***SUBMISSION: GWEN HECHT, PH.D., MFT, CT***

Recognized as a woman of influence and a servant leader, Dr. Gwen Hecht, Ph.D., MFT, CT is an author, philanthropist, non-profit founder, and retired marriage and family therapist.

Dr. Hecht began her career over 35+ years ago, as one of the founders of a rape crisis center. She worked full-time, while obtaining numerous licenses, post-graduate degrees, and certifications. She spent decades as a licensed marriage and family therapist, with specializations in trauma, grief and loss, thanatology (death, dying, and bereavement), depression, dissociation, and interfaith chaplaincy. Further dedicated to manifesting human potential, she authored Finding the Gems: The Search for Meaning in Life's Traumas and Losses.

No one is more deserving for the award than her, and I emphatically nominate her for the 2022 Zayed Award for Human Fraternity. She has dedicated her time, money, and resources to leading the promotion of global fraternity and world peace.

Dr. Hecht has always believed in making a difference and giving back, thus she has founded several non-profits committed to global education, interfaith, and trauma-informed initiatives. Presently and for the last handful of years, Dr. Hecht has served as the President Emeritus of California Southern University, a regionally-accredited, global online University that prepares Learners to succeed in a world that we have yet to imagine. CalSouthern does this through active learning, respecting diversity, and promoting intellectual freedom.

Under her leadership, California Southern University sponsored numerous global sustainable development projects, focused on supporting mentorship, girls’ empowerment, and reducing inequalities through access to education. Dr. Hecht even donated the services of her nonprofit organization, the House of Ruach, to support the establishment and sponsorship of schools and education programs for hundreds of children in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Israel.

As President Emeritus of CalSouthern, Dr. Hecht collaborated with Razia’s Ray of Hope Foundation, an organization that provides Afghan girls and young women with safe, nurturing, and inspiring educational environments, to contribute to a brighter future for the students, their families, and their community. Dr. Hecht recognized that educating a child, educates a family, and thus committed to sponsoring three years of education for over 300 of Ray of Hope’s kindergarten girls.

In 2017, I approached Dr. Hecht, on behalf of Calpak Education Services, and informed her of the dire human conditions in the remote, underserved areas of Sindh Tharparkar. These schools had buildings, but lacked basic necessities, resources, and trained teachers. Hundreds of children were without education, clean water, and resources for basic needs. With a culturally-sensitive approach, and when the global majority was afraid to visit rural areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India, Dr. Gwen Hecht traveled to the Tharparkar District of Sindh. Dr. Hecht witnessed and listened to the Tharparkar community’s needs, first-hand, spending long periods of time with the local villagers. The indigenous, multi-faith community of Tharparkar witnessed the empathy, compassion, and generosity of Dr. Hecht. The villagers were stunned that a Jewish-American woman wanted to provide solar power, clean drinking water, and educational supplies to the multi-faith village’s schools, mosques, and community center. Now every Friday, the villagers pray for her good health and prosperity, often referring to her as “Mother Hecht.” As a result of her support and donations, over 500 children and parents have access to education, clean water, and a healthier well-being.

More recently, Dr. Hecht founded the Hecht Trauma Institute, which provides education, information and services to empower and support those affected by trauma. As a victim of child abuse, and as a trauma expert of over 35 years, Dr. Hecht founded this Institute to provide programs related to assisting with identifying, addressing, and treating trauma as the result of adverse childhood experiences, interpersonal violence, natural disasters, pandemics, civil unrest, work-related stressors, second-hand traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma.

Dr. Hecht currently serves as a board member for the American Muslim and Multifaith Women’s Empowerment Council, where she has been known to travel with me to DC, meet congressional representatives, and lobby for shared initiatives, such as stopping hate, Islamophobia, and Anti-Semitism.

At her core, Dr. Gwen Hecht is a philanthropist, dedicated to manifesting human potential, global collaboration, and world peace. She deserves the 2022 Zayed Fraternity Award.