

# HUMAN RIGHTS



## OBSERVER

PUBLISHED BY MINNESOTA ADVOCATES

FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## 2004: The Year in Review

### Of Human Rights, Websites, Education, Asylum Seekers, and Sierra Leone

What kind of year was 2004 for Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights?

It was a year when Minnesota Advocates and our 350 volunteer lawyers provided legal services for more than 800 indigent refugees fleeing persecution and violence in dozens of countries around the world – people such as an Egyptian man who publicly criticized the lack of real democracy in his home country. He was repeatedly arrested, detained and tortured by the Egyptian security forces between 1995 and 1999. The government bulldozed his business, ransacked his home and froze his bank account. This man escaped, contacted our Refugee and Immigrant Program and was eventually granted asylum in Minnesota. He and his family now have the right to stay permanently in safety in Minnesota.

It was a year when Minnesota Advocates further established our StopVAW website ([www.stopvaw.org](http://www.stopvaw.org)) as a unique and vital resource for people working to help the victims of domestic violence all across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.



Minnesota Advocates' StopVAW website. The team traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia, in July for the second session of training and orientation for National Violence Against Women Monitors from eight countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

It was year when Minnesota Advocates' Death Penalty Project expanded its role advocating against capital punishment. The project, for instance, played a lead role in coordinating the 14 witnesses who testified against a bill to reinstate the death penalty in Minnesota, which was defeated in an 8-2 vote. Minnesota Advocates and the Innocence Project of Minnesota



Kevin Magnuson and Jeff Keyes, of Briggs and Morgan, outside the U.S. Supreme Court, where Keyes argued on behalf of a Minnesota Advocates client they represent.

### “A Chance to Make a Difference” Jeff Keyes, Minnesota Advocates at the Supreme Court and on Death Row

Jeff Keyes of the law firm of Briggs and Morgan used his extraordinary legal talents this fall on two prominent cases that highlight the scope of volunteer lawyers' work with Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.

In September, a federal judge in Houston, Texas, threw out the death sentence of inmate Martin Draughon, based on new ballistics evidence developed by Keyes and Briggs colleagues Jim Long, Paul Thissen, Tiernee Murphy, Kathy DiGiorno and Margo Coyle. Keyes had taken the Draughon case 11 years before through Minnesota Advocates' Death Penalty Project, which both advocates against capital punishment and supports lawyers' work on behalf of death row inmates' post-conviction appeals.

Then, in October, Keyes took his Minnesota Advocates *pro bono* work to the Supreme Court of the United States. He and Briggs colleague Kevin Magnuson were representing Keyes

Minnesota Advocates staff and volunteers traveled to Budapest in early May to provide training for 31 women from 14 countries on the StopVAW web-

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**Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights**

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

**From the Director's Desk**

In human rights work, progress can sometimes be difficult to measure. We must take time to step back and celebrate all our successes, both big and small. As we look back on this past year at Minnesota Advocates, we have much to celebrate.

We celebrate each of our asylum victories and the opportunity these victories give people to leave behind fear, persecution and trauma and build productive lives in the United States. Minnesota Advocates continues to have a success rate of over 90% for our cases, compared with a national average around 21%. (See page 6 for a description of some of our recent victories.)

We celebrate the opportunities to see the impact of our work. I recently returned from a trip to Bulgaria. I met with a woman who participated in our Women's Program Inter-Balkan training in 1996. The training included sessions on providing direct services to women victims of violence. This woman told me that they used the information from our training to start a hotline in Sofia that now provides services to victims of domestic violence and trafficking 24 hours a day. This same training inspired similar services for women victims of violence in Prishtina, Kosovo and Tirana, Albania.

Also in Bulgaria, we trained and consulted with the drafters of a new civil order for protection law that is working its way through the Parliament. The legislation is modeled on Minnesota's current order for protection law and provides an essential remedy for victims of violence now lacking in the Bulgarian legal system.

We celebrate the five-year anniversary of the school Minnesota Advocates sponsors in Sankhu, Nepal. The students at our school achieved at a higher level than students at the local government school. These students, who would not otherwise be in school, learn English and human rights principles, and they eat a nutritious lunch at the school each day.

We celebrate the defeat of the proposed

death penalty legislation in Minnesota and the contributions of Minnesota Advocates teams to the transitional justice processes in Peru and Sierra Leone.

We celebrate Minnesota Advocates volunteer Penny Parker's success at the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. Penny has

encouraged reforms in the Sub-Commission to allow for greater scrutiny of human rights violators around the world.

We celebrate creative new ways to bring human rights to the community through the arts. This year we collaborated with Pangea World Theater, Intermedia Arts and the Playwrights Center on projects to promote understanding of important human rights issues.

We celebrate the many committed volunteers who make our work possible and achieve stunning results for those whose rights have been violated. This year, one of our most dedicated volunteers, Jeff Keyes, argued a case before the United States Supreme Court just weeks after learning that he was successful in getting the death sentence thrown out for his *pro bono* client on death row in Texas, a case he had been working on for 11 years. (See page 1 for more details about Jeff's work.)

We also celebrate the many ways our members support us. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you in the coming year.

Best wishes in the New Year!



Robin Phillips  
Executive Director

**We celebrate the many committed volunteers who make our work possible and achieve stunning results for those whose rights have been violated.**

## Human Rights Education

### Sandburg and Creative Arts: A Tale of Two Schools

What kind of school environment best supports human rights education? At Saint Paul Creative Arts High School and Sandburg Middle School in Golden Valley, teachers are proving how human rights education thrives in very different types of classrooms.

Sherry Kempf, for example, has been teaching human rights through literature for seven years at the Creative Arts High School, a close-knit school of 100 students. Using the book *Farming of Bones* by Edwidge Danticat, Sherry teaches students about enduring slavery and persecution in Haiti.



Sandburg Middle School's art projects are part of their human rights education curriculum with Minnesota Advocates.

The whole school became involved with human rights education after a Human Rights Day workshop last December. Guest speakers from human rights organizations gave students a glimpse of how to combat human rights violations. The students then combined their passions for art and social justice for an event called "Filling the Bowls." With the help of the ceramics teacher, the students made and decorated clay pots, filled the bowls with soup donated by a local restaurant, and sold the bowls. They raised \$1,300 for a local food shelf.

Kempf says, "Concrete social action projects really encourage kids." When she asked students about the impact of the projects, comments were enthusiastic and thoughtful: "I like to learn about human rights because of the real life examples," said one. "I think it's more important to learn about experiences that are closer to home," said another. Others said, "It's cool to learn about different races," and "You should do good just because

it's good for your community."

Creative Arts already this year organized a "Get Involved!" student conference to inspire the students to think about the elections. The most adventurous human rights education program might have been the Spanish teacher who took five students to El Salvador last June to live with families and learn about the country's political history. The class plans to travel to Peru later this year.

