

International Women's Day Celebration

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On Saturday, March 6th, 1999, over 700 people came to celebrate the 1999 International Women's Day Celebration co-sponsored by Minnesota Advocates and the Minnesota Women's Foundation. The diverse group of women, girls, men and boys that came to honor, learn and celebrate women made this 4th annual event the largest celebration ever. Thanks in particular to Jane Evershed, who graciously allowed her famous "The Great Leap of Faith" painting to be used as the logo for the day, the tone of the celebration was set to one of excitement, courage and faith in the work being done to improve the lives of women worldwide.

Adding to the atmosphere of the celebration were decorations by the Arts Committee of the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom in the North Star Ballroom; peace doves by the Multiculture Club of Winona Senior High School; cloth panels of women by In the Heart of the Beast Theater; and drumming by DrumHeart added a rhythm of anticipation to the entire day.

See WOMEN'S DAY, Page 6

Fifteenth Annual Human Rights Awards Dinner: Connecting the World Through Human Rights

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is pleased to announce our 15th Annual Human Rights Awards Dinner to be held Thursday, June 3, 1999 at the Minneapolis Hilton Grand Ballroom. This year's event theme "Connecting the World Through Human Rights," captures the spirit of the organization's 15th Anniversary. The event will recognize the accomplishments of Minnesota Advocates and the human rights movement over the past 15 years, and look ahead at the human rights issues and concerns facing our world.

Among the honorees for this year's event are Baltasar Garzon and Wilma Mankiller. Mr. Garzon is the Spanish Magistrate whose leadership initiated the case against ex-Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet -- arguably the single most significant human rights accomplishment of the past year. Mr. Garzon has established a prestigious human rights and judicial record. His jurisdiction includes cases involving terrorism.

See HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS on page 5

Minnesota Advocates is assisting with the documentation of war crimes against the Kosovar refugees.

Your contribution to this effort would be most welcome.
Please make your donation to:

"Minnesota Advocates- Kosovo Relief Fund"

and send it to:

Kosovo Relief Fund
Western Bank
663 University Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

One hundred percent of your contribution will be used to support Human Rights Activists in Albania.

Many thanks.

*See page 2 for an update on the human rights situation in Kosovo.

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**DIRECTOR'S
DESK**

Kosovo: The Price of Ignoring Human Rights

As early as April 1993, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights issued a briefing paper entitled, "Recommendations for Preventing Gross Human Rights Violations in Kosovo." The recommended actions included:

- A U.N. Observer mission of sufficient size and sophistication to act as a deterrent to further violations;
- The U.N. and its member states withhold recognition of the Serbian government as the legitimate successor of Yugoslavia until Kosovo is granted autonomy;
- The U.N. provides peacekeepers to police Kosovo until elections are held;
- Designation of Kosovo as a trust territory of the U.N.

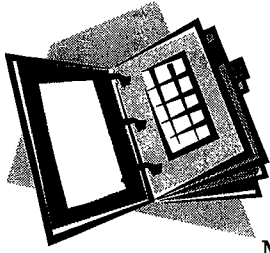
Not a bad set of ideas for 1993, and just as relevant through most of 1998. And even now the idea of a U.N. protectorate has emerged among policymakers as part of an "exit strategy."

Most major human rights organizations have in fact paid a good deal of attention to protecting the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo since the province was stripped of its autonomy in 1989. Amnesty International mounted three campaigns between 1989 and 1993. In mid-1998, Minnesota Advocates arranged a meeting between Albanian human rights activists and U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright. In September 1998, Physicians for Human Rights became the first such organization to call for the introduction of NATO ground troops to protect the lives and rights of Kosovars. Throughout 1998, Human Rights Watch reported increasingly vicious massacres of Kosovars by Serbian military forces. From 1989, human rights reporting was clear: Kosovo was being targeted for the elimination of its 1.8 million ethnic Albanians.

