ACI '25 MUN

ANTALYA PRIVATE ACI COLLEGE MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE 2025

PEBA

AGENDA ITEM:

PERSONHOOD FOR GENETICALLY ENHANCED LIFEFORMS

UNDERSECRETARY GENERAL:
EZO FERDA TOPAL

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I. Letter from the Secretary-General

First of all, let me extend a huge and warm welcome to all of the participants to the very first official session of Private Açı High School Model United Nations Conference of 2025, which will be held in Antalya from September 2nd to 4th!

I, Yasemin Raithel, as the Secretary-General of this well-planned and coordinated conference, it is my immense pleasure to be able to present this organization with this position. I sincerely wish you a fulfilling and thriving one. Model United Nations Conferences are not just a conference, you have a wonderful opportunity to level-up your knowledge of international relations and today's issues, gaining confidence whilst being a representative in the committees. Especially, members of the Academic Team; our Under-Secretary Generals, Academic Assistants and Board Members are the best you could ever ask for in Antalya society. Each of our committees are carefully selected for you to have the best experience ever. From advanced committees to beginner ones.

My utmost gratitude to the Principals and Teachers of our school, their effort and guidance made this conference possible. Moreover, I want to thank every single attendee of AÇIMUN'25, particularly our Academic and Organization Teams, who worked hard and served their best. Also a special appreciation goes to the only other person of the Executive Team, his organization skills are beyond any measure.

Last but not least, I want to leave a quote from Founder Father of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk:
Turkish Youth, your first duty is to preserve and to defend Turkish Independence and the Turkish Republic forever. This is the very foundation of your existence and your future. This foundation is your most precious treasure.

Lastly, whether you are a first timer delegate or an experienced member of ours, I wish everyone a marvelous experience and success during the conference. Hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,
Yasemin RAITHEL
Secretary-General of AÇIMUN'25

II. Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

Dear Delegates,

It is my privilege to welcome you to this session of the Pan-Earth Bioethics Assembly. The agenda before you, ***Personhood for Genetically Enhanced Lifeforms***, represents one of the most challenging and consequential topics facing humanity in the 22nd century. Advances in genetic engineering, synthetic biology, and bio-enhancement are transforming our understanding of life, identity, and society itself.

As delegates, you are entrusted with the responsibility of examining these developments through the lenses of ethics, law, and social policy. The decisions made within this assembly will influence not only the rights and recognition of enhanced lifeforms but also the broader principles that guide human advancement. Balancing innovation with morality, inclusion with security, and scientific progress with global equity will be central to your deliberations.

I encourage each delegate to approach the debate with open-mindedness, critical thinking, and a commitment to justice and responsibility. Consider the historical precedents, the contemporary legal landscape, and the ethical dimensions presented in this guide. Your proposals have the potential to shape international norms, protect vulnerable populations, and define the future relationship between humanity and bio-engineered life.

I wish you productive discussions, rigorous analysis, and insightful resolutions. May your work here at PEBA exemplify the spirit of collaboration, foresight, and ethical leadership that our era demands.

Respectfully,

Ezo Ferda Topal
Under-Secretary-General
Pan-Earth Bioethics Assembly

III. Introduction

A. About the Pan-Earth Bioethics Assembly (PEBA)

The Pan-Earth Bioethics Assembly (PEBA) is a multilateral forum established in the mid-21st century in response to the unprecedented ethical, legal, and political challenges posed by biotechnology, genetic engineering, cybernetic augmentation, and synthetic life creation. Unlike traditional international bodies, PEBA incorporates representation not only from nation-states but also from recognized bio-engineered communities, non-state actors in the biotech sector, and academic ethics councils.
Its mandate is to develop globally accepted norms and frameworks that safeguard dignity, rights, and safety in an era where the boundaries of "human" are rapidly evolving. PEBA operates at the intersection of science, law, and morality, addressing issues that existing legal systems often lack the capacity or consensus to resolve.

B. Significance of the Agenda Item

"Personhood for Genetically Enhanced Lifeforms" addresses one of the most pressing and controversial questions of the 22nd century: should beings that have been genetically engineered—whether partially modified humans, fully bio-designed entities, or hybrid species—be recognized as persons under international law?