Across the river at Sandburg Middle School, which has more than 1,300 students, human rights education has taken on a larger scale. For example, a large group of eighth graders in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years program participate in a quarter-long interdisciplinary unit entitled *The Rise of Fascism in Post World War I Germany, the Holocaust and Human Rights*. The students then create murals in the school as a reminder to future students of the need for society to learn from the past so as not to repeat its mistakes.

In August, Minnesota Advocates education staff helped organize human rights activities with the entire 6-8 grade IB team and their families. Interactive games such as "Global 20 Questions" asked for student responses to "What is child labor?" and "What is one thing that you can do this year to make your school a better place?" The "Hate Free Zone" game allowed students to create strategies to combat bias and discrimination. The "Human Rights Wheel of Fortune" challenged students, parents and school staff to assess their knowledge of human rights in their own backyards. In October, Minnesota Advocates trained Sandburg teachers to incorporate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into all disciplines of the IBMY program curriculum, as well as strategies for service learning projects.

Thanks to the educators living and working in these two "different worlds," human rights education becomes the link to bridging cultures within schools and across many communities.

Supporters of Human Rights in India and Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights Present

### ***FINAL SOLUTION***

*"Best Documentary & Critics Choice, Hong Kong Film Festival"*

Film Screening and Discussion with **Director Rakesh Sharma**

Set in Gujarat, India, "FINAL SOLUTION" examines the aftermath of deadly sectarian violence in February 2002 when more than 2,500 Muslims were murdered and more than 200,000 families were driven from their homes.

Call 612-889-7334 or 612-331-3134 for tickets, or purchase them at the door.

**Saturday, Nov. 20, 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.**

Bell Auditorium, University of Minnesota

Tickets: \$5, \$3 for students and seniors

## 2004: The Year in Review...Continued

Continued from the front page  
also sold 350 tickets to the benefit performance of "The Exonerated" last spring and coordinated speakers for talkbacks after 5 performances.

It was a year when Minnesota Advocates staff and volunteers returned to Peru to continue the work of monitoring the transitional justice process in that country. The focus of this trip was to monitor the government's response to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Another team spent two weeks in May in Sierra Leone conducting fact-finding throughout the country on the transitional justice process, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court for Sierra Leone. Minnesota Advocates has submitted written statements on Peru and Sierra Leone for consideration by the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and



More than 170 students study in Minnesota Advocates' Sankhu School.

Protection of Human Rights at its session in August.

It was a year when the impact of our school in Nepal created opportunities for more than 170 children such as Rajita Karki, a twelve-year old girl who walks one hour

Sankhu-Palubari Community School. Before she began attending school, she used to help her father work in the field all day and look after the cattle. Now, Rajita enjoys the opportunity to learn and see her friends and teachers. Every day, she wakes up at 6 a.m. to do her homework. Rajita tells her teacher, "I like to study very much because I want to become a doctor."

It was a year when Minnesota Advocates' Human Rights Education staff and volunteers worked with thousands of K-12 students, dozens of teachers and scores of community members to bring the principles of human rights and cultural understanding to schools and communities throughout the region. One example is a partnership with Intermedia Arts to create a new speakers bureau of nine immigrant artists who will address human rights issues through various art media. These artists will present to schools, community groups, businesses, and others in 2004-05. The Education Program is also conducting trainings to prepare all volunteer speakers to lead human rights presentations on behalf of Minnesota Advocates.

**"I like to study very much because I want to become a doctor."  
-Sankhu student**

It was a year when our International Women's Day Celebration – our ninth annual – attracted 400 people to participate in work-

shops, performances and panels. The keynote speaker was Bonnie Campbell, former Iowa attorney general and Director of the national Violence Against Women Office, who has extensive U.N. experience advocating for women's rights around the globe.

It was a year when Minnesota Advocates contributed to media coverage of human rights, immigration and international affairs in the *Star Tribune*, *Pioneer Press*, *Minnesota Lawyer*, *New York Times*, *Law & Politics*, *Minnesota Daily*, *The Economist*, *Minnesota Women's Press*, *La Prensa*, *La Calle*, *Scholastic* magazine, *The Pulse*, Minnesota Public Radio, WCCO-AM, WWTC-AM, KAXE-FM, and KFAI-FM.



Joe Margulies

It was a year when our National Security Speaker Series – founded to contribute to the public discussion of the balance of human rights and national security in the war on terrorism – featured such notable speakers as lawyer Joe Margulies, who represents men held in Guantanamo Bay; board member Barb Frey of the Institute for Global Studies; Professor Elizabeth Heger Boyle; Robin Phillips and Doug Johnson, executive directors of Minnesota Advocates and the Center for Victims of Torture; and David Crane, the Chief Prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

It was a year when Minnesota Advocates completes a human rights fact-finding project reporting on the unique plight of immigrant women in Minnesota who are victims of domestic violence. It was a year when we joined the Park Avenue Foundation and the Volunteer Lawyers Network to operate a walk-in legal clinic for low-income residents of Hennepin County; when we were honored for our service to the Togolese community and the Consortium of African Community



Walter F. Mondale

Organizations; when the Supreme Court of the United States heard the case of Minnesota Advocates client Keyse Jama; and when we helped create a court-monitoring project in Bulgaria to make sure that victims of domestic violence find safety and the perpetrators are held accountable.

It was a year when our Human Rights Awards Dinner honored Walter Mondale for his legacy and leadership in human rights – as well as the tradition of social justice and international activism in Minnesota that guided his career and also inspired the founding of our organization. This year's event attracted about 650 people and included Palestinian dancers and our first-ever silent auction. Introducing Mr. Mondale in a pre-recorded video that evening, former President Jimmy Carter said: "It is organizations like Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights that turn the world's good intentions into the noble work of protecting fundamental human rights here at home and overseas."

## Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence

### A Minnesota Advocates Human Rights Report on the Way

Minnesota Advocates will release a report in December that documents the unique plight of immigrant women in the Twin Cities region who are victims of domestic violence.

The report – “The Government Response to Domestic Violence Against Refugee and Immigrant Women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area: A Human Rights Report” – is the culmination of 18 months of research and interviews conducted with government workers, judges, lawyers, police, court administrators, interpreters, doctors, shelter advocates and domestic violence survivors. It will be available on the Minnesota Advocates website after its release.

The report represents the first time that Minnesota Advocates’ Women’s Human Rights Program has applied its human rights methodology to hold governments in the United States accountable for compliance with their obligations under international human rights law. Over the last ten years, the Women’s Program has documented the government response to domestic violence, trafficking in women and sex discrimination in many countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The Women’s Program began its research for this project in 2003 to understand the barriers confronting refugee and immigrant survivors of violence as they seek government protection and safety in their home for themselves and their children. Minnesota Advocates learned of this need through its participation in the Immigrant and Refugee Battered Women’s Task Force, a group of service providers and shelter advocates who serve battered immigrant women.

