

MINNESOTA ADVOCATES' REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT PROGRAM

presents its

Third Annual Celebration of Community and Diversity

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A CELEBRATION FEATURING FOOD
AND ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDED BY AND IN HONOR OF
MINNESOTA'S IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.

**Thursday, December 2
5:00-7:30 p.m.**

University of Minnesota Law School
Auerbach Commons
229 - 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis

THE REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT PROGRAM WISHES TO
RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING DONORS* :

Summit Brewing Company • Lucia's Restaurant
• MN Center for Shiatsu Study • Aveda
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Joe's Garage • Planet Hollywood
Dudley Rigg's Brave New Workshop
The Guthrie Theater • D'Amico & Partners

*Includes all donations received before 11/18/99

Minnesota Advocates Launches Human Rights Education for Community Change Initiative

Thanks to a three-year grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation, Minnesota Advocates has launched Human Rights Education for Community Change in Greater Minnesota. The main objective of the initiative is to increase awareness of international human rights standards in Greater Minnesota communities, helping individuals and organizations in Greater Minnesota communities use this knowledge to address local issues of racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, discrimination, violence, and poverty. This initiative builds on the great work of the Partners in Human Rights Education Program and B.I.A.S. (Building Immigrant Awareness and Support) Project.

The initiative is being conducted in three phases. Phase 1 involves a thorough needs assessment survey and a series of regional workshops. In Phase 2, Minnesota Advocates will coordinate a statewide youth conference and provide ongoing support and technical assistance to individuals and groups working to improve the human rights situation in their communities. Phase 3 of the initiative will include a final state-wide conference and evaluation.

Through the Human Rights Education for Community Change initiative, Minnesota Advocates has served as a convener for over 135 individuals and 75 organizations in St. Cloud, Rochester, and Worthington. The three regional meetings took place in July, August, and November respectively, and provided a forum for individuals and organizations to come together to learn about the human rights education resources available from Minnesota Advocates, discuss concerns facing their communities, and examine how those concerns could be addressed using a human rights framework.

In addition to representatives from the host communities, individuals from Albert Lea, Austin, Big Lake, Eyota, Mankato, Marshall, Luverne, Owatonna, Red Wing, St. James, St. Paul, St. Peter, Sauk Rapids, Willmar, Winona, and Wright County attended the meetings. Diverse sectors of the community were present, including representatives from law enforcement, the school

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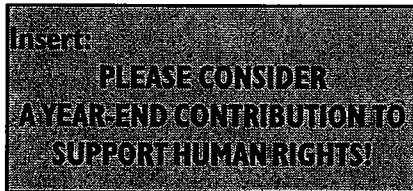
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The past year has been a time of extraordinary transition for Minnesota Advocates. Jack Rendler, after two years as Executive Director, resigned in June. Jack's tenure was marked by efforts to make Minnesota Advocates a voice on international human rights crises such as the war in Kosovo, and to strengthen the organization's relationship with major funders. We thank Jack for his efforts and wish him well in his future endeavors.

Board member Linda Foreman stepped in as interim Executive Director to ease the transition and to allow for a comprehensive search for a new executive director. Linda, a partner with the Minneapolis law firm of Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, is on loan to the organization until a permanent executive director is selected. The transition from Jack to Linda has been seamless, and the work of the organization continues uninterrupted, thanks to the dedication of the staff and Board. We thank Robins, Kaplan for their tremendous commitment to the organization.

In October, Minnesota Advocates welcomed eight new members to the Board of Directors: Carol Batsell-Benner, John Borman, Bill Cameron, Jim Dorsey, Don Fraser, Barbara Frey, Victoria Johnson, and Dr. David Parker. The new members represent a cross section of the organization's founders, volunteers, advisory board members, and the community at large.

Minnesota Advocates also has added new staff who are helping to strengthen the organization in many ways. Michelle Garnett joined the Refugee and Immigrant Program in September as program attorney. Allison Sharkey came on board in September as the Administrative Assistant responsible for handling office procedures. H. Anne Nicholson, Minnesota Advocates' Administrative Director, joined the staff in October. Finally, Minnesota Advocates is looking for a new Director for the Children's Program, after staff members Huy Pham and Mary Marrow left the organization in September to pursue new directions.

Despite all of the changes in the organization, the work of the programs and the mission of the organization have continued forward with tremendous results. As you will read, Minnesota Advocates continues to be a major player in the human rights arena, locally, nationally, and internationally. Reinvigorated now at all levels, the organization is positioned to expand the scope of its work and the impact of its mission.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, I want to thank you for your commitment, work, and support.

