

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVER



25th Anniversary 2008 Human Rights Awards Dinner

On June 5th, The Advocates for Human Rights held its 2008 Human Rights Awards Dinner at The Depot in downtown Minneapolis. This year's event celebrated The Advocates' 25th Anniversary. Nearly 800 people attended, including lawyers, teachers, students, artists, volunteers, and others from the community and from across the globe.

Board President Aviva Breen welcomed guests to the event and then turned the program over to Executive Director Robin Phillips. Phillips told guests that the evening was a celebration not only of the organization, but also of being part of a greater community advocating for human rights and social justice in Minnesota.

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Don Fraser, Barbara Frey, Arvonne Fraser, Sam Heins
at the 2008 Human Rights Awards Dinner

Liberian TRC Public Hearings



TRC Chairman Jerome Verdier
welcoming attendees

The Advocates for Human Rights hosted public hearings for the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) from June 9 - 14, 2008 at Hamline University's Sundin Music Hall in St. Paul, Minnesota. All eight commissioners of the TRC traveled from Liberia to participate in this historic event, the first time a national truth commission has ever held hearings outside the country of conflict. The hearings were open to the public and streamed live on the Internet.

From 1979 to 2003, more than 1.5 million Liberians were forced from their homes to escape the violence and destruction of a protracted civil conflict. Many Liberians eventually made their way to the United States in their flight from war, including an estimated 30,000 who settled in Minnesota.

Since January 2007, The Advocates has been taking statements from Liberians living in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Buduburam Refugee Settlement in Ghana about their experiences during the Liberian conflict. The public hearings were the first opportunity for Liberians in the U.S. to provide direct testimony to the Commissioners of the TRC.

Witnesses traveled from across the United States to participate in the hearings. They testified about the human rights abuses in Liberia that forced them to flee, their experiences in flight and in refugee camps, and the experience of resettlement in the U.S.

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The Observer is published by
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The Advocates for Human Rights

The mission of The Advocates for Human Rights is to implement international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law. The 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, policymakers and children about human rights and cultural understanding. The Advocates holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.

From the Director's Desk

This year, as we commemorate our 25th Anniversary, we also celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of our many volunteers. The Advocates was founded on the core principles that each person has a role in protecting the human rights of others, and that collectively, we are much more powerful than any one of us acting alone.

The Advocates currently has more than 1,000 volunteers, directed by a 27-member staff. Volunteers carry out a wide range of projects, including representing asylum seekers, conducting human rights fact-finding locally and overseas, writing human rights curriculum, and helping with fundraising and administrative needs.

This past year, more than 300 volunteer lawyers handled asylum cases in an effort to bring safety to those fleeing human rights abuses. Volunteer interpreters and doctors joined with legal professionals to provide the highest quality representation to our clients, resulting in a success rate of nearly 90% for our cases. Other volunteers provided consultation at our walk-in immigration legal advice clinics and detained immigration court. In all, nearly 1,100 people received assistance through the help of The Advocates volunteers.

Volunteer lawyers and judges accompanied staff to the Republic of Georgia to train police, judges, and prosecutors in implementing their new law on domestic violence. Over twenty individuals worked with us on our report on human sex trafficking in Minnesota, assisting with interviews and research. Many professors, lawyers, and activists volunteered to speak at our conferences and lunch lecture series to educate the public about important human rights issues, and teachers helped create lesson plans to educate the next generation of human rights advocates.

Our Liberian TRC Diaspora Project brought hundreds of volunteers together to promote peace-building and respect for human rights in the truth and reconciliation process. More than 600 volunteers in the U.S. and the U.K. took statements from Liberians who fled the brutal civil war in their country. Twenty-three volunteers traveled to the Buduburum Refugee Settlement in Ghana to take

statements from Liberians there.

Our recent historic public hearings for the Liberian TRC highlight some of the more nontraditional ways volunteers become involved in human rights work. A team of court reporters from the Minnesota Association of Verbatim Court Reporters & Captioners volunteered to transcribe the hearings. The entire proceedings were filmed and webcast with the help of Bob Vaaler – who coordinated a crew of 20 professionals – Magnetic Pictures, and St. Paul Neighborhood Network TV. Hamline University provided the audio, and Georgia Tech provided the webcast technology. Attorneys Chris Carlson, Dulce Foster, Dianne Heins, Mark Kalla, Jim O'Neal, and Professor Sarah Paoletti from Penn Law School worked with witnesses to prepare them to give their testimony. Psychosocial service providers from the Center for Victims of Torture, as well as volunteers from the Liberian Ministers Association, the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking, and Southern Truth & Reconciliation, volunteered to provide support to the witnesses before and after their testimony. J. Austin & Associates coordinated media relations. Hamline University hosted the public hearings, and dozens of volunteers helped coordinate the logistics of the hearings. The great success of the public hearings was the result of this amazing team effort.

Through the exceptional efforts of our volunteers, we are able to leverage a relatively small cash budget to provide millions of dollars in human rights services. More importantly, this expanding corps of volunteers, people who have experienced first-hand the importance of this work, are essential in creating broader communities that respect human rights both here and across the world. After 25 years, we still believe that each of us makes a difference, and that together, we can bring about a more just world.