But here we are in the spring of 1999: NATO officials say air strikes on Belgrade may last for months, yet they also estimate that Kosovo will be empty of ethnic Albanians in ten to twenty days. Human rights monitors have been removed; all U.N. personnel and NGOs have left. More atrocities are reported than ever before. Ethnic Albanian homes, farms, and villages, are being destroyed in a way that will make them impossible to return to. Hundreds of thousands of refugees stream toward neighboring states that cannot accommodate them.

So once again we witness the enormous tragedy of a simple need for the protection of human rights become a complex humanitarian disaster accompanied by military conflict. The same tragic multiplication of misery occurred in Bosnia and (to a far greater degree of magnitude) in Rwanda. Not one of the three situations should have come as a surprise. All the signs were there, diligently researched and reported by human rights groups.

Some policymakers, notably Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone, have gotten the message: Violations of human rights, especially those committed against a particular ethnic group, cannot be ignored. When they are, calamitous consequences result. We must see where human rights violations are occurring now, recognize them as early warnings of deep trouble, including genocide. We must act early to stop or to prevent these violations. A senior NATO diplomat said last week, "This has the makings of a Greek tragedy—of the unbelievable overwhelming you." Unbelievable, yes; inevitable, no.



Mark your calendars!

Minnesota Advocates announces 1999 Annual Meeting

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is hosting the 1999 Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 24 from 9:00 am to 1:15 pm at the William Mitchell College of Law. All Minnesota Advocates members and friends are welcome.

The Annual Meeting is an important time for exchanging information and ideas among the Board, Staff, volunteers and members of Minnesota Advocates. The Annual Meeting allows supporters of Minnesota Advocates to provide important input on current or upcoming issues and projects of the organization.

This year's Annual Meeting will offer members and friends opportunities to learn more about the organization's current programs and upcoming projects, and discuss ideas and issues. Minnesota Advocates Board and Staff will present our 15th Anniversary Report which provides an overview of the organization and our accomplishments over the past 15 years. Program staff will also present one hour seminars on recent human rights issues such as: *Recent Developments in Asylum Law; Indigenous Human Rights Issues in Minnesota; Women's Human Rights: International and National Priority; and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: Preventing Child Mortality and Child Labor.*

For more information, please call the Minnesota Advocates event hotline at (612) 713-8490. Please RSVP by Wednesday, April 21.

Be a Better Advocate

Refugee and Immigrant Program to hold Annual Training Conference

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights will sponsor its fourteenth annual Asylum Conference in Minneapolis on **Friday, May 21, 1999**. The Conference will be held at the University of Minnesota Law School. This full day event provides A to Z training in handling asylum claims for volunteers, students, and immigration practitioners.

Representatives from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Executive Office of Immigration Review, academia, and the immigration bar will provide training on recent changes in asylum law and regulations, cutting edge issues in international and domestic law, techniques for interviewing clients, country and human rights documentation through computer-based resources, the asylum officer interview, removal proceedings, and resources available to torture victims.

This year, there will be two simultaneous training tracks. The Basics track will cover basic asylum law and procedures, while the Advanced track will provide training on advanced topics in asylum law. Application will be made for 7 CLE credits.

For registration and information please contact Jennifer Prestholdt at (612) 341-3302 or fax (612) 341-2971.

Asylum Project Needs You!

Since new asylum laws were passed in 1996, demand for Refugee and Asylum Project services have increased by forty-four percent. Many of the individuals seeking our asylum services have nowhere else to turn for help. This increased demand has had a great impact on the Project. We have been able to keep up with demand by

recruiting new volunteer attorneys, but we still need more volunteers. Currently we have several clients whose cases have been screened and accepted, but who are now waiting for volunteer attorneys. This is your opportunity to use your legal skills to save someone from persecution, torture and possibly even death. No experience is necessary -

just a willingness to learn. The Project has excellent training materials and will provide a consulting attorney to answer your questions.

For more information or to volunteer to take a case, please contact Audrey Carr or Jennifer Prestholdt at (612) 341-3302.

Minnesota Advocates' Wishlist

If you are looking to donate any of the following items, please contact Annie Williams at (612) 341-3302.

