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Summer Programs

In the summer of 2006 GYC is organizing four human rights delegations for young leaders ages 18-25 to the following countries:

Bosnia
Cambodia
Guatemala
Rwanda

Application Deadline
December 2, 2005

Check out the GYC website for more details and help us get the word out.

Alumni Retreat

GYC is organizing its first ever alumni retreat as a part of our efforts to expand on and sustain the energy generated during our programs. It is our hope that GYC will continue to serve as a resource for past participants and we also want to encourage more alumni to take on new leadership roles in our work. Alumni will have a chance to reconnect with GYC, attend a skills training workshop and gain inspiration from guest speakers and other participants. The retreat will take place February 17-19, 2006 at the Lifebridge Sanctuary in Rosendale, NY.

GYC Scholarship Fund

In order to better meet the needs of participants who are challenged to find financial resources to take part in our programs, we have begun to raise money to establish a scholarship fund. Awards will be determined through a competitive process by an alumni committee and will be based on financial need as well as other criteria currently under discussion. The first scholarship awarded from the fund will benefit at least one participant in the January 2006 human rights delegation to Rwanda.

Dart Foundation Grant Helps GYC Expand

We are very pleased to announce that we were recently awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Dart Foundation. This grant has come at a critical stage in our development and will allow us to deepen our work in many important ways. The Dart Foundation has been a consistent supporter of GYC since its founding in 1997.

Dr. Frank Ochberg, a representative of the Dart Foundation, had this to say about GYC, "The Dart Foundation appreciates young women and men who are willing to push themselves beyond the conventional limits of academic education

to experience the realities of history, economics and science; to listen and to learn in a profoundly different culture, and then to make something tangible and helpful of that experience. Global Youth Connect builds bridges in thought and understanding. Its goals are modest, but its implications are vast."

We greatly appreciate these kind words and the continued support by Dart. We are excited by the many opportunities made possible by the receipt of these funds and the potential it offers our work. In particular, this grant will allow us to expand our

services to support the needs of a growing network of program alumni, hire new staff, re-design our website, and provide us with a much-needed opportunity to spend time developing new programs and initiatives.

We are indebted to the Dart Foundation as well as our many other donors and supporters – especially program participants – who help make our vision a reality.

On behalf of all of us at GYC, thank you for your continued investment in us!

In This Issue

Letter from the Director	2
Who's New at GYC	2
Program Highlights	3
Cambodia	4
Guatemala	5
Upcoming Events	6

Who's New at GYC?



Mirsad "Miki" Jacevic

Bosnia Program Director
miki@globalyouthconnect.org

Miki is a human rights activist and peace program specialist from Sarajevo, Bosnia Hercegovina. He is a co-founder of Global Youth Connect where he is now organizing GYC's first delegation to Bosnia. In addition, Miki works full-time as a senior policy officer at Women Waging Peace where he oversees policy efforts aimed at including women in formal and informal peace processes.

Navin Moul

Cambodia Program Director
navin@globalyouthconnect.org

Navin is the Program Director for Cambodia. She is a Cambodian-American currently pursuing a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley in the Ethnic Studies department. Her dissertation research is on citizenship with a specific focus on the deportation of Cambodian-Americans from the United States to Cambodia.

Christen Dobson

Program Assistant
christen@globalyouthconnect.org

Christen is the Program Assistant at GYC and also a past participant of the August 2005 delegation to Guatemala. She graduated with a BA from Mount Union College with a double major in Japanese and International Studies and a minor in Spanish. She also spent a year studying at Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka, Japan.

The Art of Helping Others

Each of you reading this newsletter share a common bond with each other: a deep-seated desire to help other people.

It is amazing how that even though we come from so many different backgrounds, cultures and experiences that we are able to work together to creatively use our talents to serve the needs of others.

And yet, the act of reaching out to another human being to help is not always so simple. In fact, many would argue that it is an art, especially in situations where people are working across cultures or from positions of privilege in relation to those they are helping.

I believe that it is very important to be as conscious as possible of the voice of the people that you are trying to "help". In particular, we need to respect their needs and work in partnership with them to reach common goals.

At the same time, we need to make sure that we are acting in ways that are culturally appropriate and that are not causing more damage than good. There is a spectrum of involvement from being a totally passive and inactive bystander to doing too much in all the wrong ways. The art of helping is about finding a way to avoid either of these extremes. It is also about knowing how to take responsibility when things go wrong and to do what you can to both correct the mistake and learn from it.

Sometimes we may not have all the skills needed to complete a task or do not feel comfortable trying something new but we should still try to find ways to get

involved. This is especially important for young leaders who are still learning new skills and strategies. For example, if you don't feel ready to facilitate a workshop in a cross-cultural setting, perhaps instead you can observe the workshop, take pictures, write down quotes or important ideas and provide feedback.

