From Ripples to Sea Change

- Paving Pathways for Justice & Accountability
- Moving from Exclusion to Belonging
- U.S. Held Accountable
- Turning Fact-finding into Action in Mongolia
- Human Rights Awards Dinner
“It’s like a stone dropped in a pond; it sends ripples outward and we don’t know where they will stop,” a journalist in Bulgaria told us in 1995 when our first report on domestic violence in that country was released. Since that time, we have witnessed a dramatic transformation. Bulgaria passed a domestic violence law, monitored its implementation, and amended the law to meet the drafters’ vision of providing safety to victims and increasing accountability of offenders. Judges have issued thousands of orders for protection so that victims are not forced to leave their homes to avoid violence. Throughout Bulgaria, our NGO partners developed a network of shelters and advocates to meet the needs of women escaping violence.

The Advocates creates ripples every day. When a lawyer takes a pro bono asylum case, individuals, and communities around the globe, benefit. A man imprisoned and tortured for his political opinion in his home country of Iran is now a surgeon in Minnesota who also trains doctors throughout the world. A woman who fled the Liberian conflict provides nursing services in a rehabilitation facility in the United States. Another client returned to Liberia after the war to help build the democratic institutions needed to advance peace. A Somali client now teaches at the University of Minnesota and is raising children who excel in their classrooms.

When we advocate at the United Nations to hold governments accountable for human rights violations, the ripples turn into waves of change. When we assist front-line human rights defenders, they are empowered to take on the challenges of protecting human rights.

We draft laws used as models around the United States and the world. One law, Minnesota’s Safe Harbors Act, which redefines trafficked children as victims of crimes in need of services—rather than as criminals, has inspired federal legislation. The recognition that when people have a way out of sexual exploitation, they can realize their potential is taking hold.

Using our educational curricula, teachers across the United States are creating ripples every day and transforming lives. Children are learning about human rights and responsibilities, the negative effects of bullying, and the benefits of immigration.

The hundreds of volunteers who work with us save lives and create important social change. They also impact the people with whom they live and work, improving respect for human rights in their own circles. The ripples continue—improving individual lives, communities, countries, and the world.

We appreciate all you do to make The Advocates a strong and thriving organization, and the ripples you make in your lives and the lives of others.

Robin Phillips,
Executive Director
A typical grandmother might not respond to a grandchild’s simple question by writing a book. But Marilyn Carlson Nelson, the former CEO and chairman of Carlson who has been named by Forbes as one of the “World’s 100 Most Powerful Women,” is a fierce human rights defender with a not-so-typical eye for opportunities and the drive for pursuing them.

“When my grandson was studying the civil rights movement of the 1960s, he asked me if I was alive during segregation. I realized then that he really didn’t know me,” Carlson Nelson shared in an interview with MinnPost’s Amy Goetzman. “We’d taken vacations together, seen each other at holidays and at his hockey games, and he knew that I was a CEO, but I realized that he didn’t know about the things I’d fought for and the things I believe in and care about, or the changes I’d seen.”


The Advocates for Human Rights will honor Carlson Nelson with the 2014 Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award at its annual Human Rights Awards Dinner on June 25, at the Hilton Minneapolis. Carlson Nelson will also deliver the event’s keynote address.

The stories about what Carlson Nelson has fought for, believes in, and cares about are compelling, both because of the scale of her achievements and the depth of her compassion—particularly when it comes to protecting children. Under her leadership, Carlson—which includes such brands as Radisson Hotels, Country Inns & Suites, and Carlson Wagonlit—became the first major U.S.-based travel company to commit to training its hotel employees to watch for and report child sex abuse when she signed the travel industry’s International Code of Conduct to end sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

Her passion for human rights also invigorated efforts to defeat the Minnesota marriage amendment that was before voters in 2012. The op-ed she wrote for the Star Tribune went viral and encouraged other Minnesota business leaders to voice their support for LGBTI rights. In the article, Carlson Nelson laid out in unequivocal terms why LGBTI rights are vitally important to the community as a whole and to her personally as a mother, colleague, and friend of people in the LGBTI community.

With an incredible wealth of experience and a generous candor for sharing her thoughts, Carlson Nelson is an invaluable asset to Minnesota’s human rights advocacy community.

Pictured: Marilyn Carlson Nelson

Marilyn Carlson Nelson > Valued Leader

The Advocates for Human Rights

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS DINNER 2014

June 25
Hilton Minneapolis

See page 11 for details.
Whether a country is in turmoil because of a brutal dictator, internal armed conflict, or persecution of groups or individuals, people in diaspora communities can create change in their homelands—even while living half-way around the world. A groundbreaking resource recently released by The Advocates for Human Rights provides diaspora communities with the tools they need to effect change.

_Paving Pathways to Justice & Accountability: Human Rights Tools for Diaspora Communities_ is a how-to guide with a full menu of strategies and resources to empower migrants to be effective advocates for human rights in their countries of origin. The goal is to facilitate the inclusion of diaspora voices in efforts to hold governments accountable.

“Many migrants—refugees and asylum seekers in particular—leave their homes because of human rights abuses,” said Amy Bergquist, The Advocates’ staff attorney who presented the manual to the UN Human Rights Council in March in Geneva, Switzerland. “Many were political and human rights activists, and they bring their experiences with them. From their new home base, they can create change in their countries of origin.”

