

Letter to World Citizens

5/1.Aug '89

"But how can I use this passport?" is the question most frequently asked me by the Chinese students flooding the Nakano/Tokyo WSA office.

Over the years I have evolved many answers to this basic question. First I must tell each one that he or she has the right to travel anywhere on his/her planet. Or put another way, no one has the right to prevent the exercise of that right. This is usually met with either amused tolerance for such a naive viewpoint, undiluted scepticism, or blank incomprehension. Don't I really know there are frontiers, hard-eyed consular officers, "foreign" police, etc. out there?

I follow up by producing a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pointing to article 13(2) which defines the right of freedom of travel: Everyone has the right to leave and country, including his own, and to return to his country."

My next response is to show them samples of national visas, entry and exit stamps all affixed on our passport.

By this time they begin to realize that the World Passport is more than a mere symbol. It actually "works," at least for some and on certain occasions.

"But human rights only work if we claim them," I tell them. "Every member-state of the UN has signed this declaration and pledged to respect human rights. The trouble is we, the humans actually concerned, are never taught our rights or then how to implement them. That's why we need our own political framework to sanction and protect them. In other words, human rights and world citizenship are two sides of the same coin.

I try then to broaden the question. "The entire nation-state system is restrictive," I tell them. "Those frontiers are the symbols of distrust, fear and war. Our real mission is to save the human race and the planet earth, not merely to travel from one country to another."

To each World Passport holder we give an Instruction sheet on how to use their document. An important tactic is the Questionnaire Form issued by the World Judicial Commission to be filled in with precise data from each interview with consular officers. A visa refusal is a violation of the right to travel and must be reported to this Commission if we are to expose the duality between principle and practice of national officials.

I tell the Chinese students here that before seeking renewal visas from the Japanese immigration office, they should first inform the world press that they are also World Citizens equipped with World Passports, the only human rights travel document. If their comrades died on Tainanmen Square in the defense of human rights, they must have the courage and will to defend them wherever they are.

Finally what most applicants haven't yet realized - nor indeed any immigration depts. - is that art 13(1) of the UDHR provides for individual choice of residence "...within the borders of each state."

Many "illegals" come to WSA for help. "Are you an "illegal" human being?" I ask them. This brings smiles. Then I point out art. 13(1) of the UDHR. "How can you be illegal if you have the right to reside here according to this article?"

In my next letter, I will develop more fully how to use this historic document defining OUR human rights.