



2007 Human Rights Awards Dinner

Minnesota Advocates held its 2007 Human Rights Awards Dinner on June 19th at The Depot in downtown Minneapolis. This year's event, entitled *Human Rights, Justice, and Peace: Truth and Reconciliation in Post-Conflict Societies*, featured some of the world's foremost experts in transitional justice, including the 2007 Human Rights Award recipients Priscilla Hayner and Sofia Macher, and keynote speaker Counsellor Jerome J. Verdier Sr., Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia.

Executive Director Robin Phillips provided an update of the organization's domestic and international activities, as well as an overview of Minnesota Advocates' pioneering role in facilitating the work of Liberia's newly formed Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Diaspora community. Minnesota Advocates has sought to provide a voice to Liberian refugee communities by gathering statements in Minneapolis, other major U.S. cities, and other Diaspora populations. These voices, Phillips noted, must be heard to ensure the accuracy of the historical record and to lay the foundation for a comprehensive, lasting peace.

The proceedings continued with the presentation of this year's Volunteer Awards, given *in memoriam*. Refugee and Immigrant Program Director Michele Garnett McKenzie remembered



Selahadin Mohammed as a dedicated volunteer who served the organization in a myriad of ways through his gift of languages, saying, "Selah gave graciously of his time and skills as a translator and interpreter for asylum seekers hoping to find a new life and a new start. Because of Selahadin's work, many people facing persecution upon return to their home countries have found safety and hope with asylum in the United States." Board member David Parker presented Emily Sandall's Volunteer Award to family representatives, remarking on her adventurous spirit and commitment to serving the underprivileged. Emily was among the first supporters of Minnesota Advocates' Sankhu-Palubari Community School in Nepal.

Minnesota Advocates presented the 2007 Human Rights Awards to two women who have created new visions for promoting peace, justice, and human rights.

Dulce Foster, Partner at Fredrikson & Byron, P.A. and member of the Liberian TRC Project Management Committee, presented the award to Priscilla Hayner.



Keynote Speaker Counsellor Jerome Verdier, Sr. (center) with Human Rights Awards Recipients Sofia Macher (left) and Priscilla Hayner (right)

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**Minnesota Advocates
for Human Rights**

The mission of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is to implement international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law. Minnesota Advocates was founded in 1983 by a group of Minnesota lawyers who recognized the community's unique spirit of social justice as an opportunity to promote and protect human rights here at home and worldwide. We are a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that investigates and exposes human rights violations; represents immigrants and refugees in our community who are victims of human rights abuses; trains and assists groups that protect human rights; and works through education and advocacy in Minnesota to engage the public, policy-makers and children about human rights and cultural understanding. Minnesota Advocates holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.

From the Director's Desk

Immigrant advocates had hoped that 2007 would be the year that comprehensive immigration reform legislation would reach the president's desk. We knew that if a bill with bipartisan support did not emerge by summer, the issue would likely be on hold until after the presidential elections.

The stakes were high when the U.S. Senate proposed the "Grand Bargain" for immigration reform, crafted by a bipartisan team of Senators. As the rounds of amendments proceeded, the bill drifted further away from a focus on due process, worker rights, non-discrimination, and family unity, and became increasingly punitive. Immigrant advocates were divided on how to proceed.

Meanwhile, anti-immigrant voices in the media continued relentlessly with anti-immigrant myths and stereotypes overshadowing discussions of the positive contributions of immigrants. By the time the final vote to close debate on the bill was defeated 46 to 53, the national dialogue on immigration had become negative and dehumanizing. Although the defeat was disappointing, many advocates were relieved that the more punitive measures in the bill had not become law.

In spite of the stalled efforts in Congress to fix our broken immigration system, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has made it clear that it will increase border and interior enforcement in the form of more raids, detentions, and deportations. Unfortunately, we believe these efforts will include more operations like the Swift raids that lacked the due process and civil rights protections that are guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution, regardless of citizenship or legal status. Actions like these further marginalize and dehumanize our immigrant populations.

States and municipalities continue to craft legislation in response to the failure of federal reform. Many of these actions, arguably unconstitutional, are creating a patchwork of punitive measures that are driving immigrant populations underground and do not address the core problems within the current immigration system.

The collapse of the Senate immigration bill presents an opportunity for human rights defenders to shape the charged national discussion of immigration that promises to surround the 2008 elections. The anti-immigrant lobby has gained power by convincing people that certain classes of people have no constitutional or human rights.

Human rights advocates have the duty to restore dignity to immigrants by promoting the value, recognized in international human rights treaties and in the U.S. Constitution, that it is our humanity, not our citizenship, that gives us our fundamental rights.

Advocates must raise the public's awareness of the human rights violations that drive people to migrate and continue the international human rights monitoring that reduces civil conflicts and stems migration. Immigrant advocates must help the public and policy-makers recognize that "economic migration" is a direct consequence of human rights being disrespected. The human right to housing, health, food, employment, and education is not only neglected by governments abroad, it is often perpetuated by U.S. foreign and trade policies as well.

Governmental and private actors must assume due responsibility for ensuring the protection and promotion of these rights to ensure any lasting reform. Moreover, human rights advocates must work for comprehensive immigration reform in 2009 that recognizes the inherent dignity and rights of all human beings here in the United States. To realize these values, we as human rights advocates must begin our work now.



Robin Phillips
Executive Director

Journey to Safety



Journey to Safety performance by Pangea World Theater actors at the Battered Women's Justice Project conference

On June 26, 2007, Minnesota Advocates and Pangea World Theater presented a live performance of *Journey to Safety* to an audience of more than 500 criminal justice professionals from around the country. The performance was featured at the Battered Women's Justice Project's national conference, "Milestones and Momentum: Strengthening Community Responses to Violence Against Women." In addition to the performance, copies of the "*Journey to Safety: The Battered Immigrant Woman's Experience*" training materials were distributed to all attendees. Response to the performance was overwhelmingly positive, prompting audience members to comment that "the *Journey to Safety* performance was a highlight of the conference" and "the vignettes force us to acknowledge the obstacles faced by battered immigrant women on a daily basis."