The report’s findings and recommendations focus on the follow-

ing key areas of concern:

- ♦Language barriers, inadequate interpretation services and government failures to access interpretation services;
- ♦Immigrant community pressures and involvement in crisis resolution;
- ♦Government funding cuts that affect all services for battered immigrant and refugee women;
- ♦Battered immigrant women’s fear of legal systems and deportation, and the laws and policies instituted by the federal immigration authorities and state and local governments that exacerbate this fear; and
- ♦Procedural barriers and failures to implement existing remedies and protections available to battered immigrant women under federal and state law.

Minnesota Advocates is grateful to the following foundations for their support of this research and related outreach activities: Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, and the Minnesota State Bar Foundation. Minnesota Advocates is also indebted to a team of volunteer attorneys, staff and interns who completed interviews for this project; to attorneys Molly Beutz, Aviva Breen, and Mary Ellingen for their assistance in writing the report; and to the members of the Steering Committee who provided valuable guidance to the Women’s Program as it drafted the report.

Following the release of this report, the Women’s Program will work with government agencies, shelters, medical institutions and other community organizations to address and implement the findings and recommendations set out in this report.

## Staff and Intern Update

❖ **Brenda Anfinson** finished her one-year term with Minnesota Advocates in August of this year. She worked as a Program Assistant in the Refugee and Immigrant Program through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. We miss her!

❖ **Emma Kelty** is our new Lutheran Volunteer Corps staff member in the Refugee and Immigrant Program. She is originally from Massachusetts, and graduated from Grinnell College in 2004 with a degree in psychology and linguistics. At Grinnell, she was active in an environmental advocacy group, volunteered as an ESL tutor, and spent a semester studying in Valparaiso, Chile. As a program assistant, Emma helps with client intake interviews, answers the client hotline, and interprets for the Minnesota Detention Project. Welcome, Emma!

❖ **Laura Provinzino** is the Wellstone Fellow of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. She has a B.A. in history and international affairs from Lewis & Clark College and a B.A. in philosophy, politics and economics from Balliol College, Oxford University, earned while studying as a Rhodes Scholar. She graduated from Yale Law School in 2003. Prior to her work at

Minnesota Advocates, Laura was a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Diana E. Murphy of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Welcome, Laura!

❖ Many volunteers and interns assist us in our various projects and programs. Our



Laura Provinzino and Emma Kelty

thanks to this semester's volunteers and interns: **Sara Dondlinger** and **Jennifer Dunning** working on administrative projects; **Samantha Carolus**, **Jamie Nymann**, **Inna Ponomarenko**, **Erika Rood**, and **Melissa Toft** in the Education Program and B.I.A.S. Project; **Colleen Daly**, **Amy Draeger**, **Rob Lafrentz**, **Ana Peña**, and **Karla Vehrs** in the Refugee and Immigrant Program; **Heidi Andres**, **Laura Mapp**, **Kai Shideman**, **Sarah Shiundu**, **Michael Tierney**, and **Sam Walling** in Special Projects; **Lilo Bayati**, **Beth Braun**, **Jeremy Goyette**, **Heather Vinge Hanson**, **Katharine Horowitz**, **Julia Kashaeva**, **Sharada Lakhani**, **Jenny Mojica**, **Mary Mullen** and **Kasia Policzkiewicz** in the Women's Program.

## Asylum Victories

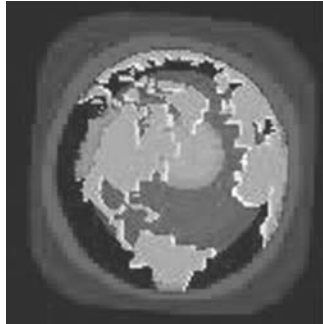
### Volunteer Lawyers, Interpreters and Doctors Help Refugees

Minnesota Advocates in the last year secured asylum for more than 40 people from such countries as Burundi, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Togo.

Asylum permits those who have fled their home countries to remain indefinitely in the United States, free from fear of persecution on account of their religion, political opinion, nationality, race or membership in a social group. Minnesota Advocates has recruited and trained more than 350 volunteer attorneys, 70 volunteer interpreters, a panel of 40 medical professionals and numerous in-office volunteers and interns to help asylum seekers. With pending cases and consultations, Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program provided immigration assistance to more than 800 individuals in the last 12 months.

While some of Minnesota Advocates' cases proceed quickly, other clients spend months or even years awaiting a final decision. One client from Togo waited patiently for nearly two years after the filing of his asylum application before he received his asylum approval letter in August 2004. With his newfound freedom, he now intends "to have my family here and begin the full integration and contribution into the American community that has welcomed me tremendously."

In addition to grants of asylum, Minnesota Advocates also in the last year obtained a grant of withholding of removal for a Zimbabwean man who was ineligible for asylum due to the late filing of his application.



"The exciting thing about asylum grants," said staff attorney Emily Good, "is seeing the visible change in the client. When we first meet clients, they are often recently arrived and still very much fearful, traumatized, and uncertain about how the asylum process will work. Once they learn of their grant, either by letter from the asylum office or in person from the judge, the change is immediate. Clients really do seem to brighten, and have more energy for their day-to-day lives. Many people have said, 'Now I can actually sleep at night.'"

Many thanks to the following volunteers who have reported asylum victories to Minnesota Advocates: Tom Bastings, Colleen Beebe, Molly Beutz, Ben Casper, Jennifer Dasari, Karen Ellingson, Michael Fondungallah, Mitchell Granberg, Mike Hatting, Dianne Heins, Joel Hurwitz, Stephanie Morgan, Kathy Moccio, Dan Palmquist, Wayne Popham, Michelle Rivero, Pam Santer, Sally Scoggin, Max Schott, and the students at the University of Minnesota Immigration Law Clinic.

Thank you to the following volunteer attorneys for your assistance in other asylum cases: Karen Ellingson, Alan Goldfarb, Lesley Guyton, Loan Huynh, Pat Mattos, Kathy Moccio, Paschal Nwokocha, Nancy Peterson, and Steve Thal. Finally, thank you to interpreters Patrick Finnegan and Annalise Nelson for volunteering your language skills for these winning cases.

Minnesota Advocates and our hundreds of clients are fortunate to have the commitment of so many volunteer attorneys, interpreters and medical professionals who have worked on asylum cases in the past year.

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**PANGEA WORLD THEATER and INTERMEDIA ARTS present**

**Indigenous Voices Series:**

### **I Don't Wanna Play House**

**Thursday-Saturday, November 18-20, 2004 at 8:00 P.M.**

**Intermedia Arts**

**2822 Lyndale Avenue South**

**Minneapolis, MN 55408**

**\$12 (\$6 Intermedia Arts members and youth under 16)**

Tasmanian aboriginal performer Tammy Anderson weaves together the events of her extraordinary childhood and the abundance of her family life with rich, witty story telling, seamless movement and mimicry. *I Don't Wanna Play House* is in turn sad, shocking, funny and uplifting as Tammy works her way through fourteen characters accompanied by musician Don Hopkins.

