The 29th Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) at Columbia University continued the Institute for the Study of Human Right’s commitment to strengthening the skills, knowledge and networks of grassroots human rights advocates like Inna Hudaya of Indonesia.

The HRAP curriculum comprises academic coursework, skill-building workshops, mentoring and networking with the human rights, academic and donor communities primarily in New York City and Washington, D.C. The 2017 advocates came from Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Ukraine, Uganda and Uruguay. Due to safety concerns, one advocate asked to remain anonymous.

This year at Columbia, HRAP partnered with the Center for Gender and Sexuality and Human Rights Institute at Columbia Law, the Mailman School of Public Health, Teachers College, the Institute of Latin American Studies, the Harriman Institute and the School of International and Public Affairs to organize a number of speaking engagements by the 2017 advocates.

HRAP is grateful to Dr. David Rosenthal of the Mailman School of Public Health and Anya Schriffin and Minky Worden of the School of International and Public Affairs for joining the long list of Columbia faculty who welcome advocates in their classes. HRAP is also grateful to the Columbia faculty who mentor the advocates including long-time HRAP mentors Pratima Kale of SIPA and Dr. Theodorus Sandfort of the Mailman School of Public Affairs.

“I have decided that I cannot do things based on the quality of my life — I must follow what my heart and moral compass say.”

2017 ADVOCATE INNA HUDAYA
Just seven short years ago, I was collecting empty bottles to feed myself. Today I am a human rights advocate leading a feminist organization in Indonesia and attending HRAP at Columbia University.

I grew up in a conservative environment in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. While I still believe that religion should bring peace and love, that was not my reality during my childhood. I witnessed people around me mistreating women and girls and showing hatred toward others. During high school, I quietly saved money and prepared to run away. After my final exam, I jumped on a bus to Yogyakarta. I walked out of my hometown thinking, “What can I do to make a difference?”

I was 22 when I had an unplanned pregnancy. Given my religious upbringing, I knew that sharing my situation openly was not an option — that I would face stigma and discrimination from my family. I did not know where to go to find support and information. I got lost. My boyfriend and I finally decided to have an abortion. I couldn’t afford an abortion at a clinic. I had to give up my motorbike and borrow money for a clandestine abortion in a hotel room. I thought I was going to die from the pain — there were no painkillers. My boyfriend took off after the procedure and I was left alone with my trauma. Overcome with depression, I gave up my university studies. I chose to hide in a dark room.

Several years later, I found a way to tell my mother who surprisingly supported me. I slowly got my strength back. Around that time, I read an article that there are 2 million abortions a year in Indonesia. I was wondering what if half of those women had been traumatized too. I began to blog my story. Unexpectedly, women replied and shared their abortion stories. I turned the blog into a support group. The group evolved into a feminist organization called Samsara that aims to improve women’s sexual and reproductive health and promotes women’s bodily integrity and autonomy. While I love traveling and adventure, I mark my activism through Samsara as the most epic adventure. Today, Samsara offers pre- and post-abortion counseling and an educational and advocacy program on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

It’s hard to be an activist. I know that I could have a better and more comfortable life elsewhere. I have decided that I cannot do things based on the quality of my life — I must follow what my heart and moral compass say.

“I have decided that I cannot do things based on the quality of my life — I must follow what my heart and moral compass say.”

Inna Hudaya
Founder and Executive Director
SAMSARA
INDONESIA

“2017 Program Report | 3

THE ADVOCATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Inna Hudaya

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Inna and Kenedy at the White House.

Inna Hudaya
Founder and Executive Director
SAMSARA
INDONESIA
Growing up, I saw the people around me – especially the women – suffer from violence and extreme abuse. Even in my own family, some voices were considered less valuable than others. Across the block from where I lived, I saw a family of doctors living in a totally different environment. I admired them and always wanted to live in such an oppression-free space.