Robin Phillips
Executive Director

Nepal School: First Class Graduates

Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental. – W.E.B. Dubois

In May, a six-member delegation of staff and volunteers from The Advocates for Human Rights traveled to Nepal to attend the Sankhu-Palubari Community School's first eighth grade graduation. Delegation members included Executive Director Robin Phillips, Board President Aviva Breen, and Education Director Colleen Beebe, as well as long-time supporters and volunteers, Lois Libby Juster, Carole Martin, and Daniel Pennie.



Carole Martin and Lois Libby Juster with the eight graduates

The graduation was a milestone for the school's eight graduates, who have studied there since it opened its doors in September 1999. Currently enrolling 241 of the area's most disadvantaged children in grades K-8, the school provides a free quality education, a free daily meal, and health care as a way to break the cycle of poverty and combat the prevalent issues of child labor and illiteracy.

The school is a three-way partnership between the local community, represented by a committee made up of parents and community members; Hoste Hainse, a Nepali non-profit that works to prevent child labor and promotes quality education for children at risk of child labor; and The Advocates for Human Rights.

With the help of donors, The Advocates for Human Rights is committed to providing scholarships to the eight graduates so that they can continue their studies in a local high school. Three of the eight graduates from this year's class who are going on to study in 9th grade are featured below.

Anoop: This graduate considers the teachers of the Sankhu school and members of The Advocates for Human Rights to be his second parents who helped him to receive an education.

Bishbu: One of the youngest graduates at 15 years old, Bishnu says that his parents, who are farmers, sent him to school because they wanted him to study and be a good person.

Kanchi: One of the two female graduates, Kanchi is one of seven children in her family. Her mother and father's hard work in the fields is not enough to send their children to school. To get to school, she walked one and a half hours each way. Kanchi



Sankhu-Palubari Community School

says that after she completes her studies, she would like to use her knowledge to help children who are in danger of child labor.

These three young people, as well as the other graduates, are a window into the future potential of Nepal. It is through the opportunity of obtaining an education that they and other youth like them will bring positive change and hope to Nepal.

If you would like to help children like Anoop, Bishnu, and Kanchi attend school in Nepal, please contact Colleen Beebe at The Advocates for Human Rights at 612.341.3302, ext. 114.

Join The Advocates at the
Minnesota State Fair!
Aug. 21 – Sept. 1



Please stop by our booth on the lower level of the Grandstand.

For information about our State Fair campaign, *Energy of a Nation*, visit our website at www.energyofanation.org.

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Mahamoud Wardere from Sen. Coleman's office, Jim O'Neal, Mark Kalla, Dianne Heins, Siad Ali from Sen. Klobuchar's office, and Rosalyn Park listening to testimony

"Organizing this week of public hearings has been a rewarding challenge," said Robin Phillips, executive director of The Advocates. "The Advocates was pleased and honored to help make this historic event possible and to work with the TRC of Liberia in their efforts to include the diaspora community in the truth and reconciliation process."

After a day of private testimony, the public hearings commenced on Tuesday, June 10th. Dan Loritz of Hamline University and Robin Phillips of The Advocates formally welcomed the TRC to the United States. Representatives from prominent Liberian organizations also spoke. TRC Chairman Jerome Verdier described the essential role the diaspora would play in uncovering the root causes of the conflict.

The public testimony began with an overview of the Liberian conflict. This history was provided by expert witness Dr. Augustine Konneh from Atlanta, Georgia. Bishop Bennie Warner, former vice president of Liberia, then testified about his experience as a member of the Tolbert administration in the late 1970s and about the coup in which Tolbert was assassinated.

The following day, witnesses described the roots of the conflict in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Witnesses included the daughter of Liberia's former President Tolbert, Wilhelmina Holder, who testified about her experience of the 1980 coup in which her father was killed. James Hunder, a security guard to President Tolbert, gave testimony about his experience working as a prison guard and being assigned to several high level political prisoners. Garswah Blacktom recounted his memories of the Rice Riots in the late 1970s, and Samuel Kalongo Luo talked about his work as a soldier in the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) under President Tolbert and his role as a close advisor to President Samuel Doe.

Thursday's session opened with the testimony of Ambassador Hank Cohen, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1989 to 1992, who described the U.S. response to the conflict from his perspective of working in Liberia and other parts of Africa during this period. Later that day, Ambassador

Cohen asked to return to the stand to apologize and express his personal belief that the U.S. could have acted differently to lessen or avoid the conflict.

Later, Alfred Zeon talked about his experiences as an AFL soldier under Samuel Doe in the 1980s. Bai Gbala, a close advisor to three Liberian presidents, also testified. The TRC heard witnesses describe their experience of hardship and human rights abuses during the conflict in the 1990s as well. Pajibo Kyne testified about deprivation and abuses that he and his family experienced. Rev. Bill Harris described his experience of working with Liberians in the United States while they tried to cope with the conflict at home.