Journey to Safety is a unique artistic stage presentation and training developed through a collaboration between Minnesota Advocates and Pangea World Theater. It highlights the challenges and systems barriers from the perspective of battered immigrant women.

In 2006, the Battered Women's Justice Project commissioned

Minnesota Advocates to produce a video and accompanying training guide for the *Journey to Safety* performance. The video and guide contain interviews of police officers, judges, emergency room doctors, and county officials describing their "best practices" to address the needs of battered women and a wide range of information and tools for professionals working with immigrant victims of domestic violence. The videotaped interview portion of the training features police officers from St. Paul, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park describing steps they have taken to ensure that battered immigrant women have fewer barriers to receiving protection and services. In addition, a Hennepin County judge, an emergency room doctor at Hennepin County Medical Center, and the Ramsey County Attorney describe practices and policies that result in better access to services for battered immigrant women.

Minnesota Advocates continues to work with local, county, and state-wide government agencies and community service providers to reduce the systems barriers that prevent battered immigrant and refugee women from accessing safety for themselves and their children and accountability for their abusers.



St. Paul police officers Tanya Hunter and Doug Whittaker talking with Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner (right) and staff attorney Rebecca Palmer (left)

Get a copy of the *Journey to Safety* Training DVD and Facilitator's Guide!

To order *Journey to Safety: The Battered Immigrant Woman's Experience* Video and Facilitator's Guide (\$25), call (612) 341-3302 or visit our website at www.mnadvocates.org.

A free copy of the *Journey to Safety* Facilitator's Guide can also be downloaded at www.mnadvocates.org.

2007 Human Rights Law & Policy Conference



Representative Carlos Mariani, Executive Director of the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights held its fifth annual Human Rights Law and Policy Conference, *Children Left Behind: A Child's Right to Education in the United States*, on June 15th at the law firm of Dorsey and Whitney, LLP in Minneapolis. More than 120 attorneys, advocates, community leaders, academics, policymakers, educators, and students attended the conference, which looked at the issue of education in the U.S. from a unique perspective: human rights. A conference participant stated, "the speakers provided new ways to frame thoughts and ideas surrounding

education, human rights, and the American classroom."

Elizabeth Sullivan of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative in New York and political science Professor Scott Abernathy of the University of Minnesota presented keynote sessions on education as a human right and the current state of education in the United States. These presentations provided an excellent springboard for panelists to discuss barriers to the right to education in the United States. The right to education is a fundamental human right recognized in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Looking at education through a human rights framework helps us to work toward educational systems that focus on the individual development and needs of children, the participation of the entire community, and systems accountability.

Morning panelists were from the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota, the School Law Center,



Joe Nathan, Senior Fellow, Center for School Change, University of Minnesota; Natela Jordan, Education Coordinator, Human Rights Center; and Anne Carroll, School Board Member, St. Paul School Board, presenting at the Conference

Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, and Ready4K. They discussed how racial and economic segregation, the failure to adequately prepare pre-K students for school and students of color for higher education, and the failure to adequately address the needs of students with disabilities contribute to unequal access to education in the U.S. and Minnesota.

In the afternoon, speakers from the Human Rights Resource Center, the St. Paul School Board, the Center for School Change, Crossing Barriers, and the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative described their efforts to ensure that students fully realize their right to education. Their creative approaches ranged from school-based solutions, such as incorporating a rights-based approach into school curriculum and pilot schools to community-based solutions, such as grassroots parental organizing and lawsuits.

The final session brought all conference participants together to discuss strategies to improve the educational system in Minnesota. Conference participants expressed support for continued work on improving the state of education in the U.S. using new models, such as a rights-based model. Conference materials and strategic discussion data are available at www.mnadvocates.org.

Minnesota Advocates would like to thank the conference speakers and co-sponsors for helping to make this conference a resounding success:

Scott Abernathy, Anne Carroll, Baris Gumus-Dawes, Amy Goetz, Natela Jordan, Representative Carlos Mariani, Joe Nathan, Kathleen O'Donnell, Todd Otis, Elizabeth Sullivan, Ladan Yusuf, Dorsey & Whitney, LLP, the Minnesota Dream Fund, African American Family Services, Education Minnesota, the Human Rights Center of the University of Minnesota, the Institute on Race & Poverty, Admission Possible, Target Corporation, and the Minnesota Twins.

2007 Asylum Conference

On Friday, June 1st, nearly 120 people joined Minnesota Advocates for its Annual Asylum Conference, hosted this year by Fredrikson & Byron, PA. Each year, Minnesota Advocates' Asylum Conference brings together local and national experts to train attorneys new to asylum law and to provide experienced practitioners with up-to-date information. "Asylum case law and procedures are constantly developing," said Michele Garnett McKenzie, director of Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program. "It is essential that attorneys representing asylum seekers – particularly our volunteers whose regular practice is not asylum – have access to high-quality training." The conference serves as primary training for the hundreds of volunteer attorneys who handle *pro bono* asylum cases through Minnesota Advocates.

The Expert Track featured Juan Osuna, Acting Chairman of the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), who discussed recent BIA cases and organizational issues. Kevin Lashus, former Bloomington ICE Assistant Chief Counsel, now in private practice in Texas, returned to Minnesota to present with Minnesota Advocates staff attorney Emily Good on issues surrounding the new barriers to asylum for those found to have provided "material support" to terrorism. Attorney Ben Casper of St. Paul updated participants on the many recent Eighth Circuit asylum cases.