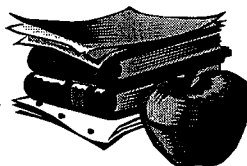
- Frequent Flyer Tickets
- File Cabinets
- Office Equipment (chairs, tables, desks, collator, fax machine, etc.)
- Computer Hardware & Software
- Office Supplies
- Printing Services
- Layout & Design
- Volunteer Hours
- Administrative Support
- Volunteer Hours
- Development Assistance
- Public Relations Assistance
- Research

Thank You!

Acting for Change

**Partners Program Students Present
at National Conference on Service-Learning**

Irene Briseño DeJoy and Jenny Latz-Hall, students at Highland Park Junior High in St. Paul, have both developed a strong desire to work for social change and share with others how they have been empowered by the service-learning program at their school. Irene and Jenny will have the opportunity to do just that when they present to a national audience of teachers and administrators at the National Service-Learning Conference in San Jose, California in April.



Their advisor, teacher Martha Johnson, and the current service-learning teacher at Highland Park, Nancy Nelson, have both integrated the Partners in Human Rights Education Program into their classes, and note that students in the service-learning program tend to work on issues related to human rights. Past projects include: child labor, the campaign to close the School of the Americas, St. Paul - Cuidad Romero (El Salvador) Sister City Project, racism, community violence, domestic violence, conflict resolution/peer mediation, environmental concerns, gay rights, the campaign to ban land mines, community recycling, homelessness, and hunger.

For young people, service-learning is a way of learning through experience in which they gain and apply academic and social skills by addressing authentic community needs. For teachers, it is a way of facilitating student mastery of academic and personal growth outcomes by engaging students in addressing real world problems. Service-learning is different than 'volunteerism', in that the service experience is accompanied by structured reflection on the service activity, and there are concrete links to the on-going curriculum in the classroom. Through service-learning, students gain a capacity for action, a sense of self-worth, citizenship skills, and improved academic skills.

According to Richard F. Schubert, President and Executive Chief Officer of the Points of Light Foundation, "Service-learning offers a means to revitalize education by transforming the relationship between communities and schools...Communities themselves become places of learning, and their various institutions, led by the schools, assume considerable responsibility for helping young people develop essential skills, behaviors, and values. Schools and teachers facilitate learning by linking students with educational opportunities throughout the community."

Both human rights education and service-learning models ask students to think critically about problems in their community, whether that community is their school, neighborhood, city, state, country, or the world. By combining an understanding of human rights as they are listed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* with service-learning, students learn to view the work they are doing in the community not as "charity", but as maintaining the human dignity and rights of all people. Furthermore, the students begin to question the role of individuals, government, business, and other public and private institutions in the protection or violation of human rights at all levels. Ultimately, students gain self-confidence and the skills needed to move toward positive social change.

Irene Briseño DeJoy and Jenny Latz-Hall will share their experience at the National Service-Learning Conference at the Partners in Human Rights Education Spring House Party and Fund Raiser on Thursday, April 29, 1999. For more info call Marna Anderson or Johanna Allayne Ronnei at 612-341-3302.
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read me my rights!

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees everyone the right to freedom of opinion and expression. It seems clear that "everyone" includes children, however, Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child reinforces this right specifically for children. It reads, "States shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." Certainly, many of the "matters affecting the child" are relevant human rights issues such as racism, child labor, education, and poverty. These are just a few of the human rights topics Partners Program students discuss in classrooms throughout Minnesota.

On May 21, 1999, the Partners Program will be giving junior high and high school students a venue to exercise their freedom of expression. We will be hosting the *Read Me My Rights Reading and Rap Session* at the University of Minnesota Coffman Student Union. Students will present their views of important human rights topics through poetry and prose. They will also have the opportunity to enjoy one another's company as they exercise another right -- the right to rest and leisure. Bowling is on the agenda. We know this will be a fun event for students as well as a great venue to exercise their rights guaranteed through the Universal Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Specific information on service-learning, including the quote by Richard F. Schubert, was taken from "Learning by Giving: K-8 Service-Learning Curriculum Guide", published in 1993 by the National Youth Leadership Council.

