**Celebration of UN Human Rights Day 2020**

**Saturday 12th December 2020: 10am to 1pm via Zoom**

**RECOVER BETTER – STAND UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Celebration of United Nations Human Rights Day**

HELEN

*And now our Celebration of United Nation’s Human Rights Day , the Anniversary of the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the end of the 16 days of activism* *against Gender-Based Violence Campaign in which I know many of you have been involved.*

*To quote our SI President, Sharon Fisher – “Today is just one day but it is one day that Soroptimists can join together to ensure our global voice is heard”*

*This year’s Human Rights Day theme****Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights****relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the need to build back better by ensuring Human Rights are central to the recovery efforts.*

*Human Rights Day is our opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights in re-building the world we want, the need for global solidarity as well as our interconnectedness and shared humanity*

*We are going to have 4 readings exemplifying this and celebrating the work being done to achieve Human Rights for all.*

***Before each of the following readings Past President Denise will light a candle.***

* *to* ***symbolizes the light****Human Rights bring into the darkness of life*
* *to* ***recognise the illumination*** *which the Universal Declaration brings to our understanding*
* *And because the* ***act of lighting symbolises the action*** *which we all need to take to bring the Universal Declaration into reality.*

**CANDLE and READING 1**

**DENISE - *I light this first candle to celebrate Human Rights Day and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and hand over to President Helen ……***

**READING 1 – Reader: President Helen**

***HELEN***

*On this the 72nd Human Rights Day in the 75th Anniversary Year of the founding of the United Nations I would like to share a message from Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.*

*“This year’s Human Rights Day falls at a time we will never forget. COVID-19 has taken us by storm and shaken our world. A tragedy followed by an extraordinary opportunity to recover better.*

*This Human Rights Day is a call to action. A call for all of us to seize this opportunity and build the world we want. For that, we must accept the lessons from this crisis.*

***Number One: end discrimination of any kind.*** *Like pre-existing conditions that make individuals more fragile, gaps in respecting human rights have made all of society more vulnerable. If anyone is at risk, everyone is at risk. Discrimination, exclusion and other human rights violations harm us all.*

***Number Two: reduce widespread inequalities****. Universal social protection, universal health coverage, and other systems for the delivery of fundamental rights are not luxuries. They keep societies standing and can shape a more equitable future.*

***Number Three: encourage participation, especially from young people****. All voices have a right to be heard.*

***Number Four: increase and intensify our resolve and efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, a concrete Agenda for universal human rights.*** *These are not just the right things to do –they are the smart things to do. And there is only one way they can be done: by standing up for human rights. Because human rights yield fair and resilient societies. They are the answer to this human crisis.*

*Like the climate emergency, COVID-19 reminds us that we are bound together as one humanity.*

*We must act.*

*Working together, we can recover better.*

*With strong solidarity, we can build a world that is more resilient, sustainable and just.  
  
Join me in standing up for human rights.”*

**CANDLE AND READING 2**

**DENISE *- I light this second candle to celebrate the work of Women across the World towards the achievement of Human Rights for all and invite Doltice Grey, President of SI Greater London to unmute herself …***

**Reading 2 - Reader**- Doltice Grey, President of SI Greater London

**DOLTICE:**

*These words are from a newspaper article written earlier this year about Alicia Garcia, Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter.*

*The origin story of Black Lives Matter is one of collective, collaborative action rather than individual glory. After*[*George Zimmerman was acquitted of fatally shooting Trayvon Martin*](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/14/zimmerman-acquitted-killing-trayvon-martin)*, an unarmed black teenager, in 2013, Alicia Garcia wrote a Facebook post she called “a love letter to Black people”. Her friend*[*Patrisse Cullors*](https://patrissecullors.com/) *shared the post with the hashtag BlackLivesMatter. Another friend,*[*Opal Tometi*](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/sep/24/opal-tometi-co-founder-of-black-lives-matter-i-do-this-because-we-deserve-to-live)*, designed the*[*blacklivesmatter.com*](http://blacklivesmatter.com/) *website and social media platforms, using the signature black and yellow colour palette. Seven years later, that rallying cry has changed our lexicon and landscape. Black Lives Matter has been chanted by millions of protesters around the world. It has been*[*painted in giant letters*](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/06/washington-mayor-muriel-bowser-trump) *on a road leading to the White House, and posted on windows in primary schools in Northamptonshire.*

