the mere affirmation of human rights and fundamental freedoms does not guarantee compliance, the 40th anniversary provides the opportunity to renew commitment to the principles of equality and freedom for all, and to build a world where human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.

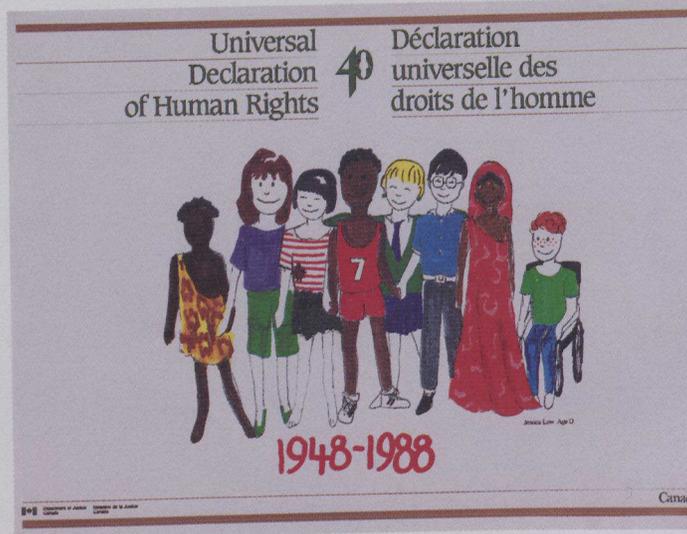


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