While there are times where it may be inappropriate to intervene in a situation, we also must be careful to not become so self-conscious about our roles that it paralyzes us, preventing us from acting in a situation where we may have something very valuable to contribute. We need to remember that even small actions can be very powerful.

As I prepare to go back to Rwanda at the end of the year, these ideas about the art of helping seem more relevant than ever. At the time that Rwandans needed help the most from others, the international community did next to nothing to stop the genocide.

At the same time there were many Rwandans – both Hutu and Tutsi – who courageously stood up, often sacrificing their lives to help others. The story of Paul Rusesabagina portrayed in the movie *Hotel Rwanda* is an important reminder of what can be accomplished by one person in extraordinary circumstances.

There is also the story of Romeo Dallaire, the head of the UN mission to Rwanda, who refused to abandon the Rwandan people despite constant pressure to withdraw from the country. He reminds us that the international community also had a critical role to play in stopping the genocide.

Neither one of them worked in isolation but depended on each other.

Rwanda clearly has many lessons to teach us all about the art of helping others.

There are many young leaders in Rwanda today who are working to ensure the respect of human rights and dignity for future generations of Rwandans. But they need support from and collaboration with others to reach their goals. GYC hopes to "help" them in an artful way, combining both respect for local capacities and courage to express our talents and ideas to work together with them as they re-build their country.

There is no question that our task is complex. We will find new strengths in ourselves and grow in unexpected ways from our work. We will learn as much, if not more than, we give. The process of helping is and should always be reciprocal.

I view helping others as a process that allows me to be consciously present with myself and the people that I am working with. I don't always get it right but I know that I can't hide behind my fears and insecurities. I do my best to learn from the things that challenge me. And I continue to try to do what I can in the best way possible despite countless limitations that I face on a daily basis.

Without a doubt, the art of helping others is one of the most challenging and rewarding tasks we can dedicate our lifetimes to mastering.

Peace,

Jennifer Kloes

Nepal: A Time for Action

Not long after the February 2006 coup led by Nepal's King Gyanendra, we received a special visit from Dilli Chaudhary, the director of a Nepali NGO - Backward Society Education (BASE).

Dilli has been working for more than a decade to advocate for the rights of bonded laborers (known as ("kamaiyas")) in the western region of Nepal. In the past several years, the escalating violence between a Maoist insurgency and the Nepali government has made BASE's work even more challenging and dangerous.

GYC has been working in solidarity with BASE since 2000, when two of BASE's youth members attended our first Global Human Rights Learning Community. In 2001, we visited BASE in Nepal and learned more about the difficult conditions of ex-kamaiyas.

Inspired by the work we have been doing in Cambodia and Guatemala, Dilli invited us to organize a similar delegation to work with youth in Nepal.

This delegation will focus specifically on providing

training and support to Nepali youth working to promote peace. We will leverage the experience of the trip by documenting their stories as well as interview young Nepalis directly affected by the conflict. We plan to distribute a report on the challenges faced by youth working for change in Nepal, create a small grants fund to support projects and create educational curriculum for high school students in the U.S. about the situation in Nepal. We hope these projects will complement local efforts to promote peace in Nepal.

U.S.-Egypt Learning Community

At a time when global tensions seem very high, particularly in relation to the growing divide between the U.S. and the Muslim world, the need to build meaningful bridges of collaboration between youth working for human rights in the U.S. and the Arab and Muslim world has never seemed clearer.

In 2006, GYC will organize a pilot project to bring together Egyptian and American youth in a 2-week intensive learning community workshop. The training will allow participants to better understand how youth from each of the two countries are approaching the issues facing our world, strategize potential steps for addressing

shared human rights concerns, build skills to increase their ability to work together, and identify new projects.

This project will help inform a larger initiative to increase opportunities for cooperation between youth in the U.S. and Arab and Muslim countries.

Bringing Human Rights Home

As much as we enjoy working with youth from so many communities across the U.S. and in many difference countries, we recognize that it is also important to invest in and support our own community. We are also interested in expanding our programs to serve the needs of high school students.

In the fall of 2006, we will organize a series of human rights training workshops for youth in the Hudson Valley region of upstate New York.

In these workshops we plan to look at both local and global issues, with a special focus on human rights challenges faced in our program countries. We will also work with participants to draw connections between the local and the global.

The training will also focus on building the skills and confidence of youth in our community to take action on the human rights issues that are most important to them. We will also encourage participants to take the skills

and knowledge and pass them on to other youth in their community.

Through this process we hope to better understand how GYC can provide programs that are relevant to the interests of high school students in the U.S.

We intend to expand this U.S.-based program to at least 2 other communities in the spring of 2007 and organize our first delegation for teenagers in the summer of 2007.

Who's New at GYC?

