

REMEMBERING RHONDA

Peter Weiss†

There are three types of human rights lawyers. There are those whose emphasis is on rights, the spinners of theories, analysts of decisions, writers of books and articles. Then there are those who remember that human rights is about human beings and for whom every human rights case becomes a source of intimacy with and comfort for the plaintiff/victims. And there are those, very few in number, who partake of the characteristics of both of the other two. Rhonda was in that third group.

I always envied Rhonda's capacity for instant sisterhood. It was evident in her relationship with Dolly Filártiga, whose brother was tortured to death in Paraguay,¹ and with Joyce Horman, whose husband was executed in Chile.² Those were the two big Center for Constitutional Rights ("CCR") cases on which we worked together. Both of them have recently come back to life after many years of quiescence. Rhonda, who was always conscious of the role played by the United States in human rights abuses in foreign parts of the world, would be thrilled to know that, in the *Horman* case pending in Chile, the judge has submitted to the Chilean Supreme Court a request for the extradition from the United States of a senior U.S. military officer implicated in the case.³

While gender and other human rights matters were Rhonda's principal occupation during the last two decades of her all-too-short life, she was no intellectual slouch when it came to other mat-

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¹ *Filártiga v. Peña-Irala*, 630 F.2d 876 (2d Cir. 1980) (recognizing state-sponsored torture as a violation of the law of nations, actionable in federal court pursuant to the Alien Tort Statute); *see also* *Filártiga v. Peña-Irala*, CTR. FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, <http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/past-cases/filartiga-v-peñ-irala> (last visited Aug. 11, 2012).

² *Horman v. Kissinger*, 77 Civ. 1748 (D.D.C. filed October 3, 1977) (suing Henry Kissinger and other officials of the U.S. government for their role in the death of U.S. journalist, Charles Horman, who was executed by Chilean soldiers in the days following the U.S.-backed *coup d'état* against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende); *see also* *Horman v. Kissinger*, CTR. FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, <http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/past-cases/horman-v-kissinger> (last visited Aug. 11, 2012).

³ *See Solicitan Extradición de Ex Militar Estadounidense por la Muerte de Dos Personas en 1973* [Request Extradition of Ex-US Military Officer for the Death of Two People in 1973], LA TERCERA, April 29, 2012, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2012/04/680-455561-9-piden-extradicion-de-ex-militar-estadounidense-por-muerte-de-dos-personas-en.shtml#>.

ters involving constitutional and international law. I will never forget the run-through she inflicted on me the day before I was to argue at an emergency session of the First Circuit a case involving the illegal bombing of Cambodia.⁴ She had a hyperactive hopscotch mind, which tended to jump to the next question almost before the first was answered. Her questioning was sometimes maddening, but never irrelevant.

She was a stickler for facts and a living demonstration of her belief that anything men could do women could do as well, if not better. In my tribute to her at the CCR event shortly before her death, I committed the mistake of saying that she had helped to build her house in Noyack, which prompted the following barely audible interjection: "What do you mean, helped? I built it!"

Others have rightly described her gigantic contribution to human rights and gender law in these pages. To me she was a dear and fiercely loyal friend, and I will miss her to the end of my days.

⁴ *Drinan v. Ford* 516 F.2d 894 (1st Cir. 1975). The challenged bombing stopped shortly before the hearing, rendering the case moot; *see also* *Drinan v. Ford*, CTR. FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, <http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/past-cases/drinan%2C-et-al.-v.-ford%2C-et-al.> (last visited Aug. 11, 2012).