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Human Rights Interns Work for 'All of Humanity'

Aug. 13, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan University's **Center for Human Rights and Social Justice** (CHRSJ) provides summer opportunities for students to actively support human rights efforts around the world.

"Human rights internships can be life changing," said Irv Epstein, professor and chair of educational studies and director of CHRSJ. "They allow students to see how hard it is to defend human rights and promote social change, and the dedication of those who have devoted their lives to doing so."

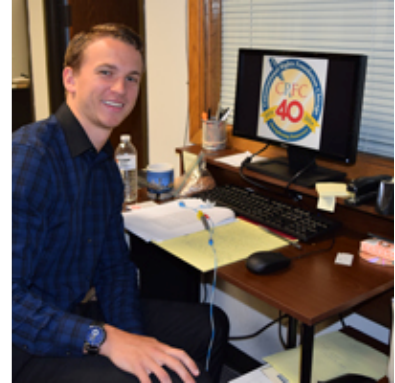
The following three students interned this summer at human rights organizations:

Colin Rathe '15, Constitutional Rights Foundation, Chicago

As an intern at the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Chicago, Colin Rathe (Deer Park, Ill.) increased his knowledge of the American legal system while working and forming relationships with professionals in the field, legal figures and teachers.

The Constitutional Rights Foundation provides elementary and secondary education students with interactive programs and curriculum on the rights, law and policy of the Constitution.

Rathe's responsibilities included creating case briefs on important Supreme Court cases, developing a semester-long curriculum and giving a presentation at an annual conference for Illinois teachers. Rathe, a **history major**, said he became passionate about developing materials that would help increase students' interest and knowledge in the Constitution and their role in a democratic society.



Colin Rathe

"A lot of the work that I did investigated the issues, debates and importance of understanding and expressing your rights as an American," said Rathe. "When students are actively engaged in civil discussion, there is an opportunity for realizations that can shape how they participate in their own communities."

Olive-Kemi Adeleye '15, The Advocates for Human Rights, Minneapolis

Olive-Kemi Adeleye, an international student from Kenya, learned more about the U.S. educational system and the need for human rights education to be incorporated into school curricula while interning at The Advocates for Human Rights organization in Minneapolis.

The Advocates for Human Rights organization is dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights for marginalized communities where rights are at risk. Through projects and programs, hundreds of volunteers work to provide assistance to local, national and global communities in need.

Adeleye, an **international studies major**, interned in the Human Rights Education Department, which provides education, guidance, advocacy and learning materials to educate people about human rights and how to incorporate standards into their own communities and education system. She researched, edited and updated human rights education curricula and lesson plans for K-12 teachers, researched how other states incorporate human rights education into the curriculum, and participated in special events, seminars and discussions held at the organization.



Olive-Kemi Adeleye

"Instilling human rights education into the lives of people starting at a young age is an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses worldwide," said Adeleye. "This education also contributes to the efforts of achieving an unbiased, unprejudiced and just society in which all human rights are valued and respected."

Chris Tatara '14, Scholars at Risk, New York

During his internship at Scholars at Risk in New York, Chris Tatara (Naperville, Ill.) was surprised by how personal the work became to him.

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of over 340 universities and colleges in 36 countries that promote academic freedom, protect threatened scholars and prevent attacks on higher education communities.

Tatara was responsible for writing a rough draft of the Academic Freedom media review, a collection of reports of threats to academic freedom and higher education communities worldwide. He also drafted letters of appeal for imprisoned scholars and prepared case assessments for SAR applicants, scholars seeking help after experiencing threats to their life, liberty or academic career. Tatara said his work was extremely rewarding, knowing he was defending human rights and making a difference in the world.



Chris Tatara

“Human rights and social justice work creates passionate and driven young men and women who stand for something greater than ourselves and represent the best society has to offer,” said Tatara, a **history major**. “This type of work increases your empathy, and it is this spirit which is essential for developing a peaceful world in which all of humanity can thrive.”

As well as providing opportunities for internships, the CHRSJ sponsors events and student groups on campus that support human rights and social justice causes, which are an important part of the University’s mission and curriculum. These causes include the Peace Fellows Program, the Scholars at Risk Advocacy Seminar, the Human Rights Undergraduate Research Workshop and the Unraveling Inequality Course Cluster.

By Danielle Kamp '15