The resolution of this question will determine not only the civil, political, and economic rights of these lifeforms but also the ethical trajectory of humanity's future. Recognition could prevent exploitation, genetic discrimination, and statelessness, while failure to address the issue risks creating an underclass of sentient beings without legal protection. This debate is not limited to moral theory; it has immediate implications for citizenship laws, labor rights, military regulations, and global stability.

IV. Historical Background

A. Early Genetic Enhancements in Humans and Animals

The concept of genetic enhancement traces back to the late 20th and early 21st centuries, when selective breeding and early gene-editing techniques, such as CRISPR-Cas9, were first applied to animals and, in limited cases, to humans. Early successes included livestock with increased disease resistance, crops fortified against climate change, and companion animals engineered for hypoallergenic traits. In humans, initial interventions focused on eliminating hereditary diseases, but by the 2040s, enhancements began to extend into non-therapeutic domains such as intelligence, physical strength, and sensory acuity.

These advancements sparked widespread ethical debates, with some societies embracing genetic improvement as a tool for progress, while others condemned it as a threat to natural human identity. Despite early caution, the rapid accessibility of enhancement technologies led to their proliferation in both medical and private markets.

B. Landmark Scientific Breakthroughs

The mid-21st century saw several key developments that transformed genetic enhancement from theoretical possibility to global reality:

- **2043 The Helix Accord Inception:** First coordinated project between biotech corporations and governments to map enhancement-safe regions of the genome.
- **2051 First Fully Bio-Engineered Human ("Gen-1"):** A viable human embryo designed entirely through synthetic genome construction, eliminating the need for traditional reproduction.
- **2067 Neural-Gene Integration:** Successful merging of genetic engineering with neuro-implant technology, creating beings with enhanced cognitive processing far beyond the human baseline.
- **2074 Cross-Species Hybridization:** First confirmed viable hybrid between human DNA and non-human primates, sparking an international human rights crisis.

These breakthroughs dramatically accelerated both the benefits and risks of biotechnology, forcing the international community to confront the question of who, or what, qualifies as a "person."

C. Previous International Regulations and Treaties

While early bioethics frameworks such as the **Oviedo Convention (1997)** and the **UNESCO Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (1997)** laid the groundwork for genetic ethics, they quickly became outdated as technology advanced. The following were key attempts to regulate the field:

- **The Global Gene Integrity Pact (2056):** Banned germline modifications for non-medical purposes, though enforcement proved inconsistent.
- **The Sentience Recognition Charter (2062):** Proposed granting legal protections to non-human but sentient beings, including AI and genetically engineered animals.
- **The Hybrid Identity Accord (2078):** Attempted to define citizenship status for human-animal hybrids, but collapsed after major powers refused ratification.

Despite these efforts, no binding, universally accepted framework exists to define the legal and ethical status of genetically enhanced lifeforms, making the current PEBA agenda not only timely but essential.

V. Defining “Personhood”

The concept of personhood is central to the question of genetically enhanced lifeforms. While “human” and “person” have often been treated interchangeably in law, history shows that legal personhood is a flexible construct that evolves alongside societal, moral, and technological changes. This section examines the foundations of the term, its historical expansion, and its relevance to genetic enhancement.

A. Traditional Legal and Philosophical Definitions

Traditionally, **legal personhood** refers to the status of being recognized as a “person” under the law, with the ability to hold rights, duties, and legal standing. Classical legal systems restricted personhood to natural persons (humans) and, in some cases, juridical persons such as corporations or states.

Philosophically, the debate has often revolved around criteria such as:

- **Rationality:** The capacity for reason and moral judgment
- **Autonomy:** The ability to make independent choices
- **Consciousness:** Awareness of self and surroundings
- **Capacity to Suffer:** A measure of moral consideration in utilitarian ethics

These criteria have historically excluded non-human animals and artificial constructs, though exceptions have emerged in limited legal contexts.