When I was in primary school, the teachers used their ultimate authority to make the students do menial jobs for them. For me, school was not only a learning space – it was also an environment where the mighty had their way. Considered “naughty” by the teachers, I was transferred from an urban government school to a local up-country school. The menial work at my new school involved carrying three pieces of firewood to school each day as well as the preparation of ropes and goal posts during the school day. I often asked myself if the school did not have a budget for such tasks.

Given the rate of theft of school, I had to carry my big bag of books on my back and from school every day. This was 4 km roundtrip. One day after walking home from school, I was too tired to look for firewood. The next day I was the only person who arrived at school after school without firewood. Since I had not brought any firewood, I was temporarily expelled — I call it ‘temporary’ since it took the intervention of the district education officer to get me back in school. The head teacher was transferred. This is how I became my school hero as well as a human rights defender. My nickname from then became “jawar” which translates to savior. To this day, I am still known by my nickname.

“At that moment, I knew I had to speak out and defend everyone including myself. Even though I was only 7 or 8 years old at the time, I shouted, ‘This has to stop.’”

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Kenedy Abor Owiti

Programme Manager
NYARWEK LGBTI Coalition
KENYA
My story as a human rights advocate is one that combines frustration with the desire to make things different. As a young student, I decided to go to law school to change the world by pursuing justice and protection for the most needy. The reality was different: a lot of young students enter law school believing in justice and graduate believing in legality. This is not necessarily a bad thing. However, when you live in a country like Mexico—a country that has weak public institutions, a corrupt justice system and the worst human rights crisis of its history—it is a bad thing.

In traditional legal education, a human rights course represents a light in a dark place. It was in that class that I understood the law could also be used as a powerful tool for social transformation. From that moment, I decided to study human rights to obtain the necessary tools to build a more just and equal society. Human rights education became the engine that drives my career.

After studying human rights in Spain for two years, I returned to Mexico with the illusion of change. In 2014, I started working as a researcher at CEEAD, a research center founded in 2008 in Monterrey by Luis Fernando Pérez Hurtado. CEEAD was created with the mission to transform legal education to educate lawyers to be more committed to the rule of law and the protection of human rights. In CEEAD, I found an opportunity to convert my frustration into action.

In response to the human rights crisis the country was (and still is) going through, the Mexican Congress reformed the Constitution in 2011 to include international treaties and human rights as parameters to validate the entire legal system. This is the paradox of the human rights crisis in Mexico: on paper we have a very progressive human rights legal framework that differs from the reality of millions of Mexicans. A general atmosphere of violence, torture, disappearances, discrimination and corruption are some of the main issues Mexicans face on a daily basis. One of the reasons for this paradox is that the international human rights standards are not being applied by the legal profession. This practice is related to cultural resistance and low-quality legal education. Law schools, which are the entrance door to public institutions, can reduce the gap between the legal framework and the reality.

In its early days, CEEAD created a working group with human rights experts from public institutions, private and public universities, and civil society organizations, to discuss ways to improve human rights education in law schools. As a result of this, CEEAD elaborated a plan that includes the incorporation of human rights courses in the curricula, training professors in the teaching of human rights and guidelines for universities to include human rights standards in their legal education. The plan is now being implemented at the national level.

In my experience with the HRAP and my fellows, I confirm that every human rights advocate is, can and should be a human rights educator. For me, being a teacher is being an activist every single day.

“\n
Carlos promotes the study of human rights in legal education in Mexico.

Carlos R. Asúnsolo Morales

Human Rights Project Leader
Research Center for the Teaching and Learning of the Law (CEEAD)

MEXICO
Although I completed the seventh grade of primary school with high grades, my mum and I didn’t have money for me to continue with my high school education. Shortly after thinking I would not continue with my education, I visited Kampala where I found the majority of people with disabilities (PWDs) begging on the streets while the others mended shoes and watches. I returned home and told my mum, “I don’t want to be like them. I have to study to be a role model.”