U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum attended the hearings on Friday and addressed those gathered for the testimony. Many of the witnesses on Friday spoke to the experiences of women in Liberia. Miatta Adotey, Jane Samukai, Doris Parker, and Marie Vah gave testimony on their personal experiences of human rights abuses and atrocities during the conflict. Dr. Patricia Jabbeh-Wesley, a professor from Penn State University, testified about both her personal experience trying to survive in Monrovia during the conflict and her flight to the United States. She also offered her perceptions of the experience of Liberian women during the conflict based on her research. Ali Sylla testified about his experience as a teenager, when his neighborhood was attacked by Charles Taylor's forces.

Later in the week, the Liberian Ambassador to the UN, Milton Barnes, gave brief remarks at the hearings. Witnesses that day included Kerper Dwanyen and Miamen Wopea, who presented their personal testimonies to the TRC. Representatives of Liberian diaspora had the opportunity to give testimony. Doris Parker and a panel from the Liberian Women's Initiatives—Minnesota (LIWIM) presented the experience of Liberian women in the diaspora. A panel of Liberian leaders, including Telee Brown of the Staten Island Liberian Community Association (SILCA), Sam Slewion of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas, Hassan Kiawu of the Liberian Association of Metropolitan Atlanta (LAMA), and OLM president Kerper Dwanyen presented recommendations on behalf of their organizations to the TRC.



Emmanuel Wetee of ULAA, Dan Loritz of Hamline University, OLM president Kerper Dwanyen, The Advocates' Robin Phillips, Consul General Alexander Gbayee of Liberia, and Marzu Stubblefield from UNDP in Liberia, at the opening ceremony



The commissioners of the TRC of Liberia



Commissioner Konneh addressing the audience



Bai Gbala, advisor to three Liberian presidents, testifying



Bennie Warner, former vice president of Liberia, testifying before the TRC



Doris Parker and a panel from the Liberian Women's Initiatives-Minnesota giving testimony as part of a women's panel

Thank You to All Public Hearings Volunteers!

- Bob Vaaler/Magnetic Pictures for filming
- Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking for witness support
- Center for Victims of Torture for witness support
- Georgia Institute of Technology for webcasting
- Hamline University for technology and logistics support
- Liberian Ministers Association for witness support
- Minnesota Association of Verbatim Reporters & Captioners for transcription
- Southern Truth & Reconciliation for witness support
- St. Paul Neighborhood Network for filming
- J. Austin & Associates for media relations

And to the hundreds of individual volunteers who made the public hearings a success!



TRC Vice Chair Dede Dolopei

Liberian Refugees in Ghana Being Repatriated

As a part of its Liberian TRC Diaspora Project, The Advocates has established a connection with the community of Liberian refugees in the Buduburam settlement outside of Accra, Ghana. There currently are more than 38,000 refugees living in Buduburam. The Advocates has traveled to the settlement on three occasions as part of its work with the Liberian TRC.

Liberians began arriving in Ghana in 1990 in the wake of the atrocities being committed in their home country. Although the perception from the outside might be that this settlement must be well established after 18 years, opportunities for employment and education are scarce. Health and sanitation conditions are substandard. A solution for those living in the camp has been elusive – Liberia is not ready to receive them home, they are largely dependent on remittances and NGO support in Ghana, and resettlement to third countries has been largely stopped. These issues have sparked tensions in the debate over integration versus repatriation for Liberian refugees.

At the beginning of 2008, the Ghanaian government announced a multi-million dollar program to integrate Liberian refugees into Ghanaian society, as previous repatriation efforts had received minimal participation. On February 9, a group of refugees delivered a petition to the UNHCR and the Ghana Refugee Board. The petition stated that they “strongly oppose” integration into Ghanaian society and that they were requesting to be resettled in a third country or to be given US \$1,000 in order to start a new life back in Liberia. In conjunction with this request, hundreds of Liberian refugees – primarily women and

children – held a month-long protest on a soccer field in Buduburam.

On March 17th, Ghanaian authorities arrested 630 of the protesters. The detained protesters, virtually all women and children, were taken to Kodeabe Youth Camp in the Eastern Region of Ghana. In the process, many families were separated. The conditions of this detention area were of grave concern. Reports showed that two pregnant women had miscarriages while detained, and others suffered from scorpion bites. One woman who had diarrhea was only saved by the intervention of a human rights activist who called the commander of the security unit for her to get medical attention. After intervention from UNHCR, the Liberian government, and Ghanaian human rights NGOs, 90 of the most vulnerable women and children were released after a few days, and ultimately, all of the detainees were released back to the camp. However, the crackdown also included arrests of Liberian men from the camp, several of whom were summarily deported, apparently without due process of law in Ghana.

After the protests, the Ghanaian government and UNHCR came to an agreement to close the camp and repatriate the refugees back to Liberia. The unrest highlights the tragic plight of refugees who flee situations of long-term conflict. Finding durable solutions for long-term refugee crises must be a continuing point of advocacy for those concerned with human rights globally.

The Advocates’ Cheryl Thomas Invited to U.N. Expert Meeting



Participants at breakout session

In May 2008, Cheryl Thomas, director of the Women’s Human Rights Program, was one of fifteen experts invited to a United Nations Expert Group Meeting in Vienna on best practices in legislation on violence against women.