*Post performance discussions will be moderated by Juanita Espinosa, Native Arts Circle Director (Friday) and Sandy Agustin, Intermedia Arts Artistic Director (Saturday)*

For reservations or information call (612) 871-4444 or visit [www.intermediaarts.org](http://www.intermediaarts.org) or [www.pangeaworldtheater.org](http://www.pangeaworldtheater.org)  
This project is co-sponsored by the Women's Human Rights Program of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.

## 20 Years of Helping Asylum Seekers

### The Refugee and Immigrant Program Celebrates an Anniversary

In the fall of 1984, lawyers in the Twin Cities who worked with immigrants saw a significant group of people who needed legal help – indigent refugees seeking asylum in the U.S. from persecution overseas. They turned to a young human rights organization, the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee – now Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights – to organize *pro bono* representation for these people whose lives often depended on finding asylum.

That was the beginning of Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program, an effort that over the last two decades has recruited, trained and managed hundreds of volunteer lawyers who have represented thousands of people from around the world. The first three clients were from Sri Lanka, El Salvador and Haiti.

The celebration of this anniversary – and the community's spirit of social justice that supports it – began in October with a fall house party at the St. Paul home of Barb Frey, one of the founders of Minnesota Advocates, and her husband, Howard Orenstein. Program supporters mingled with former clients, board members and staff.

In the early years, the project had one legal fellow who coordinated the intake and placement of asylum cases with volunteer attorneys. Potential clients were placed on a waiting list for an intake interview. Volunteers conducted those intake interviews, screened clients for income eligibility and determined if there was a substantive asylum case. The volunteers then recommended cases for placement to the coordinator, who placed the cases with a volunteer attorney. At times the wait for an intake

interview was more than a year, with the wait for an attorney placement adding more months.

As it became obvious that the program needed more volunteers, Minnesota Advocates in 1986 inaugurated a training seminar on asylum law for volunteer attorneys. The training – now the Annual Asylum Conference – is usually held in June. It has trained about 1,000 lawyers over the past 19 years, providing advanced education for immigration practitioners and new volunteer lawyers in asylum law practice.

This year, with funding to support staff lawyers and many dedicated volunteer attorneys, the Refugee and Immigrant Program provided representation in 483 cases, and legal advice in hundreds more. Typically, clients get an intake interview within weeks, not months. The program now has the capacity to place cases within days, not months.

Our recent clients include the Togolese woman who fled to the United States after being tortured because of her political activism; the Sudanese man who was imprisoned and tortured because he practices Christianity; the Chinese human rights activist who, after documenting human organ harvesting in Chinese prisons, can no longer safely return to his home; and the Somali children whose family's clan membership makes them targets in their home country. Our clients are political activists, human rights workers, journalists, physicians, and teachers in our community who are seeking refuge from persecution, torture and death because of their beliefs, their work, and their identities.

Currently, almost 300 volunteer attorneys are involved with the program. We now need more help, as cases become more complex in the post 9-11 world. The Refugee and Immigrant Program has adapted to changes in the patterns of immigration and needs over the past twenty years by adding or changing projects. Projects involving humanitarian parole and family reunification in 1990, and unaccompanied child asylum cases in the mid-1990's, have demonstrated the program's flexibility.

This flexibility will continue as the program heads into another twenty years of service to the community. The Refugee and Immigrant Program celebrates twenty years of service, and thanks the many Minnesota Advocates supporters and volunteers who have made it all possible.



Staff members Amy Beier, left, and Christine Tefft, right, with volunteer interpreter Blaise Tumanjong.



Board member Samuel Kofi Woods, left, with Tarnue Marwolo, staff member Emma Kelty, and Samuel's daughter, Irene Woods, at the Refugee and Immigrant Program House Party.

# “Maybe the Powers-That-Be Will Wise Up”

## Off Death Row, Kirk Bloodsworth Tells His Story

*In March 1985, Kirk Bloodsworth was wrongfully convicted for the murder and sexual assault of a nine-year-old girl. After serving eight years in prison, two on death row, Bloodsworth was released in 1993, the first time DNA evidence exonerated a convicted criminal of a capital crime. Bloodsworth and attorney and novelist Tim Junkin have written a new book that describes Bloodsworth's experience and raises provocative questions about the U.S. legal system and the death penalty. They recently spoke with Minnesota Advocates staff.*

### Tell us what you are doing now with your life.

**Kirk Bloodsworth:** I'm touring most of the U.S. to tell people about my story. I'm talking to everybody from bookstores to law classes at UNC and Duke to a law office in Minnesota. I figured if I tell my story enough, maybe the powers-that-be will wise up and do something to keep this from happening again.



**You have a new book out, called “Bloodsworth: The True Story of the First Death Row Inmate Exonerated by DNA.” Can you tell us a little about this book?**

**Tim Junkin:** I tried to write it that way as the dramatic story of a crime, a police investigation, the prosecution and the defense of Kirk Bloodsworth—how he fought for years against overwhelming odds to prove his innocence and of his eventual triumph over injustice. ... It's also the story of the incredible impact that Kirk has made since his exoneration. It speaks to DNA in America and the death penalty in America, it speaks to the problems in our criminal justice system, and it speaks to the unfortunate arrogance that some people in power in our country seem to develop like it's some kind of sickness.

**Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty has sought to reinstate the death penalty in Minnesota. He claims that several safeguards, including the requirement of a DNA link, would make Minnesota's capital punishment system free of the errors so often found in other death penalty states. Do you think it's possible to have a foolproof death penalty?**

**KB:** No way. My bottom line is, even if you still use the death penalty, you are still going to have Kirk Bloodsworths, but (they) may not be so lucky.



Kirk Bloodsworth

**TJ:** How about all the cases where DNA doesn't exist? We are showing that innocent people are going to prison because there is no DNA to prove their innocence. Again, you end up with arbitrariness in the system. ... He (Pawlenty) is going to only use the death penalty when DNA is available—how can you call that fair? One man commits a terrible crime, but there is no DNA, so he doesn't get the death penalty. Another man commits a crime and there is DNA present, so he gets the death penalty.

**Could you explain the Bloodsworth DNA Technology Act, its status and what impact you think it will have on the criminal justice system?**

It's called The Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology Act. There is also another bill that is going to be coming in the House for a vote and should pass. It is a larger part of a victims' rights bill and would basically give rape victims a chance to have their backlog of rape kits tested. Over 300,000 rape kits are just sitting on the shelves, and that's a low estimate ... And the Kirk Bloodsworth Post-Conviction DNA Testing Program would also be for post-conviction DNA testing that would give \$25 million every five years to states that ask the federal government for money to have this access to DNA testing. It applies to everyone across the board if you have a viable claim of innocence. I believe that the bulk of this will be for death row inmates.