Thanks be to God, I made it to Makerere University in Kampala after much struggle and with the support of various people. I earned a bachelor’s degree in Adult and Community Education. At Makerere, I became the first student with a disability to run for president of the student body. When most people first meet me, they ask if my disability is the reason why I advocate for the rights of PWDs. My reply is always, “No!” Having a disability does not necessarily mean that you know the issues and challenges faced by people with the full spectrum of disabilities. I have studied those issues. I advocate for PWDs because they are human beings who are differently able. I have the means, voice, ability and passion to advocate for those who cannot do it for themselves.

Through structured negotiations, advocacy, community education, and the media, I work to reform systems and practices that discriminate against PWDs. Sometimes I truly feel like I’m not getting anywhere. But I never stay down for long. I am motivated by PWDs.

In 2009, I started the Masaka Association of People with Disabilities Living with HIV/AIDS (MADIPHA) with the mission to ensure the full integration of our target group as well as access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS services. Currently, we have more than 386 members who are disabled and HIV positive.

Through our peer-to-peer model at MADIPHA, fellow PWDs identify PWDs in communities, refer them to health centers and counsel them. At MADIPHA, we do a number of things: we advocate for better health services, train health workers and other community members in disability and sign language, support our members with income-generating activities, engage political and religious leaders in disability debates so that our issues are planned and budgeted for, and document and share our best practices.

The year 2017 has been great and another landmark in my work. Through HRAP I met wonderful and knowledgeable people from whom I have learned new approaches and strategies. Many have given me their time and ears. I will always remember what my mentor, Pratima Kale (SIPA), told me: “No matter how poor and vulnerable a person is, she knows what she wants and you should always listen to her while designing any intervention.”

While in DC, Michael met Judy Heumann, a senior fellow at the Ford Foundation and Special Advisor on Disability Rights for the US State Department under President Barack Obama.
Back in the ‘90s when I was a young girl, I was dating a fellow student from a neighboring university. One day as she was seeing me back to the student house, our route passed the local police station. When we stopped on the empty street in front of the building, she took my hand and gave me a light kiss.

I need to make a remark here and draw a small picture of Ukraine in the ‘90s. It was a young country that had become independent a few years earlier. Inhabitants were living in a constant economic crisis and unable to wake up from their Soviet past. The LGBT movement wasn’t even born. Members of the community were hiding in the closet. We met once a month in secret and never risked behaving openly in public spaces.

So, this light kiss — an invisible and hasty lip touch — was a very brave step. Stunned by the boldness of our act, we froze. We believed we were safe.

The danger came from where we did not expect. A policeman approached us and rudely asked, “What are you doing here?” “Nothing,” we replied. “Do you know it is inappropriate, what you were doing? Why do you hold her hand? Do you want to spend the night in a jail?” I remember the anger growing inside me. I remember trying to prove to him that it was he who was behaving inappropriately and that kissing on the street was not a crime. Other police officers came out of the building and approached us. My girlfriend pulled me aside and said, “Run! Let’s run! We are not safe here.”

I had met homophobia before, but at that moment I understood how unprotected we were—helpless and totally alone in front of the huge gray wall of hatred and injustice. I started looking for opportunities to somehow fight the oppression. I soon found people as crazy as I was. We were few, but we had ideas. We launched the very first gay magazine in Ukraine and registered one of the first LGBT organizations in the country. We held press conferences teasing the media and public with the fact of being openly gay. We organized and attended public actions. We encouraged other LGBT people to stand up.

And one day, long after that kiss in front of the police station, I realized that we were not crazy, despite everyone—friends and enemies—telling us that we were. Being against the oppressive system doesn’t make you crazy. It makes you strong, smart, and unstoppable. It makes you an activist—that person who changes the world for the better.

Theodore Kerr welcomed advocates for a discussion at The New School.
I grew up listening to stories of activism and courage by those who were fighting against the military regime in Uruguay during the late 70’s and early 80’s. I was always reminded that democracy and freedom are not a given and that we need to be actively invested in the process of defending our rights as humans and speaking for those whose voices are being silenced.