The meeting was convened by the Division for the Advancement of Women. Other experts were from Spain, Honduras, Uruguay, Turkey, India, the United Kingdom, Austria, the Netherlands, Philippines, Nigeria, Kenya, Croatia, the Pacific Islands, South Africa, and the United States. The meeting involved plenary sessions with all participants and breakout groups on domestic violence and sexual assault. Discussions focused on best practices and lessons learned on legal reform on violence against women.

On the first day, all participants presented their papers on various legal reform efforts on violence against women. Cheryl Thomas presented her paper on the topic, “Legal Reform on Domestic Violence



Cheryl Thomas with other experts

in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union.” Participants reported a wide range of activities and progress on efforts to address violence against women. There was agreement among the group that there is an urgent need internationally for standards and best practice models for governments and civil society groups to use as they embark on legal reform efforts. As a follow-up to the meeting, participants are drafting a model framework for legislation on violence against women.

Protecting Women's Rights Overseas

In June, Cheryl Thomas, Mary C. Ellison, and Aviva Breen traveled to Yerevan, Armenia for two days of meetings with approximately sixteen government and non-governmental officials involved in drafting and advocating for a new domestic violence law in the Republic of Armenia. The Women's Rights Center and its president, Susanna Vardanyan, invited The Advocates to facilitate the two-day meeting. The two organizations have collaborated in the past, and in 2000, The Advocates published a human rights report entitled "Domestic Violence in Armenia."

Participants included officials in the Ministries of Health, Justice, Labor, and Social Affairs, the Republic of Armenia Police, and representatives of non-governmental organizations, including the Armenian Helsinki Committee and the Women's Rights Center. A representative from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and a representative of the Open Society Institute Foundation also attended the



Members of the Armenian working group

meeting, providing an important perspective on developments in the protection of women from violence in the Former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe (FSU/CEE).

The goals for the two days of meetings were to expand participants' knowledge of international best practices on domestic violence legal reform, and to give participants techniques and strategies to convince members of parliament to adopt the new domestic violence law. The Advocates shared best

practices from the U.S., Bulgaria, and Georgia, among other countries. Participants engaged in a lively discussion of a number of concepts and points in their draft law, including the definition of domestic violence, the types of remedies that should be available to victims, and the responsibilities of the government and non-governmental organizations.

The culmination of the meetings was a practice parliamentary hearing. During the practice hearing, many of the participants testified to prepare for likely questions and arguments from elected officials. The following is a summary of some of the testimony:

"I would like to thank the honorable members of the parliament for agreeing to these hearings and to ask them to be ready for further cooperation. Our sisters, our daughters, and our mothers are affected by domestic violence. We have witnessed more domestic violence than the statistics suggest. In order to ensure safety and in order for us to be a civilized country, we need this domestic violence law. This kind of law has already been passed in other democratic countries, and societies are yielding the fruits of these laws."

"The essence of the law should be orders to protect the victims. In practice, we face problems because we have a gap in the legal framework when representing victims. We should officially recognize that there is a problem. We cannot pretend that we do not have this responsibility. The parliament should take responsibility and pass this law. Passing a domestic violence law is a matter of national security, international human rights, and constitutional rights. It ensures rights, prosperity, and well-being."

The working group will continue its work to advocate for the new law by consulting with counterparts in other FSU/CEE countries, as well as international experts. The Armenia group plans to introduce the law in parliament in the upcoming year.

Save the Date to Celebrate!

Women's Program House Party and Fundraiser
 Sunday, October 12th
 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

At the home of Marlene and Tom Kayser
 466 S. Mississippi River Boulevard
 St. Paul, MN

To celebrate the Women's Program and the 70th birthday of Advisory Committee Co-Chair and Board member, Marlene Kayser!
 Tom Kayser has agreed to match donations up to the amount raised at the September 2007 House Party.

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Board member Dipankar Mukherjee

Robin Phillips also described some historic milestones in The Advocates' recent human rights work, such as the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's public hearings in St. Paul, the first graduation from the Sankhu-

Palubari School in Nepal, the Women's Program Regional Conference on Domestic Violence Legal Reform in Bulgaria, and the ongoing legal services provided to asylum seekers and immigrant detainees.

She went on to thank the board, staff, and volunteers of The Advocates for all of their hard work in ensuring the success of the organization.

After acknowledging organizational accomplishments, Phillips encouraged the audience to look forward to the challenges ahead. "We do not want to lose sight of all the work that remains and our responsibility to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves," she said.

Hyder Khan and Cheryl Thomas recognized volunteer award winners, including Mourad Ammi for his work as a professional interpreter, Kim Hunter for her work as a consulting immigration attorney, James Keuning for designing a new client database, and Matthew Ralph for his work in representing asylum clients. Other volunteer award winners included Amy Albus for her work on the Stop Violence Against Women website and Lily Troia for her work on women's rights.

The Advocates presented the 2008 Special Recognition Award to Padilla Speer Beardsley, David Kistle, and Faith Einerson for their extraordinary *pro bono* support in guiding the organization through its recent name change. The firm provided professional advice throughout the entire process by facilitating the selection of a new name, developing marketing materials, and introducing design concepts and color schemes for the new logo.

Volunteers DeAnne Hilgers and Pamela Wandzel announced the honorable mention of the Human Rights Video Contest, which went to filmmaker Jonathan Woodward. Board members Jim Dorsey and Wood Foster then reflected on the past 25 years of The Advocates.

