

A Year in Review

THE GRAPHIX PROJECT

JANUARY 24, 2025

Dear All,

As we march into the new year, we're heartened by all that we have accomplished together since 2001. Our team continues to grow, and our projects are expanding in reach and impact. Over the last four years, ***we led the largest global comics and activists research in history***, with a focus on the nexus between human rights activism and art. This robust listening exercise is helping us understand exactly how young people want to make common cause with others in search of social justice, regardless of national boundaries and specific causes. To date, over 600 people or organizations from over 25 countries have been interviewed or consulted. Our ever-evolving research team, consisting of multilingual (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Tamil, etc.) volunteers from universities across the globe have worked closely with a range of partners including Amnesty International which helped us develop and share an online questionnaire in 2001, McGill University's faculty of education which helped us develop a formative interview research guide in 2022 and Yale Law School which was a project base from 2001 - 2004.



In this newsletter we celebrate the launch of exciting new initiatives and partnerships and reflect on the progress made during Phase 1 of our global research efforts (2021-2024). We look forward to entering Phase 2 with fresh momentum, continuing to explore innovative ways to promote change on critical social issues through graphic storytelling and research. Thank you for your ongoing support and for being a part of this creative journey with us.

- *The Graphix Project Team*

2024 Selected New University Partnerships

- *Taiwan*: Soochow University's Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights
- *USA*: Fordham University's Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs
- *Canada*: University of Toronto's Faculties of Education and Information
- *Nepal*: Kathmandu School of Law (new core Nepali educational partner)
- *India*: Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta
- *Ecuador*: Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador (new core Spanish educational partner)
- *Portugal*: ABERTA University (new core Lusophone educational partner)
- *Philippines*: Polytechnic University

FANTAGRAPHICS: GRAPHIC HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

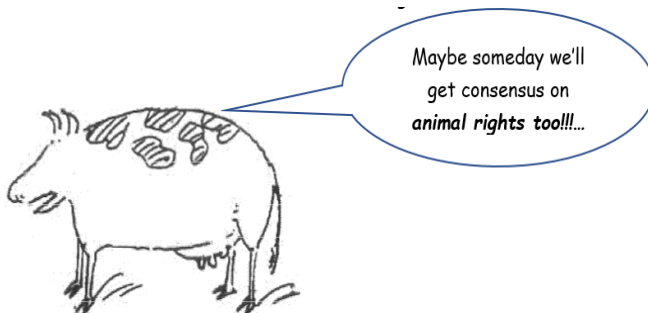


The project is finalizing an agreement with [Fantagraphics](#), one of the world's foremost publishers of international cartoonists, including classic comic strips such as Charles Schulz's Peanuts, original graphic novels, manga, and artists from Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Argentina, Brazil, and many other countries. Based in the United States, publications include [alternative comics](#), classic [comic strip](#) anthologies, [manga](#), magazines and [graphic novels](#). The publisher has won numerous awards for achievement in comic books.

The GP's first Fantagraphics book

The world recently commemorated the 75th anniversary of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The celebrations, however, came in the long shadow of an ongoing assault on the very concept of human rights, as understood in the post-World War Two context. If left unchecked, this trend could undermine decades of progress on the common values of inclusivity, tolerance, and respect that lie at the heart of human rights. It has been argued that the human rights movement, like the world it monitors, is in crisis.¹

As the debate rages around the relevance of human rights in the 21st century, the Graphix Project (GP) is thrilled to announce its collaboration with **human rights luminary Aryeh Neier**. An American activist who co-founded Human Rights Watch, Neier also served as the president of George Soros's Open Society Institute philanthropy network from 1993 to 2012 and was National Director of the American Civil Liberties Union from 1970 to 1978.



His book ***The International Human Rights Movement: A History*** is considered a classic in its field. It offers a comprehensive and authoritative account of the rise of the human rights movement as a global force, from its beginnings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to its essential place in world affairs today. Neier combines analysis with personal experience, and gives an insider's perspective on the movement's goals, the disputes about its mission, its rise to international importance, and the challenges to come.

