ISRAEL, RUSSIA and LIBERIA meet the NEW HAVEN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

“Has the like of this happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell theirs, and their children the next generation!” (1 Joel, 2-3)

While this Biblical inscription has specific relevance to the Echoes and Reflections Holocaust curriculum being taught at the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center, it has resonance for all three of the extraordinary exchange programs that have taken place this year at the Center. The impact of these three initiatives has been widespread. Judges, staff, teachers and children all have come away with a new understanding of how systems and societies can work together to bring new, multi-generational understanding to difficult issues, and of how lessons can be learned and passed down through different generations and cultures.

The three international programs include:

1. **Israel (2007 - 2008)**
   *Echoes and Reflections: A Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust*
   A specific Holocaust curriculum has yielded powerful lessons for juveniles about tolerance, prejudice, racism and humanity.

2. **Russia (April; Mid-June, 2008)**
   *Russian/New Haven Judicial Exchange*
   A U.S. exchange program, in collaboration with the Open World Program and the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium, has enabled judges from New Haven and three Russian cities to learn from one another about strengths and differences in their relative systems, including their juvenile systems.

3. **Liberia (Mid-July, 2008)**
   *Liberian Judicial Delegation Program Exchange*
   An exchange with the Liberian Judicial Delegation Program through Lawyers Without Borders has helped inform chief players from the Supreme Court of Liberia in their struggle to plan for a fair and restorative juvenile justice system for young people who have grown up in the midst of civil war and been trained as child soldiers.

LETTER from Judge Quinn

The young people in the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center have, for the most part, few experiences outside of their own neighborhoods and culture. Three recent exchanges have exposed them to a world far beyond their own: to Israel, Russia, and Liberia. We applaud the Federal and Superior Court judges, the teachers, and the staff at the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center for their pivotal role in implementing these important programs and exchanges. In particular:

- Federal Court judges Janet Arterton and Peter Dorsey
- Superior Court judges Peter Brown, Bernadette Conway, and Jonathan E. Silbert
- John Fitzgerald, Superintendent, New Haven Juvenile Detention Center
- Alisa Parcells, Teacher, ACES, New Haven Juvenile Detention Center

These experiences have resulted not only in lessons learned by these young people about very different cultures, but also about how to acknowledge, confront and combat prejudice, racism and intolerance.

The Hon. Barbara M. Quinn, Chief Court Administrator
What is the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center?

THE PROGRAM

The New Haven Juvenile Detention Center is a nationally accredited facility that serves teens who are admitted under court order or because they have committed a Serious Juvenile Offense (SJO). It is a secure detention residential facility where delinquent youth are detained while the courts determine their more permanent placement -- whether that means being released back home or released to a residential treatment facility, foster home or the Connecticut Juvenile Training School.

The New Haven Juvenile Detention Center is run by the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch and contracts teachers from ACES (Area Cooperative Educational Services) who ensure that the students continue their education while they are being detained. This is a highly transient population. Each week some will exit and others will enter the school program. They are at varying academic levels, from non-readers to grade level or better, with most performing at about a 4th grade level (which is well below where they should be). Many have learning and psychological disabilities, as well as anger management and behavior challenges.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- Clients are mostly boys, and range in age from 10 – 16.
- Approximately 30 – 40 young people are housed in the facility at any given time.
- The average length of stay is under two weeks.
- Most reside in the greater urban areas of New Haven and Waterbury, Connecticut.
- Approximately 45% are African American, 45% are Hispanic and 10% are Caucasian or other ethnicities. Most say they are Christian.

THE “REAL” PROFILE

The previous is the demographic profile, but, as teacher Alisa Parcells says of her students in the Center:

“Those are the statistics, but who are my students really? They are the kids who may live next door to you or the kids you see on the 6:00 news. They are kids brought into custody for an array of reasons. Many come from places of violence and prejudice, places that teach them hate with the mindsets that can cause holocausts and genocides. They are kids who show me their bullet wounds - who carry guns and grow up with gangsters as their role models and gunshots as their lullabies. They sing the credo of the streets, “Snitches get stitches - or die.”

