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HUMAN RIGHTS



FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

OBSERVER

The 2005 Year in Review

Impact overseas and here at home

At any given moment in 2005, you could have found the staff and volunteers of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights engaged in important human rights work -- training police and judges in Eastern Europe; working with teachers and school administrators in West St. Paul; or documenting human rights abuses in Africa, South America or the Twin Cities. And every day in 2005, the world came to us, as indigent refugees by the

hundreds came through our doors for help finding asylum from human rights abuses overseas.

Some highlights of 2005 for Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights:

We celebrated the 20th anniversary year of Minnesota Advocates' work on behalf of indigent asylum seekers. We counseled approximately 1,000 refugees and immigrants during the year, including more than 450 people seeking asylum in the U.S. from persecution, violence and torture in their home countries.

For this work, we received awards of appreciation from Minnesota's Liberian and Togolese communities.

Minnesota Advocates this summer

launched the *Torture Destroys Us All* campaign, an effort to inspire and inform a wider public discussion about the use of torture in the war on terror. The campaign -- built around an exhibit with photographs, background materials, petitions and post cards addressed to public officials -- began on the Nicollet Mall and continued at the

Minnesota State Fair, where our staff and volunteers distributed more than 4,000 buttons with the *Torture Destroys Us All* logo, and a petition was signed by more than 1,000 people.

Minnesota Advocates helped draft an amicus brief on behalf of bar associations and human rights organizations in a death penalty case that was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Our Battered Refugee and Immigrant Women Project report has changed public policy. Staff trained police, judges, social service workers and community groups on Minnesota Advocates' findings.

The impact of our Stop Violence Against Women website grew. This research and networking resource is helping the victims and opponents of domestic violence in 30 countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

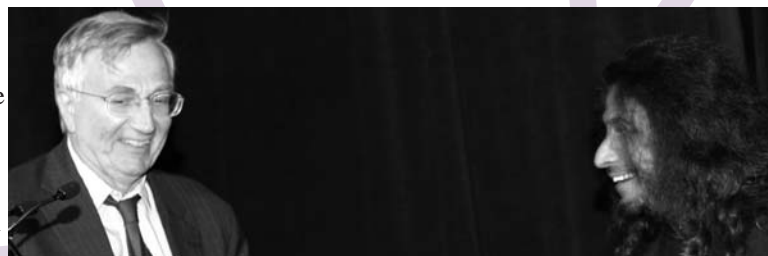


Students at Sandburg Middle School, a Minnesota Advocates' Rights Site, helped feed children overseas this year.

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Our "Torture Destroys Us All" campaign had its debut in June on the Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis.



Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Seymour Hersh was introduced by Minnesota Advocates board member Dipankar Mukherjee at this year's Human Rights Awards Dinner.

This year, the 20th Annual Asylum Conference and the Human Rights Law CLE were combined in a two-day conference that saw record attendance. The conference brought together experts on

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From the Director's Desk

In 2005, the United States experienced one of the worst humanitarian disasters in our history. In exposing many problems of poverty, race and class, Hurricane Katrina exposed the dramatic failure of U.S. domestic policy related to economic, social and cultural rights.

The statistics are staggering. In 2004, 12.7 percent of the U.S. population was living in poverty. That is 37 million people, up 1.1 million from 2003. More than 45 million people in the United States do not have health insurance, which accounts for more than 15 percent of the population. In a study done by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 3.5 million people, including 1.35 million children, are likely to experience homelessness in a given year. In Minnesota, while better than the national average, 8.5 percent of the people do not have health insurance and 7 percent of our people live in poverty. More than 20,000 Minnesotans are homeless and an estimated 10,600 children are either homeless or living in temporary arrangements on any given night.

The public debate in the United States often focuses on the imperfections of public welfare policies rather than inequities in the system or lasting solutions. Our politicians have even publicly distinguished between those people they say "pay into" the system and those they say "take out" of the system.

Public policy in the United States should reflect the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all people are born equal in dignity and rights. There is a worldwide consensus that basic needs such as food, health care, education and housing are fundamental human rights and that they should be ensured on an equal basis to all, without discrimination.

The United States is one of the few countries that is not a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the treaty that outlines these protections. Notably, Eleanor Roosevelt fought hard to tie economic, social and cultural rights to civil and political rights because

she feared that economic rights would be marginalized as they have been.

I am often asked when traveling abroad how a country as wealthy as the United States allows its own people to go without basic health care or adequate housing. It is incomprehensible to many people outside of the United States that our public policy accepts that some people will go without these basic necessities. Any real improvement in this situation will require a major shift in public policy, recognizing these basic needs as fundamental human rights. Any such shift would bring the U.S. closer in line with the rest of the world community.

The immediate and generous response to Hurricane Katrina from individuals around the United States gives much cause to be optimistic. Unfortunately, however, if fundamental human rights are dependent on private sector philanthropy, many of the nation's most profound needs will go unmet. We must hold our own government accountable for these human rights violations here at home and work to change the public policies that have allowed these inequities to continue decade after decade.

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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. By involving volunteers in research, education, and advocacy, we build broad constituencies in the United States and selected global communities. 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.



Robin Phillips
 Executive Director

New Rights Sites Partnership

The Perpich Center joins human rights education

The Perpich Center for Arts Education in Golden Valley, MN, is Minnesota Advocates' newest "Rights Sites" Project partner school.

The Perpich Center for Arts Education is a school that is charged by the Minnesota Legislature to bring the arts into all K-12 education. Its mission is innovative public education, centered in the arts. With more than 13 years of leadership, the center is a nationally-recognized example of what is possible in the field of arts and education.

