

Synopsis for “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” UNExpo 2023

Purpose: This thematic exhibit tells the story of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), illustrating each article of the UDHR with the UN stamps issued between 1989 and 1993. The labels on these stamps give the text of each article in English, French and German. The challenge is to find elements that illustrate abstract concepts like equality, dignity and justice. The UN Postal Administration has issued stamps, souvenir sheets and minisheets to illustrate these concepts, but the exhibit tries to limit the number of these items.

Treatment: The exhibit begins by examining the historical development of legal rights. Some of the earliest concepts of human rights are found in scriptures of many religions. Legal rights were first articulated in the Magna Carta in England and the Golden Bull in Hungary. Later the Virginia Declaration of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights in the U.S. and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen formalized the concept. With the formation of the United Nations after World War II, the idea of Human Rights for everyone gained ground. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the UN committee designated to compile the UDHR, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The UN then formulated Covenants or Conventions which, when ratified by members of the UN, provide a legal framework to ensure Human Rights. These conventions are examined following the articles in the UDHR. Organizations such as the European Union also have promulgated laws to ensure Human Rights. Non-governmental Organizations like Human Rights Watch keep governments on task to observe the laws for Human Rights. There are 30 Articles in the UDHR, so this section is the bulk of the exhibit. This will affect the balance. Balance is also affected by the amount of philatelic material issued that pertains to each of the conventions, which varies considerably.

Research and Knowledge: The exhibitor has been collecting this material for about 30 years.

As many of the concepts are only found illustrated by stamps, diverse philatelic elements are not easy to find. Consequently the use of mint stamps may appear to be overwhelming. Recent purchases have been made to overcome this difficulty.

The inverted logo meter slogan for the International Year of Disabled Persons was discovered by the exhibitor.

Rarity and Condition: There is one piece of original artwork, which is unique (Frame 3), a free frank of abolitionist British MP William Wilberforce from 1818 (Frame 1), a Lucretia Mott photograph from Sol Glass archives, used for the 1948 American Women Centennial issue, and several printer's proofs. The exhibitor has not seen any commercial covers using the Geneva or Vienna issues of the Articles in 25 years of looking.

Recent Additions:

The exhibit has been revised and is now printed on double pages. The text that appears on philatelic items is given in a gray box.

References:

Baur, B.C. 1996. Franklin Roosevelt's concept of four freedoms could not be endorsed by many nations until end of World War II. *Global Stamp News*, Issue #72, July, page 86.

Gaines, A. 1988. Human Rights Marks a 40th Anniversary. *American Philatelist* 102:1199-1205.

United Nations Postal Administration. 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992. Pamphlets "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", UNPA, United Nations, New York 10017, 12pp.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/humanrights/timeline/index.cfm>

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>