They are kids with dimples still pressed into the backs of their hands and dimples that appear on their cheeks when they smile. (I like to make my students smile often for many reasons – one because I know that smiling raises our energy level and makes us feel good.) They are kids who love listening to fairy tales and playing with the stuffed animals in my classroom. They are kids who are open to possibilities. They have been molded, but their cast hasn’t set yet, and they can, as I often tell them in Gandhi’s words, “… Be the change you wish to see in the world…” These are my students, my kids.”

These are the young people who have been part of three events that have exposed them to a world far beyond their own: to Israel, Russia, and Liberia.

“All three programs have offered an opportunity for children who many in this country view as throw-away children to be exposed to the world around them. By exposing children to world leaders and historic tragedies we have given them an opportunity to voice opinions and learn from each other, and hopefully have inspired them to achieve a better life after discharge for themselves and society as a whole.”

JOHN FITZGERALD
SUPERINTENDENT, NEW HAVEN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER
ISRAEL

**Echoes and Reflections:**

**What is this curriculum, and what is its credibility?**

*Echoes and Reflections: a Multimedia Curriculum on Teaching the Holocaust* is the result of an unprecedented partnership among three leaders in education: combining the international outreach network of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the unmatched visual history resources of the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education at the University of Southern California, and the historical expertise of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, Israel.1 Launched in July 2005, the pedagogical experience of the three organizations has produced the most comprehensive curriculum on the Holocaust available to date for enabling educators to teach the complex issues of the Holocaust and to bring home its lessons for current society.

**Why is this curriculum being taught at the Detention Center?**

Alisa Parcells, an English teacher, poet, and trainer with the Anti-Defamation League, has taught for eight years at the New Haven Detention Center through its ACES (Area Cooperative Educational Services) program. In 2007, she was one of 40 educators and administrators chosen, through a very competitive process, to be a member of the *Echoes and Reflections* 10-day Scholarly Intensive summer training program in Jerusalem, Israel. During this transformative time, she learned about the development and implementation of this powerful curriculum from renowned scholars, educators and historians. Because of her unique adaptation of the curriculum for the young people of the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center she was invited to return to Yad Vashem in July 2008 and present a workshop at their 6th Annual International Holocaust Education Conference of 700 international attendees. Or, as Parcells says, “I was invited because of what my students learned from what I learned in 2007.”

**What is the relevance of this curriculum?**

Many of the young people in the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center have grown up in community settings that encourage gang activity and racial and ethnic prejudice. The point of the curriculum is to help students connect the history of the Holocaust with contemporary issues of cultural diversity, intolerance and prejudice -- to help them make the leap to understanding how hate and prejudice can lead to violence in their own lives and communities, not to mention the role those passions play in recent genocide crises in such places as Rwanda, the Sudan and Darfur. Parcells would say that the key importance is “teaching the Holocaust in an environment of prejudice.”

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1. About the Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), founded in 1913, is the world’s leading organization fighting anti-Semitism through programs, services and educational materials that counteract all forms of hatred, prejudice and bigotry. ADL defends democratic ideals and protects civil rights for all by building bridges of communication, understanding, and respect among diverse groups, carrying out its mission through a network of regional and satellite offices in the United States and worldwide. ADL works to bear witness to the enduring impact of the Holocaust and to apply its lessons to contemporary issues of genocide, prejudice and moral decision-making. For more information about ADL, visit www.adl.org.

About the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education

The Shoah Foundation, with nearly 52,000 videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses in 32 languages and from 56 countries, is the largest visual history archive in the world. The mission of the Institute is to overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry — and the suffering they cause — through the educational use of the Institute’s visual history testimonies. The Institute relies upon partnerships in the United States and around the world to provide public access to the archive and advance scholarship in many fields of inquiry. The Institute and its partners also utilize the archive to develop educational products and programs for use in many countries and languages. Today, the Institute’s educational resources reach more than two million students worldwide annually. For more information about the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, visit www.usc.edu/vhi.

About Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority, was established by the Knesset in 1953. Located in Jerusalem, it is dedicated to Holocaust remembrance, documentation, research, and education. Through the International School for Holocaust Studies, the International Institute for Holocaust Research, the Archives, the Library, the Hall of Names, and its museums and memorials, Yad Vashem seeks to meaningfully impart the legacy of the Shoah for generations to come. Drawing on the memories of the past, Yad Vashem aims to strengthen commitment to Jewish continuity and protect basic human values. Yad Vashem recently launched its Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names onto the Internet, and an 11th Hour International Campaign is underway to collect nearly three million missing names. Yad Vashem recently completed a 10-year campus and program development initiative that culminated in the opening of its new Holocaust History Museum. For more information about Yad Vashem, visit www.yadvashem.org.
**Why is this curriculum so powerful?**

*The flexibility of the curriculum:* The curriculum comprises ten multi-part lessons with companion DVD of visual history testimonies from Holocaust survivors, rescuers, liberators, and other witnesses of the Holocaust. Each of the interdisciplinary lessons is supported with numerous primary source documents, including poems, literature excerpts, maps, photographs, timelines, a glossary, and student handouts. These can be used individually or as part of a larger unit of study, allowing for easy integration into a flexible schedule such as that of the Detention Center, with its transient body of students. In short, the curriculum provides teachers with a structured, but flexible framework for exploring with students the conditions that made the Holocaust possible, and to consider what can happen when prejudice and discrimination are allowed to flourish.

*The power of visual history:* Visual history provides the immediacy and personalization that can make history, and the lessons that students can learn from that history, truly come alive. Use of visual history testimonies establishes an emotional connection as students hear survivors share their life stories before the Holocaust, their struggle to survive, and their resiliency of spirit. These poignant first-person narratives – more than 50,000 hours of them -- have an important educational value beyond the Holocaust, by broaching questions of fairness, justice, labeling and scapegoating – issues that adolescents confront in their daily lives.

*The power of source materials:* The curriculum uses original source materials, both to educate, to make the experience more vivid, and to individualize the event and experiences. For the kids in detention, for example, Parcells focused on *Excerpts from the Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, a teenager living in the Lodz ghetto in Poland. Ultimately the students saw Dawid as a person like themselves, and were angry and outraged when they found he died just because of his religious beliefs.

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**Lesson Four: The Ghettos:**
*(Example of guidance for teachers)*

- Analyze primary source documents and watch first-person visual history testimonies from survivors of the Lodz ghetto to provide a glimpse into what life was like for Jews (particularly the children and youth) living in ghettos between 1940 and 1944.

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**Lesson Seven: Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance**
*(Suggested journal topics for participants)*

- Write a letter to someone that you’ve learned about in this lesson. Tell the person what you are thinking and feeling after learning about his/her experiences.
- Reflect on the meaning of the statement from the Talmud, “He who saves one life, it is as though he has preserved the existence of the entire world.”
- Write about a time when you made a conscious decision to help someone in a difficult situation or about a time when someone came forward to help you.

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“It has always been my dream that the Shoah Foundation’s unique archive of testimonies would transform the way history is taught and learned. Today that dream is becoming a reality. The partnership we celebrate here today ensures that future generations can learn what survivors and other eyewitnesses to the Holocaust can teach -- that our very humanity depends on the practice of tolerance and mutual respect.”