B.I.A.S. Project Promotes Positive Images of Immigrants

The B.I.A.S. Project recently developed panels featuring diverse groups of immigrants who discussed their perspectives on various issues.

The Project developed "An Introduction to Minnesota's Immigrant Populations," a workshop session featured at this year's International Women's Day Celebration. The panel was moderated by Therese Gales, who opened the session with a brief overview of the history of immigration in Minnesota, focusing particularly on recent immigration trends. Presenters included Harriette Badio of Liberia, Milla Benavides of Ecuador, Sarem Neou of Cambodia, and Nermina Zagic of Bosnia. Each of the women spoke about their personal stories and also discussed why members of their ethnic groups migrated to Minnesota, focusing especially on the current challenges facing each population.

The main challenges facing immigrant women are in maintaining two cultures and in keeping traditions alive for the next generation, as well as in understanding the language and system in the U.S. They also expressed that, although immigrant women face numerous barriers in living in Minnesota, they are also hopeful in that there are also many opportunities here.

The Project also served on the planning committee for a recent conference co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis Called "A Symposium on Immigration in Minnesota: Public Policy and Catholic Principles." The project developed a session entitled "Faith and the Immigrant Experience." The panel, facilitated by Therese Gales, featured four immigrants who presented their perspectives on the impact of immigration on faith as one moves from one's culture of origin to another.

A rich diversity of religious beliefs was
May 1999

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS, continued from page 1

narcotrafficking, organized crime, and extradition. He has received numerous awards for his work including Spain's National Human Rights Award and the Leaders of the Future Award from the World Economic Forum.

Ms. Mankiller is Chief of the Cherokee Nation-Oklahoma whose life and work are dedicated to Native American, development and women's issues. Ms. Mankiller was the first woman elected as Principal Chief. Ms. Mankiller has been instrumental in numerous rural community development projects relating to such issues as housing, education, and health care. She was recently recognized for her work by *People Magazine* which named her among the Top 100 most significant women of the century.

This year's event will also recognize the contributions of such distinguished Minnesota leaders as Harold Stassen and Walter F. Mondale, as well as the tremendous work of various Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights' pioneers, volunteers, and supporters. We hope that you will join in honoring their achievements and supporting this special event.



**For ticket information, please call the
Minnesota Advocates' event hotline at (612) 713-8480.**



featured in the panel, as representatives from the Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions spoke about their personal stories as well as about the trends they see in their communities. Gene Scapanski, of the University of St. Thomas concluded the session with a short reflection on interfaith issues. Presenters included Thupten Dadak of Tibet who is the founder of the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota and current director of Tibetan Education Action; Susana Dias of Mexico who is currently active in the Catholic Community of Sacred Heart in St. Paul where she serves on the parish council; Abdullahi Muhammad of Somalia, former editor of *The Muslim World Journal* in Saudi Arabia and current director of the Somali Committee for Culture and Development and editor of the *Somali Observer*; and Ninel Zamanskyaya of Azerbaijan who is active in a local Synagogue in the Metro area.

Panelists discussed faith and the immigrant experience. They discussed

the extremes of the situation facing many immigrants: of many immigrants whose faith was strengthened because of the intensity of the immigrant experience and of others who have lost their faith due to the difficulties encountered on the journey here. Some panelists discussed the discrimination they faced due to their religious beliefs in their home countries and of the repression of their religions there. Others discussed the tremendous challenges immigrants face in keeping religious traditions alive when living in this country and adapting to the American lifestyle.

**Watch for next issue of
the Observer featuring 15
Years of Human Rights
Advocacy & Action --
all the names, all the
places, all the progress!**

International Women's Day

In addition to the inspirational decorations, the variety of workshops that were offered this year helped to draw new attendees to the day, in particular, girls of junior high and high school age. Participants had to choose two out of nineteen workshops and many of the workshop spaces were filled to capacity as attendees eagerly listened to topics ranging from youth sweatshops in Nicaragua to battered immigrant women to Minnesota farm women of the 90's.