Diaspora communities agree. “We have the privilege to see countries from a different perspective,” said Chanravy Proeung, co-director of the Providence Youth Student Movement based in Providence, Rhode Island, and a member of the Cambodian diaspora. “We need to have the people who are the most marginalized and affected by issues at the forefront of creating change, not only here in the U.S., but having influence in their countries of origin, too.”

“The unique ability diaspora communities have to improve human rights around the world has largely been overlooked,” said Jennifer Prestholdt, The Advocates’ deputy director and director of the organization’s International Justice Program. “It’s time for that to change.”

Advancements in technology and communication allow people to form strong international networks and to share emerging information about human rights abuses almost as soon as they happen. This seismic shift in the way human rights organizations work provides access to the information necessary for the broader community to engage as advocates.

“Diaspora communities can now maintain a foot in two worlds,” Prestholdt said. “They can influence the politics, economies, and often the human rights cultures in their countries of origin, as well as their ‘new countries.’”

_Paving Pathways_ will assist advocates undertaking a variety of activities, from the relatively simple to the more complex. With background information, key questions to consider, case examples, and practitioners’ tips, the resource is loaded with tools to combat human rights abuses and change social institutions and structures.

Created after two years of research and shaped by guidance from diaspora communities, _Paving Pathways_ is available for download at no cost at The Advocates’ website, TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/pathways.

Pictured: Oromo diaspora community member speaking at a forum held in May in Minnesota about government forces in Ethiopia opening fire on peaceful Oromo demonstrations and the continued persecution of the Oromo in Ethiopia. Photo credit: Big Z, OPride.com
Paving Pathways for Justice and Accountability: Human Rights Tools for Diaspora Communities by The Advocates for Human Rights provides practical tools and step-by-step guidance for diaspora community groups and others who want to use human rights monitoring, documentation, and advocacy to change policy and improve human rights conditions in their countries of origin. Here is a sampling of Paving Pathways’ first-hand accounts of each approach’s success.

Monitoring
Monitoring was part of an extensive research project conducted by The Advocates that culminated with Human Rights in Ethiopia: Through the Eyes of the Oromo Diaspora in 2009. The report highlighted a history of systemic political repression in Ethiopia and supported the improvement of human rights conditions in that country.

Interviews with members of the Oromo diaspora were critical to the project. The Advocates brought together and trained attorney volunteers, who interviewed Oromo people in the diaspora, Oromo scholars and community leaders, immigration bar members, and providers of medical and community services to the Oromo.

The report includes nearly 50 pages of findings on human rights violations, including torture, extra-judicial execution, arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, lack of due process, and inadequate prison conditions. It also documents Ethiopia’s surveillance apparatus and violations of the rights to freedom of speech, assembly, association, and expression, as well as violations of economic, social, and cultural rights.

This carefully researched report has been cited as supporting evidence in immigration court and as a basis for recommendations by UN human rights bodies.

To document the conflict, The Advocates took statements from more than 1,600 Liberians in the diaspora and recorded testimony from 31 witnesses at the public hearings.

The Advocates’ final report to the LTRC, A House with Two Rooms, documents the “triple trauma” experienced by members of the diaspora while fleeing through Liberia and across international borders, living in refugee camps in West Africa, and resettling in the U.S. and Europe. The report also summarizes the views of Liberians in the diaspora on the root causes of the conflict in Liberia and their recommendations for systemic reform and reconciliation.

Advocacy
More than 40 south Asian diaspora groups came together in 2005 to block the impending visit to the U.S. of Narendra Modi, chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat. Modi is reportedly connected to the 2002 communal violence in India that left more than 1,000 people—mostly Muslim—dead.

Working together, the diaspora groups succeeded at getting a resolution introduced in U.S. Congress condemning Modi and a denial of his visa by the U.S. State Department.

The coalition went to work again in 2013, when India’s Bharatiya Janata party selected Modi as its prime minister candidate. While the U.S. State Department has reiterated the U.S. policy regarding Modi’s visa, it is unknown if a visa will be denied now that Modi was elected India’s prime minister.

In recent action, The Advocates’ executive director, Robin Phillips, testified before the U.S. Congress Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in April about the threat of increased violence against minorities in India in connection with the upcoming elections. In the first eight months of 2013, there were 451 incidents of communal violence, up from 410 in all of 2012, Phillips told the commission.

“India cannot abrogate its obligation to protect the human rights of its citizens in the name of national security,” she testified. “The United States and India stand as democratic and pluralistic nations. As such, we must hold each other accountable to the highest standards of human rights protection. We encourage the United States to take strong bilateral and multilateral action to ensure that the rights of religious minorities in India are adequately protected and that India complies with all of its international human rights obligations.”

Documenting
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (LTRC) was the first of its kind to make a systematic effort to engage a diaspora population in all aspects of the truth commission process. The Advocates and the LTRC partnered to facilitate diaspora involvement in outreach and education, statement taking, report writing, and the first official public hearing of a truth commission ever held in a diaspora.

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Day after day from the safety of our homes, we hear gut-wrenching stories and see gruesome images as misery mounts in Syria. More than 150,000 people have been killed. Millions more—most of them children and women—have fled their homeland for other countries. Another four million are displaced inside Syria.

We watch as people are harmed because of the internal conflict in Egypt, and members of the LGBTI community are tormented—and killed—in Nigeria and elsewhere.