The Rights Sites Project uses collaborative teams of teachers and administrators in K-12 schools to develop a sustained approach to human rights education for their students. For example, a teacher at St. Paul Creative Arts High School works with her students to write skits based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At J.J. Hill Montessori in St. Paul, students write their own history of immigration. At Sandburg Middle School in Golden Valley, classes connect human rights with topics as varied as the Holocaust and schoolyard bullying.

Minnesota Advocates' education program has worked with teachers for the past 11 years to educate more than 15,000 students and community members in more than 100 communities in Minnesota about human rights issues, the realities of immigration, and information about specific immigrant populations in Minnesota. Last year, more than 1,500 K-12 students in the Twin Cities region attended human rights education events, activities, and classes led by Minnesota Advocates staff and our partner teachers.

Minnesota Advocates recruits teachers and administrators who are interested in making human rights education part of their classrooms. Our staff supplies them with curricula, lesson plans, training, volunteers, staff support and printed media. Last year alone, we conducted more than 20 professional development trainings at the request of teachers, administrators and school districts.

Our "Rights Sites" Project currently has close working partnerships with eight other schools – the Work Opportunity Center, P.E.A.S.E. Academy, Bethany Elementary, and Interdistrict Downtown School in Minneapolis; Washington Technology Magnet Middle School, J.J. Hill Magnet Montessori School and Creative Arts High School in St. Paul; and Sandburg Middle School in Golden Valley.

At Perpich, one of the lead teachers will be Chris Granias,

known to his colleagues and students as "Dr. G." He first heard about Minnesota Advocates this summer at a workshop in Albert Lea, and was inspired by the connection made between human rights, the arts and immigrant and refugee issues. He is Greek American, the child of immigrants, a musician and history buff who is passionate about using his own background to connect with his students.

Chris has taught music at Perpich for 10 years. Working with Minnesota Advocates, this year Chris' music class – "World Music and Culture" – will connect students to the cultures around them. He invited immigrants and Native Americans to share the music and musical instruments of their culture. Musician Erol Mastafar played modern Turkish music for his students and handmade instruments such as the saz, zurna and the mey. Another day a cook at Perpich, Mohamed Chalbi from Tunisia, told students about his immigrant experiences.

Last year more than 1,500 K-12 students in the Twin Cities attended human rights education events, activities, and classes led by Minnesota Advocates staff and partner teachers.

Chris teaches a heritage lesson that connects music to immigration. The students create a family tree that goes back in time to trace the roots of a culture that has either immigrated to the U.S. or that is Native American. Chris shows his own family tree that traces his roots to Greece and plays a cassette of his grandmother singing in her 80s in Greece. The students are then asked to choose a nonliving relative and investigate the type of music they may have listened to at the age of 16. The students get a sense of cultural history as well as appreciation for the various types of music that exist today.

As an immigrant youth growing up in Chicago, Chris feels a strong connection with many of his immigrant students today. He said he understands the feelings of young immigrants ignoring their culture and trying to become "Americanized." He wants his students to know that it's most important to be educated. He wants to convey the message to his students that they can do well in school, become Americans, without neglecting their immigrant heritage.

"By teaching World Music and infusing human rights into his curriculum this year, Chris hopes to open the eyes of his students to the world around them," said Kathy Seipp of Minnesota Advocates Education Program. "Chris has already made a huge impact on his school and the students."



New Rights Sites teacher Chris Granias, second from left, and his students welcome Turkish visitor Erol Mastafar to their classroom.

The 2005 Year in Review...Continued

From IWD to Seymour Hersh

refugee rights, religious freedom and indigenous rights, along with practitioners of immigration and asylum law.

Minnesota Advocates joined the Steering Committee of the Detention Watch Network, a national organization that advocates against the detention of immigrants.



Zainab Salbi, right, at this year's International Women's Day.

After more than a year of interviews and research, a report to be published this winter will document human rights conditions in Ethiopia, as described and documented by the Oromo people who fled to Minnesota. Our state has the largest Ethiopian population outside the Horn of Africa.

Last spring we celebrated the 10th anniversary of International Women's Day with an event that was attended by more than 500 people, and included keynote speakers Zainab Salbi, founder and president of Women for Women International, and Winona LaDuke, activist, author, Program Director of Honor the Earth and Founding Director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project.

The expertise of Minnesota Advocates' staff, board and volunteers contributed this year to media coverage of human rights issues in such venues as the *Star Tribune*, *Pioneer Press*, Minnesota Public Radio ("Midmorning," MIDDAY," and "All Things Considered") *City Pages*, *Minnesota Lawyer*, *Law & Politics*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *The Minnesota Daily*, *The Fort Worth (Texas) Weekly*, AP, *The*



More than 180 students attended our Sankhu School in Nepal this year.

San Jose Mercury News, *Minnesota Women's Press*, Twin Cities Public Television, WCCO-AM, and KFAI-FM, among others.

Minnesota Advocates' 2005 Human Rights Awards Dinner in June – with a record crowd of more than 850 people – honored The American Refugee Committee and The Center for Victims of Torture, and included a provocative keynote speaker, Seymour Hersh, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who has

written extensively about torture by U.S. Army troops and the threat to civil liberties in this country. Hersh asked the audience in the Depot in downtown Minneapolis: "What you have – maybe because of 9/11 or whatever reason – is the fundamental question that has to be asked: How fragile is our democracy? How fragile is it?"