Board member Mark Lindberg introduced Don and Arvonne Fraser and announced that The Advocates' annual human rights award has been renamed the Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award, in recognition of their pioneering work in the field of human rights. Arvonne Fraser presented the Don and

Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award to Samuel D. Heins, who was a founding member of The Advocates. Twenty-five years ago, he brought together several lawyers to establish the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, and served as the first board chair of the organization. Heins is currently an equity member and governor of the local firm Heins Mills & Olson, P.L.C.

Don Fraser then presented the Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award to Barbara A. Frey. Frey was also a founding member of The Advocates and was the first full-time executive director of the organization, serving in that capacity for 13 years. Frey is currently the Director of the Human Rights Program in the Global Studies Department at the University of Minnesota.

Ishmael Beah, author of the international best seller, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, delivered the keynote address. Beah came to the United States when he was seventeen and graduated from Oberlin College in 2004. In his book, Beah tells the riveting and difficult story of his youth, when he was forced to become a child soldier in Sierra Leone and was later rehabilitated.



Keynote speaker Ishmael Beah

Beah discussed the importance of working for human rights. "As somebody who has lived through the war and come out of it, I've been somebody who has seen what the practical applications of human rights are, and what they do to the human being, to the person," he said. Beah pointed out that often "human rights" is discussed in abstract terms or concepts. He encouraged audience members to remember what it means to individuals. "When you've absolutely lost faith in your life and then when the worthiness of your own human spirit is restored again, you become a strong believer in human rights," Beah said. "Through human rights, I believe we begin to really understand our commonalities, what makes us human, as opposed to our little differences that sometimes set us apart."

Aviva Breen, board chair, followed Beah's speech by describing her recent trip to Nepal for the graduation of the Sankhu-Palubari school. She also encouraged attendees to donate to the organization to have a lasting impact on programs and projects.

Pat Gaughan gave beautiful guitar performances for the evening's celebration before and after the program. She played a mix of folk, blues, and music from around the world.



Staff members Malinda Schmiechen and Emily Good



Board member Roberta Walburn



Board members Mark Lindberg and Wood Foster



Robin Phillips (center) with Special Recognition Award recipients Faith Einerson and David Kistle



David Weissbrodt and Eric Janus



Board Chair Aviva Breen

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

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Bill, Connie, and Todd Cameron	Rachel Johnson Hamlin	Ordway Center for the Performing Arts	Ruth Usem
Canterbury Park	Sandy Johnson	The Outing Lodge at Pine Point	Walker Art Center
Cathy Carlson	The Jungle Theater	Pangea World Theater	David Weissbrodt
Howard M. Christopherson and Icebox Quality Framing & Gallery	Julia Kashaeva	Hong Sik Peter Park	The Wellness Center
Aloysuis Chu	Marlene Kayser	David Parker	Wild Mountain
	Hyder Khan and Nazneen Khatoun		Roberta Walburn
			Heidi Witte
			Christine Yang

Advocating with Liberia Delegation

The Advocates for Human Rights traveled to Washington, D.C. in May with Liberian leaders and advocates. The delegation met with key legislative offices and allies to develop a strategy for bringing permanent resident status to the thousands of Liberians who have been under temporary protection in the U.S. since the outbreak of the Liberian conflict in 1991.

The delegation was spearheaded by the Coalition for Permanent Residency, a Minnesota-based group working for fair immigration policies for communities affected by long-term temporary protected status designations. Throughout 2008, CPR has worked to raise awareness of the urgency of Liberian immigration status. The Advocates for Human Rights is an active member of the Coalition for Permanent Residency, a group that also includes Jewish Community Action, the Minneapolis Urban League, the State Council on Black Minnesotans, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, as well as many others.

Liberian community leadership from Minnesota and around the country took part in the trip. Emmanuel Wettee, president of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), and Liberian leaders from Atlanta, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, and Rhode Island joined Deputy Chief of Mission to the Liberian Embassy, Edwin F. Sele, to educate lawmakers on the need for continued protection of Liberians.

Accompanying the delegation were Melanie Nezer of Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and Eric Sigmon of Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services. The two also organized a lunch briefing at Amnesty International USA, which was generously hosted by the Refugee Council USA.



Michele Garnett McKenzie, Michael Wreh, Kerper Dwanyen, and Edwin F. Sele

The United States has extended temporary protection to Liberians since they began arriving nearly 20 years ago. Every year, Liberians have been required to re-register for TPS, paying filing fees to renew their status and work permission. In September 2006, the Department of Homeland Security announced the termination of Liberian TPS, effective October 1, 2007. On September 12, 2007, President Bush announced that Liberians who were registered under TPS would be permitted to remain and work in the U.S. under Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) until March 31, 2009. The Advocates hopes that the many Liberians who are now such an integral part of our society will find relief with an option for permanent resident status.

A Retrospective Look at Human Rights



Keynote speaker Bill Schulz

The Advocates for Human Rights held its sixth annual law and policy conference, "Human Rights and the United States: the Past, Present and Future of Dignity and Justice for All," on June 30th. Each year, The Advocates holds a day-long CLE conference on important human rights issues at the offices of co-sponsor Dorsey and Whitney.

