

Gaining Ground?: The Declaration of Human Rights at Fifty

Sisyphus, the much-beleaguered king of Corinth, was condemned by the masters of Olympus to spend his days rolling a heavy stone up a hillside only to have each day's progress end just short of success. Is the tale of the hapless Sisyphus a metaphor for the struggle for universal acceptance of human rights?

At first glance, it would seem so. The attention paid to human rights by President Jimmy Carter faded quickly in the Reagan administration, and did not prevent the rise of genocidal Pol Pot nor the outbreak of the bewildering "racial cleansings" in the disintegrated Yugoslavia. Now, human rights again figure prominently in public discussions. To his audience at the University of Beijing, President Clinton affirmed that "certain rights are universal," and quoted from Thomas Jefferson's last letter, in which Jefferson wrote, "All eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man."

Our symposium, presented in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, casts light on the progress made over the past five decades and the 172 years since Jefferson's observation. *PS* is indebted to Charlotte Ku, executive director of the American Society for International Law, and the contributors listed here for making this symposium possible. We anticipate that the content of these essays, like the articles of so many previous symposia, will soon find their way into our conversations and classrooms.

RJPH



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Symposium Contributors

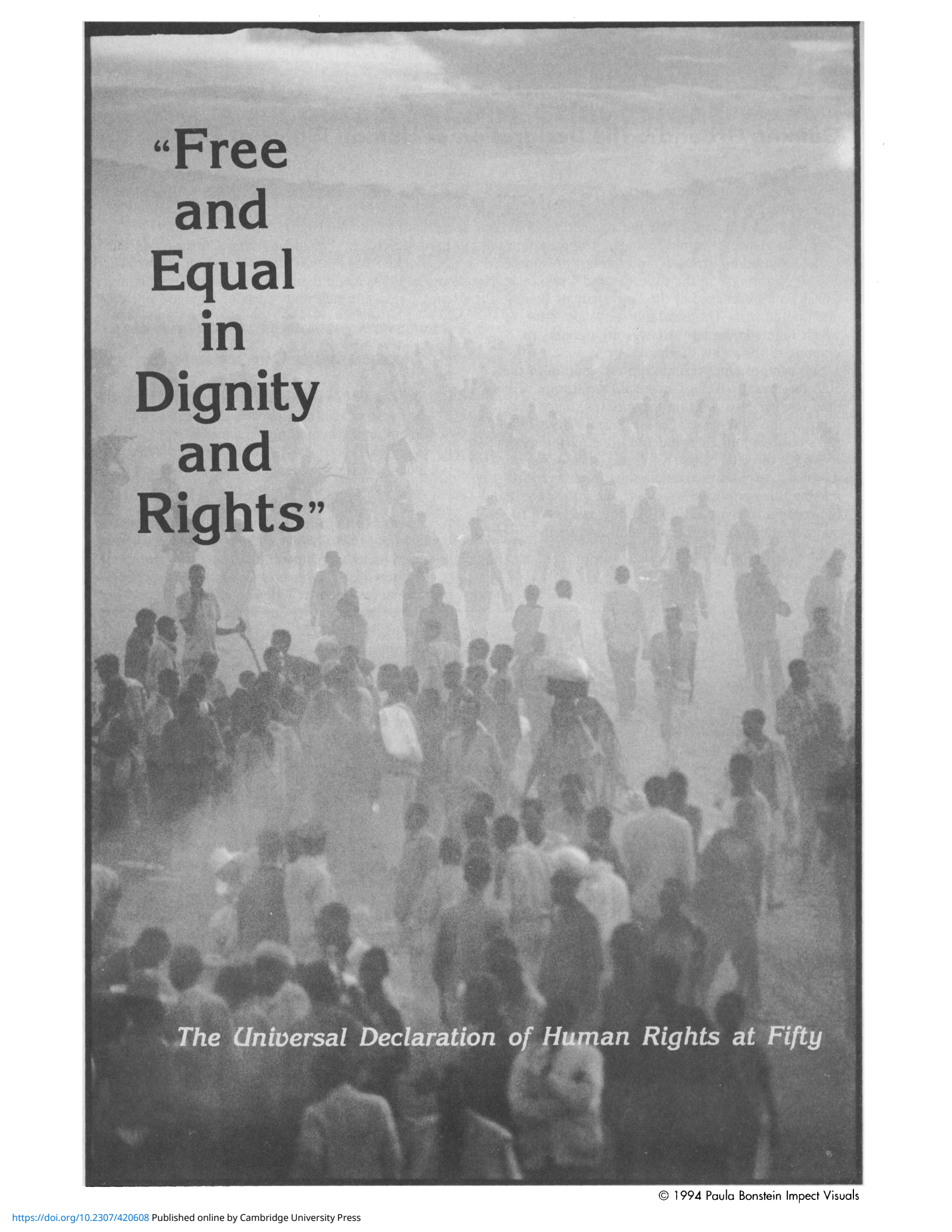
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**“Free
and
Equal
in
Dignity
and
Rights”**

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