I decided to become a political scientist because I always thought that it was through policy making that we can create a more respectful, equal world. I have since realized that most times this is not enough. I understood early on that it is crucial to also modify the mindset of the majority in order to move towards a better tomorrow.

In my early 20’s, I had an opportunity to direct the international and social justice department of a local Jewish youth organization. We ran a program through which students from the USA and Uruguay worked together in helping the local community with specific projects, such as restoring local health clinics, building organic gardens at schools, creating green places and community plazas, etc. We all had the chance to see the change happening. The local communities got to see the projects up and running, the students got to see the impact that their work on the local communities, and I was encouraged by the transformation that most students experienced during the two-week program. It was there that I began to see and understand the importance of human rights education on a system based on the respect and promotion of human dignity that we can create an improved environment for future generations.

Joining HRAP was the opportunity for a new beginning. I knew that the program was going to provide me a great “bag of tools” to bring back home and work hard on the promotion of human rights and, indeed, it did so. The classes at Columbia University propelled me to become a better academic learner. The diverse workshops offered through HRAP covered so many different areas. Together, they turned us into much better and effective advocates.

And the greatest value of this experience has been to learn from my fellow advocates, now friends, from different parts of the world — this is the hidden treasure of HRAP. Through this process of getting to know their personal journeys, I grew as a person. I became inspired and proactive. I have reaffirmed that this is the path I want to take.

HRAP has made me realize how much more I could do and how important it is to work together so we can work better and seek a better tomorrow.

“Joining HRAP was the opportunity for a new beginning.”

2017 Program Report
Growing up in a modest and quiet neighborhood in the capital city, I was always perceived as different. That difference would take the form of religious beliefs (as we were living in a Catholic area), ethnicity and/or the fact that I was not conforming to the expected manifestation of masculinity. My parents always encouraged me to strive to provide the best of myself, being rigorous with all that I engage in, and to find my salvation in reading.

At puberty, I realized that contrary to my other classmates, I was not attracted to girls and started an internal journey of questioning and self-acceptance, a journey I couldn’t share with anyone for fear of judgement and rejection from society. During my denial moments, suicide thoughts and self-shaming became routine – they were my companion for almost three years. In 2008, I met for the first time a group of gay activists who were starting to organize at regular meetings in a café. They had peened a safe space for identifying and questioning gay men. I was so happy I had found a place where I could meet people who were like me. In the same space, they had started some programming around HIV/AIDS for men who have sex with men that were not necessarily speaking to my needs. I successfully lobbied the board chair to start a support group for young and teenage gays and lesbians identifying and questioning that would then meet twice a month to share stories of resilience, tears and joy as well as tips on how to navigate the school environment. It was beautiful!

Sometime later, I got a call from a friend who wanted to share ideas on how to build a resilient community engagement on advocacy, looking beyond the public health perspective. That moment changed my life as it came clear that demanding rights that were taken away and consolidating protection mechanisms needed a community that was aware of its rights and able to connect its existence to that of other marginalized communities. I also realized that what had happened in my country was similar to what was happening around the world. Action was needed! People ready to dedicate themselves to that cause were needed. I was available. I embarked on this journey a few months later. I am now in a leadership position.

As I reflect on my journey of becoming an advocate, I couldn’t be more thankful for a platform for strengthening human rights advocates as they foster the understanding and operationalizing of interconnection between sexual orientation and gender identity with civil and political rights but most importantly also with economic, social and cultural rights.

AFRICA

LGBTQ Activist

“That moment changed my life as it came clear that demanding rights that were taken away and consolidating protection mechanisms needed a community that was aware of its rights and able to connect its existence to that of other marginalized communities.”

