



Fall 9-2-2005

Illinois Wesleyan Senior Works for International Justice

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Recommended Citation

Welzenbach, Rebecca, "Illinois Wesleyan Senior Works for International Justice" (2005).
News and Events. 3518.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/3518>

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Illinois Wesleyan Senior Works for International Justice
September 2, 2005

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Lindsey Irwin of Belleville, Ill, a senior Hispanic studies and educational studies double major at Illinois Wesleyan University, spent the summer of 2005 advocating for international human rights as an intern at the Washington, D.C., headquarters of the International Justice Mission (IJM), a non-governmental Christian human rights organization.

Founded in 1997, IJM investigates cases of injustice around the world, with the goal of providing victim relief, perpetrator accountability, structural prevention of human rights violations and victim aftercare. Through their offices in South Asia, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and Latin America, IJM assists national lawyers and investigators to build relationships with local authorities, persuading police and government officials to enforce the human rights laws of their countries.

IJM also seeks to increase American, Canadian and British public awareness of and commitment to battling international injustice.

Irwin, who has been conscious of international human rights issues since participating in the Model United Nations as a student at Belleville Township West High School, said that education is one of the most important steps to achieving international justice. "I was shocked that some of my classmates [at Illinois Wesleyan] had never heard of sex trafficking; they didn't know it existed," she said.

As an IJM intern, Irwin researched cases of human rights violations such as sexual slavery, bonded labor, unprosecuted rape, wrongful imprisonment and illegal land seizure in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Her findings provided material for IJM educational initiatives, such as the 50-page advocacy guide to ending illegal land seizure in Honduras that Irwin compiled with the other eight interns working at IJM headquarters.

Irwin also visited Capitol Hill, where she met with legislative aids for several members of the U.S. Congress, including Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), Sen. E. Benjamin Nelson (D-Neb.) and Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), in order to discuss concrete steps that legislators can take to counteract international injustice.

"We know that we can make a difference," Irwin said of the organization's pervasive sense of hope in the face of tragic crimes against women, children and other innocents. "The lawyers, the investigators and even the interns are all able to use their skills to help people who don't have any means to help themselves."



Lindsey Irwin

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