



A White Paper: Human Rights and Social Responsibility – A Universal Language

**By Gregg Tyler Milligan, Author & Abuse Prevention Advocate
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<http://www.godmustbesleeping.com/>

The purpose of this white paper is to extend the discussion beyond [abuse of any kind] to the issue of Human Rights. We can begin the argument by stating the obvious; Human Rights – Fact or Fiction? Fact. Without Human Rights, there would be no society. No people. Instead, a clean ever-changing amazing paradise of a planet none of us would ever come to inhabit. I wish to also make those who read this white paper aware of human rights issues existing in the world today.

I am currently advocating in S.E. Asia. I can speak, read, and write only English. Therefore, when I give lectures, presentations, seminars, and workshops – I need an interpreter. At the risk of stressing an apparent and understated fact; *language* is crucial to any discussion.

What we know about languages all over the world...

First, the basics: Based on my research, around 6,912 languages exist in the world, but as of 2009, almost 2,500 languages were endangered, while 200 were already lost. In my own American culture, I have observed the increasing prevalence of *digital language* (i.e., LOL, BRB, TTFN) continuing to merge into a greater number of daily conversations. Once thought of as only *acronyms*, these digital terms are now considered words due to their popular use in several forms of technology and media – which BTW, help shape our world. ‘Words’ such as these are then added to the dictionary and given a permanent place in our language history.

Personally, I still have no idea why one would derive the word ‘deets’ from detail and I do not use ‘tweet’ as a proper verb for ‘posting content on Twitter’. Of course, as it has always been the case, language is an ever-changing subject; words have origins carrying significance in specific time periods.

Second, language carries culture, and there’s no better example than Asian characters that span across most, if not, all of the Asian languages. These characters are interesting because with just one character you can tell a cultural story of how that symbol came to be. They are a deeper version of prefixes and suffixes, since they not only have a meaning, but also a story. This is a good example of why we need to preserve language, because it’s more than just communication, but a record of our history and culture.

Third, and making full-circle back to the point of Human Rights: As primitive as it may seem, being able to communicate effectively is the difference between life and death. As a much lesser problem and not as critical, there are now universities that find it difficult to invite me to speak because of the ‘language-barrier.’ In examples like these, we all lose out on an opportunity to further the advancement of Human Rights or any other issue for that matter. If we cannot communicate with one another then how do we effectively share ideas which could lead to improving humanity, helping one another, and/or saving lives? With this said, it is important to point out that you do not need to speak the same verbal language to appreciate the need for Human Rights.

For example, historical [accounts] of Human Rights Violations all begin with a clear understanding of what the victims said when describing what happened. These verbal and written stories had to be translated before they could be shared with the rest of the world. Therefore, language – is and will always be – ever-changing; therefore, we must change with it.

The notion that the world must speak one language to communicate with one another is simply not true. However, as a world, we must be prepared to speak another language in order to communicate our stories. For example, The New Zealand Herald released an article detailing the heroic effort of a woman who suffered and experienced terrible rape in prison camps during the Bosnian wars between Serbian and Croatia. This woman, Nusreta Sivic, was held in a prison camp for several months where she was raped and even forced to clean up the blood from her tortured countrymen. Today, she has pleaded with women around Bosnia to give their stories of these horrible experiences of rape to the United Nations. Due to her courage and conviction, she has been instrumental in the conviction of numerous guards who raped women in the early 1990's. Her story, along with the stories of the other women, were translated and/or adopted in several languages. Note: It is important to remember that rape had not been considered a war crime until the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949. Rape was merely considered a byproduct of war.

We cannot fathom the mental and emotional effects that occur when someone is raped. People hold on to these stories for decades and even lifetimes before surrendering them to someone. Often, people who have experienced traumatizing events do not have the courage or opportunity to voice their tragedies (it took me 19 years to tell my own horrific story of abuse and only because I suffered a nervous breakdown). The voices of those who have suffered are the only real accounts of human rights violations and cannot be substituted by any means. Rape has been prevalent in many wars in this century including the Rwandan genocide where close to 50,000 women were raped. Only through courageous acts, like those of Nusreta Sivic, can we hear the voices of those who have suffered and bring justice to those who have blatantly ignored the rights of a human. It is a language we can all understand ... the language of compassion.

This is an appropriate segue into demanding time for reformation in the way governments treat their own citizens and one another. It is long overdue to bring reform in the way our systems work so that normal people are afforded basic rights and living conditions. Spreading awareness is not enough. We need to take action! Therefore, it stands to reason that regardless of what language you speak, it is imminent that Human Rights begins with the basic "right" is to improve the situation of citizens everywhere in the world. I've used the word in speeches and will repeatedly – it is time for a 'revolution from below', which will slowly change the hierarchy of the political system. Even though this is extremely difficult we must not give up our hopes for a better future and continue to strive.

In any language – *"Yes. I'm speaking to You."*

Gregg Tyler Milligan is an internationally-known author and child abuse prevention advocate. He has written two books, *A Beautiful World*, detailing his childhood and the horrific suffering Milligan endured at the hands of his mother and strangers. Milligan later completed the continuation to *A Beautiful World*, describing his next eleven years. Both books are published under the same volume, titled *God Must be Sleeping*. Milligan is a member of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) Speakers Bureau and continues to spread his message of hope.

In his words, "Please remember, the reason we are here is to save one another – Break the cycle." More information can be found at godmustbesleeping.com/.