We accelerated our efforts to inspire discussions of human rights throughout the community. This year staff members and volunteers made hundreds of presentations on diverse human rights issues attended by more than 6200 people. Staff and volunteers also 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.

Ten legal professionals from the Republic of Georgia came to the office of Minnesota Advocates for a two-week training on domestic violence legal reform. The Georgians, all lawyers, are drafting laws on domestic violence in the former Soviet republic.



People from 21 countries attended training in Tbilisi this year to be human rights monitors for our StopVAW website.

Our staff conducted training in Sofia, Bulgaria for a new court monitoring program to be launched in three cities in Bulgaria. Minnesota Advocates collaborated with the Open Society Institute and WATCH to train people to follow cases of family and sexual violence, and provide feedback to the local justice systems.

We trained Amnesty International's European staff in London on documenting domestic violence as a human rights abuse.

Minnesota Advocates' Post-9/11 Project – an effort to document the long-term impact of the terrorist attacks and the government's response to them in the region's immigrant communities – also neared completion, as staff and volunteers conducted research and 70 interviews with refugees and immigrants in Rochester, St. Cloud, and in the Twin Cities.

Minnesota Advocates presented an oral statement on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process in both Sierra Leone and Peru at the 2005 meeting of the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

2005: The Year in Pictures



Our "Moving Lives" speaker series of immigrant artists began in 2005.



The Ananya Dance Theater performed this year at International Women's Day, co-presented by Minnesota Advocates and the Human Rights Program of the University of Minnesota



Volunteer lawyer Kevin Magnuson, left, worked on the case of Keyse Jama, right, which was decided in 2005 by the U.S. Supreme Court.



Students from Anoka High School raised money this year for Minnesota Advocates' school in Nepal.



The staff of Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program with friends from the Somali community.



Executive Director Robin Phillips with attorney Jeff Keyes outside the U.S. Supreme Court after a hearing for a refugee client's case.



Minnesota Advocates' Education Program worked with thousands of students this year to knit together diverse classrooms across the region.



Minnesota Advocates board members Hyder Khan, left, and Skip Humphrey introduced this year's Human Rights Award winners.

Minnesota Advocates Briefs

Two countries, one cause

In Thailand and Tajikistan, working against violence

As the *Observer* went to press, delegations from Minnesota Advocates were presenting in a panel on the use of technology in the struggle against violence against women at an international conference in Bangkok, Thailand, and conducting fact-finding on the government's response to domestic violence in Tajikistan.

The four-day forum in Bangkok – the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)'s 10th International Forum – brings together 2000 women's rights activists from all over the world. With speeches, interactive sessions, workshops and debates, delegates create plans to further gender equality and women's human rights. The theme of this year's conference was: "How does change happen?"



Cheryl Thomas, Minnesota Advocates' Women's Program Director was to participate in a panel discussing Minnesota Advocates' Stop Violence Against Women website (www.stopvaw.org) as an innovative tool in the struggle against violence against women. 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, the states of the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, and the U.N. Protectorate of Kosovo.

Minnesota Advocates was also invited to display the StopVAW website as a forum for information, advocacy and change at a technology booth throughout the conference.

Minnesota Advocates staff and volunteers were in Tajikistan at the invitation of organizations in Dushanbe. Based on their research on domestic violence, Minnesota Advocates will publish a human rights report on domestic violence in Tajikistan. The delegation included Thomas, Rose Park, Laura Nelson, Mary Ellingen and Kathleen Graham. Former staff attorney, Christine Tefft, who now works in Tajikistan with the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative, will assist with scheduling interviews when the team is there.

There is currently a draft law on domestic violence in Tajikistan, and Minnesota Advocates will also be consulting with advocates and justice system personnel there on provisions of the proposed law. Support for this project comes from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Bulgaria work continues

Nine years of experience and success

A delegation from Minnesota Advocates – staff members and volunteer judges and police trainers – will be in Sofia, Bulgaria, after Thanksgiving for a five-day training conference to support Bulgaria's new domestic violence law.

Bulgaria's law, which went into effect last March, is modeled on Minnesota's 1979 Order for Protection law, and is one of the first of its kind in the region to give judges the option of removing an abusive spouse from a household. The delegation will use their experience in Minnesota to train Bulgarian judges and police on how to apply the law there.

Since the publication of Minnesota Advocates' "Domestic Violence in Bulgaria" report in 1996, Minnesota Advocates has worked closely with the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) to reduce domestic violence in the region. Earlier this year, working with the foundation, Minnesota Advocates interviewed judges, police, lawyers, and activists in Bulgaria on the impact and application of the new domestic violence law. The results of those interviews provided the focus for training materials for the upcoming conference.

Minnesota Advocates has worked closely with the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) to reduce domestic violence in the region.

"We're proud that we contributed to the passage of the domestic violence law in Bulgaria," said Cheryl Thomas, Director of Minnesota Advocates' Women's Program. "The law is a new idea in the region, and trainings like these will help women find safety, and create accountability for their abusers."

New Speaker Series

Subject: The rights and freedoms of children

Minnesota Advocates and the law firm of Faegre & Benson LLP in December will launch the Children's Human Rights Speaker Series, a schedule of lunchtime events that will highlight issues of the fundamental rights and freedoms of children.

A preview series event is scheduled for noon, Dec. 12, in the Minneapolis offices of Faegre & Benson LLP, 2200 Wells Fargo Center, 90 South Seventh Street. The first speaker will be Huy Pham, Director of International Operations for the American Refugee Committee, who will draw on his experiences with Hurricane Katrina, Darfur and other international crises to discuss the impact of disasters on children.