The Basics Track provided a nuts and bolts orientation to asylum law and practice for attorneys new to asylum. Bob Gilbertson (Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, LLP), a member of the Refugee and Immigrant Program's steering committee, joined staff attorney Malinda Schmiechen to open the morning sessions. Bob described the tremendous personal and professional impact of representing asylum seekers to new volunteers. Michele Garnett McKenzie provided an overview of the law of asylum, followed by a practice panel featuring Nancy Peterson and Paula Duthoy, both in private immigration practice in St. Paul, moderated by steering committee member Alan Goldfarb (Davis and Goldfarb, PLLC).



Acting BIA Chairman Juan Osuna responding to questions from attorney Ben Casper

Later in the conference, representatives of the various government agencies which handle asylum cases again joined the private bar to train and update attorneys. Ken Madsen, director of the Chicago Asylum Office, provided an overview of practice before the Asylum Office moderated by immigration attorney Steve Thal of



Immigration Judge Joseph Dierkes encourages volunteers to represent asylum seekers before the Immigration Court

Minnetonka. The Immigration Court and ICE Office of Chief Counsel addressed immigration court practice issues. Immigration Judge Joseph Dierkes, Assistant Chief Counsel Terry Louie, immigration attorney Karen Ellingson of St. Paul, and moderator Dinesh Shenoy of Aronson & Associates addressed core practice issues before the Immigration Court. The second panel featured Immigration Judge Kristin Olmanson, Assistant Chief Counsel Dan Pornschloegl, Lynn Mershon of Behavioral Interventions, attorney Paschal Nwokocho of St. Paul, and Dinesh Shenoy. The panel dealt with issues of detention, bond, and the Intensive Supervised Appearance Program (ISAP) to prepare volunteer attorneys for the increasing likelihood that their clients will face detention in the course of their asylum cases.

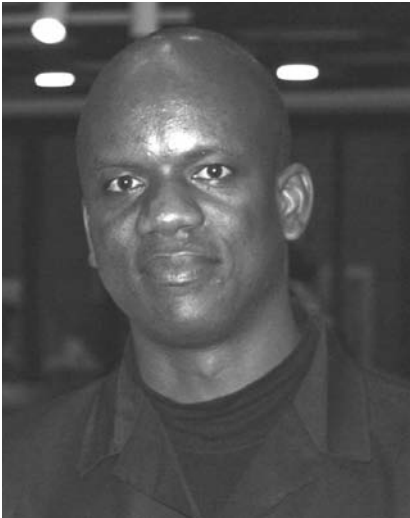
"We're grateful to all the presenters for their generous participation in the Asylum Conference," said Malinda Schmiechen, staff attorney and co-organizer of this year's conference. "Ultimately, the biggest beneficiaries of today's training will be our clients."

Thanks to **Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, LLP; Maslon, Edelman, Borman & Brand, LLP; and Fredrikson & Byron, PA** for underwriting the costs of the Asylum Conference.

Special thanks to **Fredrikson & Byron, PA** for the generous use of their new conference facilities and for audiotaping and catering the event.

2007 Human Rights Awards Dinner

Keynote Speaker: Counsellor Jerome J. Verdier, Sr.



Jerome J. Verdier Sr., Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia, was a leading human rights and civil society activist prior to his selection to serve on the TRC. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) Degree in Accounting and Economics (1988) from the University of Liberia and a Bachelor of Laws Degree (LLB) from its Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law. Apart from working both in the private and public sectors as a Senior Accountant, Comptroller and Executive Director, he has been instrumental in strengthening civil society advocacy by serving in several capacities: Executive Director of Liberia Democracy Watch (LDW); Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Human Rights Center of Liberia (NHRCL); a consortium of nine human rights and pro-democracy organizations; Board Chairperson of the Foundation for International Dignity (FIND); Senior Staff Attorney for the Association of Environmental Lawyers (Green Advocates); and the first Research and Program Officer of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC). Mr. Verdier is a practicing attorney, credited for rendering *pro bono* legal services to indigent clients, civil society activists, and journalists, while leading civil society adversarial legal teams in several successful lawsuits against the government of Liberia.

The 2007 Human Rights Award Honorees

Priscilla Hayner



Priscilla Hayner is an expert on truth commissions around the world and has written widely on the subject. Ms. Hayner is a co-founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, where she currently serves as Director of the Peace and Justice Program. Prior to joining the ICTJ, Ms. Hayner served as a consultant to the UN High Commissioner for Human

Rights and as a program officer on international human rights and world security for the Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

Sofia Macher



Sofia Macher has been involved in the human rights movement for nearly three decades, including tenures as the first female head of the Peruvian branch of Amnesty International, three consecutive terms with the Executive International Committee of Amnesty International, and a position on the Executive Secretariat of the National Organizing Committee of Human Rights. Dr. Macher also served as a Commissioner for Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, documenting the

worst tragedies of Peru during its history as a Republic.

We extend special thanks for help with our 2007 Human Rights Awards Dinner to:

- **Boulevard Gardens** for donating flowers for the event;
- **Bill Cameron** for photography at the event;
- **Marie Enge** and **Johnson Design + Etc** for donating the design of the Awards Dinner invitation and program cover;
- **Dijana Andic, Karna Berg, Karen Evans, Rachel Johnson, Chelli Phillips Ray, and Lily Troia** for assisting with the event;
- **Jesús Purisaca** and the **Total Praise Chorus** for providing music for the event;
- All of our volunteers the night of the event; and,
- All of our silent auction donors (see page 7).