Beyond attending thoughtful and engaging workshops, participants were treated to a number of celebratory moments in the three plenary sessions throughout the day. While many of these large group sessions were presented through the arts such as dance, percussion and chorale, the themes of each of them gave thought to the struggles and triumphs of women in Minnesota and throughout the world.

An important aspect of the celebration was the dedication of the individuals who volunteered to plan and help on International Women's Day. Their enthusiasm brought excitement to the 700 people who attended the event to support women and girls in Minnesota and throughout the world.

Thank you all for making the 4th Annual International Women's Day Celebration the most successful ever!



Panelists from the introduction to Minnesota Immigrant Populations' Workshop: Milla Benavides, Therese Gales, Sarem Neou, Harriette Baelio, and Nermina Zugic.



Participants greeting each other in front of the Minnesota Women's Foundation Booth. The Women's Foundation was a co-presenter.

More pictures from Women's Day on pages 8 and 9

thanks...

Contributors to the event!

Danish Pastry Shop-St. Paul	Old Dutch Foods, Inc.
Great Harvest Bread Company-St. Paul	Sam's Club-West St. Paul
Headwater's International, Inc.	Schlottsky's Deli-Eagan
Kowalski's Grand Market-St. Paul	Schlottsky's Deli-St. Louis Park
Kowalski's Market-White Bear Lake	Taste of Scandinavia
	Target-Roseville
	Twin City Bagel-St. Paul
	Wuollet Bakery-Minneapolis
	Wuollet Bakery-Wayzata

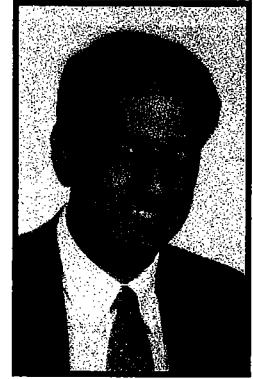
Volunteers who made it happen!

Jocelyn Ancheta, Marna Anderson, Tara Barenok, Vania Brightman, Bounna Chhun, Annie Cull, Marilyn Cuneo, Nancy Galatowitsch, Therese Gales, Sara Hartfeldt, Ellen Hatch, Lois Herman, Mary Hunt, Saori Ishida, Rachel Johnson, Denise Karamafrooz, Mary Marrow, Carole Martin, Kim Paray, Huy Pham, Robin Phillips, Ronda Phillips, Jennifer Prestholdt, Jack Rendler, Johanna Ronnei, Sosamma Samuel, Malinda Schmiechen, Donna Sherlock, Karla Stone, Cheryl Thomas, Wanda Troscynska, Jessica Van Tuyl, Annie Williams, and Nicole Willis-Grimes.

Minnesota Advocates Celebrates Asylum Victories!

After Four Years, Liberian Client Receives Asylum

"Andrew" is a citizen of Liberia who filed for asylum in the U.S. in 1994 on the grounds that he would be persecuted and killed if he returned to Liberia because of his political opinions and the imputed political opinions of his father. Andrew was active in student movements opposing the human rights violations of the government of former President Samuel Doe. In addition, the student groups opposed the killings by Charles Taylor's NPFL forces. Because he had been an official in the Doe government, Andrew's father was detained, imprisoned and interrogated numerous times by Charles Taylor's forces. Andrew narrowly escaped death when NPFL soldiers entered the house where he was hiding and killed the co-chair of one of the student movement organizations. Andrew escaped through the window as a soldier searched the house for other people.



Volunteer Attorney
Robert Sicoli

At the asylum interview, Andrew provided the Asylum Officer with a letter from Andrew's brother. In this letter, Andrew's brother described his return to Liberia and subsequent detention by Charles Taylor's forces, who now control the government. The military personnel recognized him as Andrew's brother and asked questions about Andrew's whereabouts.

Volunteer attorney **Robert D. Sicoli** of **Thompson & Sicoli, Ltd.** prepared Andrew's asylum application and represented him at the interview. Bob deserves special thanks, as he has also helped several other members of Andrew's family with their asylum cases. Thanks so much!