No matter the part of the globe, The Advocates witnesses the world’s strife in real time and measured in real people, as those fleeing their homelands find their way to our doors for help. “Take Syria as an example,” said Deepinder Mayell, director of The Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program. “We had a major increase of clients from Syria, starting in 2011. Before that, we had none.”

Syria
Mr. M grew up in a city recognized for being largely controlled by the Free Syrian Army, the country’s main opposition army group composed of military officers and soldiers who have defected from the Syrian military. The city is known for hosting protests against President Bashar al-Assad’s government. Mr. M participated in some of those protests.

As Mr. M passed through a Damascus checkpoint in 2012, men from the Syrian government checked his identification. They began beating him when they saw his city listed on his identification. Then, when officials found photos of anti-government protests on his phone, Mr. M knew he was in greater danger. The beating began again, and they interrogated and insulted him. He was taken to a large detention facility and held for 10 days. There, he faced the prison guards’ wrath. They starved, interrogated, and kicked him, demanding to know why he opposed the al-Assad government, and they pressed him for names of others who had attended anti-government protests.

Mr. M’s family learned his location through a family friend who works for the Syrian government. They paid a large sum of money for his release. Once back home, he lived in fear, spending the majority of time sequestered inside his house. When he had to venture outside to attend school, he took indirect routes, avoiding crowds and checkpoints. He was certain his name was on the government’s lengthy “wanted list” that was in the hands of men stationed at checkpoints throughout Damascus. He was also afraid of being forced into the military, because military service is compulsory in Syria.

Now in the U.S., Mr. M’s asylum application is in progress.

Egypt
Mr. R came to the U.S. to attend graduate school. Three years later, Mohamed Morsi, then president of Egypt, mandated that governors and ministers appoint assistants. A friend of Mr. R’s family (and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood), encouraged Mr. R, who was still in the U.S., to apply for a position. Mr. R sent him the personal information necessary to be considered for employment.

Even though he had not yet returned to Egypt, Mr. R’s troubles began when Morsi was ousted as president in 2013. Soon after, all members of the Muslim Brotherhood were targeted in Cairo. Mr. R is not, and never has been, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.
Nonetheless, security officers hunted him down. They showed up at his mother’s home, demanding information. He fears for his life if he returns to Egypt. He is working with The Advocates’ volunteer attorney Keith Harris on his asylum application.

Now consider Mr. J, a member of Egypt’s Coptic Christian minority. He and his family received many threats to their lives because of their religion. The threats became all too real when two men attempted to kidnap Mr. J’s young son.

The family contacted the U.S. embassy in Cairo, pleading for safety in the U.S. They hid until their visas were issued. Now in the U.S., the family has been granted asylum, thanks to The Advocates’ volunteer attorney Francisco Gonzalez.

Mr. O and Mr. K, members of the LGTBI community in Nigeria, were in a serious relationship and frequently seen together in public.

While Mr. O was out of town, Mr. K’s neighbors learned about the relationship and set out for blood. They beat Mr. K to death and set his house ablaze. They then turned their attention to Mr. O, setting fire to his house. Yet, that was not enough for the vigilantes. Wanting more blood, the vigilantes went to his family’s house, demanding to be told where he was hiding.

Mr. O received calls and text messages about what had happened and images of his destroyed home. When his family warned him to never return, he fled the country.

His troubles did not end when he left Nigeria. He was apprehended by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement when he entered the U.S., and he was held in detention for three weeks. An attorney referred him to The Advocates; Mr. O is working with a volunteer attorney, and his asylum application is in progress.

“When people watch TV or read the newspaper about turmoil in the world, I often hear the comment, “I wish I could do something,”” said Mayell. “You can. By reaching out to The Advocates to donate or volunteer, you make a direct, positive impact on the people you see in the news—people living desperate, dangerous existences.”

While *Moving from Exclusion to Belonging* focuses on Minnesota, it can be used as a model throughout the United States.

In addition to delving into the challenges and abuses of immigrants and refugees, *Moving from Exclusion to Belonging* identifies what is working to promote integration and success, what is failing, and what gaps exist in public policy. The report sets forth recommendations for policymakers and others.

Often, discussion about immigration focuses judgment on the actions of immigrants—whether they follow increasingly complicated immigration rules, their adeptness at adjusting to life in the U.S., and their willingness to meet the broader community's expectations of behavior and appearance.

The report turns the conversation on its head and examines the actions of Minnesota's government, civic institutions, and long-term residents, focusing on how well they fulfill their responsibilities toward immigrants.

While welcoming gestures can help ease transitions and build friendships, “welcome” by itself—without upholding fundamental human rights—ultimately leaves some Minnesotans excluded from the most basic protections needed to ensure that every person lives with dignity.

Immigrants and refugees with legal status often remain ineligible for public safety net programs, and they face difficulty establishing new lives in Minnesota due to lack of credit history, recognized credentials, or social and professional networks. Parents and teachers struggle to communicate, while schools tackle the challenge of educating a student population that speaks more than 230 languages, according to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Federal immigration policies and programs leave immigrants vulnerable to due process violations and racial profiling by local law enforcement. The report points to Minnesota law, which does not allow driver's licenses for those who cannot prove their lawful presence in the U.S., creating a whole host of challenges for people and communities.

Yet another example is a Minnesota law enacted in 2005 that makes labor trafficking a criminal offense. The law remains unused—despite reports that continue to surface of exploitation of undocumented workers, including wage theft, false imprisonment, assault, and trafficking.