Many Thanks to Our Silent Auction Donors

Afshan Anjum A child's ghagra choli with scarf, an Indian punjabi suit, and an Indian bridal jacket

Zarina Baber A cotton bedspread and pillowcase set from India

Colleen Beebe and Jesús Purisaca Two pillowcases from Nepal

Karna Berg A silver bracelet from Mexico and two cookbooks

Bibelot A \$25 gift certificate

Black Forest Inn A \$25 gift card

Bombay Bistro Two \$50 gift cards

Aviva Breen Polish pottery, a pair of scarves and a pashmina from Nepal

Bryant Lake Bowl Bowling for five and a \$25 gift card

Calhoun Beach Framing Two \$25 gift certificates

Christos Greek Restaurant A \$75 gift certificate

Cinema Ballroom One private ballroom or Latin dance lesson

Carolyn Collins A woven silk scarf and two embroidered pillowcases from Iran

Steve and Jean Danko Limited edition art print (192/250) by Couraden

Jonathan Eisenberg Two-hour sailing cruise on Lake Minnetonka for up to 4 people on 19' yacht "Summery Judgment," skippered by owner

John Erickson "Impressions" painting

Firelake Grill House A \$40 gift card

Susan Gainen Five pounds of "\$100 almonds"

GameWorks Dinner and half hour video game play for two at Gameworks

Graves 601 Hotel A one-night weekend stay in an Executive level room

The Hub Bike Co-op A bike tune-up

Human Rights and Peace Store A children's book package

Sarah Hunt A handmade girl's felted cloche-style hat

Loan Huynh A Vietnamese dinner for six

Cindy Jackson A handpainted cakeplate, two coffee mugs, two purple floral wine glasses, and two original paintings

Barbara Jarvis An original painting

Donna Jarvis Two handpainted wine glasses and a handpainted leather case

Jawaahir Dance Company & The Cassandra School Two 10-week sessions of beginning Middle Eastern dance classes

Fatima Jawaaid An original intaglio print

Joe's Garage Restaurant A \$25 Gift Card

Jungle Theater Two tickets to any Sunday-Friday 2007 season performance

Kay Kautio A framed painting, "Grasses"

Marlene Kayser An Ecuadoran tablecloth and items for a baby-themed gift basket

Hyder Khan and Nazneen Khatoon A Hyderabadi Indian dinner for six

Kvasnik Photography & Frames Inc. A family photography session with one 5"x7" print

Rufino Magno A batik from the Philippines

Mall of America Two passes to the Park at the Mall of America

Joseph Margulies A signed copy of "Guantanamo and the Abuse of Presidential Power"

Mid-America Festivals Two passes to the 2007 Minnesota Renaissance Festival

Minnesota Fringe Festival Four tickets to any show during the 2007 Festival

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club Four seats to a 2007 season game

Moxie Hair Salon A haircut experience with Andy D. and moisture products by Paul Mitchell

Dipankar Mukherjee and Meena Natarajan A thread and wooden bead necklace from Tibet, a batik mask from Malaysia, a beaded jewelry set from South Africa and three gold embroidered pillowcases, earrings, a necklace, and scarf from India

NEED Magazine A one-year subscription to NEED Magazine

Darin and Vance Opperman A Minnesota Twins box with 10 tickets to a regular season game

Rosalyn Park Four Bulgarian ceramic bowls

Peace Coffee One pound each of regular and decaf fair trade, organic, shade-grown coffee

Rick Phillips A portrait of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Robin Phillips A summer reading package, items for a baby-themed gift basket, a silver jewelry set from Puerto Rico, bracelets from Thailand, Polish pottery, two pillowcases from Nepal, two pillowcases from Thailand, and four hand-carved masks from Liberia

Chelli Phillips Ray A "Friday Night" gift basket

Jennifer Prestholdt Liberian batik fabric made in the Women of Glory skills training course in Buduburam Refugee Camp, Ghana.

Red Balloon Bookshop A \$10 gift certificate

Resource Center of the Americas One Spanish class, including materials

Rocco Altobelli Salons and Dayspas A \$40 Gift Card

Marie J. Saunders Mayan fabric

Sawatdee A \$50 gift certificate

Science Museum of Minnesota Omnitheater and exhibit hall admission for four and a household membership

Sebastian Joe's Ice Cream Café \$15 in Joe Bucks

Spalon Montage A Montage Massage

St. Paul Saints Four reserved and four general admission tickets

Stella's Fish Cafe A \$50 Gift Card

Mani and Vidya Subramani A traditional Indian vegetarian meal for six

Theatre de la Jeune Lune Two tickets to any mainstage performance

Ann Theisen A filled, handmade piñata and authentic Mexican pinata bat

Cheryl Thomas and Roger Heegaard Three nights at a cabin on Island Lake

Ruth B. Usem Three nights at a condo on Lake Superior

Vertical Endeavors A basic safety rock climbing lesson for two

Walker Art Center Two gallery admission passes

The Wellness Center One hour of therapeutic massage

Western Bank A wine basket

Wild Mountain Two Superday Passes

Yes! Magazine A one-year subscription to Yes! Magazine

2007 Human Rights Awards Dinner Continued from page 1

Ms. Hayner, who has published widely on truth commissions, reflected on her experiences providing guidance to truth commissions in countries such as East Timor, Peru, Sierra Leone and, more recently, Liberia. While there were elements common to each of these truth commissions, she emphasized that every road to reconciliation must ultimately follow a unique path.

John Mandler, Partner at Faegre & Benson, L.L.P and Minnesota Advocates board member, presented the award to Sofia Macher. Dr. Macher formerly served as a Commissioner for Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Executive Secretary of Peru's National Organizing Committee on Human Rights, and the first female head of the Peruvian branch of Amnesty International. She has proven to be an integral figure in the formation of modern Peru and has received national and international recognition for her remarkable work in her country's pursuit of transitional justice and healing after two decades of civil war. In her acceptance speech, translated by Education Program Director Colleen Beebe, Dr. Macher urged the audience to continue to advocate for the rights of those who have been left without a voice.

Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chairman Jerome J. Verdier, Sr. delivered the evening's keynote address. He began by thanking Minnesota Advocates, stating, "Apart from the invaluable contribution of Minnesota Advocates to our work in Liberia, I honored this invitation to serve as keynote speaker, convinced that their work with refugee and immigrant societies, women, human rights education, monitoring and other programs is a profound testimony of a rare commitment to

humanity and the protection of individual dignities." Mr. Verdier went on to speak about his own commitment to individual dignity and humanity as the Chairman of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. After describing the events of the decades-long civil war and its effect on the Liberian people, Verdier touched on the role he anticipates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will play in shaping the country's future, saying, "Human rights will only be achieved in Liberia through public acknowledgement of the violations that Liberians have experienced, followed by comprehensive reparations, justice, and an institutional reform program. This will give practical meaning to human rights and guarantee both protection and redress, which is what every society emerging out of prolonged violent conflict needs." Mr. Verdier concluded with inspiring words for the audience: "Let us continue in our pursuit of justice and human rights for all, going to bed with a full heart every evening knowing that we have done everything possible in that day to help our fellow men and women."

Jesús Purisaca and the Total Praise Chorus provided music for the evening's celebration. Mr. Purisaca played traditional Peruvian music while guests gathered in the reception hall. The Total Praise Chorus entertained the crowd during the program with traditional Liberian music.

Each year, the Human Rights Awards Dinner serves as a powerful symbol of the collaborative and sustained efforts necessary to promote and protect human rights effectively. Minnesota Advocates would like to thank the law firms, companies, individuals and volunteers that provide their support and make this event possible. We hope that you will join us next year for our 25th anniversary celebration!

Minnesota Advocates would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support:

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Only our name is boring.



2007 Human Rights Awards Dinner Photos



Philipp and Laura Muessig and Semira Ahmed and daughter Rana



Warren and Marge Spannaus, Nancy Etzweiler, Mark Lindberg, Steve Carlson, and David Weissbrodt



Board Chair, Aviva Breen



Jesús Purisaca performing at the event



Min Chong, Emily Good, and Ingrid Haugland



Irfan Sandozi, Bill Cameron, and Jeanne and Joe Dixon



Juli Endee, Robin Phillips, and Richard and Karen Evans



Members of Total Praise Chorus performing at the Awards Dinner



Eric Janus and Carolyn Chalmers

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Assessment for the Republic of Georgia

Minnesota Advocates and the Institute for Policy Studies in the Republic of Georgia released the report, *Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Georgia: An Assessment of Current Standings of Law and Practice*. The report was commissioned by a consortium of United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia (RC).

The report encompasses the findings of a delegation who traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia in November of 2006. The delegation consisted of three staff attorneys from the Women’s Program and volunteer Jeanne Voigt. The delegation evaluated the currently available research and conducted numerous interviews with law enforcement professionals, social and medical service providers, and legislators.

In the report, Minnesota Advocates provides commentary on the new Law of Georgia on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection of and Support to Its Victims. The law addresses both domestic abuse and child abuse and was enacted in May of 2006. The delegation was privileged to witness the very first

(and successful) hearing for an Order for Protection in the Republic of Georgia. The report includes a summary of current conditions, including information on street children and children living in institutions, as well as numerous substantive recommendations for the UN Country Team and the Georgian government as they



Jeanne Voigt (left) and Judge Nino Bakakuri (center) with Women’s Program staff members Cheryl Thomas, Laura Nelson, and Mary Ellingen

partner to develop and implement an effective and responsive system to protect Georgia’s domestic violence victims and children. The report is available in both English and Georgian.

Fact-Finding Mission to Bulgaria



Staff attorneys Mary Ellingen and Rosalyn Park with members of the NGO “Demetra” and BGRF attorney, Albena Koycheva

Minnesota Advocates successfully completed a two-week mission to Bulgaria in July 2007 to monitor implementation of the Law on Protection

against Domestic Violence. Since the law passed in March 2005, Minnesota Advocates has worked with its longtime partner, the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF), to train police and judges on the implementation of the law. Minnesota Advocates is currently working with the BGRF to document implementation of the law and make recommendations to improve the government’s response.

Staff attorneys Mary Ellingen and Rosalyn Park visited six cities in Bulgaria – Sofia, Plovdiv, Pleven, Ruse, Varna and Burgas – accompanied by lawyers from the BGRF. The team conducted interviews with lawyers, judges, police, prosecutors, and NGO representatives. The team observed positive developments, including more effective assistance to victims of domestic vio-

lence where NGOs are working with government agencies. For example, in one city, the police are working with NGOs to develop a center to provide services to victims, replicating a successful model in Sofia.

There is still a need, however, for greater public awareness and greater resources for victims, such as shelters. Those interviewed also stressed the need for legislative changes that would criminalize violations of protection orders and increase criminal penalties for acts of domestic violence. Minnesota Advocates will publish its conclusions and recommendations regarding the implementation of the 2005 Law on Protection against Domestic Violence in a report this fall.



The team meeting with police from Burgas

Minnesota Advocates Testifies at Congressional Briefing on Medical Treatment at Immigration Detention Centers

Refugee and Immigrant Program Director Michele Garnett McKenzie traveled to Washington to testify about severe problems with health care delivery faced by people detained in immigration custody. The July 9, 2007 briefing was sponsored by Congressman Keith Ellison (MN-5th). Panelists included Allen S. Keller, M.D., Director, Bellevue/N.Y.U. Program for Survivors of Torture, June Everett, sister of Sandra Kenley who died in Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, Tom Jawetz, Immigration Detention Staff Attorney, ACLU National Prison Project, and Michele Garnett McKenzie, Refugee and Immigrant Program Director, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights serves as the co-chair of the Detention Watch Network and helps to coordinate the

Minnesota Detention Project, a regional alliance of immigration legal service providers ensuring access to counsel for immigration detainees in the upper Midwest.