Best regards,

Jean-Robert Cole
President

Win Two Tickets to Kathmandu! Raffle to Support Growth of Nepal School

Thanks to a generous donation from Northwest Airlines, the Campaign Against Forced and Exploitative Child Labor of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is offering raffle tickets for sale in support of its One School at a Time project in Sankhu, Nepal. First prize is two round trip tickets to Kathmandu, Nepal or \$1000 cash.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 250 million children worldwide are forced to work to help support their families or repay their parents' debts. Often these children work 12-hour days in quarries, brick factories, or carpet-weaving enterprises.

The goal of the One School at a Time project is to curb forced child labor by demonstrating that an investment in educating poor children can improve not only their lives but also improve prospects for the larger community as well. In a broader sense, the volunteers working on this project hope that it will serve as a model of one constructive alternative to the complex problem of child labor in the global economy.

The Campaign Against Forced and Exploitative Child Labor developed a partnership with the village of Sankhu, Nepal, located northeast of Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. Annie Williams, a volunteer in a classroom through the Partners in Human Rights Education Program, received a Partners Program fellowship and is currently in Sankhu. She is working with a local non-governmental organization and the Sankhu Village Development Committee on the creation of a school for 200 children in the region who might otherwise have no alternative. Beginning in September, the One School at a Time project started educating 50 of the children in need.

The Campaign needs your help in order to expand the project to meet the needs of all 200 children in the region, and to develop resources for the long-term sustainability of the school. Your contribution will help give these children an education and a brighter future.

Raffle tickets are available until December 27, and may be purchased from Minnesota Advocates for \$10.00 each. In addition to the tickets, three second prize winners will receive an 11 x 14 photograph by David Parker of child workers, and ten third prize winners will receive signed copies of David Parker's book, *Stolen Dreams: Portraits of Working Children*. Please call Johanna for more information on the One School at a Time project.

The raffle will be held December 28, 1999.
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"Who Pays the Price of Child Labor," (top), and "Construction Worker, Kathmandu, Nepal,"
Courtesy of David Parker.

B.I.A.S. to Co-Sponsor Teacher Training with Minnesota History Center

"Travels to Minnesota: Immigration from 1800 to today"
Explore new ways to look at immigration into Minnesota. Take away classroom-ready lessons on immigrant life. Find fresh methods to examine who, how, and why people arrived (and are still arriving) in Minnesota. For teachers (grades 4-7) of Social Studies, Minnesota History and Northern Lights curriculum users.

New Ulm, Friday, February 25, 2000, 9am-3pm
\$50 (including lunch) • 6 class hour credits

For further information or to register, contact Jennifer Goldman at the Minnesota History Center, telephone: 651-205-4498 or e-mail: jennifer.goldman@mnhs.org

Mexico Human Rights Center Under Attack

SIPAZ (International Service for Peace), a coalition of North American, Latin American and European organizations formed to support the Chiapas peace process, is requesting that we take action in protest of the threats and attacks that have been suffered in recent months by the members of Mexico City's Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (PRODH).

BACKGROUND

According to SIPAZ, the PRODH Center has suffered from repeated periods of threats, harassment, surveillance, and other actions that have never been properly investigated by the authorities. Various members of the Center have been threatened with death at different times.

On the night of October 28, Center attorney Digna Ochoa was the victim of an attempted homicide as well as verbal aggression, interrogation and intimidation by unknown individuals who entered her house. Ochoa was subjected to a harsh and prolonged interrogation session about PRODH's work and the activities and personal information of each individual member of the center. They repeatedly questioned Sra. Ochoa about supposed "contacts" of PRODH in Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, Puebla and Hidalgo. After the interrogation, the men tied her feet and hands behind her back and placed an open gas tank next to her. Ochoa managed to free herself before being harmed by the fumes.

On the morning of October 29, the door to the PRODH office was found open, and the Legal Defense Department offices, on the second floor of the building, had been broken into. On one desk a folder was placed in an obvious position with the words "PODER SUICIDA" (SUICIDE POWER) printed on it in red.

REQUESTED ACTIONS

SIPAZ requests that you do the following:

- Send letters to the Mexican government. You may write letters to the editor, and send a copy to the Mexican embassy. Send copies of letters to the Mexican press as well as your local press.
- Encourage government representatives to personally contact the Mexican government or its diplomatic representatives to express their concern about these alarming developments.