To register, email Amy Beier at abeier@mnadvocates.org. The

Minnesota Advocates ... Briefs

regular every-other-month schedule will begin in January.

“Minnesota Advocates and Faegre & Benson have collaborated for many years to protect the rights of children,” said Michele Garnett McKenzie, director of Minnesota Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program. “We hope this series will raise the profile of these issues and broaden our understanding of them.”

Future events will cover such topics as child soldiers, children’s asylum claims, child labor, and children’s rights to education and health care. For more information, watch the Minnesota Advocates website, at www.mnadvocates.org.

International Women’s Day

Date set at U of M

The 11th Annual International Women’s Day Celebration will return to Coffman Memorial Union on the University of Minnesota campus on Saturday, March 4, for a full day of workshops, keynote speakers, performances, and information from co-sponsoring organizations.

The celebration, which is free and regularly draws as many as 700 participants from across the Twin Cities region, celebrates the diversity of Minnesota women and advances in women’s human rights and equality. The event also provides opportunities for education and activism on human rights issues affecting women and girls locally, nationally and internationally. As Zainab Salbi of Women for Women International said at last year’s event, “Stronger women lead to stronger nations.”

Save the
date: March
4 for IWD

Co-presented by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the University of Minnesota’s Human Rights Program, this celebration is co-sponsored by more than 50 local organizations that staff displays and information tables throughout the day.

For more information, watch for our mid-winter mailing or check in the weeks ahead for updates on the Minnesota Advocates website (www.mnadvocates.org). To volunteer for International Women’s Day, please contact Mary Hunt, IWD Coordinator at 612-341-3302, ext. 107, or mhunt@mnadvocates.org.

A “16 Days” Event

Activism against gender violence

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the Hennepin County Medical Center Education Department will present a noon-time speaker presentation on Wednesday, December 7 as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence international campaign.

In keeping with the theme of this year’s campaign, “For the Health of Women, For the Health of the World: NO MORE VIOLENCE”, Diane Knust from Hennepin County Ryan White Title I and Dr. Joan Othieno, researcher with interests in HIV/AIDS and women’s issues will address the complex connections between women’s human rights, violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Location: Room OL200, HCMC (for directions, see the Minnesota Advocates website). Time: 12 – 1 p.m. This event is free and open to the public; please RSVP to Mary Hunt at Minnesota Advocates, 612-341-3302, ext. 107, or mhunt@mnadvocates.org.

...And in Tbilisi

Website monitors gather for training

Minnesota Advocates Women’s Program staff over the summer joined the Network Women’s Program of Open Society Institute in Tbilisi, Georgia, to host the annual meeting of the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Monitor Program.

The meeting was part of the ongoing management of Minnesota Advocates’ Stop Violence Against Women website, www.stopvaw.org. The Monitor Program helps women’s human rights activists in Central and Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Mongolia, monitor violence against women and gender equality in their respective countries.

“We’re trying to build a network of monitors to fight violence against women throughout these regions,” said Laura Nelson, a Minnesota Advocates staff lawyer. “It’s very important that they get together from so many places to share ideas, experiences and the training.”



The meeting was the first opportunity for the 20 monitors to gather as a group and begin to establish a cohesive network. The meeting was split between training on writing for and posting to the StopVAW website, and brainstorming and discussion of visions for the future of the project.

Finding Asylum

Hundreds of pending cases, hundreds of volunteer lawyers

Minnesota Advocates in 2005 secured asylum for clients from such countries as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guinea, Tanzania, Liberia, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan and Togo.

More than 60 new cases were placed with volunteer attorneys and, increasingly, attorney teams. In all, Minnesota Advocates provided immigration assistance to nearly 1000 individuals in the last 12 months, including full representation to more than 450 indigent asylum seekers.

Brief advice and service to refugees and immigrants were provided at Minnesota Advocates' legal advice clinics. The Park Avenue Foundation/Volunteer Lawyers Network Walk-In Legal Clinic served more than 300 individuals in the last year. Other regular clinics are held at the Center for Victims of Torture and Minnesota AIDS Project.

A number of families were reunited after years of separation through the dedicated work of Minnesota Advocates' attorneys. And in an exciting development, Minnesota Advocates' clients who won asylum several years ago finally began receiving their lawful permanent resident status after years of waiting in a backlog of more than 100,000 applications for green cards.

This year's victories were hard-fought. Changes to the asylum laws made by the REAL ID Act, including new restrictions on judicial review, and numerous federal court decisions posed new challenges to asylum volunteers.

"U.S. asylum law grows more challenging each day, and without the help of dedicated volunteer attorneys, asylum seekers would far more likely be denied protection," said Michele Garnett McKenzie, director of the Refugee and Immigrant Program. Asylum permits those who have fled their home countries to remain indefinitely in the United States, free from fear of persecution because of their religion, political opinion, nationality, race or membership in a social group.

Minnesota Advocates has recruited and trained more than 500 volunteer attorneys to represent asylum seekers in the region. More than 70 interpreters joined the Volunteer Interpreter Panel, and this year nearly 60 requests for interpreters were filled. The

Minnesota Asylum Network of health care professionals continued to add volunteers and respond to requests for forensic evaluations in support of asylum applications.

Many thanks to the following volunteers who have reported asylum victories to Minnesota Advocates: John Barker, Maureen Harris, David Woodward, Laura Tripiciano, Caroline Ostrom, Suzanne Tresnock, Evon Spangler, Michelle Rivero, John Ella, Robert Sicoli, Heather Toft, Mark Thieroff, and clinical

instructors Karen Ellingson and John Keller, together with their students at the University of Minnesota Immigration Law Clinic.