Recent articles in the New York Times and Washington Post have unveiled inadequacies regarding the medical treatment immigrant detainees receive while held by ICE. The New York Times article reveals that at least 62 people have died while in ICE custody since 2004. The Washington Post article details extreme failures in medical treatment that resulted in death and serious disfigurement. A January report by the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that four out of five immigration detention facilities in its study had significant failures in providing health care.

Immigration Practice Tip: New Immigration Filing Fees Result in Increased Need for Fee Waiver Requests

On July 30, 2007, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) implemented its new fee schedule, increasing filing fees for immigration benefits by an average of 66 percent. The new fee schedule affects asylum seekers and asylees, dramatically increasing the costs incurred in renewing employment authorization and applying for lawful permanent resident status. Asylum applicants seeking to renew their employment authorization documents now must pay \$340 to renew their documents. When applying for lawful permanent resident status, people granted asylum face a filing fee of \$930, plus biometric fees.

The new fee rules include updated guidance for clients seeking to waive certain application fees due to an inability to pay. The section of the law that states these new guidelines can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.7(c)(5), and is published in 72 Fed. Reg. 29851. The fee waiver guidance is now more specific regarding which applications qualify for fee waivers. A fee waiver can be sought (including biometrics fees which were previously not waivable) in the following cases: application for adjustment of status from asylees, victims of trafficking, victims of violent crime, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self petitioners, and special immigration juveniles. People applying for employment authorization can also request fee waivers.

A client making one of these applications may get a fee waived if he or she shows an inability to pay the requested fees. This requires thoroughly documenting the client's income and assets, expenses, and any government benefits the client receives. The fee waiver guidance from USCIS urges applicants to submit documents including copies of pay stubs, tax returns, utility bills, rent/mortgage receipts, school fee receipts, and SSI, food stamp, or other benefits payments received in order to prove eli-

gibility for the fee waiver. The client should also submit an affidavit stating the client's inability to pay the fee and explain why he or she believes he or she deserves the fee waiver.

Minnesota Advocates advises attorneys representing *pro bono* clients to talk with their clients about the option of a fee waiver. Clients may not realize a fee waiver is an option, and often will put off filing applications for permanent resident status or other benefits because they cannot afford the fee. Volunteers who are preparing fee waiver applications can look for sample requests on www.probono.net/asylum. Additionally, practitioners should see the new memo from USCIS Acting Associate Director Donald Neufeld, dated July 25, 2007, which provides guidance on the adjudication of fee waiver applications in light of the new rules. This memo will also be available on www.probono.net/asylum. As always, volunteers should contact Minnesota Advocates staff if they have questions about fee waiver requests and whether or not to make one, depending on their client's situation.

Minnesota Advocates submitted comments opposing the new fee schedule.

We are grateful for the help of Sue Halverson of Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi LLP for authoring Minnesota Advocates' comments.

Visit www.mnadvocates.org in the "What's New" archive to view Minnesota Advocates' comments.

Liberia TRC Updates

Minnesota Advocates' Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Diaspora Project (TRC Project) is expanding both nationally and internationally. Minnesota Advocates is continuing to work with members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as project partners around the country to ensure that Liberians around the world are able to participate in the TRC process.

Ghana

The TRC Project is collecting statements from Liberians in the Buduburam Refugee Settlement near Accra, Ghana. Currently, there are 38,000 Liberian refugees residing in this camp, which has been in existence for 17 years. The TRC conducted outreach in the camp in early April and May of this year. During a week-long statement taking pilot project in May, a team of Minnesota Advocates' staff and volunteers, along with three TRC representatives, gathered more than 160 statements. Jennifer Prestholdt, Deputy Director of Minnesota Advocates and leader of the team that traveled to Ghana, said that interest in the TRC in Buduburam was overwhelming. Prestholdt said, "The week was very intense – each day the line of people waiting to give their statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) got longer and longer."

For many statement givers in Buduburam, the TRC process was the first time they had recounted their stories of displacement and severe human rights violations. It was also the first time that many had been asked for their recommendations about reconciliation, reforms, and national healing. The residents of Buduburam seized the opportunity to give well-considered and creative recommendations about how Liberians can recover after decades of conflict. Many statement givers also talked about the importance of their links with family and friends in the United



The Liberian TRC and Minnesota Advocates team meet with former child soldiers in Buduburam Refugee Camp

States, and called on Liberians living in the United States to take an active role in healing Liberia's wounds.

Interest among refugees in the camp in participating in the TRC process is so great that Minnesota Advocates is organizing a subsequent trip and calling for volunteer statement takers to participate. One team from Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights will travel to Ghana September 21 - September 30, 2007 and a second team will travel to Ghana September 28 - October 7, 2007. The teams will be led by Robin Phillips, Minnesota Advocates' Executive Director and Jennifer Prestholdt, Minnesota Advocates' Deputy Director.

Jerome Verdier's Visit

Clr. Jerome J. Verdier, Sr., Chairman of the TRC of Liberia, completed a successful visit to the U.S. this June in conjunction with Minnesota Advocates' Human Rights Awards Dinner. During a two-week trip to the United States, Clr. Verdier visited Minnesota, Atlanta, and Philadelphia to review the work of the TRC's Diaspora Project. Verdier officially launched statement taking in Philadelphia and Atlanta and participated in numerous meetings with project partners on his three-city tour. Verdier also held community meetings on each U.S. stop to allow Liberians living in the Diaspora to present their questions and ideas to the TRC Chairman.