Two years in the making, the report draws on more than 200 interviews and 25 community forums held throughout Minnesota. The Blandin Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, and the Andrus Family Fund provided support for the project.
Moving from Exclusion to Belonging: Immigrant Rights in Minnesota Today reports that while Minnesota is welcoming, the welcome does not extend very far. Newcomers face discrimination and exclusion from social networks, and by extension, exclusion from the economic opportunities and political power such networks bring.

Immigrants and refugees report barriers to belonging that result from discrimination, social distance, exclusion from the greater community, and fear. These barriers lead to human rights violations that impact safety and security and that undermine immigrants’ abilities to earn a living and to meet their basic rights.

Failure to protect fundamental human rights undermines Minnesota values and squanders the rich resources that Minnesota’s newcomers bring. Public policy must guarantee that all people who live in Minnesota, regardless of where they were born or their immigration status, enjoy the fundamental human rights that allow them to live with dignity.

Public Safety
Immigrants’ ability to enjoy safety and security suffers because of fear and mistrust of law enforcement and cooperation by law enforcement with federal immigration authorities.

Access to Justice
Immigrants and refugees in Minnesota face serious barriers to accessing justice that are compounded by lack of immigration status, language barriers, and lack of familiarity with the U.S. legal system.

Economic Opportunity
While many individual immigrants reported enjoying economic opportunity, other immigrants and refugees reported barriers to employment, exploitation by employers who prey on fear of deportation or job loss, and discrimination based on race, religion, and national origin.

Education
While Minnesota has seen overall improvements in academic outcomes, persisting disparities highlight inequities within the system. Interviewees pointed to poverty and segregation as underlying causes. They also pointed to the need for policy changes to reduce bullying, as well as to the need to mitigate the negative effects of school discipline policies on immigrant and refugee students, to improve children’s readiness for school, to better prepare staff to work with immigrant students, to increase funding and staffing levels, and to increase hiring and retention of staff of color. Participants also identified the need for greater attention and resources for English learner services.

Housing
Immigrants struggle to find safe and well-maintained housing, a problem fueled by a shortage of affordable housing, restrictions on public benefits, immigration status, exploitation by landlords, and outright discrimination in renting and buying. The systems meant to protect people from exploitative and discriminatory landlords, realtors, and mortgage lenders are not working for immigrants.

Basic Needs
The United States makes scant public benefit provisions for refugees. Asylum seekers receive no support upon their arrival in the United States and face a waiting period for work authorization after applying for asylum.

Civic Engagement
Active religious discrimination prevents Muslim immigrants from fully enjoying their rights. Civic engagement by refugees and immigrants is strongest within ethnically-based organizations and weakest when it comes to holding decision-making power in government or as leaders of large organizations that serve the broader community. English language classes and volunteering provide connection to the larger community.

Immigration
Immigrants and refugees face long waits for application processing, difficulties communicating with immigration officials, and discrimination based on religion and country of origin.

Moving from Exclusion to Belonging: Immigrant Rights in Minnesota Today may be downloaded at no cost at: TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org; keywords: Moving from Exclusion
Creating Change Together

What do you think makes The Advocates’ awards dinner special or unique?
LTH: I love the awards dinner because it helps us to see how we, through The Advocates’ work, are connected with the larger world. Each of us has an individual role we play, whether it’s interpreting for an asylum seeker, proofreading a report, stuffing a mailing, or making a gift of support. It is through our combined efforts that we make the world a better place. The awards dinner shows us what is possible when we work together.

When did you first become involved with the Human Rights Awards Dinner?
LTH: My involvement dates back to the late 1990s when I was working as a staff attorney with The Advocates. In the weeks leading up to the awards dinner, it is “all hands on deck” around the office.

What was significant about your role in 2011 as the guest speaker at the Human Rights Awards Dinner?
LTH: I was happy to share my personal story of immigrating to the United States because I think it deepens people’s understanding of immigrants when they have the opportunity to hear first-hand about their experiences.

How did you get started offering the Vietnamese dinner as a silent auction prize?
LTH: It is a way for me to contribute to The Advocates’ fundraising efforts, drawing on something I love to do, and share with people.

What prompted you to serve on the Human Rights Awards Dinner’s planning committee?
LTH: The awards dinner brings our community together in an all-encompassing celebration of the work done by staff and volunteers. Celebrating The Advocates’ work is something I want to support.

Pictured: Loan T. Huynh
invites you to the

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS DINNER 2014

Wednesday, June 25, 2014
5:30-6:30 p.m. - Silent Auction
6:30-8:30 p.m. - Dinner & Program

Hilton Minneapolis
1001 Marquette Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Featuring keynote speaker and
2014 Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award Recipient
Marilyn Carlson Nelson

Register online by visiting TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/HRAD
Please RSVP by Monday, June 16, 2014

Marilyn Carlson Nelson is an extraordinary values-based leader and human rights advocate. While best known for the success of the Carlson brands, Carlson Nelson, former Carlson CEO and board chair, signed the travel industry’s International Code of Conduct to end child prostitution, pornography, and trafficking and co-founded the World Childhood Foundation. She also worked tirelessly to defeat the marriage amendment in Minnesota.