CLASSES

- Human Rights and Human Wrongs
- Health and Human Rights Advocacy

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Current LGBT Discourse in Kenya and Ukraine, Center for Gender and Sexuality, Columbia Law School
- Conversation with African Human Rights Advocates, Center for African Education, Teachers College
- LGBTI Voices from the Frontlines, Columbia’s Humanitarian Organization for Migration and Emergencies
- Lunchtime Conversations: Kennedy Abar Owei and Anonymous Advocate, Spectrum and UN Working Group, School of International and Public Affairs
- SAGE (Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders)
- StoryCorps
- Treatment Action Group
- UN Women
- WITNESS

NETWORKING

NYC
- African Services Committee
- Amnesty International USA
- Arcus Foundation
- Human Rights Watch
- The New School
- New York Public Library Trans Oral History Project
- Out in Tech
- OutRight Action International
- Parliamentarians for Global Action
- SAGE (Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders)
- StoryCorps
- Treatment Action Group
- UN Women
- WITNESS

DC
- Amnesty International USA Center Global
- FH360
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
- Heartland Alliance
- Human Rights Campaign
- Human Rights First
- National Endowment for Democracy
- Open Society Foundations
- PFLAG
- Randal Mason Consulting
- Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- Synergia
- USAID
- Victory Institute
- World Bank Inspection Panel

Olena (2nd row, 10th from right) attended the OutSummit organized by OutRight Action International.
WORKSHOPS

**DOCUMENTATION**

Pamela Graham, Columbia University

The Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research at Columbia University holds an extensive collection of archives of human rights NGOs. Director Pamela Graham discussed the collecting program and the process of working with NGOs to preserve their records. She noted the value and importance of preserving the record of human rights advocacy. The CHRDR is also developing the Human Rights Web Archive, an online resource that captures and preserves the websites of human rights organizations and blogs. Graham demonstrated the HRWA and discussed the issues associated with preserving this information, and encouraged advocates to consider contributing their websites to this collecting effort.

**EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS**

Stephanie V. Grepo, Columbia University

The advocates learned how to make concise and effective presentations on their work. Stephanie V. Grepo encouraged the advocates to provide constructive feedback to one another as they learned to make powerful presentations.

**ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE**

Michael Silverman, Columbia University

Michael Silverman, Adjunct Associate Professor at School of International and Public Affairs, led a workshop on the broader issues of managing organizations to meet their respective compliance and ethical challenges. He has held various offices specializing in strategic planning, program management, compliance and policy development in both the public and private sectors. He presented the advocates with his book, *Compliance Management for Public, Private or Nonprofit Organizations* (2008), McGraw-Hill, New York, New York.

**FUNDRAISING**

Erik Detiger, Philantropia Inc.

With more than a decade of experience working in the field of international philanthropy and fundraising, Erik Detiger provided the advocates with an overview of concepts and strategies in international fundraising. The two-part workshop series focused on fundraising from institutional donors and individuals.

**HUMAN RIGHTS SKILLS AND ADVOCACY**

Dragica Mikavica, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

Dragica Mikavica, Watchlist’s Advocacy Officer, spoke about the design and implementation of Watchlist’s advocacy strategies in New York to advance its priorities with the UN Security Council, permanent missions, agencies, and other relevant bodies.

Human Rights Watch offers a six-part workshop on research, writing and documentation.

Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict offered a workshop.
**INTERVIEWING**
Thomas R. Lansner
Thomas R. Lansner provided basic skills and tips for preparing and presenting positive and proactive media and public appearances that promote the advocates’ messages.

**MAXIMIZING YOUR TIME IN HRAP**
Bakary Tandia, African Services Committee
2010 Advocate Bakary Tandia helped the advocates to maximize their time in HRAP. He described the U.S. government system through the lens of advocacy and presented resources available to advocates in the USA. Tandia is a case worker and policy advocate at African Services Committee in New York City and a co-founder of The Abolition Institute which is working to end slavery in Mauritania.

**IMPROVING TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY**
Staff, Center for Teaching and Learning at Columbia University
The Center for Teaching and Learning at Columbia University led a workshop on how the advocates can use new media and emerging technologies in their advocacy work.

