Citations for the Human Rights and Nursing Awards 2014

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What is This?
The International Care Ethics (ICE) Observatory is pleased to announce that on 2 September 2014, the Human Rights and Nursing Awards will be given in Bangalore, India, during the ICNE conference organized by St John’s College of Nursing in collaboration with the University of Surrey, Guildford, United Kingdom. The awards are given in conjunction with Nursing Ethics.

Citation for Sister Jyoti Rosamma

Sister Jyoti is a staff nurse and member of the Roman Catholic Congregation Salesian Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (SMMI). For the last 40 years, she has worked with and campaigned on behalf of marginalized people. She made use of her nursing skills and knowledge of human function and behaviour, especially for thousands of poor, marginalized and uncared-for people. She challenged the inhuman treatment meted out to Dalit people by money lenders and the land lords who exploit poor people and take advantage of them at every level, dividing families and clans. Sister Jyoti’s charismatic nature enables her to get alongside the daily lives of vulnerable people and raises their consciousness of social and political inequalities, rights, duties, talents and potentialities and the urgent need for unity and good organization. Thus, today the situation has changed. Sister Jyoti started a micro-credit co-operative bank with a few women and 10 Rupees per person per month, paying minimal interest. Now more than 2000 women are using the facility, as well as about 450 children in groups and also some men and young people. They are now free of exploitation by the rich, women are safe, there is unity among families and villages, people help each other and land lords have
left. There are enough funds for children’s education, for treatments and for marriages. The people own the bank with 3,300,000 Rupees available for internal loans among the shareholders and for income-generating activities. Women have been trained to make washing detergents, candles and incense sticks for sale. Sister Jyoti taught yoga, counselling and reflexology, acupressure, making and using different tonics, massage oils and other herbal preparations as ‘drugless therapies’ to enable people to handle many of their illnesses and avoid the misuse and costs of allopathic drugs.

Sister Jyoti is currently the convener of the Forum for Justice and Peace (Bihar unit) for religious men and women. There are forums in every diocese in India, forming the new generation of their adherents in the effects of globalization on marginalized people and how they relate to issues of human dignity, freedom and equality as citizens of their country.

Sister Jyoti works in some 40 villages with the help of other Sisters and colleagues. She is well known in the district, and in 2013, she was awarded by the Bihar government for her service to the poorest and most neglected people by helping them to regain their human rights and dignity. The Bihar Voluntary Association awarded her for creating the best community organizations. She has many more dreams to put into practice, though she is aware that she is 69 years old and has fragile health, but is strong enough to liberate thousands more people. She sleeps very little but always has time for her prayers, which, she believes, is the secret of all her work.

Citation for Rula al-Saffar

Her colleagues say of Dr Rula al-Saffar that she loves people, works hard and always tries to lift the spirits of the people around her, thus representing the characteristics of all that is good.

Rula is Assistant Professor at the College of Nursing in Bahrain, and she is also the President of the Bahrain Nursing Society. In 1996 she drafted the first code of practice and principles of nursing ethics for
Bahrain. In 2006 she launched a campaign to increase the salaries of nurses and change the status of nurses from a general salary scale to a professional scale. In the same year she travelled to Lebanon during the war there, and in 2009 to Gaza, to stand in solidarity with the injured people during both wars. In both 2012 and 2013, she was nominated as 11th out of 500 of the most influential Arab personalities by ArabianBusiness.com. This year (2014), she was listed as one of the 100 most influential Arab personalities and one of the 10 Heroes in the Arab World. During the crisis in Bahrain in early 2012, she came to worldwide attention together with 48 physicians, for treating protesters. For this, she was detained for five months, tortured, electrocuted and finally acquitted in June 2012.

Rula manages the campaign ‘I Am Free’, an international and national campaign to release all medics and prisoners of conscience in jails in Bahrain and to free all detained medics in the world and protect them in the future. In March this year, she visited human rights societies, such as Physicians for Human Rights, in the United States, and the Human Rights Council in Geneva about her cause. She is aiming for a resolution for Medical Neutrality at the United Nations and to have 16 March as International Medical Neutrality Day. One of her colleagues in Bahrain says ‘she will get it! I know her!’

Dr Rula al-Saffar has also developed the Emergency Nursing Program as a subspeciality at the College of Health Sciences in her country. She works for the rights of women and children in general in Bahrain, advocating the highest standards of care and dignity for people needing nursing care. In the community, she goes out of her way to help people in need. No wonder that she manages to resolve conflicts and handle difficult situations with remarkable patience and admirable tact. In fact, says one of her colleagues, ‘I have never met anyone like her with such whole-hearted kindness’.