Steven Spielberg  
Academy Award winning director, “Schindler’s List”  
Shoah Foundation founding chairman, at its 2005 launch
The curriculum is designed in a way that makes the Holocaust relevant to the students by individualizing the event and the experiences. By watching interviews and reading journals, students see a face and hear a voice – helping them realize that, behind the statistics of the Holocaust, there are real people with individual stories to tell. Alisa Parcells is proudest when she talks about her students who “made connections when they saw prejudice, propaganda and stereotyping…who drew parallels to current events.” In her remarks to the Summer 2008 International Holocaust Education Conference in Jerusalem, Parcells said:

“Throughout my seven years teaching English at the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center, I have met many extraordinary and wonderful children, and that is why I need to tell you about C. and M. and how they “got” what happened in the Holocaust and beyond. They, along with many of my other students, came to understand how hate and prejudice can lead to violence and genocide. They made connections to what occurs today not only across continents and oceans, but across streets and in their own neighborhoods. They came to understand that each individual has the potential to influence others for evil or for good and how we choose to use our influence is what matters. They learned that although the Holocaust happened to a group, that group was made of individuals. Each victim and each survivor has their own story and through their stories we learn not only about the event, but about the ramifications, impact and influence the Holocaust continues to have on us today. Their stories are literature and are a part of what teaches us about the Holocaust and about what it means to be human. Their stories need to be passed down and remembered so that “never again” can really be never again.”

Parcells’ presentation, “Teaching the Holocaust at New Haven Juvenile Detention Center: The Stories of C. and M.,” was based on excerpts from the diary of Dawid Sierakowiak and from events that occurred after her classroom study of Kristallnacht. The Kristallnacht study included an interview with Kurt Messerschmidt who recounted his experiences as a boy riding his bike through Berlin on a pivotal night in 1938, the night when Nazi brownshirts rampaged through Berlin.

“I have taught the Holocaust, but I have never had such an outstanding curriculum. This is phenomenal. The curriculum addresses not just the event but it focuses on so many aspects of our human experience and speaks to the lessons we need to learn from this horrific event – which is, simply, what hate can lead to and what words perpetuate. It addresses what we as a society need to learn, and how we can use the experiences of the Holocaust to promote peace and understanding – especially, in my case, among high-risk kids.”

Alisa Parcells
Echoes and Reflections Teacher

“Silence is what did the harm”
“A teacher”, it has been said “effects eternity. She never knows where her influence stops.” Alisa Parcells undoubtedly “effects eternity” through her passion for teaching her students the important lessons of the Holocaust and the connection to issues they face in their own lives today. Her creativity, dedication to teaching, and most of all, commitment to inspiring her students through creative teaching strategies is commendable.”

**MARJI LIPSHEZ-SHAPIRO**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

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**Ongoing training**

The program is by no means limited to the New Haven Detention Center. Alisa Parcells has worked in concert with her Connecticut co-participants at Yad Vashem: Marji Lipshez-Shapiro, Associate Director, Connecticut Office of the Anti-Defamation League; and Dr. William A. Howe, Multicultural Education Programs Manager, Connecticut State Department of Education. Together, their goal is to help ensure that the *Echoes and Reflections* curriculum is embraced and used throughout Connecticut. So far over 300 middle and high school educators, administrators, librarians and graduate students from public, independent, and vocational schools across Connecticut have participated in full-day workshops. Hundreds of others have been reached through conference and other presentations. Alisa Parcells has presented to the New England Conference of Multicultural Education and the New England Association of Teachers of English conference, and has trained other educators at ACES in this curriculum.

**For more information about the program and/or the curriculum, contact:**

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English teacher with ACES, New Haven Detention Center  
203 786-0308 / aprcells@aces.org or aprcells@yahoo.com

**Marji Lipshez-Shapiro**  
Associate Director, Connecticut Office of the Anti-Defamation League  
203.288-6500 x 305 / Mshapiro@adl.org

Or go to www.echoesandreflections.org

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**Silence continued from page 5**

on a government sanctioned program in which thousands of Jewish shops, synagogues and homes were set afire, looted and destroyed with impunity. Messerschmidt talked about what happened when he stopped to help an old shopkeeper who had been ordered to pick up shards and splinters of glass from his storefront window. Many watched, but did not help. When Mr. Messerschmidt, as an adult, said, “Silence is what did the harm,” the Detention Center students were beginning to understand:

**C:** One Detention Center student confronted C. about the relevance of this material, spewing anti-Semitic slurs. C. shot back: “It’s all about how you think - it’s all about the mind set. [Hitler] convinced everybody [the Jews] were bad, and then everyone was afraid to say something, and since no one said nothing, it was the silence that did the harm! No one else spoke out for them! It’s all about how we treat each other! And its like what we do to each other – the black-on-black crime! You got to open your mind!”