In addition, participants chose from four workshop sessions, each focusing on a specific area of human rights. Workshop sessions included: 1) Women and Human Rights, 2) Conflict and Human Rights, 3) Using Domestic and International Law to Advocate for Human Rights, and 4) Human Rights Issues for the 21st Century.

Participants also observed the launching of the Discover Human Rights Institute. The Institute is an online educational resource aimed at helping Americans "get informed, get involved, and get others interested" in human rights issues. Through the Institute, The Advocates provides educational resources and tools to help people learn about and apply international human rights standards in their daily lives, their families, their workplaces, and their communities. Information about the conference, including a full schedule and conference materials, speaker biographies, notes on the sessions, and PowerPoint presentations is available on the website: www.discoverhumanrights.org.

This year, in celebration of a quarter-century of promoting and protecting human rights, the annual law and policy conference took a retrospective look at the human rights movement and looked ahead to the future of human rights in the 21st century.

In addition to the many distinguished speakers, The Advocates introduced its latest educational initiative, the Discover Human Rights Institute, representing a step forward in human rights education and an important long-term improvement in human rights worldwide.

Former Executive Director of Amnesty International USA William F. Schulz delivered the keynote address, entitled "Restoring America's Credibility: The Future of Human Rights." Currently a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, Dr. Schulz is credited with working tirelessly to make human rights issues known in the United States.

The afternoon plenary address was delivered by Peggy Hicks, international advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. Her address, "A New Age in Human Rights: The UN Human Rights Council," examined both the challenges and the opportunities for the future of human rights enforcement.

This year's conference was made possible through the generosity of its sponsors, Dorsey & Whitney LLP, the Human Rights Committee of the Minnesota State Bar Association, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, William Mitchell College of Law, the University of Minnesota Human Rights Program, the Midwest Coalition for Human Rights, and the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center. For information about future conferences and other educational events, please visit us at www.discoverhumanrights.org.



Panelists Angela Bortel, Mary Ellingen, Alena Chaps, and Aviva Breen

Fact Fair on Immigration



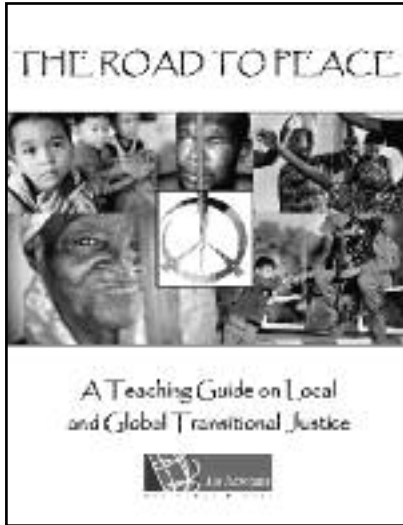
Kim Condon with event attendee

The Advocates for Human Rights partnered with the Faribault Diversity Coalition and other agencies to sponsor a fact and resource fair entitled "The Immigrant and Refugee Story from a Human Rights Perspective" on

Saturday, April 26, 2008 from 10 am to 2 pm in the Great Hall of Buckham Library in Faribault, Minnesota. The purpose of the event was to help shed light on the facts surrounding immigration to the U.S. and Minnesota, as well as provide information about the rights of immigrants and refugees who reside in the Faribault community.

The event was open to the public, drawing approximately 50 community members throughout the day. Delicious food was provided by Somali and Latino communities in Faribault.

The Road to Peace: A Teaching Guide on Local and Global Transitional Justice



The Advocates is pleased to announce the release of its new curriculum, *The Road to Peace: A Teaching Guide on Local and Global Transitional Justice*. Using the expertise of The Advocates' human rights monitoring teams who carried out work in Peru and Sierra Leone, our Education Program has created this teaching guide to introduce students to the concept of transitional justice.

The Road to Peace teaching guide contains ten lesson plans on conflict resolution and the restoration of justice in the aftermath of war, emphasizing the processes that countries emerging from conflict undertake to seek resolution, address past human rights abuses, reform their societies, and heal from violence. It challenges students to apply these methodologies to transform conflict in their own lives and stop violence.

This teaching guide provides educators with creative, thought-provoking, and innovative lesson plans that help students explore these topics. Educators will find role plays, in-depth case studies, investigative tools, skill-building exercises, and much more! Each lesson is tied to the Minnesota high school social studies standards.

We hope that *The Road to Peace* will inspire and empower students and educators to promote peace and justice in their own communities and around the world.

To order a copy or to download a free PDF of *The Road to Peace: A Teaching Guide on Local and Global Transitional Justice*, please visit www.discoverhumanrights.org.

Actions on the National Moratoria on Capital Punishment

In May 2008, The Advocates for Human Rights submitted a paper regarding moratoria on capital punishment in the U.S. to the U.N. Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR). The submission was made in response to a request for information on implementation of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 62/149, "Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty" (adopted December 2007). The information will be considered for the U.N. Secretary-General's report on the death penalty to be submitted to the General Assembly at its 63rd session.