Battered women's task force to hold training in Minneapolis

Minnesota Advocates is a member of the Immigrant and Refugee Battered Women's Task Force of Minnesota, which will be hosting the Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Network on Behalf of Battered Immigrant Women in Minneapolis on June 3 through 5, 1999. The Task Force will also be providing a full-day training on June 2, 1999, on working with battered immigrant and refugee women. This training will provide information about immigration law and abuse-related immigration remedies, including self-petitioning under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Welfare and family law issues important to battered immigrants and refugees will also be covered. The training will also provide an introduction to Minnesota's growing immigrant and refugee communities and cultures.

For more information, please contact
Martha Malinski at (612) 341-8084.

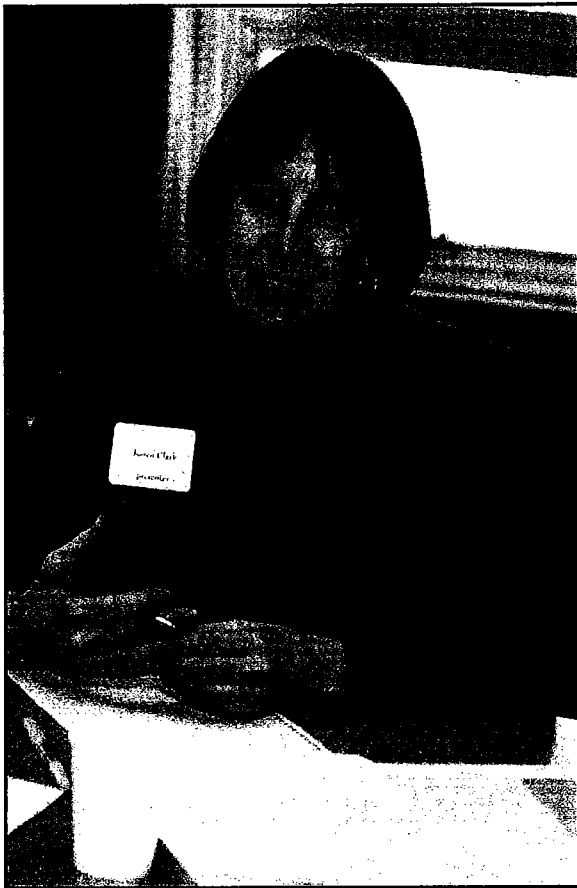
Immigration Judge Grants Chinese Client Asylum

"Linda", a Chinese national, was persecuted for most of her life in China. Her father was a high-ranking official in the Nationalist Party government prior to 1949. Because of her father's position and her own opposition to the Communist government, Linda experienced long-term discrimination and persecution at the hands of the Chinese government. She fled China and applied for asylum in the U.S. in 1993.

Linda had an interview with an asylum officer, but the asylum officer did not grant asylum and referred her case to the Immigration Court. Immigration Judge Carlos Cuevas granted Linda asylum on the theory that she had been persecuted primarily because of her membership in a particular social group, i.e. people who had been associated with and were part of the Nationalist Party government.

Many thanks to volunteer attorney **Roderick I. Mackenzie** of **Lindquist & Vennum, P.L.L.P.** for providing excellent representation to Linda. Thanks also to **Lesley Gatton** for providing valuable assistance as the consulting attorney on the case.

**Thanks for making
International Women's Day
such a huge success!**



**Rep. Karen Clark presenting at the
workshop on Sexual Orientation and
Hate Crimes.**



**Naima Richmond of the WILPF Arts' Committee portraying the
mother in the "I See Hope in Your Eyes: An Account of Female
Genital Mutilation" workshop.**



Young girls attending the day long celebration!



Carolyn Collins from Winona Senior High Multiculture club, teaching young girls how to make origami peace doves.



Volunteers Nancy Galatowitsch and Vania Brightman prepare to feed the over 700 people in attendance.



Closing performance and call to action by "In the Heart of the Beast" puppet and mask theater.

