

Working for the World: IUPUI Law Interns Hone Their Skills



Students Learn Challenges of International Human Rights Law

When George Edwards joined the faculty of the IU School of Law—Indianapolis in 1997, he had just completed five years of teaching and directing law programs in Hong Kong. He was especially active in international human rights law, convening workshops and assisting in United Nations human rights advocacy training. In Indianapolis, he built upon that formative experience to establish the Program in International Human Rights Law. Summer internships in that program took current law students and placed them in service positions around the world. Now, a decade later, more than 75 students have worked in more than 50 countries. The program continues to thrive, and for 10 weeks every summer, IUPUI law students work to assure that important causes around the world don't become lost causes.

In recent years, students have engaged with issues of civil and political rights in Korea, Thailand, Cambodia, India, and Zambia; of the rights of children in Ghana and Costa Rica; of death penalty litigation in Jamaica; and of environmental rights through organizations with activities around the world. Not all the causes for which the students work are easy to like. IUPUI students in the program provided legal research for the defense team of Yugoslavian dictator, Slobodan Milosevic. When they mentioned this over lunch, Vice President for International Affairs Patrick O'Meara challenged them; he wondered whether they would do the same thing for a particular odious dictator in Africa. The reaction, instant and unanimous, suggests the global legal conscience that the international human rights law program instills: "You must make a genuine effort to defend these people." "Otherwise you make a mockery of international law." "If they are convicted after a strong defense, then you have left a legacy for the future."

In their experience abroad, however, students recognize the harsh realities of the law as well as its ideals. Many run into infrastructures that are inadequate or too broken to enforce the laws that are on the books. Many see the little progress that they are able to make wiped out by the need to live and eat. The issue of child labor, for example, ceases to be an easy one when the alternative to a child's working is family starvation.

The lessons don't just apply to the countries interns visit; they brought back new goals for their work in the U.S. "My idea of international human rights broadened," explained Eva Wailes, who worked in degree counseling in Prague. "Even in the U.S., I now see that more

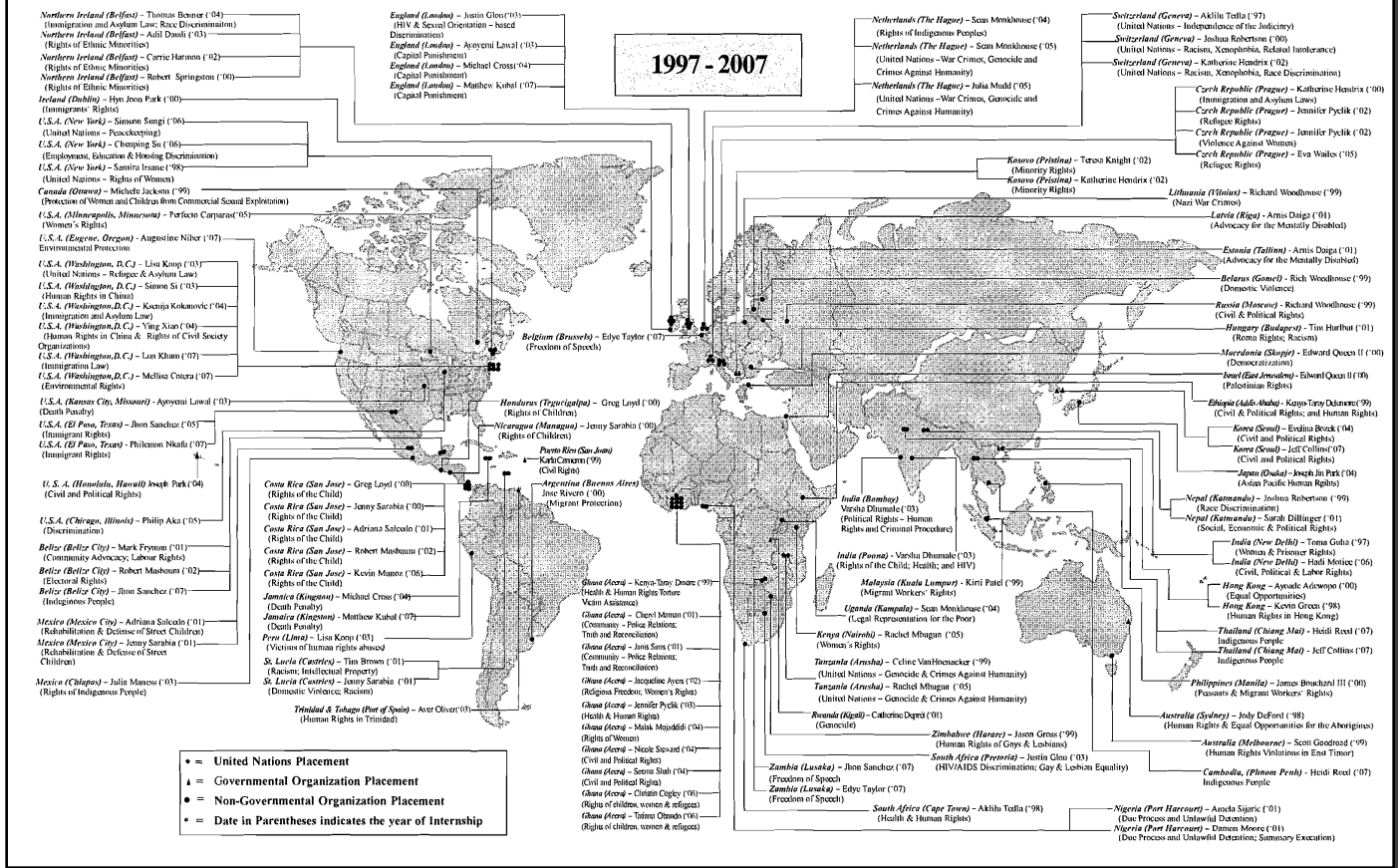
▲ *George Edwards founded the international summer internship program soon after he joined the faculty of the IU School of Law—Indianapolis.*