TRC Diaspora's Project Continued National Expansion

In June, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights' Liberian TRC Diaspora Project doubled in size, from two cities to four, and the fall months will bring two additional cities on board. The TRC Diaspora Project currently has trained statement taker volunteers available in Minnesota, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Atlanta, and soon it will expand to Providence, RI and Staten Island, NY. Another expansion is planned for the Washington, D.C. and Maryland area. Although the TRC Diaspora Project does not have trained statement takers in every city where Liberians are found, the project has focused its expansion on cities with well-



Taking statements from women in a "Women of Glory" skills training program.

established, significant Liberian populations. For Liberians who are not living in one of the project areas, a toll-free number is available to give statements over the phone, or statement forms can be downloaded online.

Minnesota and Chicago were the first TRC Diaspora Project sites. Statement taking began in Minnesota in January and in Chicago in March of 2007. Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights partnered with the Northwestern University School of Law's Bluhm Legal Clinic to conduct outreach and train law student volunteers as statement takers.

As word about the TRC spread throughout the Liberian communities in the United States, community leaders in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Staten Island, and Providence began asking when the TRC would come to them. In Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania Law School's Transnational Law Clinic offered its assistance as a project partner. Statement taking was officially launched in Philadelphia in mid-June with Schnader Harrison Segal and Lewis LLP coordinating volunteer statement takers. In Atlanta, with the help of the Carter Center, Emory University, and King and Spalding, the TRC Diaspora Project was launched in a moving ceremony at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site in late June.

Each expansion site provides new opportunities and challenges.

Give Your Statement to the Liberia TRC!

Call (612) 766-7788 or
1-800-799-3688

For more information contact:
Kim Babine (612) 341-3302 ext. 113
Liberia-TRC@mnadvocates.org

In Minnesota, the project began as a unique collaboration between Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the Pro Bono Consortium, a group of large law firms committed to *pro bono* work. In Chicago, Northwestern University developed the model of law clinic students as statement takers. The Atlanta Friends of the Liberian TRC operates using a loose coalition with a strong faith-based component and collaborative leadership from a number of community groups. In Philadelphia, Penn Law School, Liberian Community leaders and immigration legal service providers are involved. Each partnership draws on the protocols and systems developed by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, but the project sites continue to learn from one another and adapt to the needs of their specific communities.

Volunteer Corner: George Norris and Matt Ziegler

George Norris was the first volunteer to accompany Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights staff in their work in the Buduburam Refugee Settlement in Ghana for the TRC Project. George is a graduate of Macalester College, a returned Peace Corps volunteer from the Philippines, and will be starting law school at the University of Minnesota in September, 2007. George joined a team that completed interviews with more than 160 Liberians in a one-week period. George made important connections with former child soldiers in the settlement, many of whom made special requests for George to be their statement



taker. The ex-combatants group in the camp honored George with a gift of an African shirt to show their appreciation for his work with them. We thank George for all his hard work.

Matt Ziegler is a returned Peace Corps volunteer from Liberia, where he served in Sinoe County at the time of the first coup d'etat. Matt's affection for the Liberian people and his dedication to service come through in all of his activities with the TRC Project. Matt was trained as a statement taker and regularly makes himself available on short notice to interview Liberians who decide to share their stories. Matt has also played a critical role in assisting with community outreach and with training other volunteers. Matt has a master's degree in education and is currently employed at the University of Minnesota in the Institute on Community Integration. We appreciate Matt's many contributions. Matt's training session on Liberian history is available at www.liberiatrc.mnadvocates.org.



Matt during his Peace Corps days in Liberia

Minnesota Advocates Events

More information about these and other Minnesota Advocates events can be found on our website at www.mnadvocates.org.

Voices From Silence: Personal Accounts of the Long-Term Impact of 9/11

Speakers: Abdi Aynte and Laura Provinzino
Post-9/11 Project Lecture Series
Co-presented by Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, LLP
Wednesday, August 22, 11:30 – 1:00 pm
Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, LLP
2800 LaSalle Plaza, 800 LaSalle Avenue, Minneapolis

The Andre Thomas Death Penalty Case: Serious Mental Illness on Trial (or Not?)

Speaker: Cliff Anderson
Death Penalty Project Speaker Series
Co-presented by Dorsey & Whitney, LLP
Thursday, September 13, 2007, 12:00 – 1:00 pm
Dorsey & Whitney, Seattle Room, 15th Floor
50 South 6th Street, Minneapolis

Children and Education: Investing in Our Future

Children's Human Rights Speaker Series
Co-presented by Faegre & Benson, LLP
Thursday, September 27, 12:00 – 1:00 pm
Faegre & Benson, LLP, The Century Room
2200 Wells Fargo Center, 90 South Seventh Street, Minneapolis

The Women's Movement in Pakistan: Challenges and Achievements

Speaker: Dr. Fouzia Saeed
Women's Human Rights Speaker Series
Co-presented by Briggs and Morgan, P.A.
Tuesday, October 9, 12:00 – 1:00 pm
Briggs and Morgan, P.A., Minnesota Room
2200 IDS Center, 80 South Eighth St., Minneapolis

Women's Human Rights Film Series

Co-presented with the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library
Returns this fall!

MN Human Rights Week

September 30 – October 6

Events to be listed at www.mnhumanrightsweek.org

Presented by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
in partnership with Speak Truth to Power
and other human rights organizations

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights at the Minnesota State Fair

August 23 – September 3

9:00 am – 9:00 pm

State Fair Grounds

This summer, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights will return to the Great Minnesota Get-Together with an organizational exhibit at the State Fair. We will be displaying information about human rights, including the right to food, the right to education, the right to health, and the right to housing. We will be located on the upper floor of the Grandstand in Booth #224. Please stop by and visit us!