ADDRESSES

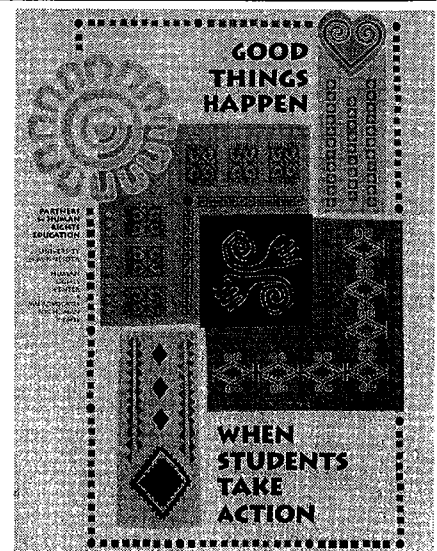
Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León
 Presidencia de la República
 Palacio Nacional
 México, D.F. 06067 MEXICO
 Fax (int-52) 55 15 57 29, 52 77 23 76.

Dra. Mireille Roccatti
 Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos
 Periférico sur 3469, 5° piso
 Col. San Jerónimo Lídice
 México D.F. 10200 MEXICO
 Fax (int-52) 56 81 71 99.

Please send a copy of your letter to:

Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez
 Fax: (int-52) 5535 68 92
 EMAIL: prodh@sjsocial.org

**Good
 Things
 Happen
 When
 Students
 Take
 Action**



This exciting K - 12 curriculum is designed to engage students on local and global human rights issues and to encourage youth leadership in the struggle against racism, environmental destruction, and discrimination. This three-part curriculum contains lesson plans, classroom activities, bibliographies, and background information necessary to prepare students for a lifetime of social justice work and activism. Copies of **Good Things Happen When Students Take Action** are available for \$15 plus \$3 for shipping and handling.

BEIJING PLUS FIVE: How Far Have We Come?

The United Nations General Assembly will hold a special session to mark the fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing Plus Five, officially called, "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century," will be held from June 5-9, 2000, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. During the special session, the General Assembly will assess the progress achieved by governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted in 1985, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995.

Governments, international organizations and NGOs around the world are preparing for the Beijing Plus Five special session. The preparatory activities include country assessments, conferences, meetings and on-line discussion groups. Official participation in the Beijing Plus Five meeting will be limited to UN Member States, Associate members of regional economic commissions, UN Specialized Agencies, NGOs with consultive status with the UN Economic and Social Council, as well as NGOs who were accredited to the Beijing conference in 1995.

Although formal participation is limited, individuals may participate by joining the discussion groups below:

1. WomenWatch Dialogues at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/forum/>;
2. CEDAW-in-action - UNIFEM at <http://www.unifem.undp.org/cedawwg.htm>;
3. Gender and Law - World Bank at <http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/current-gender.html>;
4. World Bank Development Forum at <http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/>.

For additional information on Beijing Plus Five online, see: <http://www.unifem.undp.org/beijing+5> or call the UN Division for the Advancement of Women: 212-963-1524.

**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY**

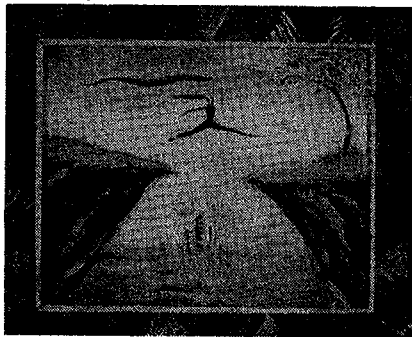
Mark your calendars!

Saturday, March 4, 2000 • 9 am - 3:30 pm

The 5th Annual International Women's Day

The New Millennium: Looking Backward, Looking Forward

University of Minnesota, St. Paul Student Center



"The Great Leap of Faith," by Jane Evershed. Printed with permission.

Presented by
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
and
Minnesota Women's Foundation

For more information & volunteer opportunities, contact Malinda.

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Women's Human Rights Program Celebrates Five Years of Advocacy

The Women's Human Rights Program celebrated five years of advocacy with a House Party Fundraiser at Marlene Kayser's home on October 10, 1999. Staff, volunteers and supporters gathered to discuss past successes and future initiatives of the Women's Program. Robin Phillips, Program Director, highlighted the contributions of the Women's Program's amazing volunteers over the past five years. These contributions include: documenting human rights abuses; conducting training workshops and educational programs in the United States and overseas; and assisting with program development, fundraising, office administration and events such as International Women's Day. The Women's Program is anticipating many new, exciting opportunities for volunteers to promote women's human rights in the upcoming year.

The fundraiser was a great success. Thank you to everyone who provided support. Proceeds will be used to fund new initiatives to promote women's human rights.

Women's Program Expands Human Rights Network Eastward

In January 2000, the Women's Human Rights Program will begin a new initiative in Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. This initiative is part of a larger collaboration between Minnesota Advocates, the NIS-US Women's Consortium and the Battered Women's Justice Project. The project is funded by the United States Department of State and focuses on domestic violence and trafficking of women as human rights violations. The Women's Program's responsibilities include researching and documenting the nature and extent of domestic violence and trafficking, as well as the criminal justice system's response to the problem in each of these countries. The Program will publish a report on the situation in each country and develop recommendations for training human rights organizations, police and other legal professionals.