**AN INTRODUCTION TO STORYCORPS**
Staff, StoryCorps
StoryCorps’ mission is to preserve and share humanity’s stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world. Staff introduced the advocates to their work by sharing previously recorded stories.

**ORAL HISTORY**
Nicole Pombier Berger
An oral historian / educator / artist, Nicole Pombier Berger spoke about her work at the intersection of disability and social change, which she has explored through projects such as the TILL Living Legacy Project, Here: Stories from Selinsgrove and KenCrest, and Nothing About Us Without Us.
RAISING FUNDS FROM US FOUNDATIONS  
**Dr. David Rosenthal, Mailman School of Public Health**  
Dr. David Rosenthal of the Mailman School of Public Health shared tips and resources on grant writing. Dr. Rosenthal is the faculty director of the Executive and Full Time Management programs in Health Policy Management and the Director of Behavior Science for the Center for Family and Community Medicine.

VIDEO ADVOCACY  
**Priscila Neri, WITNESS**  
Priscila Neri, Senior Program Manager at WITNESS, led a workshop on the effective use of video advocacy as a complement to traditional approaches to human rights advocacy. The advocates learned the ways in which stories, visual evidence and personal testimony can be used as part of a human rights advocacy strategy to inform policy.

WORKSHOP FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
**Dr. Yaniv Phillips, Columbia Health**  
Dr. Yaniv Phillips of Columbia Health led a workshop designed to address the advocates’ experience at Columbia. Topics included how to maximize your experience in class and with professors, how and when to get to know professors, expectations, participating in class, collaborating with other students, asking for help, getting comfortable, learning social norms and managing expectations.
ISHR is very grateful to the following for their financial support of the advocates in the 2017 Program.

Anonymous
Arcus Foundation
Research Center for the Teaching and Learning of the Law (CEEAD)
Harriman Institute, Columbia University
NYARWEK LGBTI Coalition
Open Society Institute-East Africa
The Sperry Fund

ISHR wishes to thank the following HRAP alumni for interviewing applicants for the 2017 HRAP:

Lana Ackar, Bosnia-Hercegovina
Esther Adhiambo, Kenya
Nadia Baza, Colombia
Maria Eugenia Carrera Chavez, Guatemala
Mulsid Eleas Jr., Uganda
Colins Imoh, Nigeria
Iuliana Marcinschi, Moldova
Samuel Matsikure, Zimbabwe
John Mwebe, Uganda
Betty Lee Odur, Uganda
Absolom Shalakha, Kenya
Jeffrey Wambaya, Kenya
Abubakar Sadiq Yusuf, Ghana*

*accepted into 2013 HRAP but unable to attend
Congratulations to 2016 Advocate Nvard Margaryan and her colleagues at PINK Armenia on the organization’s 10th anniversary!

As a facilitator for organizational learning and development, 2016 Advocate Mulshid Elesa Jr. has successfully worked on consultancies geared towards the development of individuals, organizations and communities. He has worked on projects throughout Uganda and Southeast Asia. In October, he facilitated a training for journalists in Mbale and Tororo (Uganda).

2016 Advocates Aehshatou Manu of Cameroon and Chhing Lamu Sherpa of Nepal met up at a meeting of the Asian Indigenous Women’s Network.

2017 Advocate Bakary Tandia helped lead a fact-finding mission to Mauritania under the auspices of the Rainbow Push Coalition, which was founded by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and The Abolition Institute, an organization Tandia co-founded to end slavery in that country.

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2010 Advocate Dr. Alejandro Rivera recently participated in a conference on access to healthcare for the LGBT community in Chiapas, Mexico.

2014 Advocate Benson Khemis Koro Lake recently represented his organization CEFoRD at the second NGO Expo at Nyakoron Cultural Center in South Sudan.


2017 HRAP Alumni News

1996 Advocate Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, the founder of Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project in Uganda, reflected on the meaning of World AIDS Day during an interview with National Public Radio in the USA. Nyaka was featured on page 43 of the 2017 UNAIDS report Right to Health.