**The real murderer in your case was convicted, but you opposed giving him the death penalty. Why?**

One, he has to live with it. Because it's like I said, he is definitely not an innocent person, but that punishment there is far worse than the death penalty, because he has to live with his evil doings for the rest of his life. ... I can tell you as someone who has been there, that he is not going to have a good day, or a good life, for the rest of his life.



Minnesota Advocates is updating its email lists. If you would like to receive announcements of volunteer opportunities or events and general announcements, please contact Beth Varro at [evarro@mnadvocates.org](mailto:evarro@mnadvocates.org) or 612-341-3302, ext. 100. Please be sure to mention which announcements interest you. Minnesota Advocates does not share any of its mailing lists with outside organizations.

# The Minnesota Advocates Events Page

## **Connecting the Dots: Weaving Human Rights into Curriculum: Advanced Topic Series in Human Rights Education**

*Giving Voice to Human Rights Issues Through Literature and Storytelling*

Monday, November 8, 4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

Resource Center of the Americas, 3019 Minnehaha Avenue, Minneapolis

The Human Rights Education Workshops are for middle and high school teachers of all fields. Participants in the advanced workshops should have some working knowledge of human rights or have participated in the *Bridging Classroom, Curriculum, and Community* class series last year. This year's series focuses on strategies to connect human rights, peace and global education to learning standards. See <http://igs.cla.umn.edu/outreach/Seminars.htm> for more information and registration.

## **Introduction to Global, Peace, & Human Rights Education Workshop**

Tuesday, November 9, 4:00 - 6:30 P.M.

Resource Center of the Americas, 3019 Minnehaha Avenue, Minneapolis

The Human Rights Education Workshops are for middle and high school teachers of all fields, and aim to develop participants' understanding of human rights, culture, and peace education and to provide participants with content and tools to teach human rights and peace education in the classroom. See <http://igs.cla.umn.edu/outreach/Seminars.htm> for more information and registration.

## **Community Forum: New Faces, Diverse Voices: Welcoming New Arrivals from the Hmong Community**

**New date:** Tuesday, November 16, 7:00 - 9:00 P.M.

University of Minnesota Law School, 229 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Room 25

This community forum will address the newly arriving Hmong population in the Twin Cities. Panelists will discuss the historical context and current needs of the Hmong refugees, as well as provide an international legal framework regarding this issue. Panelists include John Borden of the International Institute of Minnesota; Mo Chang of the St. Paul Public Schools; Patti Hurd of Lutheran Social Service; and Chao Lee, District Office Representative for Congresswoman Betty McCollum.

## **Women's Program House Party**

Sunday, November 21, 3:00 - 5:00 P.M.

466 South Mississippi River Boulevard, St. Paul

Join us on November 21 for a house party at the home of Marlene and Tom Kayser to benefit the Women's Program of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. The event will highlight the Women's Program report *The Government Response to Violence Against Refugee and Immigrant Women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area: A Human Rights Report*, and will also feature Lynn M. Thomas, former Executive Director of Minnesota Advocates, reporting on her recent disaster relief work in Sudan.

For more information, please contact Mary Hunt at 612-341-3302, ext. 107 or [mhunt@mnadvocates.org](mailto:mhunt@mnadvocates.org), or see our website at [www.mnadvocates.org](http://www.mnadvocates.org).

## **Human Rights Day Celebration**

Friday, December 10, time TBA

University of Minnesota Law School, 229 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Room 25

This year, Minnesota Advocates will mark Human Rights Day by highlighting the crisis in Sudan. Events will include a CLE and a screening of the film *The Lost Boys of Sudan*, a feature-length documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees on their journey from Africa to America. Watch our website at [www.mnadvocates.org](http://www.mnadvocates.org) for more information.

## **International Women's Day Celebration**

Saturday, March 12, 2005 9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

New location: Coffman Memorial Union, University of Minnesota, 300 Washington Avenue SE, Minneapolis

Planning is well underway for IWD 2005, as we mark the ten year anniversary of the event that inspired our initial celebration: the Beijing 4th World Conference on Women. Implementation of the Beijing Platform will be the focus of the day's workshops and panel discussions. For more information, contact Mary Hunt at 612-341-3302, ext. 107 or [mhunt@mnadvocates.org](mailto:mhunt@mnadvocates.org), or see our website at [www.mnadvocates.org](http://www.mnadvocates.org).

## **Visit our website for more information on the following upcoming events:**

- ❖ Refugee and Immigrant Program Interpreter Training
- ❖ Death Penalty Project Brown Bag Lunch
- ❖ Human Rights and National Security Speaker Series Lunchtime Lecture

# Torture and the Law

## Experts Say Torture is Both Illegal and Unproductive

The torture of people by U.S. soldiers and employees in Iraq and Afghanistan is both illegal and unproductive, according to the executive directors of Minnesota Advocates and the Center for Victims of Torture.

Robin Phillips of Minnesota Advocates and Doug Johnson of CVT were the latest participants in Minnesota Advocates' National Security Speaker Series, a series of lunchtime forums to discuss the balance of human rights and national security in the war on terror.

Phillips and Johnson's remarks were entitled, "International Law and Democratic Ideals: Stopping and Preventing the U.S. Use of Torture." Phillips said the mistreatment and torture of detainees has created a significant public debate about what constitutes "proper conduct." She pointed out that although this area of law is clearly defined – international law explicitly prohibits torture – the current administration has sought to blur the definitions as a result of its conduct in Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and Afghanistan.



Doug Johnson

Johnson said torture is the product of a culture of fear, an increased level of social conflict that ultimately gives license to torture. Johnson said these are the facts about torture:

**Torture does not yield valuable information.** Every single person that CVT has treated confessed to a crime, even though they were not guilty. Further, soldiers are trained to sprinkle in

misinformation among their confessions, so as to confuse the enemy and render the information unreliable. Information is not yielded quickly. Soldiers are trained to withstand torture for about 24 hours. It is also very time-consuming to sort through the information to determine what is reliable.

**Torture is not applied only to the guilty.** Johnson gave an example of a police officer who was tortured because he was suspected of sharing information with the enemy. The police officer, out of fear for his safety, gave out any and every name that came to mind. In reality, the police officer was innocent, and it is possible that those he named were subsequently tortured for information.

**Torturers are looking for evidence, in addition to information.** Torturers often feel they need to secure a confession to justify torture, even if that confession is not demanded.

**Torture cannot be constrained to specific restrictions.** Once the gates are opened, the system of torture is difficult to restrain and rarely is restricted – it becomes a fishing expedition. The humiliation and techniques used in Abu Ghraib do constitute torture. People would not strip or otherwise humiliate themselves unless some coercive or intimidating factor was present.

**The U.S. government cannot commit these atrocities and still retain the moral high ground.** By engaging in human rights violations itself, the U.S. has squandered whatever moral force it had to leverage against other countries.