The Moratorium Question:

Keeping the Goal of Death Penalty Abolition in Clear Sight

By Samuel Jordan, Director of AIUSA Program to Abolish the Death Penalty

Most opponents of the death penalty were heartened last year when the American Bar Association (ABA) advocated a moratorium on executions in the United States. Citing inadequate representation for indigent capital defendants and the intolerable propensity toward conviction of the innocent, the ABA asked-- and continues to ask-- that executions be halted pending the repair of these defects in the criminal justice system.

The U.S. Supreme Court ordered a moratorium on all executions in *Furman v. Georgia* in 1972. According to the Court, the death penalty constituted "cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eight and Fourteenth Amendments." Nevertheless, under the guise of "reform," individual states subsequently altered their death penalty statutes to provide "guided discretion" for juries and separate phases for trial and sentencing in capital cases. In the 1976 case, *Gregg v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court permitted executions to resume under these "new and improved" death penalty laws.

From the execution of Gary Gilmore in 1977 to that of Danny Lee King on July 23 of this year, 471 men and women have been led to the death chamber in this country, only to return as corpses. More than 3,300 have been forced into residence on death rows throughout the nation, awaiting "last call."

Since *Gregg*, death sentences have not proven to be any less arbitrary, capricious, racist, class-biased, or brutal than they were under the pre-Furman regime. Hence, the ABA's moratorium on executions.

But the ABA is not a human rights organization. Its resolution calling for a moratorium does not approach the death penalty does not approach the death penalty as the most egregious human rights violation. It is intended instead to correct faults in American jurisprudence. Unlike the moratorium resolution passed by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in March, the ABA's language does not characterize its moratorium as a "step toward the abolition of the death penalty."

In support of the ABA resolution, approximately 180 other organizations around the country have joined the call for a moratorium. These groups want to halt executions as long as they are "unfair." They seek to gather 2,000 organizational endorsements by the year 2000, apparently to transform that strength into de facto abolition-- while leaving the death statutes on the books. In this context, the U.S. moratorium movement seems a well-intentioned accommodation between

abolitionists and death penalty advocates.

Even so, the search for fairness is not the fundamental weakness of the moratorium movement. Rather, the movement cannot state its objectives in unequivocal moral or humanitarian terms. In comparison, the abolitionist can declare simply that the policy of executions is unfair because it violates the most basic human right-- the right to life with dignity. No correction of the system of jurisprudence can justify an exception to this right.

A decisive moral compass is our strength; it should not be abandoned in middle-ground compromise. Abolition is a goal that can certainly be achieved, but it cannot be achieved indirectly. It will require a mass movement based in the electorate and built upon facts, passion, and principle. Such a movement cannot be led by endorsers or legislators. Instead, the legislators must receive their instructions from "core" voters, the 30 percent to 40 percent of the electorate who will adopt a principled position on this issue. Finding

DEATH PENALTY continued on next page

As part of the 1999 Annual Grand Meeting on April 17 in Minneapolis, Amnesty International will be hosting a panel discussion, "The Death Penalty and Beyond-- Expanding the Human Rights Framework."

The forum seeks to challenge the audience, which is familiar with human rights issues, to apply human rights standards in new contexts as discussed by our panelists:

Sister Camille D'Arienzo, RSM, is the promoter of the "Declaration of Life" movement. Proponents of the Declaration of Life declare that should they die by homicide, their assailant(s) should not be subjected to execution.

Professor Angela Y. Davis, an invitee/Human Rights Defender in the Paris UDHR 50th Anniversary Celebration and the leader of the pioneering Critical Resistance prison abolition movement will discuss the value of applying human rights standards to the concept and practice of incarceration. Prof. Davis will also explore conditions impacting women, juveniles, the elderly, and the disabled.

Bernadine Dohrn, Director of Northwestern University's Children and Family Justice Center, is an innovator in the field of defense strategies and support programs for juveniles charged with capital offenses. Ms. Dohrn is currently developing a ground-breaking technical assistance capacity for capital litigators in the defense of juveniles.

For more information
visit www.amnesty-usa.org/events/agm1999
or call (212) 633-4287.