*When asked if she was anxious about the forthcoming election, “Of course”, Alicia Garcia replies. But the way she handles that is by “making sure I’m doing everything in my power” to get the country back on track. There was a time when she was a cynic and thought the US was beyond saving, but over the last 10 years she has become profoundly hopeful. Now is the time to fight and to engage. “Voting”, she says, “can also be a movement”.*

**CANDLE AND READING 3**

**DENISE – *I light this third candle to celebrate the work of Soroptimists across SIGBI and invite Federation President Johanna to unmute herself ….***

**Reading 3 - Reader *-*****Johanna Raffan MBE, SIGBI President 2020-21**

JOHANNA

*In our Centenary year we reflect on the aspirations behind the founding of our organisation and our work to achieve them*

*In the opening chapter of her book “The History of Soroptimist International” published in 1995 Janet Haywood wrote:*

*“It is exciting being a woman today. Many women have found a new freedom with a stimulating job, others successfully combining family life with career. Yet it is also a difficult period, one of conflict between tradition and change. To bring some balance between radical feminism and caring about issues which affect women one needs to consider the cultural and commercial differences which have always affected the progress of women.*

*During the 1800’s higher education became widely available. Yet women, whilst not necessarily excluded by all learning institutions, made little effort to gain entry. Their role was as homemaker, producing children, gracing the social scene, not as serious students of culture, law, medicine or commerce.*

*A change came about and women’s attitudes began to change. They wanted to become achievers and so began the influx of women into Universities and colleges. By 1920 British women were studying at, and obtaining degrees. Their American and European sisters found the granting of degrees more difficult.”*

*Sadly, the greatest changes came through the First World War when it became necessary for women to hold key jobs. The stage was set for Soroptimist International to be born*

*Since the founding of the very first Soroptimist club in Oakland, California in 1921, Soroptimist International has sought to bring about change to the lives of women and girls worldwide. Through its global network it has worked to transform lives through education, empowerment and by enabling opportunities.*

*1928 saw the Foundation of both the American and the European Federations and a Soroptimist International Association was created to provide a link between the Federations and in 1934, Europe and Great Britain & Ireland were to form separate Federations. During this decade many service projects were taken on, such as vocational training for women and children, housing for the disadvantaged, assistance for the sick and disabled, and caring for refugees. Australia joined the network in 1937 with the first of its clubs forming in Sydney, Eastern Australia. Excitingly 2020 saw the Chartering of our fifth Federation in Africa.*

*In 1946 Soroptimists held a reception for delegates to the UN Founding Conference, which included Eleanor Roosevelt, and in 1948, the Soroptimist International Association was awarded Consultative status with UNESCO.*

*Rooted in the vision that women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, our advocacy work and on-the-ground projects have sought to drive the realisation of our aspirational founders to ensure that women and girls have an equal voice in creating strong and peaceful communities, now and in the future.*

*These founding aspirations are expressed very clearly in these words, written in 1939 during World War II, by a British Soroptimist:*

*“Two things are clear to us in the midst of the bewilderment and distress of these present days. One is that, as a band of women whose aim is the furthering of international understanding, we must stick together and keep in active working order our Soroptimist organisation, the value of which is greater than ever before. The other is that when we emerge from this nightmare and the struggle is over, we must be stronger than ever to see that all our influence is cast on the side of a just and lasting peace.”*

**CANDLE AND READING 4**

**DENISE - *I light this fourth candle to celebrate the work of Soroptimists across the World and invite Hilary Ratcliffe OBE, SI Programme Director 2011-2015 to unmute herself.***

**Reading 4**– **Reader** *-* **Hilary Ratcliffe OBE, SI Programme Director 2011 – 2015**

**HILARY:**

*As we take time to pause and reflect on another year passed, we consider what human rights for all means and the role of Soroptimists in achieving them*

*These are the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, Chairperson of the Drafting Committee of the Universal Declaration ...*

***“****Where, after all, do universal human rights begin?* *In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood they live in; the school or college they attend; the factory, farm or office where they work. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”*

*I am proud to be a Soroptimist, part of an organisation helping to give meaning to human rights for women and girls across the world since 1921.*

**HELEN**

*Thank you Past President Denise and to all our wonderful Readers for helping us celebrate the 72nd Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the amazing work being done to achieve it’s aims.*