There are volunteer opportunities to assist in each phase of the project including both background research and in-country research. Teams are being organized for each country and training will be provided for all of our volunteers. For more information on this new project, contact Robin Phillips.

MAHR NEWS

BUILDING A VISION FOR MINNESOTA ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Community Invited to Participate

We are pleased to announce that Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights will be sponsoring a half-day Visioning Conference on December 13th. The purpose of this important meeting is to engage volunteers, board members, staff, clients and members of the broader human rights community in painting a vision of the future of the organization, and beginning to outline strategies for its realization. Jon Pekel, CEO of the Fulcrum Group, will facilitate the meeting and subsequent strategic planning. Prior to the conference, we will survey participants about the most important issues to be addressed by the organization in the next five years. For more information about the Visioning Conference, please contact Minnesota Advocates.

Thank you!

Minnesota Advocates would like to thank the following people and law firms for their generous in-kind support:

**Marlene Kayser
Tammy Tucker
Dorsey & Whitney
Messerli & Kramer
Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi**

Through their generosity, Minnesota Advocates has received contributions of printing, copying, graphic design and layout, a laptop computer and scanner, and a wealth of office supplies.

Learning to Speak Minnesotan:

Minnesota has drawn immigrants and refugees from diverse countries around the world for over two centuries. Did you know that:

- In 1896: Drawn by inexpensive farmland and a growing industrial base, diverse groups had settled here, and official Minnesota election instructions were issued in nine languages: English, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, French, Czech, Italian, and Polish.
- In 1999: Current newcomers to Minnesota are also rich in diversity. More than 80 languages were spoken by students in Minneapolis Public Schools during the 1998-99 academic year.

To order Minnesota's Immigrant Populations: Past and Present, a fact sheet recently published by the B.I.A.S. Project, please call Therese Gales at 612.341.3302.

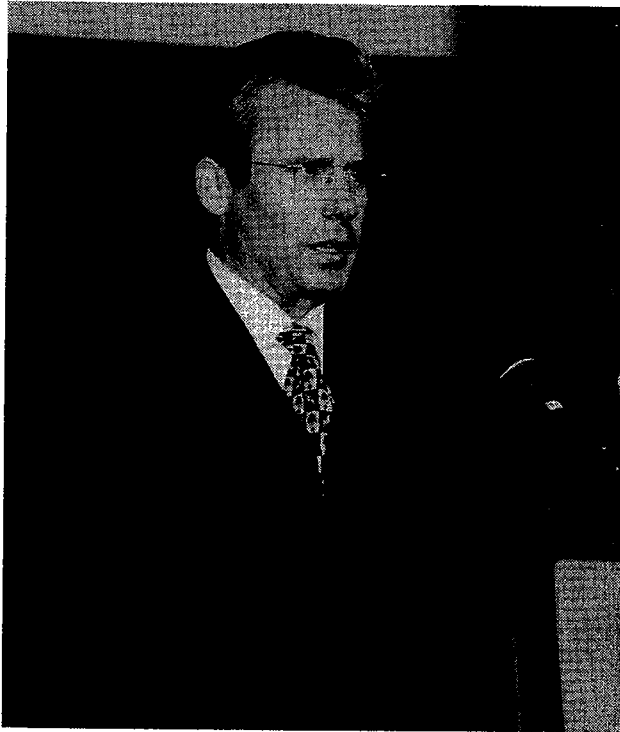
15th Anniversary Human Rights Award Dinner

It is true that today it is a committed minority that leads the movement in defense of human rights in the world, but step-by-step and little by little, their coordinated efforts and strengths shall make them winners of the match—Baltasar Garzón Real