Thank you to the following consulting attorney volunteers for your assistance in these cases: Karen Ellingson, Kim Hunter, Caroline Ostrom, Mark Frey, Nancy Peterson, Jeff

Larson, Julie Zimmer, Hargwayne Gegziabhre, Patricia Mattos, Kathy Moccio and Rose Grengs. Our consulting attorneys play a vital role in the success of Minnesota Advocates' asylum claims, serving as resources for the volunteer attorneys.

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.

One client's story ...

In the summer of 2004, a *pro bono* attorney team led by Craig Diviney from the firm of Dorsey & Whitney began representing Kofi (not his real name) in his application for asylum. Kofi fled Togo after suffering persecution because of his public opposition to the dictatorial regime of President Eyadema. A political activist since his student days, Kofi was jailed and tortured. His father mysteriously disappeared, which might or might not have been a consequence of his political activity.

Mr. Diviney and the Dorsey team worked to prepare Kofi's asylum application, affidavit and background research for filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Since his arrival in Minnesota, Kofi has been taking English classes, as well as using his engineering background to tutor foreign-born students in math. Kofi is appreciative of the "very perfect and incredible group of minds that were able to put my file together. I do not know how to thank them."

Attention Pro Bono Attorneys:

Register with probono.net/asylum to access Minnesota Advocates' online library and receive practice advisories on asylum law. Join a virtual community of lawyers dedicated to serving people fleeing persecution.

Staff and Intern Update

Kay Kautio has joined Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights as our Administrative Director. Kay's professional history includes being a Special Education teacher, an accountant, human resource manager in legal environments and most recently the Vocational Services Manager at the Courage Center. Welcome Kay!

Ronald Barnes left Minnesota Advocates after three years as the Administrative Director. **Emma Kelty** completed her year as our Lutheran volunteer. We miss them both.

We'd like to thank **Jae Asanchev** for filling in as interim Administrative Director while we were looking for Ron's replacement.

Aaron Van Alstine joins Minnesota Advocates after spending one year working as an Upper Midwest International Human Rights Fellow with the NGO *Paz y Esperanza* in Peru. Aaron also worked with Twin Cities' African communities by providing refugee resettlement assistance through Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. Welcome Aaron!

Katie Vang is the new front desk Administrative Assistant. Katie is a student at Concordia University studying Marketing Management and is involved with the Hmong organization called CHAT (Center For Hmong Arts And Talent). She is also on the *H Project* committee (www.icelevation.org), which focuses on "Art For Social Change." Welcome Katie!



Katie Vang, Jae Asanchev, Kay Kautio and Aaron Van Alstine

Minnesota Advocates welcomes the new **Interns and Volunteers** to our programs this fall:

Shantal Marshall and **Shaun Pettigrew** with Special Projects; **Margaret Hellerstein** with the Yale Law School Lowenstein Project; **Rachel Evenson**, **Mia Lisa McFarland** and **Jane Gazman** with the Women's Human Rights Program; **Sarah Carlson-Wallrath**, **Elizabeth Petheo** and **Jordan Jones** with the Refugee and Immigrant Program; **Carrie Coslin** with Special Projects and Refugee and Immigrant Program; **Elizabeth Kiechle** with the Death Penalty and Women's Human Rights Program; and continuing, **Amy Albus** and **Melanie Bradshaw** with the Women's Human Rights Program.

Leaving 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:

Gifts of stock. Donors can avoid capital gains taxes on appreciated stock and claim a deduction for the value at the time of the donation.

Life insurance and 401(k)s. Name Minnesota Advocates the beneficiary of a policy or account that is no longer needed. Additional premiums might also be tax deductible.

Bequests. Donations to Minnesota Advocates can reduce estate taxes when they are included in a will.

Cars. About to trade-in? Minnesota Advocates is prepared to accept donations of vehicles, which are sold at considerable benefit to the organization.

Other ideas. 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.

Death Penalty Speaker Series

Highlights problems with capital punishment

Harris County, Texas – the city of Houston – has sent more people to death row than any other county in the country. Recently as many as 150 people from Harris County awaited execution in Texas prisons.

Christine Funk, a part time public defender and private practitioner, will also tell you that many of those convictions were based on evidence from the Harris County Crime Lab, which is now notorious for mismanagement, fraud and mistakes. Funk shared her perspective as part of our Death Penalty Project speaker series, events sponsored by Minnesota Advocates and Dorsey & Whitney to contribute to an informed public discussion about capital punishment.

Investigations found inadequate documentation, a failure to run the necessary controls, misleading statistics, fabricated results, and biased and misleading testimony.

Funk said the Harris County Crime Lab – sometimes called “Death Penalty Central” – lacked the resources and policies to deal with Texas’ indigent criminal defense

system. Investigations in the last three years have found inadequate documentation, failure to run the necessary controls, misleading statistics, fabricated results, and biased and misleading testimony. Currently, thousands of Harris County cases are being reviewed; two men were exonerated by re-tested DNA.

Funk said a careful review of cases is necessary to detect false convictions, evaluate the need for new trials, and detect and assign blame for misconduct. But those reviews are difficult, she said, when places like Harris County undervalue science and tolerate a culture of advocacy and bias.

Additional problems with the capital punishment system were highlighted in a Speaker Series event in September. Attorney Jeff Keyes of Briggs & Morgan described how the use of false scientific testimony and ineffective performance by trial counsel led to a death penalty conviction for Texan Martin Draughon. Keyes, who began his *pro bono* representation of Draughon through Minnesota Advocates more than a decade ago, leads a defense team that recently won federal habeas relief for Draughon.

