

INTERCONNECTIONS 21

Newsletter

Spring 2001

3rd IC 21 Human Rights Study Trip in NYC a Success

Sixty-eight students, educators, and parents from five states and South Africa, participated in IC 21's Human Rights Study Trip December 6-10, 2000. The trip's centerpiece was the December 8 United Nations Student Conference on Human Rights, hosted by the United Nations Department of Public Information, and co-sponsored by IC 21 and other parties from Canada, Mexico and the US.

United Nations Student Conference on Human Rights

Four hundred students from the US and abroad addressed human rights, child labor, safe schools, land mines and education topics. Four interactive sessions, hosted by a student representative and attended by high-ranking United Nations officials, provided participants an opportunity to learn from each other.

During the opening session, participants learned about war's impact on children. Olara Otunnu, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflicts, remarked, "youth are the most vulnerable in war...The highest price of quarrel is being paid by young people, the future of the society."

The second and third sessions opened the floor to many opinions. Student speakers addressed children's needs around the world and the role schools play in meeting such needs. Throughout, the discussion moved between ideas and specific calls for action and

reports on activities undertaken during the past year. Students from schools belonging to the Associated Schools Project's American Chapter, coordinated by IC 21, intervened in the discussion, including representatives from the Anne Sullivan Communications Center in Minneapolis, the Sussex School in Montana, the UN International School in NYC, the Waldorf International School in Miami, and Western Wyoming High School in Jackson.

Jackson Hole High School's Emilie Lewis chaired the fourth session. She noted that with youth comes excitement. "One spark starts a forest fire," Lewis imparted, "and one spark can ignite change." Awe-inspiring speeches by youth activists from Himanshu Dillon of India and Collen Pooe of South Africa followed. Giandomenico Picco, Special Representative of the Secretary General for the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001), had everyone on their seat's edge with stories of his kidnapping in the Middle East, while offering advice on how to create a better world.

Prior to the last session, students presented a declaration, drafted from recommendations made throughout the conference, which will guide the next Student Human Rights Conference. In closing, Lyutha Al-Mughairy from the UN's Department of Public Information encouraged students to "keep communication alive, to find out who your world partners might be, and to be leaders.

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IC 21 participants gather at the base of the Statue of Liberty, the icon of human rights and opportunity. The IC 21 contingent visited the Statute of Liberty and Ellis Island on Saturday, December 9th, following the conference.

InterConnections 21, which coordinates the American chapter of the Associated Schools Project (ASPnet/USA), is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization (EIN: 84-1379499). Contributions are gratefully received and tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Checks should be made out to InterConnections 21 and sent to P.O. Box 960, Wilson, WY 83014. Information about our organization is found on our Web site at www.ic21.org.

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Other Special Events

Creating dolls for auction to purchase limbs for victims of Sierra Leone's war, delegates participated in a doll-making workshop at the UN on December 7th with Sierra Leone Ambassador Ibrahim M'baba Kamar and world-famous doll maker Lourdes Darvenzia. Later, during a visit to the US Mission to



Students watch fellow student speaker Collen Pooe from South Africa on the big screen as he addresses the delegation. Below, Collen watches Emilie Lewis of Jackson paint during a doll making session.



the UN, students were briefed by US Diplomatic Corp's Hugh Dugan on the impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the presence of 17 UN peacekeeping operations throughout the world. A trip to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island on December 9, followed by optional visits to the Rockefeller Center, Macy's, and the Museum of Natural History on December 10 concluded the students' study trip.

A world of dreams: dreams of being equal, sharing opportunities, living in peace. We all share these hopes, but for too many the dream escapes reality. Gathered together at the UN Headquarters in New York City on December 8th were determined young voices that want to change this. Hundreds of students from across the globe attended the 3rd Annual Student Conference on Human Rights, socializing and sharing information about their cultural backgrounds. The international environment underscored that human rights is a global issue.

The meeting was organized like a model UN, so after every three-minute speech students could comment or ask questions. Participants learned that, in recent years, 21 million children have been killed due to armed conflict, 21 million children's dreams taken away. Everyday, 800 children are injured by landmines that war left behind. Across the globe, the chance to live a dream is denied because a child's country is at war or surrounded by poverty.

What should be done to address this huge problem? Mr. Otunnu pointed out that prosperous countries could provide schools to educate young people. Resources should not provide arms, but instead provide hospitals to those in need.

Highlighting the conference, Himanshu Dillon, a student activist from India, showed such determination to change the world!. We are the future and it is up to us to change the bad into good, he said, stating, "The entire world is one family." Everyone can help, no matter what color or religion. We must listen to each other and work together. We will never understand if we never listen. What matters is not our differences but our common humanity.

There is a brighter future, and we students gathered together because we want to make our dreams a reality for the entire population. Every person at the conference should never give up hope or stop doing what they believe in. Time does not stop, every minute is important concerning these situations. We should remember the past but think of the future. Between now and the next human rights conference a lot can happen. Hopefully, determined hands will never stop working and some dreams will become realities.

Stéphanie Van Hassel, Junior
UN International School, NYC

FLASH!

Students from the Jackson Hole High School in JackCon, Wyoming, and the UN International School in New York City will attend The Carol Baur Model UN Conference in Mexico City from April 6-10, 2001. The two ASPnet/USA school delegations will participate in the Security Council and focus on work related to the Aids crisis in Africa.