Watch our website for the next Human Rights and National Security Speaker Series event.



Robin Phillips

## A Wonderful Walk for Justice

On September 19th, Minnesota Advocates staff and volunteers enjoyed a beautiful afternoon while participating in the Headwaters Foundation's annual Walk for Justice. The Walk is a community action event to raise money and visibility for Twin Cities non-profit organizations working towards social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. The purple-shirted group of more than 25 walkers raised over \$3,000 to support the work of Minnesota Advocates. Top row: Jennifer Prestholdt, Dianne Erickson, Mary Hunt, Brenda Anfinson, Jenny Dunning, Allison Dillman, Jesús Purisaca, unidentified walker, unidentified walker, Inna Ponomarenko, Renee Powers, Robyn Linde, Megan Powers, Holiday Shapiro, Laura Mapp. Bottom row: Simon and Sevrin Prestholdt Weed, Emma Kelty, Rachel Boerum, Julia Kashavea, Liz Pappas, Kathy Seipp.



## Transitional Justice

### Minnesota Advocates Follows Up in Peru

A team of Minnesota Advocates staff and volunteers returned to Peru in August to examine the steps the Peruvian government is taking to implement reforms recommended by that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which completed its work on August 28, 2003.

The first Minnesota Advocates team traveled to Peru in November 2002 to examine the TRC process that was investigating the human rights abuses committed during two decades of internal armed conflict (1980-2000). After two and a half years of work, the TRC reported that Peru's political violence resulted in 600,000 internally displaced people, and the death or disappearance of 69,000 people – nearly three times greater than previous estimates. Thousands more were imprisoned and tortured. The TRC found that the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement terrorist groups, as well as the Peruvian government, were directly responsible for human rights abuses during this period of violence.

Long-term human rights monitoring efforts, like Minnesota Advocates' work in Peru, can play a vital role in the success of transitional justice processes. Human rights monitors' investigations and published observations uphold the integrity of the process and further legitimize the process by bringing it to the attention of the international community. The presence of international monitors may also provide moral and emotional support for victims who make the difficult decision to provide testimony. In the end, human rights monitoring can play an important role in pressuring the government to implement reforms to avoid future human rights abuses.

As with the November 2002 trip, team members conducted fact-finding and on-site inspection in Lima and Ayacucho, the region where the most human rights abuses occurred. Team members conducted individual interviews with victims and family mem-

bers, human rights organizations, lawyers, former commission members and staff, judges, prosecutors and the police. The team also interviewed members of Peruvian Congress and government representatives from the Executive Branch, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights Ombudsman's office, as well as U.S. embassy staff. The delegation also met with the Minister of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



Volunteer Sara Wilkinson translated for a member of the community of Pampamarca, Peru, being interviewed by the Minnesota Advocates team.

After incorporating the findings from the 2004 trip, Minnesota Advocates will publish a final written report on the transitional justice process in Peru, applying international human rights standards and including recommendations to the Peruvian government, civil society, and other relevant participants in the process.

For more information about Peru, the transitional justice process, and Minnesota Advocates' fact-finding mission, see [www.mnadvocates.org/Peru.html](http://www.mnadvocates.org/Peru.html). The website also includes a Photo Gallery, Minnesota Advocates' submissions to the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights, and a sample advocacy letter requesting the extradition of former President Alberto Fujimori from Japan.

## Planned Giving: Creating a Legacy in Human Rights

Minnesota Advocates has been fortunate over the years to receive generous support from people who saw the benefits – for themselves and for Minnesota Advocates – in donations of non-cash gifts. These donations can have short- and long-term tax advantages for the donor, and they help build the long-term financial stability of the organization.



These gifts can be arranged by estate and tax lawyers, brokers and financial advisors, and can offer particular advantages when made at the end of the taxable year:

With **gifts of stock**, donors can avoid capital gains taxes on appreciated stock and claim a deduction for the appreciated value at the time of the donation. Name Minnesota Advocates the beneficiary of **life insurance** and **401(k)** policies or accounts that are no longer needed. Additional premiums might also be tax deductible. **Bequests** can reduce estate taxes when they are included in a will. Minnesota Advocates is prepared to accept donations of **vehicles**, which are sold at considerable benefit to the organization. Legal and financial advisors can help establish a wide variety of **trusts and asset management strategies** that will provide tax and income advantages for both the donor and Minnesota Advocates.

What just \$100 can do: It will support a volunteer lawyer for one year representing an indigent refugee seeking asylum from persecution and torture. It will support the education of a Nepalese student in our Sankhu School for a year.

## Minnesota Advocates ... Briefs

### From Nepal, This Just In...

Minnesota Advocates partners with community leaders in the village of Sankhu, Nepal, to educate 174 of the region's poorest students at the Sankhu-Palubari Community School. We have these updates:

- ❖ July and August: Minnesota Advocates volunteer Jessica Hjarrand traveled to Nepal to lead a series of trainings for Sankhu teachers.
- ❖ August: 186 parents participated in basic literacy classes.
- ❖ August: Each student received two pairs of shoes and a winter cap, as well as additional school supplies.
- ❖ September: Parents began small income generation projects in spinning yarn, soap making, and candle making.
- ❖ September: Hoste Hainse, Minnesota Advocates' partner organization in Nepal, conducted surveys with Sankhu parents on their perceived impact of education, meals, and healthcare on their children.
- ❖ October: Construction projects – two new classrooms were constructed to accommodate the growing number of students; the school's roof was repaired.

### Website Monitors Our Monitoring

Minnesota Advocates has developed new webpages to support and report on our Human Rights Monitoring Program. The pages – available in a link from our main website at [www.mnadvocates.org](http://www.mnadvocates.org) – provide links to human rights monitoring tools and an overview of transitional justice mechanisms.

Minnesota Advocates' human rights monitoring project began in 2002 when a volunteer team went to Peru to monitor, and ultimately contribute to, the work of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Minnesota Advocates returned to Peru in August 2004 at the one-year anniversary of the public release of the commission's Final Report to monitor how the Peruvian government was implementing the report's recommendations. In May 2004, Minnesota Advocates sent a team to Sierra Leone for two weeks to monitor the work of that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The website describes both Peru and Sierra Leone, providing updated news, background information, information about the conflicts, an overview of the transitional justice mechanisms in both countries, a description of each country's international legal obligations, directories of civil society organizations, and

links to online resources. In addition, each section provides a picture gallery, depicting photos from Minnesota Advocates' human rights monitoring missions in Peru and Sierra Leone.

### An Honor from African Friends

The Consortium of African Community Organizations honored Minnesota Advocates in September with the "2004 African Award in Memory of Paul Wellstone," in recognition of our work with African immigrants.

The awards ceremony – a celebration that included West African dance and vocal performances, poetry, and a taste of African cuisine – was part of the First Annual African Immigration, Health, and Cultural Conference, organized to bring together immigration and refugee resettlement agencies, religious groups, health organizations, community organizations and Minnesota's African immigrant community. A majority of Minnesota Advocates' hundreds of asylum and immigration clients this past year were from African countries.