Students from the IU School of Law—Indianapolis have spent summers working in at least 50 countries over the last decade on projects ranging from the rights of children to the trial of Slobodan Milosevic.



International Human Rights Law Internship Placements — Indiana University School of Law at Indianapolis



things are part of human rights than we usually consider—such as good representation and public defenders.” Robert Masbaum adds, “Immersed in the activity abroad, you take inventory of your own culture. The need for human rights education is a human right in itself, and that issue is as urgent in the U.S. as it is abroad.”

In the university, paradigms and programs change rapidly. It is a mark of its value to see a program like this one thrive for so long. Professor Edwards explains that the “opportunity to have an impact on the world” remains difficult to resist. “Students are so green at the beginning of their first year,” he says. “All they know is that they want to have an impact. One of the things that doesn’t change over time is the look on their faces as they are about to embark on the experience of a lifetime.” It is true that “some students come back jaded—by inadequate resources, by lots of talk and no action—but all of them learn that defending their ideals can be truly hard work.” He adds that what has changed since the program’s inception is that “students have greater access to the world with technology and mass media.” He says he is also “seeing waves of students who are more socially conscious and more acutely aware of what’s going on in the world.”

The International Human Rights Law Internship program prepared a map showing a decade of international engagement. The map can be found at <http://indylaw.indiana.edu/humanrights/interns/map.pdf>.

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Derechos del Nino

As part of the international human rights law program, Bob Masbaum and Kevin Munoz undertook internships in Costa Rica, working for agencies that were trying to assure basic rights of street children. They have since completed their law degrees and moved on in their careers. But their experience in Latin America has not left them.

The issues they faced and the lessons they learned in San Jose, Costa Rica, were ones that their public school education in the U.S. had never really touched upon. "I didn't learn about human rights until law school," Muniz explains. With funding from the Lilly Foundation, they returned to Latin America in 2007 to collect material for a documentary. They interviewed children in their makeshift homes under bridges and around abandoned buildings, and Masbaum visited a school in Colombia that offered one solution to the similar needs of Bogota's abandoned children. They have compiled the new materials into *Derechos del Nino*, a documentary designed to provide an introduction to international human rights for U.S. elementary and high school students. When completed, they hope that the film will be used in



Kevin Munoz with some of the street children interviewed for a new documentary on the rights of the child. The van belongs to Patronato Nacional de la infancia, the Costa Rican government agency charged with protecting children who have lost or left their families.

social studies classes at schools in Indianapolis and around the country. U.S. audiences got a first look at the film during a celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at IUPUI.

Legal Aid in Southeast Asia and Columbus, Indiana

What does Nancy's Nook and Nursery, a day care center in Columbus, Indiana, have in common with a Cambodian elementary school in Phnom Penh? The answer is—some of their school supplies. Heidi Reed, now in her third year at the School of Law—Indianapolis, spent her summer internship of 2007 in Southeast Asia working on projects of the international agency, Bridges across Borders. In Chiang Mai, Thailand, she helped to assemble a manual of Thai laws related to HIV/AIDS. The manual, aimed at poor and marginalized groups, detailed such things as the legal rights of patients who might be faced with discrimination by health care providers or employers. Heidi also participated in a project that set up legal clinics at universities to serve communities with no ready access to legal assistance. That project took her to several countries, including Cambodia, where she delivered classroom supplies to a local elementary school. Heidi's mother had collected these supplies as a project of her day care center in Columbus.

Heidi brought the expertise she had gained in Thailand and Cambodia back to Columbus. After devastating floods last spring, many Columbus residents faced serious issues with landlords and rent. Heidi helped to develop materials to assist them in obtaining their rights under Columbus' landlord/tenant laws. Last fall, Heidi went back to Asia,

this time as a student at Hong Kong University where she completed a semester of work in international law, studying, among other things, human rights issues and Chinese law. After finishing her J.D. at IUPUI this spring, she is looking for ways to return to Southeast Asia, perhaps as part of the Peace Corps in Thailand, perhaps with an NGO.



Heidi Reed delivering school supplies to an elementary school set up by Bridges across Borders in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Collecting the school supplies was a project of a day care center in Columbus, Indiana.