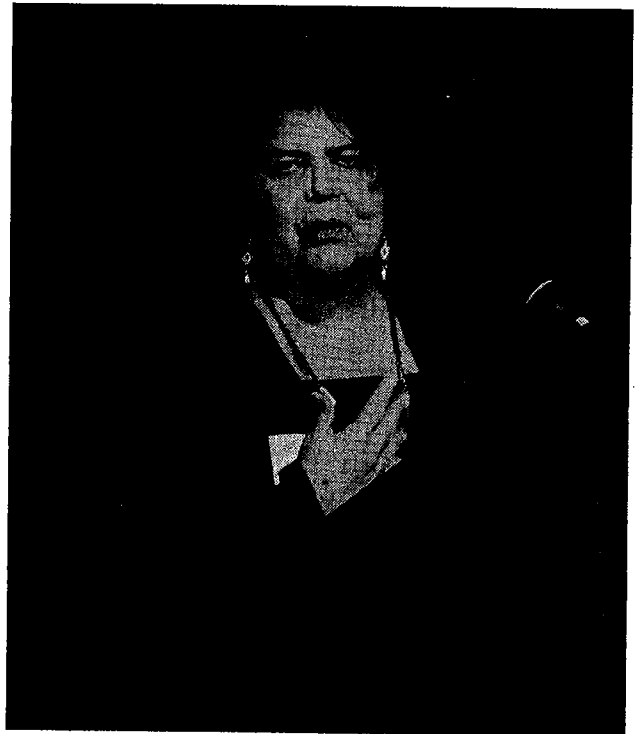
1999 marked another successful Minnesota Advocates Annual Human Rights Awards Dinner, with five hundred guests, volunteers, honorees and activists in attendance. The celebration of the 15th Anniversary of the organization included moving presentations by honorees Wilma Mankiller and Baltasar Garzón Real, a volunteer recognition ceremony, and uplifting performances by Max Ray and Drew Gordon, Karullacta and Jerry Dearly and the Indian Education Program.

Congratulations to the following Volunteer Award winners for their outstanding efforts and commitment to human rights:

- **Maria Baldini-Potermin** for expanding the Partners in Human Rights Education Program.
- **Aviva Breen** for her expertise, support and dedication to the Women's Program.
- **Saori Ishida** for her work as a Project Assistant at Minnesota Advocates.
- **Anne Marie Johnson** for initiating and developing 'Survival: Every Child's Right.'
- **Rachel Johnson** for her contributions to the Women's Human Rights Program.
- **Cheryl Robertson** for her integral role in the Child Survival Project in Uganda.
- **Elaine C. Schneider** for her services as pro bono attorney.
- **Karla Stone** for her involvement with the B.I.A.S. Project.
- **Volunteer Technology Team** for improving the technological capacity of MAHR.
- **Faegre & Benson Pro Bono Asylum Team** for their legal services to indigent asylum seekers.



*Honoree **Baltasar Garzón Real**, Magistrate for Spain's National Court, initiated the case against ex-Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet*



*Honoree **Wilma Mankiller**, first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*

Minnesota Advocates' 15th Anniversary Annual Report is now available! Call to receive a copy of this report, which details 15 years of promoting and protecting human rights!

B.I.A.S. Trains Educators in Minneapolis and Around the Region

The B.I.A.S. Project recently conducted two teacher training sessions for educators in the Minneapolis Public School system. The trainings featured interactive activities and informational pieces on immigration, Minnesota's immigrant populations, and recent changes in immigration law. The sessions also highlighted useful resources to educate about immigration and activities designed by Project volunteers for use with immigrant and refugee children in ESL classrooms. The session concluded with a brainstorming session to develop new ideas and share effective methods of acclimating refugee and immigrant students to their new communities.

Karon Webster, Director of English Language Learner Services for Minneapolis Public Schools, presented information about immigrant students in the district. Over 50 district staff participated in the trainings. Presenters were B.I.A.S. Project volunteers Karla Stone and Mary McKelvey, both ESL educators in the Robbinsdale School District, and Director Therese Gales.

The B.I.A.S. Project also recently conducted teacher trainings for educators at conferences sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, Education Minnesota, and MinneTESOL and for the staff of Folwell Middle School in Minneapolis. The Project also co-sponsored a training with the Center for Victims of Torture for ESL educators in St. Paul.

B.I.A.S. presented the keynote address at the Closer Connections Conference in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, an annual conference sponsored by Lutheran Social Services. Over 100 service providers, teachers, immigrants, and health care workers from South Dakota participated in the two-day conference.

The Project would like to thank volunteers **Beverly Alsleben, Phil Fishman, Rose Grengs, Nancy Peterson, Elizabeth Streefland, Ken Udoibok, and Julie Zimmer** for their recent presentations to local community groups and schools on behalf of the Project.

Advocating to End FGM: Minnesota Advocates Sponsors Dialogue

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) has affected millions of women and girls from nearly 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Over 6,000 girls around the world undergo this practice every day, and over 150,000 girls are at risk in the United States.

On October 15, Minnesota Advocates drew together over 40 local immigrants, service and health care providers, and attorneys to discuss this controversial issue with Meserak "Mimi" Ramsey, an internationally recognized leader in the anti-FGM movement. Ms. Ramsey, who was born in Ethiopia, has worked since 1992 to stop the practice of FGM. She founded "FORWARD USA: Together Against FGM" and "FORWARD Ethiopia" to provide education on FGM. Ms. Ramsey has also been instrumental in passing federal and state laws banning FGM practices, and works closely with individual families to save young girls from FGM.