B. Expansion of Personhood: From Slavery Abolition to AI Rights

History reveals that the boundaries of personhood have been repeatedly contested and redefined:

- **Abolition Movements (18th–19th centuries):** Recognized enslaved individuals as full legal persons
- **Women’s Suffrage and Rights Movements (19th–20th centuries):** Expanded political and civil rights to women
- **Animal Rights Legislation (21st century):** Granted limited legal protections to certain species such as great apes, dolphins, and elephants
- **AI Legal Status Debates (mid-21st century):** Sparked consideration of granting legal personhood to artificial intelligences capable of self-awareness

These milestones show that personhood is not biologically fixed but rather a socially and politically negotiated status.

C. Current Debates on Genetic Personhood

The advent of **genetically enhanced lifeforms**, ranging from partially modified humans to entirely bio-engineered species, has reignited the debate over who qualifies as a legal person. Key points of contention include:

- **Degree of Modification:** At what point does genetic alteration render a human "other" under the law
- **Non-Human Origins:** Should beings created from mixed human-animal DNA be treated as human, animal, or a separate category entirely
- **Sentience vs. Species:** Should recognition be based on cognitive ability and self-awareness rather than biological heritage
- **Potential for Abuse:** Without recognition, genetically enhanced lifeforms risk exploitation as property, labor resources, or military assets

Supporters of recognition argue that denying personhood on the basis of genetic origin is a form of discrimination comparable to historical injustices. Critics warn of legal, economic, and cultural upheaval as well as the difficulty of integrating entirely new categories of beings into existing systems of rights and obligations.

VI. Case Studies

Examining past and ongoing events provides valuable insight into the legal, political, and ethical challenges surrounding the recognition of genetically enhanced lifeforms. These case studies present situations where questions of personhood have moved beyond theory and into urgent political reality.

A. The Neo-Sapien Communities of 2087

In 2087, a coalition of bioengineering companies announced the birth of the first “Neo-Sapiens,” a generation of humans with enhanced physical resilience, disease immunity, and cognitive capacity well above the natural baseline. Initially created under private research contracts, these individuals were later integrated into specialized educational and occupational programs. While many countries granted them citizenship automatically, others refused on the grounds that their genome no longer qualified as fully human. This led to a patchwork of legal statuses, with some Neo-Sapiens enjoying full rights and others living effectively as stateless persons despite being born on Earth.

B. The Chimera Citizenship Crisis

The Chimera Citizenship Crisis began in 2074 after advancements in cross-species genetic engineering produced viable human-animal hybrids. While originally intended for medical research and organ harvesting, several hybrids demonstrated high intelligence, self-awareness, and the ability to communicate fluently in human languages. Public opinion became sharply divided. Some nations extended asylum and basic legal protections, while others classified chimeras as laboratory property. This created a humanitarian emergency when hundreds of hybrids sought relocation, forcing PEBA and other bodies to address whether species origin should determine citizenship eligibility.

C. The Cloned Soldier Rehabilitation Debate

By the late 2060s, cloned soldiers became a controversial component of military operations for several states. These individuals were genetically optimized for endurance, rapid healing, and combat decision-making. Upon the end of active conflicts, questions arose over their legal status. Many clones lacked birth records and were not recognized by civil registries. Rehabilitation programs faced political resistance, with critics arguing that clones were state assets rather than independent persons. The debate centered on whether these soldiers, created for a single purpose, should be entitled to the same rights and reintegration opportunities as naturally born veterans.

VII. Ethical Considerations

The recognition of genetically enhanced lifeforms as legal persons is not only a matter of statutes and treaties. It is also an inherently moral question that forces humanity to confront the nature of dignity, identity, and equality. Lawmakers and delegates must consider whether traditional ethical frameworks are sufficient for this new reality or whether entirely new principles are needed. These considerations extend beyond legal texts into philosophy, cultural traditions, and societal values.

A. Human Rights vs. Bio-Engineered Rights

International human rights law is built on the premise that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This assumption is deeply embedded in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Genetically enhanced lifeforms challenge this foundation because they may not fit the traditional biological definition of “human.”

If a being possesses cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, and moral reasoning equal to or greater than an unmodified human, denying them access to the same rights could be viewed as a form of discrimination. Proponents of full recognition argue that personhood should depend on capacity for thought, emotion, and moral agency rather than genetic composition.