### Bulgarian Court Monitoring Project

Minnesota Advocates is working with the Open Society Institute to help launch a new court-monitoring project in Sofia and Varna, Bulgaria, in November.

The monitoring project is a new initiative in Bulgaria – and indeed the entire region. It will train people to monitor the Bulgarian criminal justice system to make sure that the safety of victims of domestic violence is protected, and the perpetrators of the violence are held accountable.

Traveling to Bulgaria with Women's Program Director, Cheryl Thomas, will be Hennepin County District Court Judge Kathryn Quaintance, and Marna Anderson, Executive Director, WATCH, a Minneapolis based court monitoring organization. They will conduct a two-day training for criminal justice officials and court monitor volunteers on the principles, goals and logistics of court monitoring.

### StopVAW - The Newsletter

Minnesota Advocates in September launched The VAW Monitor, the first edition of the monthly newsletter for the Stop Violence Against Women (StopVAW) website.

An electronic version of the newsletter is delivered at the beginning of each month to subscribers who register at [www.stopvaw.org](http://www.stopvaw.org) (click on The VAW Monitor). It provides updates on new content created on the StopVAW website, information from the website's National Violence Against Women Monitor Program, commentary from experts on violence against women, international, regional and national news, as well as updates on new reports and research relating to violence against women. A printable version of The VAW Monitor, containing images and

## Minnesota Advocates ... Briefs (Continued)

the full newsletter text, is also available in PDF format at [www.stopvaw.org](http://www.stopvaw.org).

The StopVAW website is a forum for information, advocacy and change. Minnesota Advocates developed this website as a tool for the promotion of women's human rights in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Mongolia, and the U.N. Protectorate of Kosovo. Together with the Network Women's Program of the Open Society Institute, Minnesota Advocates implements a National Violence Against Women Monitor Program for the region covered by the StopVAW website. Regional non-governmental organizations and expert consultants have been selected to facilitate the continued development and maintenance of the Country Pages of StopVAW and to contribute news and research items for The VAW Monitor.

### “An Exceptional Advocate” Gets Award

Minnesota Advocates' Michele Garnett McKenzie in October was given the 2004 Advocate for Justice Award to honor “exceptional legal advocacy on behalf of the legal community.”

The award came from Centro Legal, Inc., a nonprofit law office that provides legal services to the Latino community of

Minnesota. Michele is the Director of Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program.

“Michele has been steadfast in her commitment to making justice an accessible reality for immigrants and refugees of all nationalities,” said Jorge Saavedra, Chief Legal Officer of Centro Legal. “She is an exceptional advocate, and her skill, presence and vision are making a tangible, positive difference for the immigrants and refugees she works with.”



Refugee and Immigrant Program Director Michele Garnett McKenzie

Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the coming year. Our clients are indigent refugees who are at risk of deportation to their home countries where they face persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political belief. Congratulations, Michele!

## From Sierra Leone to Minnesota

### UN Prosecutor Tells West Africans That Prosecutions Are Coming

When David Crane, the United Nations' Chief Prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, wanted to meet with West Africans in the U.S. to update them on his work, he came to Minnesota, home to one of the nation's largest populations of Sierra Leoneans, Togolese and Liberians.



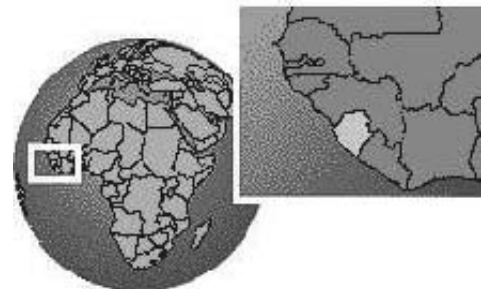
David Crane in August held what he called a “Town Hall Meeting” with Minnesota's West African community, an event that resembled the town hall meetings Crane conducts throughout Sierra Leone as part of the Special Court's outreach. Both Liberians and Sierra Leoneans attended the meeting to ask Crane questions about several issues, including the status of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and the Court's plans to indict more individuals.

Crane also spoke to lawyers at two separate events sponsored by the Briggs & Morgan and Faegre & Benson law firms. Crane explained that the Special Court was created in 2000 to prosecute “those persons who bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of violations of international humanitarian law.” The court is based in Freetown. Eleven individuals are currently indicted, including Charles Taylor.

Crane emphasized three important points about the Special Court in his Minnesota visit: 1) The Special Court has a workable mandate to prosecute those who bear the *greatest*

responsibility within a limited timeframe of three years; 2) The Special Court is situated in the country where the crimes occurred, which has not only been important for the prosecution's work, but has also helped victims to see that justice is done; 3) The Special Court has issued five decisions that set important precedents for international law.

“I am very impressed by the work that is done here in Minnesota, specifically in Minneapolis and St. Paul,” Crane said. “Minnesota does more than many other regions of the country. If other regions worked on human rights as much as Minnesota did, the world would be a better place.”



Sierra Leone

## An Unsettled Reception

### Hmong, Minnesota Advocates Battle Immigration Myths

The news last year that thousands of new Hmong refugees would soon be arriving in the Twin Cities generated a variety of public responses – from enthusiasm and curiosity to misunderstanding and fear.

As part of our Building Immigrant Awareness and Support (B.I.A.S.) Project, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights began gathering information last summer to better understand the community's response to the arriving Hmong refugees and provide the public with as much accurate information as possible.

It is already apparent that misconceptions about refugees and immigrants are common. For example, we have found that it is commonly believed by Minnesotans that refugees come to the U.S. for economic reasons. While some *immigrants* may come to the U.S. for economic reasons, *refugees* usually flee their homelands because they fear persecution. In fact, the U.S. government has determined that the newly arriving Hmong should be resettled as refugees.

The Hmong and the U.S. government have a long history. From 1960 to 1975, thousands of Hmong, recruited by the CIA, fought in the U.S.'s secret war in Laos. Despite the U.S. government's promise to help and protect the Hmong people, when it pulled out of Southeast Asia in 1975, it left behind most of these soldiers, pilots, and medics, as well as their families. Those left behind were forced into reeducation camps by the new Laotian government, fled to the jungle, or fled to refugee camps in Thailand.

Of those who made it to Thailand, 160,000 eventually resettled

as refugees in the United States. Minnesota became home to the second largest Hmong refugee population in the U.S., currently estimated at between 45,000 and 60,000. In December 2003, the U.S. government responded to a request from the Thai government to resettle in the U.S. the 14,696 remaining refugees. Of these refugees, it is estimated that up to 5,000 will reunify with family members who live in Minnesota throughout 2004 and early 2005.