In November, Hennepin County Judge Bruce A. Peterson will discuss his team’s four years of *pro bono* work on behalf of Donald Gunsby, who was convicted of a murder and sentenced to death after a two-day trial. Gunsby, who suffers from mental retardation, was represented by a court-appointed lawyer with less than one year of experience. In 1996, the Florida Supreme Court granted Gunsby a new trial based on the combined effect of prosecutorial misconduct, ineffective assistance of counsel and newly discovered evidence.

The House Party Tradition

Events with a purpose

One of Minnesota Advocates’ evolving traditions is the House Party, an event when friends of the organization host more friends of the organization to hear about our work, catch up with each other, and invariably eat fabulous food. These gatherings, which happen four or five times each year, are important connections with the community and our supporters, and also significant fundraisers.

Two excellent examples of this tradition occurred this fall, in the homes of Minnesota Advocates’ board members Marlene Kayser and Hyder Khan.

At the Kayser home in St. Paul in September, the focus was on our Women’s Program, where Marlene has been a longtime and generous volunteer and supporter. The crowd heard about the latest overseas work – the meeting of StopVAW website monitors from 21 countries in Tbilisi, Georgia; the website’s growing impact in the region; and upcoming training in Bulgaria on Bulgaria’s new domestic violence law.

And Yuliya Kashaeva, a native of Uzbekistan and former intern with the Women’s Program, provided an eloquent glimpse into

the lives of Uzbek women struggling with issues of domestic violence, the lack of educational opportunities, and forced marriage. Her remarks were testament to the extraordinary resources necessary to help women of the region in their efforts to effect change.

As the *Observer* was going to press, Hyder was scheduled to host a House Party for Minnesota Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program in his Bloomington home. It was the second time he and his wife, Nazneen Khatoon, and son, Sulmaan Khan, have hosted such an event.

Many thanks to Marlene and Hyder, and also to Peter Huxmann for designing the Women’s Program House Party invitation. Watch for notices on House Parties this winter and spring for our Human Rights Monitoring and Death Penalty projects, and our Education Program.

Two excellent examples of this tradition occurred this fall, in the homes of Minnesota Advocates’ board members Marlene Kayser and Hyder Khan.

Working for Change

Our battered immigrant women report inspires training, hope

Minnesota Advocates last December released our report on battered immigrant and refugee women in the Twin Cities, the first documentation of the many barriers to accessing the justice system faced by immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence.

Ever since, the Minnesota Advocates staff has been working to give these women hope, spreading the word about the project's conclusions to judges, government agencies, public policy groups, and immigrant and refugee communities.

"Many immigrant and refugee women can't find help or safety when they face violence in their homes," said Cheryl Thomas, Director of Minnesota Advocates' Women's Program. "We documented that fact – now we're working with governments and community agencies to change it."

We found that language barriers are the primary obstacle confronting battered immigrant and refugee women seeking protection from police, social service agencies and the courts.

Our report – "The Government Response to Domestic Violence Against Refugee and Immigrant Women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area: A Human Rights Report" – found after 18 months of research that, while immigrant homes don't have more domestic violence than any other group, immigrant women are less likely to find the safety or justice that are their right. These women often don't speak English and frequently distrust police and the

courts. Many immigrant women feel vulnerable to deportation and are terrified that any contact with any government representative will result in the deportation of themselves or members of their families.

The battered immigrant women report was the first time that Minnesota Advocates applied its international human rights fact-finding experience to human rights research in Minnesota.

Since the release of the report, Minnesota Advocates has given dozens of presentations to county judges, medical professionals, police and interpreters. A Minnesota Department of Health official said the report "filled an important gap in our understanding of the unique needs of immigrant women at the local level...Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights presentations on the report's findings at various community events, including monthly meetings of the Metro Refugee Health Task Force and the Voluntary Agency Consortium, have been invaluable."

In the next several months, Minnesota Advocates staff has scheduled trainings and presentations on the battered immigrant and refugee women's project for HeadStart families, the

Washington County Bar Association, the Dakota County Domestic Abuse Task Force, the Jewish Domestic Abuse Collaborative conference, and the Minnesota State Court Judges Conference. It is our goal to have made a presentation to each county violence coordinating council in the seven-county Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area by the end of the year.

The report is already having an impact. For example, we found that language barriers are the primary obstacle confronting battered immigrant and refugee women seeking protection from police, social service agencies and the courts. Citing our research, the Minnesota Court Interpreter Program adopted new rules that establish a procedure for handling complaints against interpreters within the state court system and for issuing sanctions for unethical or unprofessional behavior.

Minnesota Advocates, in collaboration with other domestic violence advocacy groups, is also working to chart a strategy for legislative advocacy in the next Minnesota legislative session on domestic violence issues involving immigrant and refugee women.



Minnesota Advocates staff attorney Becky Palmer has led our BIW training.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights'
2006 Silent Auction

Minnesota Advocates' 2006 Human Rights Awards Dinner next summer will include a **Silent Auction** to benefit the organization's work, and we are in search of a wide variety of products, experiences and services that will draw active bidding.

Potential items for donation: vacation packages; gift certificates for restaurants, stores and spas; wine; art; tickets for the theater, concerts and sporting events; balloon rides; meetings with celebrities; home furnishings; new cars and motorcycles.

For more information, or to make a donation, contact:
Min Chong – 612-341-3302, Ext. 115 or
mchong@mnadvocates.org.

