

CONFERENCE REPORT
ICLRS: POINTS OF LIGHT:
HEALING DIVISION BY CENTERING ON HUMAN DIGNITY
FOR EVERYONE EVERYWHERE
JULY 14, 2021
<https://www.iclrs.org/points-of-light-healing-division/>
WRITTEN BY TAYLOR NIKOLAUS

Introduction:

_____ In the Points of Light Seminar, speakers highlighted the foundational concept of human dignity that is exemplified in the book “Points of Light”. Through the conference, the speakers explain the importance of human dignity in learning how to promote cultures surrounding human rights. The book and seminar increase understanding of what human dignity is and how it can be applied to each individual’s life.

Brett Scharffs

_____ As a co-author of “Points of Light” and the director of ICLRS, Brett Scharffs’s experience in the concepts of human dignity and religious freedom allow him to educate others on these topics. Scharff began his presentation by explaining that the idea behind “Points of Light” started when he and Jan Figel brainstormed a way to commemorate the anniversary of the UN’s decision to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He explained that the human rights movement is based on human dignity. Human dignity is the foundational idea, goal, and telos of human rights. Human rights are in place to protect an individual’s dignity, and they can be used to measure human dignity. Dignity is a way to get conversations about human rights started. In Pakistan, Figel instigated a meaningful discussion about respecting human rights in relation to human dignity. Dignity is an avenue to spark conversation about all human rights. The purpose of “Points of Light” is to help people understand human dignity, improve dialogue, and aid in the human rights movement.

Jan Figel

Jan Figel is also a co-author of “Points of Light”. He discussed that human dignity as a base joins all humanists and understanding and promoting a culture of human dignity is an important role in each individual’s life. Figel defined human dignity as the highest level of worthiness each person possesses that transcends the material world. Dignity is what a person is rather than what they have. With dignity, all are equal despite different identities. Because dignity is a principle that deems all mankind equal, it unites all humanists whether they are religious or not.

Figel spoke about the three dimensions of human dignity and how they help foster an understanding of why dignity unites all humanists. The first dimension focuses on personal dignity, the second dimension recognizes the dignity of others, and the third dimension extends to dignity in society. When all three of these dimensions are recognized, a broader understanding of human dignity emerges, and all of these dimensions can be promoted together. Figel explained that human dignity is a foundation for all humans to unite and promote in helping themselves, others, and society.

JaLynn Prince-

JaLynn Prince is the photographer for the “Points of Light” book and works with NGOs globally to capture photographs that depict moments of humanity, soul, and dignity. Prince explained that through photography, she has been able to see the dignity in different people that come from different circumstances, ultimately conveying that dignity exists in each individual. She shared the stories of four different photographs of people that were taken for the book, each exemplifying dignity in their own way. Through her stories and pictures, Prince emphasized that an individual’s personal circumstance exhibits their personal dignity. She inspired the audience to look for ways to defend dignity in their own lives and to recognize the impact they each can have on defending human dignity.

Jane Wise

Jane Wise is an associate director of the ICLRS and professor of legal writing at BYU. As a lawyer and a writer, she explains that the term “dignity” is interesting because rather than having a precise definition, the concept is ambiguous. She identifies that through “Points of Light”, human dignity is attempted to be defined by compiling information from the Universal Declaration, photographs of humans, and quotes about dignity. The information from the book helps increase individuals’ understanding of human dignity and how this concept can be a foundation in understanding all mankind.