Other misconceptions:

*The U.S. is the only country that accepts refugees.* In reality, the U.S. in 2003 hosted less than .3 percent of the world's refugees. The heaviest burden of supporting refugees often goes to countries of first asylum, such as Thailand in the case of the Hmong refugees. Africa and Asia host about 71 percent of all people designated as refugees.

*Refugees come to Minnesota due to the large number of charity organizations and its generous welfare system.* Minnesota is a reunification state, which means that generally only refugees with family members already in Minnesota are resettled here. In 2002, only 2 percent of all refugees settled in the U.S. were placed in Minnesota.

Despite the challenges faced by these new arrivals, experts are optimistic that they will adapt as well, if not more quickly, than their families who came decades ago. The Hmong community in Minnesota has adapted successfully to life in the U.S.

For more information about the myths and realities about immigrants, refugees, and immigration, visit Minnesota Advocates' website under B.I.A.S. Project Resources at [www.mnadvocates.org/B\\_I\\_A\\_S\\_Project\\_Resources.html](http://www.mnadvocates.org/B_I_A_S_Project_Resources.html).

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## A Call for Volunteers

Minnesota is home to an estimated 15,000 ethnic Oromo, the largest Oromo community in the country. Many have escaped human rights abuses in Ethiopia to seek asylum here. Minnesota Advocates has designed a project to conduct fact-finding in Minnesota about human rights abuses against the Oromo people in Ethiopia with the goal of raising awareness and providing information for advocacy efforts to improve the human rights situation in Ethiopia. This project is an opportunity to document an international human rights issue that directly affects members of our community.

The project will focus on both the historical and current conditions affecting the Oromo. A fact-finding team of volunteer attorneys will conduct interviews in the Twin Cities with Oromo who have been subject to human rights violations (many of whom are former clients of our Refugee and Asylum Project), as well as Oromo scholars and community leaders, the immigration bar, and providers of medical and community services to the Oromo.

The project will create a report documenting human rights abuses and present the findings in a community forum. Based on those results, Minnesota Advocates will consider human rights monitoring or a fact-finding mission to Ethiopia.

**Call for Volunteers:** Minnesota Advocates is assembling a study group to meet monthly to research and discuss human rights issues affecting members of the Oromo ethnic group in Ethiopia. For more information contact Laura Provinzino, Wellstone Legal Fellow at 612-341-3302, ext. 128 or [lprovinzino@mnadvocates.org](mailto:lprovinzino@mnadvocates.org).



Ethiopia, home to the Oromo people.

## Volunteer Corner

### The Lawyers of Park Avenue

Every Thursday, a line forms outside the Park Avenue Methodist Church at 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue in Minneapolis for a weekly legal clinic serving low-income residents of Hennepin County. The clinic is Minnesota Advocates' newest partnership and one of our best examples of the powerful impact of lawyers who volunteer to help our clients.

With the Park Avenue Foundation and Volunteer Lawyers Network, Minnesota Advocates coordinates these weekly two-hour walk-in legal clinics that are dominated by immigration legal issues. Sixteen experienced immigration attorneys rotate to provide services to over 350 people every year.

The clients are not the only people to find rewards in the sessions. Annette Toews, who volunteers almost every week, said, "[I]t is often too easy in our society to become so involved and busy with our own lives and worlds, that we don't really see or understand the daily difficulties that those in greater need than ourselves face. The clinic gives me constant reality checks that help me keep my priorities straight."

Elaine Schneider, one of the clinic's long-term volunteers, agreed. She said she believes she is "blessed because I help people in need. I feel satisfied and fulfilled that I am using [my] law degree...to help others."

Both Annette and Elaine recommend the walk-in legal clinic as an excellent way to contribute *pro bono* assistance. Volunteering, they said, gives attorneys and law students an

opportunity to help others in need, as well as learn from other volunteers. As Annette put it, "I highly recommend others to volunteer in *pro bono* legal clinics. Not only is it a wonderful way to contribute your skills to those in desperate need of them, but it is fun and educational. The volunteer attorneys and clerks are very collegial, we learn a lot from each other, and have a fun time together. You never know what issues you will be delving into on any given day. It is intellectually challenging and rewarding, as well as emotionally rewarding."



Elaine Schneider and Annette Toews are two of the legal clinic's dedicated volunteers. Elaine has been volunteering on an almost weekly basis for four years.

Minnesota Advocates would like to acknowledge and thank the walk-in legal clinic's dedicated volunteer lawyers: Kwao Amegashie, Brian Aust, Audrey Carr, Veronica Casey, Alan Goldfarb, Rose Grengs, Lesley Guyton, Klara Huesers, Kim Hunter, Riddhi Jani, Nancy Johnson-Maloney, Paschal Nwokocha, Nancy Peterson, Michelle Rivero, Elaine Schneider, Dinesh Shenoy, Keith Simon, Amadu Edward Swaray, Annette Toews, and Scott Wold.

If you would like to volunteer for, or need information about, the walk-in legal clinic, please contact Colleen Beebe at (612) 341-3302, ext. 114 or [cbeebe@mnadvocates.org](mailto:cbeebe@mnadvocates.org).

## "A Chance to Make a Difference" ... Continued

*Continued from the front page*

Jama, a Somali refugee who faced deportation. The court agreed to decide if the federal government could deport someone – in this case, Jama – to a country like Somalia, which had no functional government and presented considerable danger to someone arriving from the United States. Keyes argued the case before the Supreme Court.

Those were two examples of people without notable resources, or even citizenship, whose rights are being protected only because talented lawyers volunteered to represent them.

"Keyes Jama and Martin Draughon could not have received better legal representation," said Minnesota Advocates Executive Director Robin Phillips. "We must do all we can to protect the rights of all people who truly need that protection."

Said Keyes, "These are the cases where Minnesota Advocates gives volunteer lawyers a chance to make a difference."

That is a sentiment familiar to Minnesota Advocates' volunteers. The organization has more than 300 volunteer lawyers

who represent hundreds of indigent refugees seeking asylum in this country from persecution, violence and torture in their home countries. This year, people from 28 different countries will receive asylum through the work of Minnesota Advocates' volunteer lawyers.

It will probably surprise no one that Keyes has been "getting a lot of ribbing" this fall from colleagues.

"They say, 'Aren't you doing billable work anymore?'" Keyes said, adding, "I don't mind the kidding." Keyes said his successes this fall are not necessarily the only way to measure the contributions of *pro bono* work.

"In this kind of human rights-related work," he said, "the victories don't come that often. They're great when they come. But what's more important is raising the issues, making sure the system works. ... We have a very special legal community in the Twin Cities and Minnesota, that understands that practicing law is a privilege and we have to give something back. I'm proud to be part of this legal community."

## **Staff**

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Administrative Assistant/  
Assistant to the Executive  
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Refugee & Immigrant Program  
Staff Attorney  
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The Minnesota Advocates Human Rights Monitoring Team, on the move in a mototaxi in Ayacucho, Peru.



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