Vahidin Omanovic

Center for Peacebuilding
Project Coordinator-Bosnia

Vahidin Omanovic is a founder and director of the Center for Peacebuilding. He has worked as a liaison, trainer, and project manager for the organization, designed and facilitated workshops and interpersonal dialogue groups and taught non-violent communication and conflict transformation.

Muny Chhit

Youth For Peace
Project Coordinator-Cambodia

Muny works as a trainer at YFP, designing and facilitating workshops for youth ages 15-25 on topics such as building a culture of peace, conflict resolution, human rights, leadership and non-violence. He is currently finishing a degree in Peace Studies at the University of Cambodia

Joseph Nkurunziza

Never Again
Project Coordinator-Rwanda

Joseph, a coordinator of Never Again-Rwanda, is also a medical student at the National University of Rwanda and is the president of the Medical Students Association of Rwanda (Medsar). He has initiated numerous community-based projects, including an HIV/AIDS sensitization and projects pre-natal consultation and family planning education.

Pinky Dangi

Backward Education Society
Project Coordinator-Nepal

Pinky is the youth representative for BASE. She is working to increase coordination and unity between Nepali youth from different districts to engage in capacity building and advocacy, as well as provide them with opportunities to make change.

Reflections from the Summer: Cambodia

By: Jessica Gibson

As part of our delegation, we spent a week and half in Battambang, the second largest city in Cambodia but a shadow of Phnom Penh, with none of its pockets of international flair and foreign products. Three of these days were spent in workshops with Cambodian youth – largely university students or recent graduates, all volunteers and youth leaders in the field of peace and conflict resolution. I spent the first two days acutely uncomfortable with culture shock, eager to get back to the hotel and into a place where I didn't need to reach, again and again, for the right word, the right way to communicate. I felt awkward and ready to be back with "my group," free of the difficulties of stepping into another culture. On the third day, however, we broke into smaller groups based on our own areas of interest, and I found myself working with two Cambodian teachers. We talked about the educational system in Cambodia and the United States, and the challenges the teachers faced as educators in a society where the money for classroom resources never reaches the teachers from the principal's pocket, and where each teacher requires the students to pay a fee to attend class, stuffing the class with as many students as possible, which makes

teaching impossible but supporting a family a little more feasible. At the unlivable salary of only \$20 a month, it was no surprise that corruption infiltrated the education system and that quality teachers were difficult to find and difficult to keep. My two friends were attempting to live a corruption-free life (this was a refrain of all of the Cambodian delegates), but it was not an easy path. As we spent the next few days sightseeing, sharing meals and talking outside of the workshops, we found ourselves bonding with the Cambodian participants in a unique way. Although their lives were infinitely more difficult than our own, they all possessed an innocence and sweetness I've never seen in an American past the age of adolescence. We shared no common ground aside from our ages and our attempts and hopes to live an ethical, peaceful life and to help others do the same. And yet, in that time and place, these shared ambitions were enough to forge deep, distinctive relationships unlike any we'd previously known. On one of the last days in Battambang one of our American delegates was struck with terrible food-poisoning that rendered her unable to travel with the rest of the group back to Phnom Penh from Battambang. I stayed with her an extra night in the hotel, much to the jealousy of our other delegates, who envied our extra day with the Cambodian participants. Our



friendships were such that saying goodbye, though we'd known each other only a week and a half, was wrenching, and I was happy to put it off for one more day. Our Cambodian friends stopped by all day and night (I came back from lunch to find a group of them waiting patiently outside our hotel door, worried about my friend's condition) bringing fruit, photos and a special Khmer type of tea for the stomach. I invited them to spend our last breakfast together – we were all eager to be together until the last minute. When we met for breakfast at the hotel, I was touched when two Khmer girls wanted to order "American food" in our honor – their first experience with the cuisine. Though I encouraged the French Toast, they opted for what represented to them the most American of all American foods: the hamburger. Once they arrived they eyed the hamburgers warily and refused, despite our urging, to hold them by both hands. Both girls cut their breakfast into neat, manageable pieces while the rest giggled and urged them on. One of the Cambodian participants told me gravely that he'd read a book about hamburgers and other American food, making them the resident expert on the subject (I don't eat them, myself). This is a small insignificant anecdote that is diminutive compared to the temple-sized experiences of the trip, but I cherish it because it represents the breaking of bread among genuine friends who, two weeks ago, knew nothing of each other. My Cambodian girls were making an effort, despite their preferred palates, despite the range of Khmer options, to reach out to our visiting culture on our last morning together. I also love that a food so mythologically American became for me, a life-long vegetarian, the symbol for true, cross-cultural friendship.