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When asked for her feedback on Stephanie’s work, 2016 Advocate Chhing Lamu Sherpa reported: “I am grateful to Columbia University for sending the most positive, optimistic and dynamic intern to Mountain Spirit. Stephanie Kim has energized our members and helped Mountain Spirit to raise awareness on Indigenous issues while also assisting with social media, documentation and publications. She exceeded our expectations.”

In 2017, Stephanie Kim, Columbia College student, volunteered in Nepal with Mountain Spirit which is chaired by 2016 Advocate Chhing Lamu Sherpa through ISHR’s Student Volunteer Program (SVP). Stephanie Kim shared the following with readers: “I gave presentations on social media and human rights to the National Indigenous Women’s Forum and at a talk program organized by Mountain Spirit. On a field visit to Udayapur, I visited several different remote villages and gave presentations on social media, human rights, health, and sanitation to community leaders, families, and children. I also created an infographic on social media as well as a new brochure for Mountain Spirit. I worked as the chief editor of their annual publication called Mountain Trail. I made the theme of the 2017 publication human rights with a special focus on Indigenous rights and women’s rights.” When asked for her feedback on Stephanie’s volunteer work, 2016 Advocate Chhing Lamu Sherpa reported: “I am grateful to Columbia University for sending the most positive, optimistic and dynamic intern to Mountain Spirit. Stephanie Kim has energized our members and helped Mountain Spirit to raise awareness on Indigenous issues while also assisting with social media, documentation and publications. She exceeded our expectations.”

In 2017, SVP was created to connect Columbia students with volunteer opportunities at HRAP alumni-led organizations around the globe. Since then, 20 Columbia students have volunteered with HRAP alumni in countries including Georgia, India, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Uganda. In 2016, Columbia students were invited to volunteer at the organizations of ISHR’s newest fellowship program, the Alliance on Historical Dialogue and Accountability.

In 2017, Stephanie V. Grepo, Director, Capacity Building, initiated a side event on advocacy tools at the 16th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The lineup of speakers included Jeremiah Kyle Drake of the Theater of the Oppressed at The Riverside Church and Jackie Zammuto of WITNESS, both of whom were invited to speak by 2015 Advocate Sandra Creamer. Stephanie also initiated and led a survey of the training needs of 300 Indigenous rights advocates and oversaw the development of a training curriculum based on the survey results. Both items were delivered to Sandra Creamer for her organization which works on indigenous rights.

STEPHANIE V. GREPO joined ISHR as the Director of Capacity Building in 2018. During her tenure, she has increased the number of female participants in HRAP, secured funding to create openings in HRAP for LGBT and disability rights advocates, and encouraged HRAP alumni—who can be found in 90 countries around the globe—to cooperate across class years and geographic boundaries. She has advised alumni on their work ranging from youth empowerment in South Sudan and Bosnia-Hercegovina to capacity building for Indigenous Peoples to advocacy around prisoners’ rights in Nigeria and Zambia. In 2011, she created a summer program at ISHR through which Columbia University students have volunteered at organizations led by alumni of ISHR’s fellowships programs around the globe. She has organized side events on advocacy tools and strategies during the Committee on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

With the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe from 2000 to 2007, Stephanie developed multi-ethnic experiential education programs in Kosovo; created and led a $2 million euros grants program to support confidence-building projects at the grassroots level in Macedonia; worked on return and integration issues and led a field office of 10 staff in one of the most politically sensitive regions of Croatia; and served as the youth and education advisor to the OSCE Head of Mission in Serbia. She has observed elections in Bosnia and Georgia. A lecturer at The New School since 2008, Stephanie was the 2008 Advocate Chhing Lamu Sherpa. She is interested in the intersection of human rights and the arts. With the School for International Training, she traveled to Morocco where she conducted an independent research project titled, “Peace Corps Morocco: International Aid or Grassroots Colonialism?” by interviewing Peace Corps volunteers and Moroccan Peace Corps staff and analyzing the history of Peace Corps Morocco through primary documents. She presented this research at the Human Development Conference at the University of Notre Dame.
We at Amnesty International USA always enjoy hosting and meeting with the HRAP participants. While my work is exclusively focused on domestic issues, our international presence working on many issues that the Advocates are focused on usually results in an engaging conversation about their work and advocacy back home, and this year was no exception to that experience. I always stress that our work as an organization is not possible without the work that they do on the ground in their own countries and try to relate that the US is no different in terms of addressing similar issues that they are working on back home.