Ms. Ramsey discussed FGM from both international and local perspectives, and argued that in addition to the severe physical consequences of FGM, the practice has serious psychological effects on girls and women.

Minnesota Advocates would like to thank the law firm of **Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi** for providing the location for this event.

In the First Person: An Intern's Experience Working with Minnesota Advocates

Spending the summer after my first year of law school as an intern with Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program was one of the best decisions I have made. After a year of numbingly theoretical classroom exercises, I couldn't wait to do something useful and practical. Having spent over three years in the Peace Corps in West Africa before law school, I was eager to assist international clients and learn about political conditions in countries all over the world. Through my internship, I was able to learn about asylum law, employment authorization, administrative procedures, and the devastating effects of persecution worldwide. It was not a lesson I will easily forget.

I began my internship by attending the Refugee and Immigrant Program's 14th Annual Asylum Conference, which introduced me to the basics of asylum law, as well as important issues associated with pursuing asylum claims. My first full week in the office, I was immediately responsible for conducting telephone intakes, responding to client's general immigration questions and referring clients to appropriate organizations for assistance. In addition, I was responsible for scheduling and conducting interviews in both English and French.

See **FIRST PERSON**, p. 11

Commentary

A forum for opinions, reactions, dialogue and disagreement

Hatred of 'other' builds wall to replace old one

By **Therese M. Gales**

Ten years ago this week, the world rejoiced at the fall of the Berlin Wall. I remember traveling to Berlin at that time. There was euphoria as we chipped away at the Wall, watching the great symbol of the Cold War crumble to the ground below us. We celebrated freedom and hope for a better future.

But what has that future brought to the post-Cold War world? A hatred that has reared its ugly head this past decade — a hatred of the "other."

Yes, the fall of the Wall was a major step in ending East-West divisions. But this great milestone has also had a dark side. Dozens of nationalistic conflicts — held in check and out of public view during the Cold War — erupted in violence, spawning mass exoduses. Nationalism in Europe led to crises in Bosnia and Kosovo. Elsewhere, similar tragedies befell Rwanda and East Timor. In the first half of this decade, conflicts around the world forced more than 50 million people to flee their homes — nearly one of every 100 people on earth.

The plight of these refugees is one of the most tragic manifestations of the post-Cold War era. Fleeing war and persecution, refugees have become scapegoats for many of the problems and instability in the regions to which they flee. Many refugees subsequently seek shelter in more prosperous Western nations, only to be depicted as "the other" by a xenophobic society.

Since 1989, the West has, in effect, put up its own walls to stop the in-migration of this per-

ceived "other." As an anti-immigrant mood grips Europe and the United States, immigrants and refugees have fallen victim to harsh legislation, housing and employment discrimination, and violent hate-driven attacks.

I saw this phenomenon in Germany. In 1997, I worked for two months with a Berlin agency that provides legal and social services to refugees and asylum seekers. Through my work, I heard firsthand accounts from refugees of their struggle in their new-found place of "refuge." Ironically, in the 1960s many "guest workers," mainly from Turkey, were welcomed to the former West Germany to fill undesirable low-paying jobs and strengthen the economy. Racism existed at that time, but escalated in the 1990s as the post-unification economic slump worsened, taxes in the West skyrocketed, and unemployment hovered at about 12 percent — the highest since World War II.

German lawmakers and citizens erected anti-immigrant walls in both policy and practice. As refugees from the former Yugoslavia and other countries sought safe haven in Germany, the government placed harsh restrictions on political asylum.

At the individual level, these walls ranged from the extreme to the subtle — from neo-Nazi groups brutally attacking refugees and setting fire to asylum-seeker shelters, to a woman in my neighborhood advertising an apartment to rent but not responding to the first inquiry because the individual had a "foreign" accent. More than once I saw "Auslander raus!" ("Foreigners out!") graffiti painted on

buildings and in train stations.

Unfortunately, Minnesota is no different. What should be a safe haven in the heartland of America sometimes seems quite hostile. Through my work with refugees and immigrants here these past five years, I have seen walls erected in both policy and practice. Due to changes in federal legislation in the mid-1990s, many legitimate asylum seekers never reach our borders, and legal immigrants have been denied public benefits historically available to them.

Though Minnesota's economy is robust, we blame immigrants for economic and social problems. Racism persists, and groups like the All-American Boys, who are like skinheads, meet in small towns around the state and not long ago beat up a young Somali boy in southeastern Minnesota. According to some of our clients, housing discrimination and exploitation of immigrant workers are also not uncommon. In the words of a recent advertising campaign, "I ask you, is this Minnesota nice ... or not?"