**M:** Parcells read *The Emperor’s New Clothes* to her class on “Fairytale Friday,” then asked the students if there were any messages the story was sending. M., a Muslim, observed that the little boy in the fairytale was the only one who spoke out because he saw the truth. She said the others didn’t speak out because they were afraid of looking bad or being disrespectful to the king. Then she equated it with lessons of the Holocaust. M. said, “Silence is what did the harm. If you don’t speak up about something that you see is wrong, then it gets worse and worse.”

C. and M. now know how to speak out against prejudice when they see it.
A U.S. exchange program, in coordination with the Open World Program and the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium, has enabled judges from New Haven and three Russian cities to learn from one another about strengths and differences in their relative systems, including their juvenile systems.

2) RUSSIA

RUSSIAN/NEW HAVEN JUDICIAL EXCHANGE
(April; Mid-June, 2008)

Judicial delegations from three cities in Russia visited the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center in 2008. Of the three programs outlined in this newsletter, the young people at the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center had the least interaction with the Russian contingents, because of the language barrier. But it was still a vibrant and active exchange. Children of the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center made a welcome sign which taught them that the Russian Alphabet is much different then their own. Superintendent Fitzgerald met with the children and discussed what he had learned about the regions of Russia and what might be of interest to the visiting delegations. The delegations even gave small gifts to the children, including books in both Russian and English about their region.

What is the purpose of this program?

The United States Library Open World Leadership Center brings people from Russia and other former Soviet Socialist Republics across myriad disciplines to meet together to share access and understanding of the similarities and differences between the judicial systems of the United States and Russia. Groups with discrete interests are matched with like Russian/U.S. communities. Thanks to this program, delegations of judges, justices of the peace, prosecutors, attorneys and academics have been visiting Connecticut since 2001. While the judicial and legal system is the primary focus, participants represent a broad range of interests when appropriate, including psychiatrists, economists, and musicians.

The “Sister Court” program

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, groups of judges in several U.S. states established links with their counterparts in Russian “states” to exchange ideas during a time of major reforms and uncertainty in the Russian judicial system. These links eventually evolved into the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium (RAROLC) which now comprises 11 U.S states, each partnered with one of the 89 Russian regions. The “Sister Court” program connects a Russian region and a U.S. location that share similar judicial interests, concerns and issues in order to implement a learning exchange system with federal and local Russian legal institutions to implement reform.

2 About The Open World Program

The Open World Leadership Center at the Library of Congress has brought more than 7,000 current and emerging Russian political and civic leaders to the United States for an in-depth, on-site introduction to American democratic and free-market institutions. Beginning in 2000, Open World conducted its landmark “rule of law” program for Russian jurists, in cooperation with the International Judicial Relations Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States and with RAROLC. The RAROLC model of creating and implementing both professional and cultural programs has proven to be a highly successful one that builds permanent ties within the legal communities in Russia and the United States. Delegations of judges, justices of the peace, prosecutors, attorneys and academics have been visiting Connecticut with regularity since 2001. These visits have not only been of personal and professional benefit to the participants and their Connecticut counterparts, but have also helped to broaden the scope and effectiveness of the overall efforts of the Connecticut-Pskov Partnership.

For more information about Open World, visit http://openworld.aed.org.