I look forward to meeting the next HRAP class and experiencing the same engaging discussions.

JUSTIN MAZZOLA
Researcher
Amnesty International USA

I was contacted by longtime advocate Judy Heumann to connect with Michael Miiro from Uganda. When I met Michael I was intrigued that he was getting around NYC in a folding heavy wheelchair. After talking to him I quickly realized nothing would hold him back. He navigated the subways, buses, streets and taxis in NYC and said that it was easy to get around. The work that he is doing in Uganda is impressive but comes with many obstacles. Transportation is not accessible, the infrastructure does not accommodate for him and attitudes toward disability are complicated. Michael has embraced all of these issues and is determined to make change. He gathered lots of facts and was relentless in asking questions on how we get things done. I believe that change will certainly start with Michael and hope the lessons he learned in NYC can carry over to Uganda. In order to get Michael going MOPD supplied him with a Titanium Rigid Wheelchair that we were able to get from a local non-profit, Wheelchair Sports Federation, so he can make change in style.

VICTOR CALISE
Commissioner
NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities

The advocates met with Justin Mazzola at AI-USA.
For many years now, the Inspection Panel has had the pleasure of hosting those taking part in Columbia University’s Human Rights Advocates Program in our offices at the World Bank’s headquarters in Washington. The meeting provides us a chance to introduce the Panel, its mandate and its operations to the group. But we also see it as a chance to learn from the HRAP participants who willingly share their knowledge and on-the-ground experience and come ready with questions about the Panel’s work in responding to complaints from people who are, or might be, affected, by a World Bank-financed project. For example, at our most recent meeting questions were posed about how the Panel deals with retaliation concerns from complainants and how it makes potentially affected communities aware that it exists as an avenue of redress if needed.

ROB DOHERTY
Acting Executive Secretary
Senior Communications Officer
The Inspection Panel
The World Bank

OutRight Action International’s focus is human rights for LGBTQ people everywhere. We truly appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss with activists who are advocating for LGBTQ rights in their home countries, to talk about what is happening there and to discuss the work of OutRight around the world and at the United Nations. The advocates left our office with a series of our research publications - there is a lot our movement can learn across regions and we are happy whenever we can facilitate that learning for others as well as learn more about what is happening in different countries ourselves. Thank you for the opportunity to meet the advocates and we are looking forward to meeting new advocates next year!

MARIA SJÖDIN
Deputy Executive Director
OutRight Action International

As an educator, writer and organizer I had the honor of meeting with participants from the Columbia University’s Human Rights Advocates Program. It was an invaluable exchange of ideas, strategies and life stories that provided an opportunity for me to share the HIV/AIDS related work I do in the US and Canada, and to hear the vital, complicated and meaningful HIV/AIDS related work that is being done elsewhere by these advocates. So taken by the encounter, I organized a community conversation with Columbia University’s Human Rights Advocates Program to help share the work of the program and the advocates I had the good fortune of meeting. In a city like New York with 8 million people, and at a networked time like no other, one would think that meeting new and interesting people from around the world and learning about their work would be a daily occurrence. But sadly, it is not. We need programs that uplift, support and bring together scholars, activists and others doing good work from around the world. Columbia University’s Human Rights Advocates Program is a much needed gem.

THEODORE (TED) KERR
The New School + What Would an HIV Doula Do?