News from the Associated Schools



Hawaii

Baldwin High has undertaken a professional development course on violence prevention, sponsored by a grant through the Commission on the Status of Women and its Violence Prevention Consortium. Instructed by Paul Pederson, a University of Hawai'i professor who teaches conflict resolution courses internationally, five teachers (including myself), three counselors and a vice principal participate. Based on what we learn, we plan to develop and implement a schoolwide program this fall.

Human Rights principles and philosophies are integrated into my Spanish class via letter writing and petition signing on current Latin issues, and by being aware consumers. Also, our Amnesty International Group posts informational banners.

Finally, working closely with Joshua Cooper, we encourage students to participate in the Hawai'i Institute for Human Rights (HIHR) activities. Ideally, I would like to see a statewide program in Hawai'i that addresses Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies from K to 12 grades.

Ave Diaz, Teacher
Baldwin High School, Maui

Connecticut

To promote tolerance and understanding of race, religion, gender and lifestyle differences, Enfield formed a Diversity Alliance, and networks with cohorts from GLSN chapters at other regional high schools. In February, the Alliance held daily contests challenging students to identify famous African American musicians. Alliance members also raised funds for the UN's Adopt-a-Minefield program, and announced Human Rights Conferences held at local Connecticut colleges.

In March, members attended "Children of the Shadows," a conference held at the University of

Hartford that addressed gender issues.

Richard Celio, Teacher
Enfield High School

Inspired by the 3rd Annual UN Student Conference on Human Rights, Jackson students and teachers launched Global Connections Clubs throughout the district. Club members engage in critical world issues while exploring positive means to resolve problems at home, thinking globally, acting locally. Six Jackson Hole schools, grades 4-12, participate in teacher-led, inclusive in approach Global Connection Clubs. IC 21 researches and provides teachers background materials on chosen topics.

"Pennies for Pakistan" is the GCCS' first project. Students raise and donate funds to Bozeman, MT's Central Asia Institute, which purchases school supplies for boys and girls in Pakistan's Northern Region where children formerly were forced to write in dirt with mud-coated twigs. Ten dollars buys one student a year of supplies. Next, GCC's will learn about the landmine crisis, and encourage students to devise ways in which they can become involved.

Other IC 21 activities in Jackson Hole during the last six months include: collaboration with Teton County School District to enable Dr. Fred Czarra, Social Studies and Global Education Specialist of the Council of Chief School Officers in Washington DC, to work with the Social Studies curriculum committee and make recommendations concerning K-12 Social Studies programs; support to bring art educator Khali Keyi to Jackson to work on diversity and human rights issues in schools; and, work with the Jackson Hole Middle School on a parents' information evening about the School's Colt Pledge (a general conduct code) and peer mediation.

Ellen Johnson,
IC 21 Jackson Schools Coordinator

FLASH!

In collaboration with UNESCO, InterConnections 21 is organizing an International Workshop on Promoting Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in Schools. The workshop will be held April 28-29, 2001, in New York City. Thirty-five students, school personnel, policy makers, and representatives of civil society organizations from the U.S., Bosnia, France, South Africa, Mexico, Lebanon, Canada and Thailand will attend the workshop. Susan Fountain, a UNICEF consultant and specialist in the area of human rights and peace education, will facilitate.

Conference Participant Reports and Reactions



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*Booker T. Washington Magnet School for
International Studies, Florida*

The New York Study trip was truly an eye-opening experience! As teachers in an International Studies Magnet School with much Model UN experience, we have been focused on global issues for quite some time. However, this trip enabled us to teach more about the structure and mission of the UN in one week than could have been done in an entire year of lectures. Furthermore, we are especially thankful for the friendships that we made with Collen Poee and Zodwa Tsasjwa of South Africa. We hope to meet with them in South Africa during the next school year. We would recommend this trip to any student or educator interested in International Studies, and hope to be a part of it for many years to come.

Apolonia Villanueva, Student Council President
Stephanie Meggs, Student Council Vice President
Meredith Scribner, Teacher

Many thanks for a wonderful, enriching experience, and for the kind things done to make our stay comfortable. I plan to keep friends and contacts made there, and eagerly look forward to welcoming

Meredith and her kids to South Africa this winter! I suggest their visit coincide with South Africa's National Youth Day (June 16). We will decide celebration festivities at the local ASPnet meeting. It would be lovely to have you here. Please plan to come!

Zodwa Tsajwa,
ASPnet National Coordinator, South Africa



Susie Rauch, Ed. D., President
Wilson, Wyoming

Benita Somerfield, Vice-President
Executive Director of the Barbara Bush Foundation
for Family Literacy, New York, New York

Kenneth N. Musen Esq., Secretary
Bergman, Horowitz & Reynolds, P.C.
New Haven, Connecticut

Bill Field
Jackson, Wyoming

Eugene B. Skolnikoff
Professor, Department of Political Science, MIT
Cambridge, Massachusetts

InterConnections 21 • (307) 733-0549 • fax (307) 733-9783 • ic21@ic21.org • www.ic21.org

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P.O. Box 960 • 3705 West Canyon Road • Wilson, Wyoming USA 83014