Reflections from the Summer: Guatemala

By: Christen Dobson

August 2005. In a dark, abandoned parking lot off of a busy highway, a group of young people congregate. Hanging out, playing soccer, and chatting amongst themselves, the group of 15 seem mostly unconcerned with their surroundings. The night air has a chill, the kind that bites through the flimsy t-shirts and jeans that many of them wear. Murmurs of "¿Quiere solvent?" can be heard as they pass material soaked in solvent amongst one another, each inhaling the poison, providing a temporary relief from cold and hunger.

Calle 18, Zona 1. A large group of boys race the length of the soccer field, competing to be the first to score. As I approach the field, I am stopped by a young boy who points at my camera, wanting to know how much it costs and if he can use it to take photos. We proceed to discuss life on the street, while he stops periodically to inhale (a habit he insists almost all street kids practice), and asks how to say "what's up, give me food, cocaine, heroin, and crack" in English. At the end of our lesson as I am about to leave, he asks if I can take him back to the US with me. When I say no, he looks up at me and asks why. At that moment, as I try to explain all of the reasons why it would be impossible, my explanations feel feeble, hollow and pathetically inadequate.

He is one of the many inhabitants of Guatemala City: children who spend their days and evenings in the streets selling gum, candy, and sometimes themselves in order to earn whatever money they can to survive. These children comprise one of the most vulnerable groups of society almost completely forgotten by the government, except when it is time to make arrests on charges of 'loitering' and lay blame for the violence perpetrated against them. These children lack adequate food, water, and shelter, and suffer frequent violence at the hands of the police.

Street children live in a cycle of abuse that seems inescapable. This cycle continues through their subjection to a home situation and poverty so desperate that it forces life on the streets, a justice system so inadequate that the children are the ones

that suffer the blame for their situation, a police force so corrupt that children are regularly targets of brutal physical and sexual violence at its hands, and a government so unconcerned that about the more than 5,000 children surviving on Guatemalan streets today.

Seeing this first hand was a disconcerting experience, a glimpse into a reality with which I have no familiarity. I cannot help but wonder what it would be like to live on the street. Existing day to day on almost nothing, sleeping on a bed of pavement every night, a victim of hunger? Who will take the responsibility to ensure that thousands more children will not suffer this existence in the future?

Despite my distress at seeing the conditions in which these children survive, somewhere in my interactions with the children I also found inspiration. I found hope in the words of one young girl, Hayley, eagerly reciting poetry for us from her school lessons. I found joy in the laughter of her niece as we danced to music blaring from a van on the sidewalk. I found courage in the details of their personal stories that they shared with us and I was amazed at the gratitude that they expressed for our visit.

The time that we spent with Nuestros Derechos has showed me that there are people dedicated to supporting Guatemala's street children. We had the opportunity to witness how Nuestros Derechos provides shelter, education, and legal support and representation for many children living on the streets in Guatemala City. One of the most touching aspects was to see the interaction between the staff of Nuestros Derechos and the children, and to come to understand their motivations and dedication in continuing to fight for the rights of street children. I know that I must maintain hope and faith that groups like Nuestros Derechos will have enough resources and support to continue their valuable work and that more people will have the courage to speak for this group of largely forgotten members of Guatemalan society.



Guatemala Hurricane Relief

From Guatemala to New Orleans this record breaking hurricane season has caused unprecedented levels of damage. In Guatemala, the disaster has particularly affected poor indigenous communities in rural areas.

More than a thousand people lost their lives as a

result of devastating mudslides from Hurricane Stan and thousands of people have been displaced. The danger for widespread hunger continues as crops were wiped out.

The hurricane relief effort has also exposed the

continued divisions in Guatemalan society and re-opened traumatic wounds still healing as a result of 36 years of state-sponsored violence.

Niño Obrero, a school for poor children that GYC has worked with, was flooded, educational materials were

destroyed and families of students displaced. GYC program alumni immediately responded raising \$625 to assist Niño Obrero in its relief efforts.

How To Help

www.redcross.org

www.rightsaction.org

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*Acting Together for
Compassion, Human Rights,
and Responsibility*

Upcoming Events: 2006

Dec. 29-Jan. 15, 2006:
Rwanda Delegation

Feb. 17-19: Alumni Retreat in
Rosendale, NY

March 19-April 3: Nepal
Delegation

May 21-June 19:
Rwanda Delegation

June 26-July 15:
Bosnia Delegation

July 1-July 31:
Guatemala Delegation

July 16-August 15:
Cambodia Delegation

August 2006: US-Egypt
Learning Community

Fall 2006: High School
Human Rights Program

About Global Youth Connect

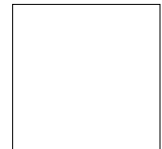
GYC is devoted to inspiring, supporting, and connecting youth who are working to protect human rights around the world.

Our mission is to build and support a community of youth who are actively promoting and protecting human rights, and to educate and inspire the next generation to work for peaceful change.

We believe that educated, compassionate and empowered youth are the key to achieving tolerance, peace and justice.

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