Host Committee
Carol & Bill Beadie
Aviva Breen
Sonia & John Cairns
Carolyn Chalmers & Eric Janus
Deborah Fowler & John Schenk
Barb Frey & Howard Orenstein
Dee Gaeddert & Jim Dorsey
Karen & Richard Evans
Rachel & Tom Hamlin
Loan T. Huynh & Aydin Ozturk
Marlene & Tom Kayser
Kathy & Allen Lenzmeier
Char & Sam Myers
Kathleen & Robert Seestadt
Jean Thomson & John Sandbo
Jane & Dobson West

Special Recognition Award
Chimgee Halatarhuu

Volunteer Awards
Mark Petty
Julie Shelton
Laura Tripiciano
Mississippi Attorney General James Hood’s feet were held to the fire during the United Nations Human Rights Committee’s (UNHRC) review of the U.S. human rights record in March.

Held at UN headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the review of the U.S. human rights record was part of the United States’ obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Hood was a member of the official U.S. delegation.

The UNHRC grilled him about the death penalty in Mississippi. The timing was fitting: Hood had just asked the Mississippi Supreme Court to put Charles Ray Crawford and Michelle Byrom to death by scheduling two back-to-back executions for March 26 and 27.

Hood had to address questions about Mississippi’s use of drugs from dubious sources and not approved by the FDA. [To learn about this contentious issue, read “Another Botched Execution” and “Lives on the Line” on The Advocates’ blog, TheAdvocatesPost.org.]

The UNHRC member who peppered Hood with death penalty questions had been prepped in advance by The Advocates’ Amy Bergquist, a staff attorney who represented the organization at the UNHRC session.

“Prior to the review, I had the opportunity to talk with the Committee member, and following our conversation, I supplied him with even more information; we fed questions to the Committee,” Bergquist said.

“Rosalyn Park [The Advocates’ director of research, who represents the organization on the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty’s steering committee] and others were of immense help in getting information from attorneys representing Charles Crawford and Michelle Byrom, who were scheduled to be executed in Mississippi in March.”

The work paid off. “The Committee drilled down on the issue,” Bergquist said. “I don’t know that without the help of The Advocates and other civil society organizations it would have been able to go into as much depth.”

In addition to participating in the review session as a member of the civil society delegation organized by U.S. Human Rights Network, The Advocates had submitted three shadow reports to the UNHRC. The reports focused on the death penalty, the rights of non-citizens, and domestic violence and “Stand Your Ground” laws.

Weeks before the session, civil society delegation members organized themselves into working groups, based on the issues that were to be addressed at the review. “By organizing into groups that paralleled the issues the Committee had signaled it would focus on, we created opportunities for a more in-depth review by the Committee,” Bergquist stated.

“The night before our formal briefing with the Committee, the working groups met to polish their two-minute statements about their specific human rights issues.”

The civil society delegation was large, numbering more than 80 people. The Committee took notice, commending the involvement in its opening remarks.

The U.S. delegation was also large, with 32 officials, including Hood and Salt Lake City’s mayor, Ralph Becker. It marked the first time a U.S. delegation for a treaty-body review included state and local government representatives.
When asked how the dynamics of the U.S. review differ from reviews of other—often much smaller—countries, Bergquist noted that despite different civil society delegation sizes, the Committee’s time doesn’t expand. “If you have 40 or 50 groups that want to have their say with the Committee, you have to budget your time,” she said. “For the U.S. review, we needed to be well organized; we needed to collaborate; we needed to plan; and we needed to be respectful of each other.”

The civil society working groups, each comprised of up to 12 different organizations, together held extended consultations with Human Rights Committee members. “The large, varied group dynamic puts more emphasis on direct lobbying,” Bergquist explained. “It is important to find the particular Committee member who will be focusing on your issues, talking to him or her individually, as well as e-mailing and feeding information to members. This helps Committee members to be better prepared to question the government under review, and it helps Committee members be as detailed and specific as possible.”

The review process encouraged Bergquist. “The examination of the U.S. delegation was highly focused, and the Committee members were well prepared to discuss the issues. They asked the U.S. delegation very pointed questions, and their follow-up questions were sharp.”

Also while in Geneva, Bergquist made a statement to the UN Human Rights Council about human rights defenders and diaspora engagement, and presented The Advocates’ newly-released, groundbreaking manual, Paving Pathways for Justice and Accountability: Human Rights Tools for Diaspora Communities. [See pages 4-5 of this newsletter.]

In addition, she met with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to discuss human rights violations in the U.S. that result from detention of non-citizens. She also participated in lobbying in advance of Ethiopia’s Universal Periodic Review held May 6, for which The Advocates submitted a shadow report on ethnic discrimination in Ethiopia.

“One of the things noteworthy about the treaty body review process is that even though they are experts about the substance of human rights standards and about what the treaty says, they are not experts about what is taking place on the ground in countries being reviewed,” Bergquist said. “It is empowering to be able to paint the picture for people with the Committee’s expertise of what is really happening on the ground, to have a UN human rights treaty body voice concerns, and to have the U.S. government forced to answer them.”

As part of the review process, the UNHRC adopted and issued Concluding Observations, detailing principal matters of concern and recommendations regarding United States’ human rights abuses. [To learn more, see the adjacent article, “UN > Concluding Observations.”]

Civil society should be encouraged and empowered by the UN treaty body review process, Bergquist stated. “While the process may seem intimidating, it’s actually accessible,” she said. “The treaty body review is not a process just for the elites. It is not just for specialized organizations, and it is not just for lawyers. The Committee members want to make it accessible for people who have on-the-ground information and who work on human rights. They want to give people a voice, and they want to amplify those voices.”