The relevant provisions of Resolution 62/149 call upon states that still maintain the death penalty:

"(a) To respect international standards that provide safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, in particular the minimum standards, as set out in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/50 of 25 May 1984;

(b) To provide the Secretary-General with information relating to the use of capital punishment and the observance of the

safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty;

(c) To progressively restrict the use of the death penalty and reduce the number of offences for which it may be imposed;

(d) To establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty;

3. Calls upon States which have abolished the death penalty not to reintroduce it;"

The submission concludes that while the U.S. has complied with some provisions, it is not in full compliance with the resolution. Further legislation is necessary, both on the federal and state level, to fully comply with Resolution 62/149. The Advocates would like to acknowledge the time, expertise, and dedication of Richard M. Martinez and Keala C. Ede of Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi LLP in researching and drafting this report. The Advocates would also like to thank Elizabeth Powers for her valuable assistance.

Asylum Conference Highlights

Current Issues and Law

The Advocates for Human Rights joined the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Minnesota/Dakotas Chapter to host the Upper Midwest Immigration Conference, entitled “Immigration Law in the New ‘ICE’ Age of Enforcement,” on May 1st and 2nd at the Eagan Community Center. Two hundred attendees received updates and training on all aspects of immigration law, including a focus on immigration raids. Program co-chairs Michele Garnett McKenzie and Scott Borene, and planners Malinda Schmiechen, David Wilson, Elizabeth Streefland, and Brian Aust reported that the event was a great success.



Michele Garnett McKenzie introducing plenary speakers, Scott Borene, Bob Aronson, and Mary Pivec

Attendees commented that it was beneficial to have such a comprehensive conference in Minnesota. One AILA member said “since the INS was broken into different agencies, the whole chapter hardly gets together. The conference was an excellent opportunity to see people from different practice areas and rekindle old friendships.”



Immigration court panel

The Asylum Conference brought together local and national experts to train attorneys new to asylum and to provide experienced practitioners with up-to-date information. During Friday’s session, attendees heard from Chicago Asylum Officer Director Ken Madsen and a supervisory officer at the Chicago Asylum Office about national security cases, gender-based asylum claims, and other processing updates. Moderated by Emily Good of The Advocates, the panel also featured Retired Judge Joseph R. Dierkes, who provided a “view from the bench” and Anwen Hughes, who offered a practitioner’s perspective. In the afternoon, the perennial favorite immigration court practice panel gave conference attendees tips on immigration court practice. The advice came directly from Judge Olmanson, Judge Goessert, DHS Trial Attorney Ann Tanke, and local practitioners Karen Ellingson and Steve Thal.

Another asylum litigation session on Friday, May 2nd provided updates for attorneys on both federal and BIA case law developments from the past year, presented by local expert Ben Casper, Maria Baldini-Potermin of Gostynska Frakt, Ltd. in Chicago, and Anwen Hughes of Human Rights First. On both days of the conference, attendees could enjoy “lunch with an expert” in the field of asylum law, providing a more informal setting in which to ask questions and discuss asylum case developments. “Asylum case law and procedures are constantly developing,” says Emily Good, program director of The Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program. “It is essential that attorneys representing asylum seekers have access to high quality training.”

In addition to the regular asylum programming, the partnership with AILA allowed for a broader topical scope. A plenary session kicked off the conference with a spirited discussion of worksite enforcement and the dynamics of an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid. The rest of the conference featured information about removal defense, family-based immigration developments, business and corporate-focused immigration practice, and trafficking visa updates. “We’re grateful to all the presenters for their generous participation in the conference,” said Malinda Schmiechen, staff attorney and one of the lead organizers of this year’s conference. “Ultimately, the biggest beneficiaries will be our clients.”

The Advocates has also been providing trainings upon request to groups of new volunteer attorneys who may not have had the opportunity to attend the conference and gain a background in basic asylum law. As always, an updated Asylum Manual was provided as part of the conference materials and is available to volunteer attorneys. Groups who are interested in basic asylum training for *pro bono* attorneys should contact Emily Good or Malinda Schmiechen.

This success of this year’s conference was enabled by the work of The Advocates’ volunteers and interns who provided assistance assembling binders and nametags, and provided staffing support throughout the conference – we are very grateful! Also, many thanks to Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi for providing financial support for the conference.



Conference participants

Asylum Case Practice Advisory: New Court Rules

As of July 1, 2008 there are new practice rules for the Immigration Court. The new practice manual replaces the local operating procedures that have been guiding practitioners at the Bloomington Immigration Court. The new manual is available at the Court's website, www.usdoj.gov/eoir. We recommend that attorneys check the practice manual prior to each submission, as the Court has advised that the manual is a "living" document and will be changed and updated as necessary, with updates being noted on the Court's website.

According to the Chief Immigration Judge, the goal of the practice manual was to provide standardization for all parties. Among the most important requirements is a fifteen-day filing

deadline before all individual, or merits, hearings in Immigration Court. The Immigration Judges all have the authority to issue separate directives; however, the manual is the default if no specific order is issued by the Judge. As an example, Judge Olmanson has recently indicated that she prefers filings without tabs, and not consecutively numbered between exhibits – both guidelines enumerated in the manual. All requests from the judges at our local Bloomington Immigration Court will be noted and posted to www.probono.net/asylum. Attorneys are encouraged to contact their consulting attorney or The Advocates staff if they have questions about the new practice manual.

