

**Interview on non-discrimination for the Human Right Day 2009 – Magdalena Sepúlveda,
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I grew up in Chile during the Pinochet regime and later I witnessed the challenges encountered in the transition to democracy. In addition to all the terrible human rights violations that occurred in the country during 17 years of military regime, from which we are still trying to recover as a society, one of the long-lasting effects is the huge inequality and the high level of poverty that his regime brought to the country though the liberalization of the economy and imposition of extreme capitalism. During his regime, Pinochet established a kind-of laboratory to house his economic advisors. They were staunch believers in Milton Friedman's ideology and were known as the "Chicago Boys." The measures implemented by this non-democratic regime created a situation of extreme social exclusion and discrimination that has not been easy to reverse, even after many years of democracy.

From an early age I began working with people living in poverty in Chile. I was very aware of the indivisibility of their rights and the negative effect of discrimination and social exclusion on people's standard of living and the enjoyment of basic rights. Later on, when I was at University and we gained democracy, I realized the importance of fighting discrimination as a tool to advance the enjoyment of human rights by those who are economically excluded.

In my work as UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, I see how poverty frequently originates from discriminatory practices. In addition, those living in poverty are also subject to discriminatory attitudes and stigmatization because they are poor. Situations of extreme poverty, and in general of economic marginalization, are almost always associated with discrimination of one form or another. This is why it is fundamental that governments work to break this vicious cycle by making efforts to reduce poverty and at the same time, making efforts to combat racism, intolerance and all forms of discrimination.

The situation that I described in regard to Chile also occurs in other contexts. In Latin America, for example, the UNDP detailed in a recent report how the recent achievements in terms of democratization hardly reach the poorest due to ingrained inequalities. The complexity of these situations calls us to carefully analyze the broad range of power relations present in each society before running into strategies both to eliminate poverty and discrimination.

At the ICHR we have published a report that is very relevant in regard to the issues that I am referring to today. The report is called "[Racial and Economic Exclusion: Policy Implications](#)". This report was prepared in the context of the 2001 United Nations World Conference against Racism and it remains quite relevant today. It discusses the particular challenge of entrenched discrimination linked to poverty. It argues that co-ordinated action across a range of policy areas is required to end entrenched economic and racial exclusion, and identifies some of the policies that need to be combined to make long-term change possible. I invite the viewers to read it. I strongly recommend it.