UN > Concluding Observations

Here is a snapshot of those UN Human Rights Committee’s Concluding Observations that are related to shadow reports The Advocates for Human Rights had submitted to the Committee. For a complete list, visit ohchr.org, keywords: US Concluding Observations.

Death Penalty

- Ensure that the death penalty is not imposed as a result of racial bias;
- Ensure effective legal representation for defendants in death penalty cases;
- Ensure adequate compensation is provided for persons who are wrongfully convicted;
- Ensure that drugs used for executions originate from legal, regulated, and FDA-approved sources, and that information on the drugs’ origins and compositions is available;
- Consider establishing a moratorium on the death penalty, and consider abolishing it.

Rights of Non-citizens

- Review policies of mandatory detention and deportation of certain categories of immigrants in order to allow for individualized decisions;
- Ensure that affected persons have access to legal representation;
- Facilitate access to adequate health care by undocumented immigrants and immigrants and their families who have been lawfully in the U.S. for less than five years;

Domestic Violence

- Strengthen measures to prevent and combat domestic violence, and ensure that law enforcement personnel appropriately respond to acts of domestic violence;
- Ensure that cases are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are held accountable;
- Ensure remedies for victims and take steps to improve the provision of emergency shelter, housing, child care, rehabilitative services, and legal representation for victims;
- Assist tribes in efforts to address domestic violence against Native American women.

To learn more, see the adjacent article, “UN > Concluding Observations.”
The spring house party season was in full-swing from March until the beginning of May, with people packing hosts’ homes to learn the latest about The Advocates’ life-changing, world-changing work.

“Attending house parties is a great way to come together with others who share an interest in human rights and keep up-to-date on The Advocates’ latest work,” said Ann Ulring, The Advocates’ director of development.

House parties are essential for providing financial support to the organization, according to Ulring. “And these casual, welcoming events afford people deeper connections to our work, and to our staff and other supporters,” she added.

A special thank-you goes out to those who hosted parties in their homes. Colleen Cooper and Richard Ihrig opened their doors to guests in March, with donations dedicated to the organization’s general operating fund.

The Women’s Human Rights Program event was held in April in the home of Jan Conlin and Gene Goetz. A week later, Linda Foreman and her son, Thomas Dickstein, welcomed supporters of the Sankhu-Palubari School in Nepal.

The Advocates’ International Justice Program was featured at the May 1 party hosted in the home of Kathleen and Robert Seestadt.

House parties have grown into an effective fundraising model for The Advocates, generating more than a third of the organization’s general operating revenue. Donors have an opportunity to direct their gifts to whichever program is of particular interest, or to the organization overall. All house party revenue supports general operating expenses.

“Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped in the water, the action of individuals can have far-reaching effects.”

The Dalai Lama
A question of grave importance to thousands of people seeking asylum is at the heart of a petition filed recently with the U.S. Supreme Court by The Advocates for Human Rights; Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi law firm; and lawyers and law students with the University of Minnesota Law School’s Center for New Americans.

At issue is the legal requirement that a person must file for asylum within a year after entering the U.S. The controversial law, established by Congress, allows immigration judges to grant exceptions to the one-year deadline in limited situations, including when “changed circumstances” arise that affect an individual’s risk of persecution in their home country. However, courts have disagreed about whether they can second-guess immigration judges when they refuse to grant exceptions.

“His children’s disappearance certainly contributed to a ‘changed circumstance.’”
Deepinder Mayell

Even when an immigration judge’s denial is wrong, some courts say they cannot intervene to correct the injustice. “It is very problematic and life-damaging that a higher level court cannot review a decision to determine if it is unjustifiable or erroneous to not grant an exception,” said Deepinder Mayell, director of The Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program. “The door is firmly and permanently shut, leaving no way to ensure that the law is applied as Congress intended.”

The case the Supreme Court is asked to review involves Pe Paul Goromou, a former military officer and citizen of Guinea. Goromou sought asylum in the U.S. in 2007 because it was likely that, if he returned to his home country, he would be killed by the Guinean government, which had recently placed him on its “black list.” The government had tortured him years earlier because of his ethnicity, religion, and opposition to corruption.

Despite the case’s undisputed facts and that Goromou had no legal help when he rushed to prepare his application, the asylum office denied him asylum. Contending that he did not qualify for a deadline exception, the office cast aside the argument that the Guinean government’s renewed threats meant circumstances had changed for him. The U.S. government initiated deportation proceedings.

Goromou renewed his claims for asylum, asserting that his application’s untimeliness should be excused because of the changed circumstances exception proscribed in the law. “His government’s renewed threats were certainly ‘changed circumstances,’” Mayell said.

Goromou was denied asylum. Instead, the judge granted a less generous type of protection called “withholding of removal.” With this status, his life remains tenuous, according to Mahesha Subbaraman, an attorney with Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, and a lawyer representing Goromou. Without asylum, Goromou can be deported to another country other than Guinea; he cannot re-unite with his family; he cannot travel outside of the U.S.; and each year he must request approval to be employed.

It is anticipated that it will be known in September whether the U.S. Supreme Court will review the case.
In a room packed with Mongolian parliamentarians, The Advocates for Human Rights launched its report, *The Implementation of Mongolia’s Domestic Violence Legislation*, in January 2014 in Mongolia. Also in attendance were the Minister of Justice and other high government officials, as well as social workers, health care workers, and others who interact with domestic violence.