Opponents maintain that these beings may require a separate rights framework tailored to their unique biology and abilities. They point out that certain enhancements may result in needs or vulnerabilities that human rights law does not currently address. For example, beings engineered for underwater adaptation might require environmental protections that ordinary humans do not. This raises the question of whether integrating enhanced lifeforms into the human rights framework is truly fair to them or whether it is better to establish an entirely parallel system of bio-engineered rights.

B. The Morality of Designing Conscious Beings

Creating life that is self-aware introduces profound ethical dilemmas. A central concern is whether it is morally acceptable to design a being for a predetermined purpose. For instance, engineering an individual for extreme obedience, military service, or hazardous labor raises questions about free will and autonomy. Critics argue that such beings would be denied a genuine choice in shaping their lives, making their creation inherently exploitative.

Supporters counter that genetic enhancements can be morally justified if they improve quality of life, reduce suffering, or allow individuals to live longer and healthier lives. From this perspective, there is no ethical problem with designing life to perform certain functions, provided those functions do not diminish the being's agency or subject them to harm.

The core question remains whether the act of creation itself imposes an irreversible moral obligation on the creator. If a state, corporation, or private individual brings a conscious being into existence, are they bound to guarantee that being full rights, protections, and the opportunity to self-determine their future? Or does the creator retain authority over the life they have designed?

C. Religious and Cultural Perspectives

Religious and cultural traditions offer diverse viewpoints on the creation and modification of life. In some faith systems, life is viewed as sacred and unalterable except by divine will. From this perspective, genetic enhancement is seen as an overreach of human authority and an act of hubris. Leaders and scholars within these traditions may oppose the recognition of genetically enhanced lifeforms on the grounds that such beings are "unnatural" or outside the intended order of creation.

In contrast, other belief systems interpret human innovation as part of humanity's stewardship over the world. In these traditions, the use of genetic science to cure disease, increase resilience, and expand capabilities can be framed as a moral duty rather than a violation of natural law.

Cultural perspectives also vary widely. Some societies may embrace genetic enhancement as a mark of progress, integrating enhanced individuals into public life without hesitation. Others may view them with suspicion, fearing the erosion of cultural identity or the rise of genetic inequality. These differences in worldview play a crucial role in shaping national policies and influence how states approach negotiations within PEBA. A proposal that seems ethically sound to one cultural group may be completely unacceptable to another, making consensus-building a significant challenge.

VIII. Legal Frameworks

The legal recognition of genetically enhanced lifeforms depends on the willingness and ability of existing systems to adapt to new forms of sentient existence. While certain principles from international human rights law may be relevant, there are significant gaps in their application. Some states have attempted to address these issues through national legislation, but such efforts remain inconsistent and fragmented. Moving forward, delegates of PEBA must consider both the strengths and limitations of current laws and explore potential models for comprehensive legal recognition.

A. International Human Rights Law and Its Gaps

International human rights law is anchored in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These instruments affirm that all human beings are entitled to fundamental rights without discrimination.

However, the language in these treaties presumes a biologically human subject. Terms such as "human being" and "everyone" have not been universally interpreted to include entities with non-human genetic origins or substantial artificial modifications. This creates a legal grey area for enhanced lifeforms, especially those whose biological composition may place them outside traditional definitions of humanity.

Moreover, enforcement mechanisms for international human rights are already limited, even for recognized human populations. Extending these rights to new categories of beings would

require not only reinterpretation of existing treaties but also political consensus among states with divergent ethical and cultural views.

B. Existing National Approaches to Genetic Enhancements

National laws vary widely in their treatment of genetic enhancements. Some states, such as the Federated Commonwealth of Australasia, have adopted inclusive citizenship policies that grant equal rights to genetically enhanced individuals from birth, regardless of the degree of modification. Others, such as the Republic of Helios, have introduced tiered legal statuses in which certain rights are withheld until the enhanced individual passes cognitive and ethical capability assessments.

A few states have taken restrictive approaches, banning the creation of enhanced lifeforms altogether or refusing to recognize them as legal persons. These jurisdictions often classify such beings as property, research material, or state-controlled assets.

The absence of a harmonized approach has led to significant challenges in migration, trade, and asylum law. Enhanced individuals may hold full rights in one country but be considered non-persons upon crossing a border, creating situations of effective statelessness.