3 About the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium (RAROLC)

By its own description, “RAROLC has been instrumental in the development of bar associations and judicial and lawyer education programs. It has provided effective training in the use of technology, initiated the adoption of alternative dispute resolution methods, and trained legal professionals to implement reforms effectively and to bring justice to citizens. The citizen engagement model of RAROLC can be used for any reform activities, for example, in modernizing the curriculum of Russian law schools, bringing technology to courts or in learning the adversary system for the adjudication of criminal cases.” It is a group of legal communities working together to improve the capacity of local Russian legal institutions to implement reform.

RAROLC is unique in that it depends almost exclusively on the volunteer activities of legal professionals, and works primarily at the regional level. Russian lawyers partner with sites in the United States based on the needs of a particular Russian legal community. Steering committees from both the American state and Russian region work together to determine how these programs are chosen. Steering committees are comprised of judges, lawyers, law professors and other professionals in the partnership areas. Additionally, RAROLC has an ongoing relationship with the Open World Leadership Center to sponsor ten-day intensive visits by members of Russian legal communities to partnership states. These delegations increase understanding between Russia and the United States and support Russia’s efforts to strengthen democratic reforms.

Because of many reforms in Russian law that occurred at the end of 2001, RAROLC incorporated several additional types of rule of law delegations in 2002 to meet the needs of the new provisions in Russian law. By 2003, delegates hosted by RAROLC included: 1) judges (general jurisdiction and commercial court); 2) trial judges; 3) journalists; 4) law faculty and clinicians; 5) justices of the peace.

For more information about RAROLC, visit www.rarolc.net.
state players. Superior Court Judge Jonathan E. Silbert, a resident of New Haven County, was one of the first Connecticut judges to throw his energy behind this newly-formed Russian federation exchange/consortium program with judges. The Connecticut–Pskov Partnership began in May of 2001. Since then, Connecticut judges and lawyers have conducted two seminars each year in Pskov. Most recently, in September 2008, Judge Michael Sheldon and Judge Jonathan Silbert went to Pskov as part of a seminar addressing “The Adversary System and Self-Represented Litigants in the Arbitrazh Court.” RAROLC also works closely with the Open World Leadership Center, which has brought several delegations of Pskov jurists to Connecticut over the life of the partnership.

What is the program design/schedule?

Guests from each Russian state spent three days in the District of Columbia, then a week in their U.S. host state. Approximately five judges from each sister city came to the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center for a half day, accompanied by their interpreters – one part of the total adult/juvenile exchange program. The Russian representatives had a morning introductory session, toured the detention facility, went to juvenile court to observe Judge Peter Brown preside over delinquent cases, then participated in a roundtable session where they were able to talk with and ask questions of a diverse group of players, including judges, public defenders, prosecutors, court staff, probation officers, and representatives from the Department of Children and Families. After their half day with juvenile court, they went on to visit and interact with adult court, Superior Court judges, other disciplines within the Connecticut judicial system, and relevant academic professionals from Yale.

How did the groups communicate?

Two Russian facilitators who are proficient in both Russian and English were assigned to each group. They served not only as interpreters, but as “shepherds” – guiding participants to hotels, appointments, and transportation. They stayed with the group not only during their time at the Detention Center, but during their visits to all disciplines within the judicial system. In addition, Open World hired two experienced American interpreters, and they and the delegates were equipped with simultaneous translation microphones and earphones for all formal interactions.

Who initiates/sponsors these exchanges?

A leading U.S. federal or state judge plans and participates in the local schedule of each Open World Rule of Law delegation. In Connecticut, Judge Jonathan Silbert was key in connecting the New Haven Courts with the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium in their ongoing Connecticut-Pskov exchange. Federal Judge Peter Dorsey was particularly instrumental in initiating the second visiting delegation from Kaliningrad and Ulyanovsk.

What Russian regions visited the Detention Center/Juvenile Court?

Delegates from Pskov, a city in the northwest of Russia with a proud ancient history, came in April 2008. Participants from Kaliningrad, a seaport on the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania, and Ulyanovsk, an industrial city on the Volga River, came mid-June.