The Advocates’ report took a critical look at the efficacy of Mongolia’s decade-old Law to Combat Domestic Violence and recommended changes to strengthen it. The report is based on two 2013 fact-finding missions to Mongolia; research on Mongolian law and practices; input from The Advocates’ Mongolian partner, the National Center Against Violence; and knowledge of best practices to prevent and combat domestic violence.

By the time The Advocates returned to Mongolia in January 2014, the country had already taken steps to adopt the report’s recommendations. “The government had created a working group to draft recommended amendments, and at the time we were there, they were at the point of completing that work,” said Helen Rubenstein, deputy director of The Advocates’ Women’s Human Rights Program. “The women parliamentarians we talked to were all very engaged and supportive of making the changes, and were very interested in learning strategies from us to get other parliamentarians on the same page.”

As with all of its work, The Advocates drew from its pool of skilled and dedicated volunteers to assist, tapping Aviva Breen, former Advocates’ board chair and current board member, to advise the parliamentarians. “Aviva has a lot of legislative experience because she was the executive director of the Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women in Minnesota for years,” Rubenstein said. “She shared suggestions with the women parliamentarians on how to bring their male colleagues on board. She has followed up, too, corresponding with them and sending more information.”

The report’s recommendations fall into two over-arching categories: designating domestic violence as a specific crime, and better delegating responsibilities for addressing the violence. “The civil domestic violence law has been on the books for 10 years, but it hasn’t been implemented because it doesn’t give clear direction to agencies as to which agencies are responsible for carrying it out,” Rubenstein said.

Beyond suggesting legislative revisions, The Advocates planted seeds for deep, sustainable change by addressing misconceptions about domestic violence. The Advocates’ interviews of more than 135 people during its 2013 fact-finding missions revealed that most people considered alcohol abuse to be the cause of domestic violence in Mongolia. Because of this belief, Mongolia has historically tried to address domestic violence by focusing on the alcohol abuse—something that The Advocates has helped authorities see as a possible aggravating factor, not the root of the problem.

“It is now being acknowledged at the highest levels that the cause of domestic violence is not alcohol but attitudes toward women,” said Rubenstein. “That recognition is transformational—it affects where resources are put and what path is taken.”

“The Advocates’ report is translating into deep, sustainable change to protect women.”

Helen Rubenstein

Photo: Aviva Breen addressing Mongolian parliamentarians and other officials.
The delegation included a judge, prosecutor, shelter worker, psychologist, a head of an aggressor’s program, and a representative from Moldovan Ministry of Social Protection. The delegation’s visit was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Moldova.

Chuck Derry, co-founder of The Gender Violence Institute, partnered with The Advocates on the training. The Institute provides technical assistance for communities and organizations invested in responding to, and preventing, sexual and domestic violence.

The Advocates has worked with partners in the Republic of Moldova to monitor the implementation of its domestic violence law, train stakeholders to effectively implement the law, and advocate for changes to the law. After several fact-finding missions in 2012, The Advocates published The Implementation of the Republic of Moldova’s Domestic Violence Legislation: A Human Rights Report, analyzing domestic violence legislation and recommending policy and legal changes.

Developing effective programs for men who batter was the focus of an official delegation from The Republic of Moldova that visited The Advocates for Human Rights in March. Joining the group was the U.S. Department of State’s Ukraine and Moldova program manager, Foreign Affairs Officer Adriana Cosgriff.

The week’s agenda was filled with training opportunities, including a trip to Duluth to meet with members of Duluth’s Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, creator of The Duluth Model. The model is the leading, groundbreaking batterer intervention program and is emulated throughout the world.

“Delegation members learned the importance of incorporating the aggressor program into a coordinated community response to domestic violence,” said Beatriz Menanteau, staff attorney with The Advocates. “We addressed the role of the various disciplines to create and maintain an effective aggressor program that protects victims and holds offenders accountable.”

The delegation included a judge, prosecutor, shelter worker, psychologist, a head of an aggressor’s program, and a representative from Moldovan Ministry of Social Protection. The delegation’s visit was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Moldova.

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Desperate mother parts with child

Little Girl Now Safe in U.S.

The day Onie’s mother was attacked by a man wielding a knife was the day she made the heartbreaking decision to part with her daughter and send the four-year-old to the United States to live. Up until then, the mother and daughter from Liberia had been living in a refugee camp in Ghana.

Onie said goodbye to her mother and traveled with a family who was immigrating to the United States.

Now ten and living with her grandmother in the Twin Cities, Onie was recently granted Special Immigrant Juveniles (SIJ) Status with the help of The Advocates’ volunteer Brian Clark, with Lockridge Grindal Nauen. With SIJ status, she can live permanently in the United States and can eventually become a naturalized citizen.

Onie is grateful. “I like the opportunities of having a life,” she said. “I want to be an attorney so I can help people find justice.”

Her favorite subject is history, and she enjoys softball and volleyball and playing with her best friend, Emma.

Onie had been living in the United States without documentation. “Children who do not have full parental support and are in the U.S. without status are extremely vulnerable,” according to Deepinder Mayell, director of The Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program. “They are often traumatized from their flight, and navigating each day without status poses challenges that seem insurmountable.”

“Onie can now live out of the shadows with considerably more security and safety, and can fully integrate into her new life in the United States,” he said. Onie is doing just that.