So what has happened as a result of the fall of the Berlin Wall 10 years ago? Yes, the Cold War has ended. But sometimes I wonder how far we have really come. We have only replaced the Berlin Wall with smaller walls — in Germany, Minnesota and elsewhere — whose purpose is not in keeping people in but in keeping "the other" out.

— *Therese M. Gales, of St. Paul, is director of the education, refugee and immigrant program at the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.*

Reprinted with permission, Star Tribune

Human Rights Education for Community Change

continued from page 1

districts, local service agencies, and county and state offices. Issues addressed at the meetings included the lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, and the lack of legal and social services for immigrants living in rural communities. Additional regional meetings are planned for Moorhead and Duluth.

In conjunction with the regional meetings, the staff attorneys from the Refugee and Immigrant Program have provided trainings in St. Cloud, Willmar, Rochester, and Worthington for social service providers, refugee and immigrant groups, and battered women's advocates on the rights and avenues for protection of battered refugee, immigrant, and undocumented women and children.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights would like to thank the following organizations for their support of the Human Rights Education for Community Change Initiative:

Thank you!

Community Connectors, Worthington
District 518 Community Education, Worthington
Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association., Rochester
Lutheran Social Services, Marshall
Nobles County Family Services Collaborative
Nobles County Human Rights Commission
Rochester Area Foundation
Rochester Human Rights Commission
Rochester Community and Technical College
St. Cloud Area Legal Services
St. Cloud Human Rights Commission
Southeast Minnesota Initiative Fund, Owatonna
Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council
Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Inc.
Southwest Minnesota Foundation
Tri-County Action Programs of St. Cloud
University of Minnesota Extension Service

Children's Rights Conference: Implementing Practical Strategies in Minnesota

On November 8 and 9, 1999, Minnesota Advocates participated with a number of other sponsoring organizations in a conference that brought together local, national, and international experts and activists on the issue of children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Presenters included a wide variety of perspectives, including Joe Mettimano from the United States Committee on UNICEF, Professor John Powell from the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota, Partners in Human Rights Education teacher Lori Dupont and her students from the Work Opportunity Center in Minneapolis, and Gerison Lansdown, Director of the Children's Rights Office in the United Kingdom.

The two goals of the conference were to educate the public about how the CRC applies to Minnesota's children, and to develop practical strategies for implementing the CRC in Minnesota law and policy. Topics discussed in working groups included the identification of discriminatory practices, laws, and policies affecting Minnesota's children, the impact of poverty on children, service learning and the development of an active citizenship curriculum on the CRC, youth voice and involvement in the protection of children's rights, family involvement, and the formation of an alliance to further the protection of children's rights in Minnesota.

A full report of the conference proceedings will be made available to those interested. For more information contact Johanna or Therese.

Partners' House Party Showcases Achievements of Program and its Fellows

The Partners in Human Rights Education Program prides itself in its base of committed and talented volunteers who each year help more than 4,500 students in Minnesota make connections between international human rights standards and local human rights issues. We were reminded again on a beautiful Fall evening in November that the Partners Program must be one of the luckiest programs on the planet!

Partners Program volunteers and 1999 Partners Fellows Erin Connolly, Jonathan Kirsch, and Rosa Rull entertained and moved an audience of colleagues and supporters at a house party and fund raiser for the Partners Program graciously hosted by David and Mary Parker on November 11, 1999. Slides from the three presenters depicted the health conditions of indigenous peoples living in strife in Chiapas, Mexico, current conditions and the history of slavery in Ghana, and the lives of immigrant children in the El Raval neighborhood of Barcelona, Spain. In addition to showing slides, Erin, Jonathan, and Rosa shared how they plan to use their experiences to enhance the human rights education they will lead in their Partners Program classrooms this year.

Many thanks to David and Mary Parker, Erin Connolly, Jonathan Kirsch, Rosa Rull, the Partners Program Advisory Committee, classroom volunteers and friends of all of the above for contributing their expertise, presence, time and financial support!

The Partners Program would also like to thank Pinnacle Printing, Baja Tortilla Grill, Boulevard Gardens and Floral, The Moghuls Restaurant, Mud Pie Vegetarian Restaurant, The Good Life Cafe, St. Martin's Table, Cafe 301, and Scandia Bakery for their generous donations.

For more information on how you can bring the Partners Program to your school or how you can get involved in a classroom, call Johanna.

**Upper Midwest International
Human Rights Fellowship Program**

**University of Minnesota
Human Rights Center**

Grants to work with local, national or international human rights organizations. The Center will award 15 grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,500. Application and guidelines are available at www.umn.edu/humanrts/links/internshipopportunities.htm or by contacting the Human Rights Center at 612.625.2857

Deadline - March 1, 2000

Kosovo: Minnesota Advocates' Members Provide Aid

During the Kosovo conflict, Albania, the poorest country in Europe, received the largest number of refugees fleeing from Kosovo. By the end of May 1999, over 400,000 refugees had entered Albania.