“There are two programs: The Open World program, which brings people here, and the bulk of [the RAROLC] program, which has us working in Russia with our colleagues there. We ask them what they would like us to talk about. We make it clear that … we aren’t there to tell them this is the only way justice can be administered. We’re there to describe the way we do it, and be candid about what we think are our strengths and weaknesses, and encourage them to learn from both our successes and our mistakes.

The Hon. Jonathan E. Silbert
New Haven Superior Court
What were some of the differences/points of learning?

Although each group was exposed to the same juvenile judicial agenda, there were distinct differences in what the delegations wanted to discuss and to learn about.

PSKOV  (APRIL 2008)

Pskov judges were particularly impressed by the level of programming in the New Haven Juvenile Detention Center and spent most of their time talking about our State's responses to delinquent and out-of-control behaviors.

- **Education**: The Pskov group was particularly impressed by how hard the Center works at trying to make sure the children's school program is being kept up to par, in order that young people can reenter their schools as if they had not left their communities. Educational services are not provided for this population in Russia, except through some volunteer programs.

- **Services**: It was clear that sufficient medical and mental health services also were not provided to their young people. While they struggle with similar substance abuse and mental health problems, they have no services or programming to deal with them, and were impressed by the medical attention given the young people.

- **Delinquency behaviors**: The Pskov group spent considerable time sharing comparisons on out-of-control behaviors. They have a much lower rate of girls than boys for delinquency charges, and were interested at the increasing number of girls coming through the Connecticut courts on delinquency charges. Superior Court Judge Bernadette Conway talked about the startling recent rise in violent crime by girls, not just in Connecticut, but nationwide, and alerted them that this might be a trend they would see as well.

- **Food**: They were impressed with the food!

KALININGRAD & ULYANOVSK  (MID-JUNE 2008)

This group was more focused on child protection issues than delinquency services.

- **Legal representation**: The Russian judges were interested that we provide legal representation free of charge for children. That is not the case in either of their two provinces.

- **Detention of children**: The Russian judges appeared “shocked” at our widespread use of detention. Children in their cities are detained only on charges of murder or serious assault. Indeed, they do not have any separate pre-adjudication facilities for children. Any detained children are housed with adults, with virtually no programming or services.

- **Parental rights, abuse and neglect**: While the United States juvenile system is focused solely on children, in Russia a “child” – a son or daughter who is an adult -- can be brought in to court and forced to support his or her indigent parent. The government has few if any resources to fund programming, so is constantly looking at other ways to provide support for indigent people.

For more information about the program, contact:

The Hon. Peter Dorsey / peter.dorsey@jud.ct.gov
The Hon. Jonathan E. Silbert / jonathan.silbert@jud.ct.gov
The African country of Liberia is in such a state of crisis after their fifteen-year brutal civil war that they are not yet able to build a new juvenile justice system. But the visit of the Liberian Judicial Delegation Program was important — to their delegation, to Connecticut’s judicial players, and to the Detention Center’s young people. The delegation was highly impressed by the resources and aspirations of the Juvenile Detention Center. In turn, the Center’s adolescents were invested in and responsive to the visit by the six members of the Liberian delegation.

First, the young people could communicate with these African/Liberian visitors, since they share English as a native language. Second, the teachers, staff and administrators had carefully educated the adolescents about the unique nature of this African country’s history, so that the young people learned lessons about and connected with the visitors and their history. Third, the young people were a bit awed — not only by the Chief Justice, but also by his bodyguard, the Brigadier General of the Liberian Marshal Service.

What is the unique nature of Liberia? Why is there any relevance to the Detention Center kids?

The name Liberia means “land of the free,” or “liberty.” Liberia was founded as a colony in 1822 by freed slaves from the United States. Liberia’s motto, “The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here’ represents the wishes, dreams, and hopes of the arriving settlers arriving to Africa’s first republic. Indeed, its capital Monrovia was named after U.S. President James Monroe. In 1980, however, the government was overthrown in a military coup, and from 1989 to 2005 Liberia was in a state of civil war that displaced hundreds of thousands of people and devastated the country’s economy. Children were exposed to widespread violence and called to arms as child soldiers. There was no formal justice system.