Improving Women’s Lives in Moldova
**In memoriam >**

**Tim Tennant-Jayne**

The Advocates for Human Rights’ staff, volunteers, and clients are deeply saddened by the passing of our colleague, Tim Tennant-Jayne. Tim courageously fought a brief battle with an aggressive form of cancer and died peacefully in his home on January 5.

Tim worked alongside us as receptionist and administrative assistant for six years. He was known and loved by many, especially The Advocates’ clients. His humor and wit were matched only by his attentiveness and generosity.

Tim was committed to advancing human rights and was a longtime activist of LGBTQ rights. He was an ordained clergyperson within the United Methodist Church, and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree a year ago.

In addition to being the first face people saw when coming through The Advocates’ doors, Tim conducted street ministry and was a spokesperson for Affirmation, an organization that promotes LGBTQ rights within the United Methodist Church.

“We miss Tim terribly,” said Robin Phillips, The Advocates’ executive director. “He was a friend and colleague, and always a bright spot in our days.”

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**“Thank you, Interns”**

The Advocates for Human Rights’ internship program attracts students from around the world. It is another way to cast ripples; interns become human rights defenders and partners for The Advocates. Thank you to those who served during the 2013-14 academic year.

**Carleton College**
Leah Kutcher

**Grinnell College**
Daria Brosius

**Gustavus Adolphus College**
Bethany Murray

**Hamline University**
Shana Sokolofsky

**Hamline University School of Law**
Casey H. Schofield

**Macalester College**
Marion Gregoire
Sarah Hanlon
Cameron Kesinger
Sasha Lansky
Kaitlyn Miller
Luiza Barbato Montesanti

**Jasper Peet-Martel**
Jennifer Suever
Selja Vassnes
Allan Martinez Venegas
Nolberto Zubia

**McDaniel College**
Jennifer Heegaard

**Minnesota State University, Mankato**
Rojina McCarthy

**St. Olaf College**
Claire Breining
Chloe Vraney

**Temple University Law School**
Rachael Steenholdt

**The University of Queensland**
Paul Conroy

**University of Minnesota**
Patrick Alcorn
Witney Bjerke
Lindsay Blahnik
Taylor Craney
Patricia Dorsher
Sarah Flinspach
Erik Katovic
Megan Kirkland
Amy Perna,
Humphrey School
Emily Pettersen

**University of St. Thomas**
Austin Dufort
Maria Mantey

**University of Queenslands**
Jessica Abrantes

**University of Minnesota Law School**

**Minne Bosma**
Brittany Mitchell
Ethan Scrivener
Sandhya Basini Sitoula,
Humphrey Legal Fellow
Chuqin Xing

**University of St. Thomas**

**William Mitchell College of Law**
Gabriel Bozian

**Non-students**
Darcy Berglund
Gail Engstrom
Stephanie Jones
Maria Orndahl
Tania Tisheva

---

"To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived—this is to have succeeded."

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Four people, in addition to Marilyn Carlson Nelson (see page 3), will be honored at the 2014 Human Rights Awards Dinner, being held Wednesday, June 25 at the Hilton Minneapolis. (See page 11 for details.)

Special Recognition Award
Chimgee Haltarhuu, a Mongolian immigrant living in Saint Paul, Minnesota, teaches and performs at Circus Juventas. She founded a circus group in 2010, Mission Manduhai, which travels to the far reaches of Mongolia to put on free performances for nomadic herders to raise awareness about the problem of domestic violence. A survivor of domestic violence, she has helped The Advocates with its domestic violence work in Mongolia.

Volunteer Awards
Mark Petty, an attorney editor at Thomson Reuters, is an exceptional volunteer translator for The Advocates. “Mark is often one of the first people to respond to our requests for translators, and his turn-around time is unparalleled,” says Sarah Brenes, staff attorney for The Advocates’ Refugee and Immigrant Program. Since 2012, Petty has donated over 100 hours of French and Spanish translation work to the organization.

Julie Shelton has proven an invaluable team member on several of The Advocates’ Africa projects. An attorney with Faegre Baker Daniels in Chicago, Shelton served as the team leader for a pro bono needs assessment in Cameroon, worked on a report on LGBTI rights in Cameroon, and wrote draft bills for post-conflict Somali law reform. “Julie has consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty,” says Jennifer Prestholdt, director of The Advocates’ International Justice Program.

Laura Tripiciano has volunteered with The Advocates for 17 years, starting as an intern in law school. Today, Tripiciano is a private immigration attorney who represents asylum seekers. She has a particular devotion to Ethiopia, where her adopted son was born. In response to one of The Advocates’ listings of new cases in 2013, Tripiciano offered to take on all of the new Ethiopian clients. Sarah Brenes says: “Laura’s interest in serving our clients is genuine, her kindness is unsurpassed, and her dedicated advocacy is unquestionable.”

Howard S. (Sam) Myers, III, Chair
Eddie Bahadir-Williamson
C. Christopher Bercaw
Aviva Breen
Carolyn Chalmers
Katie M. Connolly
Colleen Cooper
Amy Crawford
Matthew D. Forsgren
Wood Foster, Jr.
Carol Hayden
Susan Hols
Loan T. Huynh
Marlene Kayser
David Kistle
Mark W. Lee
Kathy Lenzmeier
Sharon Link
Anne M. Lockner
Sarah A. Lockner
John P. Mandler
Mary Parker
Jonathan Sage-Martinson
Ellen Sampson
Max J. Schott, II
Marlene Straszewski
Jean Thomson
Because every person matters.