2007 Headwaters Foundation Walk for Justice

September 16, 2007

11:30 am – 3:30 pm

Boom Island Park, Minneapolis

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is once again participating in the Walk for Justice to raise support for our work to promote and protect human rights. The Walk for Justice is a great way for Minnesota Advocates to raise much needed funds for the important work that we do locally, nationally and globally.

Please sign up to walk the 3.5-mile route or pledge to support our walkers at www.walkforjustice.org.

For more information, please contact Ruthie Eklund at eklund057@umn.edu or (612) 341-3302.

Minnesota Advocates joins the Genocide Intervention Network to co-sponsor:

Doctors Without Borders Refugee Camp Exhibit

September 27 – 29

Loring Park, 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis

More information at www.arcrelief.org

Camp Darfur Exhibit

October 13, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Minnesota State Capitol Mall

75 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd., St. Paul

More information at www.mngin.org

Staff and Intern Update

Angela Bortel has joined Minnesota Advocates as our new Women’s Program Staff Attorney. Angela is a 2004 Boalt Hall School of Law graduate and practiced immigration law in California after graduation. Prior to law school, Angela worked with trafficking victims in Russia. Welcome, Angela!

Alena Chaps is working with Minnesota Advocates’ Women’s Program as a Program Assistant in her second year as a St. Joseph Worker, and she will be with us for one year. Alena is a graduate of Loyola University in Chicago. Welcome, Alena!

Min Chong has left Minnesota Advocates after three years as Assistant to the Executive Director. Best of luck, Min!

Kimberly Condon joined Minnesota Advocates as a Program Assistant in the Education Program through the Americorps VISTA program. Kimberly is a recent graduate of Macalester College. Welcome, Kimberly!

Katie Gaughan joined Minnesota Advocates through the Americorps VISTA program as a Program Assistant with Communications and Development. Katie is a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota. Welcome, Katie!

Ingrid Haugland has completed her one-year term with Minnesota Advocates. Ingrid worked as a Program Assistant in the Refugee & Immigrant Program through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. Good luck, Ingrid!

Laura Nelson has left Minnesota Advocates for a position at Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi LLP. We miss you, Laura!

Krysten Skogstad joined Minnesota Advocates as our new Program Assistant in the Refugee & Immigrant Program through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. Welcome, Krysten!

Thank you to each of our talented summer interns!

Brad Engelsma (Colgate University), **Cassandra Roseen Fields** (University of Minnesota), **Mikaela Hagen** (Carleton College), **Sarah Mesick** (University of Minnesota), and **Jennifer Vail** (Macalester College), with the Education Program; **Elsie Lewison** (McGill University), **Arlene Ortiz-Leytte** (University of Notre Dame), **Robert Painter** (Macalester College), **Laura Scully** (Brooklyn Law School), and **Meghan Wild Sweeney** (Drake University Law School) with the Refugee & Immigrant Program; **Kara Apland** (Brown University), **Ruthie Eklund** (Midwest Human Rights Coalition Fellow), **Ben Guthrie** (St. Olaf College), **Seyon Nyanwleh** (Upper Midwest Human Rights Fellow), and **Aaron Teskey** (George Washington University) with Special Projects; **Zara Bohan** (Macalester College), **Sasha Choulenina** (University of Minnesota), **Danielle Sollars** (William Mitchell College of Law), and **Erin White** (University of Oregon School of Law) with the Women’s Human Rights Program.



Kimberly Condon, Katie Gaughan, Angela Bortel, and Alena Chaps

Thank You to Recent Refugee and Immigrant Program Volunteers

Many thanks to the attorneys, paralegals, and support staff accepting and assisting in new cases in March, April, May, and June.

Steven Benolkin
 Michael Berger
 Richard Breitman
 Sang Young Brodie
 Ben Casper
 Apu Chakraborty
 Heather Crain
 Hetal Dalal
 Laura Danielson
 Erika Donner
 Paul Egan
 Mark Ehling

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 Jeff Keyes
 Michael Krause
 Sara Lathrop
 Karen Leko
 Ashwen Madia
 John Mandler
 Sara McLaren
 Brooke Mengel
 Declan Mumford
 Casey Nolan

Tokunbo Okanla
 Kathy Olmscheid
 Nancy Peterson
 Matt Ralph
 Michelle Rivero
 Amy Schroeder Ireland
 Rachel Soffer
 Elizabeth Streefland
 Roger Taylor
 Steve Thal
 Dick Zonneveld

Staff

Robin Phillips	Executive Director
Kim Babine	Administrative Assistant
Colleen R. Beebe	Education Program Director
Angela Bortel	Women's Program Staff Attorney
Alena Chaps	Women's Program Assistant, St. Joseph Worker
Kimberly Condon	Education Program Assistant, Americorps VISTA
Mary Ellingen	Women's Program Staff Attorney
Emily Farell	Education Program Associate
Katie Gaughan	Development & Communications Assistant, Americorps VISTA
Emily Good	Refugee & Immigrant Program Staff Attorney
Sarah Herder	Development & Communications Director
Mary Hunt	Women's Program Associate
Fatima Jawaid	Administrative Assistant/Receptionist
Julia Kashaeva	Education Program Assistant
Kay Kautio	Administrative Director
Michele Garnett McKenzie	Refugee & Immigrant Program Director
Rebecca Palmer	Women's Program Staff Attorney
Rosalyn Park	Staff Attorney, Special Projects and Women's Program
Jennifer Prestholdt	Deputy Director
Malinda Schmiechen	Refugee & Immigrant Program Staff Attorney
Kathy Seipp	Education Program Associate
Ahmed Sirleaf	Special Projects Program Assistant
Krysten Skogstad	Refugee & Immigrant Program Assistant, LVC Volunteer
David Takassi	Refugee & Immigrant Program Associate
Ann Theisen	Education Program Online Editor
Cheryl Thomas	Women's Program Director
Laura Young	Wellstone Legal Fellow

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