Racial Disparity in U.S. Infant Mortality Rates

A Violation of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The widening racial disparities in infant mortality rates (IMRs) in the United States illustrate the deep-rooted problem of race discrimination both in Minnesota and in the United States generally. Infant and child mortality rates are generally accepted as an accurate gauge of the social and economic conditions of a community or nation. While racial disparities in infant mortality are caused by a variety of factors, including discrimination in access to health care, education, housing, and employment, the gender dimensions of infant mortality must also be recognized and addressed. The status and well being of women in a community is directly related to high infant and child mortality rates.

While all racial groups in the United States have experienced declines in IMRs in the past five decades, racial disparity in IMRs remains a huge problem. Black infants continue to die at more than twice the rate of white infants, while the racial disparity between Native American infant deaths to white infant deaths has gotten progressively worse in the past decade.

In response to the persistent racial disparity in infant mortality rates in the United States, and as part of a larger project focused on preventable child mortality as a human rights abuse, the Children's Rights Program of Minnesota Advocates is preparing a report on the racial dimensions of infant mortality in the United States to be submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This report outlines the United States' compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The ICERD is an international treaty to which governments commit themselves to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on race. The United States ratified this treaty in 1994.

State parties to the ICERD are obligated to implement the provisions of the treaty and to submit regular reports regarding their compliance with the treaty, including information about ongoing problems of racial inequities in the country and corresponding remedies. Reporting requirements include one major report every four years, with a smaller report at the mid-point between larger reports. The U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has responsibility to examine the reports, consider complaints between signatories, and also to consider individual communications to the Committee regarding ICERD issues. While the United States has failed to submit reports on its compliance with ICERD and is 3 years overdue, the United States is currently scheduled to report to the CERD during the fall of 1999.

In an effort to gain additional information on the status of racial minorities in reporting countries, the CERD also invites nongovernmental organizations to submit reports to them on their government's compliance with the treaty. This mechanism gives the Committee a better idea about the ongoing problems of racial discrimination in the reporting countries in the context of international obligations stated in the ICERD. Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is submitting a report on racial disparity in infant mortality focusing on the high IMRs in the African American and Native American communities. The complete failure of the United States to remedy this situation violates its international obligations under the treaty. The racial disparities in infant mortality rates reflects the continuing detrimental impact of race-based discrimination in the United States, especially as experienced by women of color and their children.

The report from Minnesota Advocates on racial disparity in IMRs will be submitted to the CERD as part of a compilation of reports being submitted by other nongovernmental organizations nationally. In addition to the report on racial disparity in infant mortality rates, this compilation will also provide information on racial discrimination in other areas, including; the death penalty, police brutality, discrimination in the criminal justice system, hate crimes, voting rights, and environmental racism. Through the submission of these reports the failure of the United States to fulfill its international obligations under ICERD to eliminate racial discrimination will be brought to the attention of the United Nations and the international community. The reporting process will increase visibility to the ongoing issues of racial inequity in the United States, leading to pressure from the United Nations and the international community on the United States to improve the overall status of racial minorities in the country.

DEATH PENALTY continued from previous page

the keys to this core in each state-- and then repealing state death penalty statutes-- is the work of the abolitionist community. No terrain, no gain.

Perhaps the moratorium strategy is the product of despair that abolition may never be won at the grassroots level. If, however, we turn to the electorate and learn how to influence its choices, we can repeal the death penalty. There is no need for a compromise until we have exhausted every possibility of building popular, multi-ethnic, strategic alliances. It is premature for us to seek accommodation. We must challenge the moratorium movement at least to adopt the language of the U.N. commission on Human Rights and insist, at every step, that a moratorium is the period in which we halt the killing while we change the laws.



1999 Minnesota Advocates Annual Meeting
April 24 at William Mitchell College of Law

Human Rights Education Spring House Party and Fund-Raiser
April 29, Hosted by David & Mary Parker, Volunteers



Fourteenth Annual Asylum Conference
May 21 at University of Minnesota Law School

Fifteenth Annual Human Rights Awards Dinner
June 3 at the Minneapolis Hilton Grand Ballroom

Fifth Annual Meeting of National Network on Behalf of Battered Immigrant Women
June 3 through 5

More details inside...

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