“Torture Destroys Us All”

A new project to inspire a more informed public discussion

This summer, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights introduced a new campaign called “Torture Destroys Us All” to raise awareness about the issue of torture and encourage a broader, more informed public discussion about the use of torture by the U.S. government.

The project – a display of images of torture juxtaposed with commentary from political leaders and human rights experts – made a provocative debut along Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis and at the 2005 Minnesota State Fair. These locations allowed Minnesota Advocates to reach a large audience with background information, petitions, “Torture Destroys Us All” buttons, and post cards addressed to members of Congress.

Torture is prohibited by U.S. and international law, yet, according to court testimony and a variety of reliable reports, detainees in U.S. custody have been tortured. Other people suspected of crimes have been taken – “rendered” is the word used by the government – to other countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia where torture is common.

The exhibit has drawn a wide range of reactions. More than 1,000 people signed petitions asking that Minnesota’s U.S. Senators support the establishment of an independent commission to investigate reports of abuse in U.S. detention centers in Iraq and elsewhere. In addition to the petition, more than 4,000

people have taken the “Torture Destroys Us All” buttons, as well as brochures and advocacy postcards.

And many of the people who visited the exhibit reacted like the woman at the State Fair who wrote in our Guest Book, “We are all in trouble if anyone’s human rights are in danger – Who’s next? We need organizations to watch and protect us all.

Please keep working for all of us.”

Other visitors told us the project should have concentrated on torture committed by other governments, while others said they viewed torture as a legitimate tactic against terrorism.

The “Torture Destroys Us All” campaign is currently developing a website to provide more information and grass-roots advocacy tools to further raise awareness and encourage

action on the issue of torture. Minnesota Advocates continues to receive requests from local organizations wishing to join the campaign, including requests by the University of Minnesota and local Amnesty International chapters.

Another visitor to Minnesota Advocates’ booth at the State Fair wrote, “As Americans, supporting democracy does not include torturing those in the most vulnerable situations...nor is it the will of democratic and patriotic Americans.”



Minnesota Advocates volunteers last summer at the Minnesota State Fair included, from left, Board President Aviva Breen, board member Marlene Kayser, staff member Colleen Beebe, Yuliya Kashaeva, and Jesus Purisaca.



Minnesota Advocates again this year had a robust turnout for the Walk for Justice in Minneapolis. The walkers were:

Back row (from left): Colleen Beebe, Jennifer Prestholdt, Rose Grengs, Paul Grengs, Nathan Lindberg, Mark Lindberg, Jenny Lindberg, Roger Heegaard, Cheryl Thomas, Will Heegaard, Ann Miller (crouching), Robin Phillips, Becky Ouimet-Lewis, Suzanne Tuttle, Min Chong, Danny Chatman.

Front row (from left): Eliza Prestholdt Weed (in stroller), Maren Lindberg, Kina “the dog” Lindberg, David Weissbrodt, Julia Kashaeva, Leslie Anderson, Brenda Lockwood.

The Events Page

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

Peace by Peace: Women on the Frontlines

Women's Human Rights Film Series

Film showing presented by Minnesota Advocates' Women's Human Rights Program and The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library

Tuesday, November 29, 2005 7:00 pm

Hamline Midway Library

1558 W. Minnehaha Ave., St. Paul

"Peace by Peace: Women on the Frontlines" is a documentary that celebrates women who work to build peace out of conflict and crisis. Malinda Schmiechen, staff attorney in Minnesota Advocates' Refugee and Immigrant Program, will facilitate discussion after the film. For more information, please contact Mary Hunt at (612) 341-3302 ext. 107 or mhunt@mnadvocates.org.

Bringing Human Rights Home

Human Rights Day 2005 CLE presented by the Human Rights Center of the University of Minnesota and Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

Friday, December 9, 2005

1:45 pm - 6:00 pm CLE; 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Reception; 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Evening Event

University of Minnesota School of Law, Room 25

229 19th Ave. S., Minneapolis

In commemoration of the 57th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Minnesota Advocates will hold an afternoon CLE, reception and evening event on December 9 at the University of Minnesota Law School. The CLE, "Bringing Human Rights Home," will highlight historic and current situations of discrimination in the U.S. and address international and state human rights standards of non-discrimination and remedies that address the harm suffered due to discrimination. The evening event will feature a performance of "I Voted for Gummi Bears," written and performed by Minneapolis artist Ochen K. For more information or to register for the CLE, please contact Aaron Van Alstine at (612) 341-3302 ext. 127 or avanalstine@mnadvocates.org.

Children's Human Rights Speaker Series

Presented by Minnesota Advocates and Faegre & Benson

Monday, Dec. 12, 2005 12:00 pm

Faegre & Benson, LLP, 2200 Wells Fargo Center, 90 S. 7th St., Minneapolis

This schedule of lunchtime events will highlight issues of the fundamental rights and freedoms of children. An every-other month schedule begins in January.

Developing Power with Women's Human Rights

Human Rights Speaker Series

Presented by Fredrikson & Byron, P.A. and Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

Thursday, December 15, 2005 12:00 - 1:00 pm

Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.

U.S. Bank Plaza (formerly Pillsbury Center)

200 South Sixth Street, Suite 4000, Minneapolis

Arvonne Fraser will discuss the book that she co-edited with Irene Tinker, entitled "Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development" and her article, "Becoming Human: the Origins and Development of Women's Human Rights." She will also discuss the four world conferences on women (1975-1995) and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Aaron Van Alstine at (612) 341-3302 ext. 127 or avanalstine@mnadvocates.org.