In the May 1999 issue of "The Observer," Minnesota Advocates asked its members to make financial contributions to support the efforts of the Women's Center in Tirana, Albania and its colleagues to provide relief to the Albanian refugees. MN Advocates' members responded with over \$2,700 in donations.

With these donations, and support from other organizations, the Women's Center implemented an emergency program to provide psychological and medical treatment to traumatized women and girls; train, organize and manage volunteers working in the refugee camps; provide assistance to Albanian families who have opened their doors to host refugees; provide current information about the situation in Kosovo; and organize refugees into groups to efficiently share the available resources.

The Women's Center has expressed its gratitude to the members of Minnesota Advocates who provided emergency funding for the initiatives to assist the Kosovar refugees. Without this support, much of their important work could not have been done.

November Hearing on Illegal Immigration

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has requested that Minnesota assist in the detection of undocumented immigrants residing in Minnesota by mandating state and county employees in a variety of departments to report such persons to INS and by tightening the INS reporting requirements currently in effect for county employees.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is working with the Immigration Task Force of Minnesota to respond and express our concern:

- **The chilling effect:** Policies of this nature would deter thousands of Minnesotans from accessing needed services and benefits to which they are legally entitled because they fear deportation by the INS. A recent study by the Urban Institute shows that 85% of immigrant families are "mixed status families". This report further states that most policies that affect noncitizens are likely to have spillover effects on the citizen children who live in the great majority of immigrant families. This proposed initiative would

(Continued)

In the First Person... continued from p. 8

Another ongoing assignment involved working with a French-speaking asylum applicant from Guinea. This client was already assigned to a volunteer attorney, but Minnesota Advocates needed a French speaker to help with translation. I was pleasantly surprised however, when the attorney asked me to actually prepare the client's asylum application. Since the deadline for submitting the application was quickly approaching, I worked intensely to prepare the most detailed application I could. Although I had to return to school before the client's asylum interview was scheduled, I recently learned he was granted asylum.

In addition to these cases, I wrote a Motion to Reopen under the new Convention Against Torture regulations and disseminated information to attorneys about filing procedures under the regulations. Moreover, I attended a training on the Violence Against Woman Act and its special immigration-related provisions.

My experiences at Minnesota Advocates taught me a lot about immigration, administrative law, and the often cruel way in which the world operates. I will never forget many of the stories told by the clients, their perseverance in the face of some unresponsive and hostile INS personnel, and the value of affording asylum to those who have been persecuted in their home countries. I hope to continue to advocate for refugees and asylum-seekers during my legal career.

Lisa Goldman
2nd Year Law Student
University of Pennsylvania School of Law

Immigration Hearing, continued

likely create confusion on the part of both immigrants and service providers over eligibility requirements and immigration status verification, and would discourage immigrants from seeking benefits not only for themselves, but for their eligible children as well.

- **Enforcement of immigration laws is solely a federal function:** this movement would deputize state and county workers to, in effect, carry out the work of the INS.

PLEASE ACT NOW! Contact your state legislators to voice your opposition to the INS's recommendation that Minnesota enlist its agencies to detect and report undocumented immigrants. Contact the Minnesota House and Senate at 651.296.2146 and 651.296.0504.

Not In My Season Of Songs

On November 19, supporters of Minnesota Advocates attended a benefit performance of "Not in My Season of Songs," a production of Pangea World Theater. The play, by Nigerian playwright Awam Amkpa, tells the story of a self-exiled Irish woman who searches for meaning beyond the confines of rational orders such as country, nation, and tradition. Through her travels in Nigeria, she meets two men who share her quest. The play also addresses the devastation of borders and colonialism. Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights would like to thank Pangea World Theater for sponsoring this event.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING!

The silent auction at the Celebration of Community & Diversity provides an ideal opportunity to find that perfect holiday gift!

MINNESOTA



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STAFF

Administration: Linda Foreman, Interim Executive Director; H. Anne Nicholson, Administrative Director; Allison Sharkey, Administrative Assistant

Children's Program: Vacant--See job posting on MAHR web site!

Partners in Human Rights Education: Johanna Allayne Ronnei, Interim Program Director

Refugee & Immigrant Program: Jennifer Prestholdt, Program Director.
Asylum Project: Michele Garnett, Staff Attorney; Audrey Carr, NAPIL Legal Fellow; Peder Nestingen, Program Assistant
B.I.A.S. Project: Therese Gales, Director of Education

Women's Project: Robin Phillips, Program Director; Malinda Schmiechen, Program Associate; Nicole Willis-Grimes, Program Assistant

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