The adaption of this tome is the world's first "Graphic History of Human Rights" aimed at a global demographic of 13 to 23-year-olds, including human rights activists, high school students and other youth demographics, as well as at enlightened globalists and academic and human rights advocates. The GP is in discussions with a range of partner in order to make the book the centerpiece of a new innovative and targeted global multilingual Human Rights Education programme.

¹ Samuel Moyn <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2018/04/23/opinion/human-rights-movement-failed.html>

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

The project is finalizing an agreement with the University of Toronto's Centre for Media, Culture and Education. The Centre is part of **the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)** which is ranked #1 as a faculty of education in Canada and #7 in the world. Discussions are ongoing concerning the centre becoming a core educational partner and potential base for the project, leveraging their expertise in evidence-based education, media and advocacy.

The project (in partnership with the wonderful Serbian activist NGO [CANVAS](#)) also signed an agreement with **the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information** for a January to April Master's level capstone project. The students will design a wireframe for a multilingual and secure global web platform that will fill a critical gap in the human rights ecosystem, enabling activists and artists world-wide to discover and support compelling causes and each other much more easily.

In the process, students working on this initiative will gain a deeper working understanding of how online platforms, comics, social media, and graphics can best be used to advance human rights.

The UX project team will conduct primary and secondary research to understand our users' perspective, initially in Canada and the Philippines, and share insights on the challenges they face.

Objectives of the proposed global website.

1. **Showcase Creative Activism:** Highlight diverse forms of creative activism, emphasizing the unique cultural and social contexts in which they occur.
2. **Foster Global Solidarity:** Create a platform for activists to share their stories, strategies, and successes, promoting international solidarity and collaboration.
3. **Educate and Inspire:** Provide educational resources and visual storytelling to inspire new generations of activists and inform the public about the power of creative activism.

Target Audience:

- Activists and community organizers
- Educators and students
- Nonprofit organizations and NGOs



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CHANGING THE WORLD ONE CARTOON (IST) AT A TIME

DEFENDING CARTOONISTS ON THE FRONTLINES OF FREE EXPRESSION

[Cartoonists Rights](#) is the first global human rights organization to focus on the need for protection of cartoonists to carry out their work without fear of recrimination. Since 1999 their work has helped cartoonists all over the world with legal and financial assistance so that they can do what they do best; advocate against the injustices of this world.

Together with the [Graphix Project](#) the two organizations have launched a groundbreaking initiative to raise awareness and support powerful calls to action on behalf of cartoonists.

In 2024 five graphic (auto)biographies of cartoonists in hiding or in exile. More than a dozen more stories will be developed and launched with multilingual biographies being published in newspapers and web platforms, wherever possible beginning in countries of origin. A planned book is also in the works with [Fantagraphics](#), one of the world's top publisher of alternative comics, classic comic strip anthologies, manga, magazines, and graphic novels.

With an initial grant from the US based, Herb Block Foundation, five sample stories were commissioned in 2024 including work from:

- **ABDELHAMID AMINE** aka “**NIME**”, an Algerian graphic designer and cartoonist now living in France.
- **SADAF FADAEIAN**, an Iranian graphic designer and cartoonist now living in Germany.
- “**KONG**”, a Hong Kong cartoonist who fled to the UK following the adoption of the 2020 Security Law.
- **ZEHRA ÖMEROĞLU**, a Kurdish cartoonist from Türkiye now a temporary Journalist-in-Residence with a German NGO.
- **MAKSYM SOLNTSEV**, a Ukrainian comic book artist internally displaced by the conflict in 2022.

Like with all but the luckiest refugees, forced relocation of a cartoonist at risk is often a traumatic experience entailing grief, culture shock and, unfortunately, disenfranchisement. In multiple locations (whether a cartoonist in exile or not) the refugee and asylum-seeking population are scapegoated and subjected to organized (and in the most extreme cases, state-sponsored) marginalization.

At the project's heart then is a spirited rebuttal to those who seek to restrict the freedom of expression of cartoonists and to create understanding and solidarity with all refugees and internally displaced people everywhere.

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