Death Penalty Project fundraiser

Monday, January 9, 2006, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Minnesota Center for Photography, 165 13th Avenue NE, Minneapolis. Sandra Babcock and Joe Margulies will be honored for their local, national and international advocacy against the death penalty.

11th Annual International Women's Day Celebration

Co-presented by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the University of Minnesota's Human Rights Program, and co-sponsored by over 50 local organizations

Saturday, March 4, 2006

Coffman Memorial Union, University of Minnesota campus

Please join us for a full day of workshops, keynote speakers, performances, and display tables from co-sponsoring organizations. For more information or to volunteer for International Women's Day, please contact Mary Hunt at (612) 341-3302, ext. 107 or mhunt@mnadvocates.org.

Women's Program House Party, April 19, 2006, at the home of Anne and Peter Heegaard, 184 Bank St. SE, Minneapolis.

“Bringing Human Rights Home”

Human Rights Day 2005

CELEBRATING THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

December 9, 2005

Room 25, University of Minnesota School of Law

Each year, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights commemorates the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by focusing on specific human rights issues. This year Minnesota Advocates, in collaboration with the Human Rights Center of the University of Minnesota, will hold an afternoon CLE, reception and evening event on December 9 at the University of Minnesota Law School. The CLE, “Bringing Human Rights Home,” will highlight historic and current situations of discrimination in the U.S. and address international and state human rights standards of non-discrimination and remedies that address the harm suffered due to discrimination.

Speakers will discuss the destructive impact of 9/11 on the lives of Minnesota immigrants, refugees and religious minorities; state standards of non-discrimination and protected classes of people in Minnesota; reparations for ancestors of African slaves in America; and the status of the Western Shoshone nation’s land rights.

The conference will be followed by a thought provoking performance of the one-person show and 2005 Fringe Festival audience favorite "I Voted for Gummi Bears", written and performed by Minneapolis artist Ochen K. This highly acclaimed show dissects the history and effects of Jim Crow laws enacted in the 19th century that currently keep 13 percent of the national black male population from entering the voting booth.

Following the performance of "I Voted for Gummi Bears", panelists with expertise on voting rights will participate in a discussion on the issue.

The Human Rights Day CLE will be followed by a reception, and evening event, both free and open to the public. For more information, go to www.mnadvocates.org.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATION SCHEDULE

CLE: 1:45 to 6:00 p.m.

Reception: 6:00-7:00 p.m. (free and open to the public)

Evening Event: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. (free and open to the public)

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATION LOCATION

Room 25

University of Minnesota School of Law

229 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CLE COST

Lawyers: \$60.00

Gov’t employees/Non-profit/Students: \$30.00

3.25 CLE credits will be applied for.

[Registration form at right]

Volunteer profile: John Lanari

John Lanari is the prototype Minnesota Advocates volunteer: He is passionate about human rights, talented, multi-lingual and hard-working.



John Lanari

An undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison majoring in Spanish and Latin American, Iberian and Caribbean Studies, John volunteered full-time for Minnesota Advocates this summer. He is fluent in Spanish, having lived and studied in Argentina where he volunteered with the non-profit, LIFE Argentina.

“After working with issues of poverty abroad,” John said that he “wanted to get involved with similar important work close to home.”

“Minnesota Advocates is the kind of vibrant organization with an international presence that is usually found only in New York or Washington, D.C.,” John said. “I couldn’t have been more excited to find such a high level human rights organization so close to home, nor more excited to be a part of its work.”

John’s contributions are vital to an organization such as Minnesota Advocates, which was founded on the idea that a small staff would efficiently manage the contributions of hundreds of volunteers – lawyers, artists, teachers, doctors, journalists and, yes, college students.

John worked on a wide variety of projects during his internship for the Education Program – from translating for clients at the Walk-in Legal Clinic to designing brochures for the “Torture Destroys Us All” campaign.

**John’s advice:
“Just do it!”**

Indeed, John was instrumental in making the campaign launch a success. Along with a team of other volunteers, John worked hundreds of hours designing educational materials and a visual display, organizing campaign events, and helping to develop a future website.

Born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, John said his work at Minnesota Advocates has influenced his vision for his future. He hopes one day to work with an international non-profit organization after pursuing a post-graduate education. John said he took another asset away from his volunteer work with Minnesota Advocates: “Now I have mentors and direction.”

John’s advice to others who would like to volunteer with Minnesota Advocates? “Just do it!”

“BRINGING HUMAN RIGHTS HOME” CLE Registration Form

Friday, December 9, 2005
University of Minnesota Law School

I will attend the “Bringing Home Human Rights”

CLE:

- \$60 (General)
- \$30 (nonprofit/govt/student)
- I cannot attend, but send me the materials, (\$30)
- I cannot attend, but would like to make a contribution of _____.

Method of payment:

- check (made out to MAHR)
- Visa/MasterCard

Credit Card # _____

Signature _____

CLE: 3.25 credits to be applied for.

Register by: November 30, 2005

Refunds and cancellations: All cancellations are subject to a \$25 fee; registrants who don’t attend will receive the written materials.

Name

Firm/nonprofit/school

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Fax

Email

Please return to:
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
650 Third Ave. S. #550
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Fax: 612-341-2971

For information contact Aaron Van Alstine:
avanalstine@mnadvocates.org

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Minnesota Advocates board member Wood Foster was among the many people who stood in line after this year's Human Rights Awards Dinner to get an autographed copy of Seymour Hersh's book, "Chain of Command." Printed on recyclable paper



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