C. Potential Models for Legal Recognition

Delegates to PEBA may wish to consider several potential models for addressing the legal status of genetically enhanced lifeforms:

1. **Full Integration into Existing Human Rights Law**
   This model would extend all human rights protections to enhanced lifeforms whose cognitive and emotional capacities are equivalent to unmodified humans. It would require reinterpretation of existing treaties but would avoid creating separate legal categories.
2. **Creation of a Distinct "Enhanced Personhood" Framework**
   This model would establish a new international legal category with rights and obligations tailored to the needs and abilities of enhanced lifeforms. While potentially more precise, it risks institutionalizing genetic differences and creating a form of legal segregation.
3. **Conditional or Tiered Recognition**
   Under this approach, recognition would be granted based on measurable criteria such as sentience, autonomy, or social integration. Although this may appeal to states wary of full recognition, it raises concerns about fairness and the risk of discriminatory practices.

4. **Hybrid Approaches**
   Some proposals combine full rights for certain categories of enhanced beings with specialized regulations for others. For example, military-engineered lifeforms might receive the same civil rights as other citizens but remain subject to specific oversight mechanisms related to their capabilities.

IX. Political and Socio-Economic Implications

The legal recognition of genetically enhanced lifeforms will have consequences that extend beyond the legal sphere. Such recognition will influence political alliances, social cohesion, economic development, and patterns of global inequality. Member states of PEBA must therefore examine not only the ethical and legal issues but also the wider societal and economic impact of their decisions.

A. Integration of Genetically Enhanced Lifeforms into Society

Successful integration requires more than the formal recognition of rights. It involves coordinated policies in education, employment, healthcare, and cultural participation. Without such measures, enhanced individuals may remain socially marginalized and their potential contributions underutilized.

Some states have developed inclusive programs such as specialized education designed to match the cognitive abilities of enhanced individuals, as well as public awareness campaigns to counter prejudice. Others have faced opposition from segments of society that view genetic modification as a threat to cultural identity or moral values.

International cooperation could support integration through the exchange of best practices, mutual recognition of qualifications, and multilateral agreements ensuring equal treatment of enhanced individuals in areas such as migration and employment.

B. Risks of Genetic Caste Systems

A major concern is the emergence of a genetic caste system in which enhanced individuals are systematically favored or disadvantaged according to their genetic profile. If access to enhancements is limited to the wealthy, social and economic inequalities may deepen, potentially creating a permanent division between classes.

In some contexts, enhanced individuals may dominate sectors requiring advanced abilities, leading unenhanced individuals to be concentrated in lower-paying or less desirable occupations. In other contexts, especially in jurisdictions opposed to genetic modification, enhanced individuals may face discrimination and exclusion.

Both situations can create instability. History demonstrates that entrenched hierarchies often lead to social unrest, separatist tendencies, or authoritarian governance aimed at preserving the status quo. PEBA member states may need to consider whether coordinated safeguards are necessary to prevent such divisions.

C. Economic Advantages vs. Risks of Biotech Monopolies

The biotechnology sector views enhanced lifeforms as a potential source of innovation, productivity, and growth. Enhanced workers could accelerate progress in science, engineering, and other industries, potentially helping to address global challenges such as food security, climate change, and public health.

These benefits, however, are accompanied by risks. If enhancement technologies are controlled by a small number of corporations or states, markets could become monopolistic, limiting access and inflating costs. Such monopolies could also determine the ethical boundaries and direction of research without adequate public oversight.

In addition, monopolistic control may increase geopolitical tensions. States with exclusive access to advanced genetic technology could gain disproportionate influence, leading to a new form of "genetic geopolitics" in which power is shaped by the distribution of enhancements.

Balancing the promotion of innovation with fair and widespread access will be a central challenge for PEBA delegates when considering regulation, public investment, and technology-sharing mechanisms.

X. Challenges and Threats

While the legal and ethical recognition of genetically enhanced lifeforms may offer numerous opportunities, it also presents significant risks and potential threats. These challenges extend across security, social, and environmental domains. Delegates must consider both intentional misuse and unintended consequences when crafting policies and recommendations.