How are things changing?

In January 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became the first indigenous Liberian woman to be elected as the President of Liberia — indeed, the first female president of an African country. After fighting for freedom, justice and equality for decades, spending multiple times in jail, then forced into exile, the new President is now working, in her words, to “transform adversity into opportunity.” In addition to focusing her efforts to restore such basic services as water and electricity to the country, Johnson-Sirleaf has established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address crimes committed during the later stages of Liberia’s long civil war.

Liberia’s formal law is similar to that of the U.S., but there are many tribal methods of justice that still are practiced. For example, there are physical “trials by ordeal (or sassywood)” to determine guilt or innocence by means of physical torture. Although Liberia’s justice system has passed new statutes forbidding these practices, the country does not yet have the capacity to enforce them.
So how does this visit relate to the Detention Center clients and to the other two programs, especially the Holocaust curriculum?

The children of Liberia have suffered through civil war for as long as they can remember in their lifetimes. Indeed, they have been recruited to carry weapons and fight in the country’s civil war since they were as young as seven. The issue the country is now facing is how to educate these children, who have been trained to bear arms and fight, to live in a democracy that strives for peace and civility.

What does a judicial system do when a child is accustomed to taking things by force, at gunpoint? How can this country help their young people learn the lessons of past generational abuses? The New Haven Detention facility works to help its children understand trauma in their lives which often includes exposure to similar violence, if on a smaller scale.

How did the Detention Center prepare their clients for this visit?

Federal Judge Janet Arterton arranged this meeting through Lawyers Without Borders. In advance of this visit, the Center’s young people were taught the geography, the history, the country’s struggles and the relevance of Liberia to their lives. They learned about how the country was developed – that it was established as the only American Colony in Africa by slaves in America who were freed and given permission to go back to Africa. They learned that the capital city was named Monrovia after President James Monroe. There was a map of Liberia in the classroom and the young people had made a welcome sign. Six members of the Liberian delegation talked with the Detention Center youth.

What made the kids really sit up and take notice about this visit?

The Hon. Johnny N. Lewis, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, led the delegation. The children were educated about how important a person he is in Liberia – that he is the equivalent of the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. During a legal career spanning well over 30 years, Chief Justice Lewis has also served as Dean and Professor of Law at the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia, and has provided legal expertise overseas to a number of international organizations, including the United Nations. Judge Lewis got the kids’ attention when he and a New Haven court marshal recognized a commonality and engaged in the “snap” -- the “Liberian handshake.” This led to a series of animated questions: e.g., Is life in Liberia similar to the life of a detention staff member who grew up in Nigeria?

The key person who attracted the kids’ respect and awe was Brigadier/General Marshal Service Amos B. Kesseh Dickson, Supreme Court of Liberia. Dickson was dressed in full military regalia. In the kids’ eyes, Dickson was eight feet tall -- a bodyguard with a briefcase carrying the secrets of the world. A presence to be remembered. The Brigadier General sent Superintendent Fitzgerald a thank you note upon his return to Liberia.

What did the Liberian delegation learn from their New Haven visit?

There are so many issues the government needs to address before they can repair the legal system. The country’s infrastructure has been destroyed. 70% of the country has no electricity. Roads have been blown up and need to be rebuilt. A significant percentage of crime committed is in these rural areas that are out of communication with the rest of the country. There are no holding facilities for perpetrators of crime. Clearly it is a significant challenge for the country to restore a judicial infrastructure -- particularly to deal fairly with children who have been so exposed to violence and have been trained to act as soldiers. After 15 years of civil war, it is difficult for Liberia to talk yet about building a juvenile justice system, but this visit helped inform their thinking.

For more information about the program, contact:

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