Asylum Seekers Find Relief

This spring, The Advocates celebrated an increase in the number of victories from both the Asylum Office and Immigration Court. Clients from Cameroon, Guinea, Cambodia, Russia, Liberia, Togo, Colombia, and Kenya won asylum with the help of their attorneys, interpreters, and The Advocates' staff.

Michelle Rivero (Rivero Law Office) successfully represented a man from Cameroon who was granted asylum by the Immigration Judge.

The William Mitchell Immigration Law Clinic won asylum for a Cameroonian asylum-seeker before the Immigration Court based on his political opinion.

Laura Tripiciano (Tripiciano Law Office) represented a woman from Guinea who was granted asylum by the Asylum Office.

The University of Minnesota Immigration Law Clinic won asylum for their client from Cambodia at the Asylum Office.

Ashwin Madia represented a Cameroonian man at the Asylum Office who was granted asylum based on his political activism.

Michele Garnett McKenzie, Emily Good, and Malinda Schmiechen (all of The Advocates) won asylum for a man from Russia at the Asylum Office based on his ethnicity, nationality, religion, and political opinion.

Mark Lee (Maslon, Edelman, Borman & Brand) successfully represented a man from Togo at the Asylum Office who was seeking asylum based on his political opinion.

Colleen Beebe (The Advocates) represented a man from Colombia who was granted asylum by the Asylum Office.

Julie Boehmke and Jason Stover (Gray, Plant & Mooty) recently won asylum for their client from Guinea before the Immigration Judge.

A woman from Kenya recently won asylum based on her fear of return to domestic violence and political opinion against FGM, thanks to the representation she received from the **University of St. Thomas Law Clinic**.

The following individuals have been recognized through gifts to
The Advocates for Human Rights:

Frank Cuthbert
Barbara Frey
Greene Clemente Giron
Sam Heins
Haley Skiskal

Staff and Intern Update

Alena Chaps has completed her year of service as a St. Joseph Worker with the Women’s Program. Alena will now be working at Hope Community through Sustainable Progress through Engaging Active Citizens (SPEAC), a program for community organizers. Thank you, Alena!

Kimberly Condon has finished her year with the Education Program through AmeriCorps VISTA. Kim will be attending law school this fall. Thank you and good luck, Kim!

Katie Gaughan has finished her year of service with The Advocates through AmeriCorps VISTA. Katie will now move to Portland, Oregon and eventually plans to attend law school. Thank you and all the best, Katie!

Emily Good moved to the new role of program director of the Refugee and Immigrant Program.

David Hamm has joined The Advocates as the program assistant in Development and Communications through AmeriCorps VISTA. David is a recent graduate of Augsburg College. Welcome, David!

Madeline Lohman has joined The Advocates’ Education Program as an AmeriCorps VISTA. Madeline is a recent graduate of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Welcome, Madeline!

Michele Garnett McKenzie moved into the new role of director of advocacy for the organization.

Rosalyn Park moved to the new role of research director.

Rebecca Riedell is the new AmeriCorps VISTA in the Education Program. Rebecca is a recent graduate of Hamline University. Welcome, Rebecca!

Kyrsten Skogstad has finished her year of Lutheran Volunteer Corps service with the Refugee & Immigrant Program in August. Kyrsten will start law school at Washington University School of Law in St. Louis in August.



Madeline Lohman, Rebecca Riedell, and David Hamm

Thank you to all of the individuals who served as summer interns! **Atif Khan** (University of Minnesota) and **Bill Thomson** (University of Wisconsin-Madison) with Development and Communications; **Rana Merza** (University of Minnesota) and **Lauren Taylor** (Grinnell College) with the Education Program; **Allison Cambrone** (Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA), **Kevin Marimiac** (University of Notre Dame), **Jessica Grosz** (University of Denver Sturm College of Law), **Molly McLane** (Macalester College), and **Robert Painter** (Macalester College) with the Refugee and Immigrant Program; **Erin McCabe** (Macalester College), **Maggie Crosby** (University of Denver), and **Michael Walters** (University of Minnesota Law School) with Special Projects; and **Michelle Collins** (Harvard Law School), **Gretchen Goetz** (Northwestern University), and **Jennifer Latz-Hall** (University of Michigan Law School) with the Women’s Program.

Many Ways to Give

Monthly Giving

For your convenience, The Advocates for Human Rights now has a monthly giving option.

Gifts of any amount can be automatically transferred each month. This method of giving creates steady and sustainable support for our programming.

Go to www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org and click on “Support Us.” You may change your monthly giving option at any time by contacting The Advocates. To speak to a staff member about this option, please call Sarah Herder at (612) 341-3302 ext. 126.

Planned Giving

The Advocates for Human Rights operates on the generosity of its supporters.

To receive information about including The Advocates in your estate, please contact Sarah Herder at (612) 341-3302 ext. 126 or at sherder@advrights.org.

Combined Federal Campaign

Employees of the federal government may choose to select The Advocates for Human Rights through the Combined Federal Campaign. Please go to <http://www.opm.gov/cfc/donors/> to learn more.

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