A. Bioterrorism and Weaponized Enhancements

The development of genetically enhanced lifeforms carries inherent security risks. Individuals or groups could be engineered for military or paramilitary purposes, creating beings specifically designed for combat, sabotage, or espionage. The potential misuse of enhancement technologies for offensive operations raises serious questions regarding international security and global stability.

In addition, the proliferation of genetic modification knowledge and tools increases the risk of bioterrorism. Even non-state actors could access techniques to produce enhanced organisms capable of causing targeted harm. These risks underscore the need for stringent oversight, global monitoring, and clear frameworks for accountability to prevent enhancements from being exploited as weapons of mass disruption.

B. Discrimination and Genetic Apartheid

The social consequences of genetic enhancement may include new forms of discrimination. Enhanced individuals could be either privileged or marginalized depending on the policies and cultural attitudes of specific states. In the worst-case scenario, a system of genetic apartheid could emerge, in which rights, opportunities, and social standing are determined by biological modifications rather than merit or effort.

Such discrimination could exacerbate social divisions and provoke tensions both within states and between countries. It may also undermine the legitimacy of political institutions, as populations perceive inequalities as inherent rather than socially constructed. Addressing these risks will require careful consideration of legal protections, anti-discrimination policies, and international norms.

C. Overpopulation and Resource Allocation

The widespread integration of genetically enhanced lifeforms into society may also impact population dynamics and resource distribution. Enhanced individuals may experience longer lifespans or accelerated productivity, which could strain housing, healthcare, education, and food systems.

Resource allocation will become a critical issue, particularly if enhancements are unequally distributed. Nations and international bodies may need to consider policies to ensure equitable access to resources and prevent social unrest caused by perceived or real scarcity. In addition, planning for urban development, environmental sustainability, and social welfare systems must take into account the demographic and economic effects of enhanced populations.

XI. Guiding Questions for Delegates

The following questions are intended to guide delegates in preparing for debate and resolution drafting. They highlight key issues related to the recognition and regulation of genetically enhanced lifeforms and encourage consideration of legal, ethical, political, and technological dimensions.

A. **What criteria should determine personhood?**
   Delegates should consider which characteristics qualify a being as a person under international law. Should personhood be based on cognitive ability, self-awareness, capacity to feel and reason, or biological origin? Are there minimum thresholds that must be met for full legal recognition, and how can these criteria be measured fairly and consistently across different types of enhanced lifeforms?

B. **How can PEBA prevent genetic discrimination?**
   Delegates should explore mechanisms to prevent unequal treatment based on genetic status. What international standards, protections, or oversight structures could be established to ensure enhanced individuals are not exploited, marginalized, or denied access to rights and opportunities? How can PEBA balance the protection of enhanced lifeforms with the interests of unenhanced populations?

C. **Should there be global limits on enhancement technologies?**
   Delegates should discuss whether international regulation is necessary to set limits on the development and application of enhancement technologies. What forms of oversight or governance are appropriate to prevent misuse, monopolization, or ethical violations? How can regulation encourage responsible innovation while avoiding stifling scientific progress?

D. **What role should AI play in regulating genetic ethics?**
   As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly capable of monitoring and enforcing complex ethical standards, delegates should consider whether AI systems could assist in regulating genetic enhancements. Should AI have advisory, monitoring, or even decision-making authority? How can its use be integrated ethically, transparently, and fairly while avoiding bias or misuse?

XII. Conclusion

The question of personhood for genetically enhanced lifeforms represents one of the most complex and urgent challenges facing the international community. Advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering, and synthetic biology are rapidly reshaping the boundaries of life, consciousness, and social organization. PEBA delegates are tasked with

addressing not only legal and ethical questions but also the broader political, economic, and cultural implications of these developments.

Decisions made in this arena will have lasting consequences for the rights, dignity, and integration of enhanced lifeforms, as well as for societal stability and global equity. Delegates must carefully balance innovation with ethical responsibility, ensuring that future policies protect both human and bio-engineered populations. The debates and resolutions arising from PEBA have the potential to define the framework for genetic ethics and governance for decades to come.

By considering historical precedents, contemporary legal frameworks, and emerging ethical perspectives, delegates can develop informed and forward-looking proposals that advance both scientific progress and social justice.