

Ninth Annual Youth Town Meeting Speakers: Protecting the Rights of the Child

Nasra Abdi is an active member of The Aja Project's (Supporting Self-Sufficiency) Youth Advisory Committee. Born in Somalia, Nasra was resettled to San Diego in 2000 from a refugee camp in her native Somalia. A graduate of Crawford High School, Nasra is now pursuing a degree in nursing at City College.

Dee Aker, Ph.D., is the Deputy Director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ). At the IPJ, she is also the Director of the Nepal Program and the Women PeaceMakers Program. She is a conflict resolution professional, human rights advocate, educator, journalist, and psychological anthropologist focusing on cultural and political issues. She has documented the work of more than 250 women working in politics and peacemaking efforts. Dr. Aker founded WorldLink in 1997.

Elena Azaola is Senior Investigator at the Center for Advanced Studies and Research in Social Anthropology located in Mexico City. She was an advisor for Children Rights at the National Commission of Human Rights and is a current Council Member at the Federal District Commission of Human Rights. Her research on commercial sexual exploitation of children has been sponsored by the United Nations Children Fund. She is co-coordinating a National Report on Violence sponsored by the WHO and conducting a research on Mexico's City police forces.

Nick Beda is an 18-year-old City College student who was born in Juba, Sudan. Due to the civil war, Nick left Sudan when he was eight-years-old with his family. He was resettled initially to Connecticut, and later moved to San Diego. He is an active member of The Aja Project's Youth Advisory Committee and is currently pursuing an engineering degree.

Peggy Callahan has had a distinguished career as a television reporter, producer and anchor. She has won numerous awards for her productions on social justice issues but may be most passionate about her work with Free the Slaves, an international non-profit she co-founded 5 years ago. Just released is a documentary Peggy produced on modern day slavery in America (*Dreams Die Hard*) - part of it recently aired on NBC and PBS. She is currently working on a documentary about child slavery in India.

Rick Castro has been a deputy sheriff for the San Diego County Sheriff's Department for 15 years. He is the author of a training bulletin for law enforcement called "Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children." Currently, he is a trainer and facilitator on "Human Trafficking" to law enforcement and social service agencies in San Diego County and the liaison coordinator for the San Diego Region Anti-Trafficking Task Force.

Robert Hitchcock, Ph.D., is a professor of anthropology and geography, and the coordinator of African Studies and Conflict Resolution Studies at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln where he also supervises the Human Rights and Human Diversity Initiative. He is a leading anthropologist and human ecologist working with human rights issues involving indigenous peoples, refugees, women and small farmers.

Anne Hoiberg is the President and CEO of the International Museum of Human Rights at San Diego, Director of the UNA's Women's Equity Council, and President of La Jolla Pen Women. She is the Chair of the International Interests Committee of the San Diego Branch of AAUW and Chair of the International Relations Committee of the League of Women Voters of San Diego.

Susan Hovanec is currently Senior Advisor for Press and Public Diplomacy in the Office of International Women's Issues, which reports directly to the Undersecretary for Global Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. A Senior Foreign Service Officer since 1976, Ms. Hovanec has served overseas in Beirut, Lebanon; Zagreb, Croatia; Belgrade, Yugoslavia; and Mexico City, Mexico. She has also been responsible for Central Asia and Caucasus countries and sub-Saharan Africa.

Anna Ibrahim of Sudan, is the Youth and Adolescent Coordinator at the UNICEF country office in Sudan. In this capacity, she designs and facilitates programming for displaced and newly resettled youth. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in the Population Leadership Program at the University of Washington, Seattle. As a consultant and field team-coordinator, she has worked with refugee and displaced youth in Darfur and other regions of Sudan.

Carmin Kcomt is a former Family and Juvenile Judge from the Superior Court in Piura, Peru. She held this position for 10 years. She was also a University Professor at National University of Piura and held a faculty position at the Law School at the private University of Piura. As a professor of law, she lectured on Human Rights, Child Human Rights and Family Law. She also co-wrote a publication on the Rights of the Child.

Tom O'Brien, Esquire, is the Assistant United States Attorney for the Central District of California, assigned as Chief, Criminal Division. He oversees 190 federal prosecutors in the largest federal district in the United States, encompassing seven counties and nearly 19 million citizens. Former Chief of the Civil Rights Section, O'Brien investigated and prosecuted federal hate crimes, human trafficking, and color-of-law cases (police misconduct). Before becoming an attorney, O'Brien accumulated 2,000 flight hours as a radar intercept officer in the F-14 Tomcat.

Christine Mundt-Perez serves as Manager of Program Operations at the Project Concern International headquarters, located in San Diego, CA. As a part of her duties, Mundt-Pérez is responsible for the coordination of program development efforts aimed at supporting the expansion of PCI's Ethiopia Country Program. She possesses over ten years of management and fund raising experience, including six years working in developing countries.

Maria Suarez was just 15 years old when someone hijacked her life. She was enslaved for five years by a man who tortured her emotionally, physically and spiritually. It is hard to believe it could get worse - but it did for the next 22 years. Today Maria is in college studying to be a social worker and speaking out against slavery whenever and wherever she can. Her recent testimony in Sacramento helped pass a stronger anti-trafficking law in California.

Shinpei Takeda is the President and co-founder of The AjA Project (A.J.A – supporting self-sufficiency), an international NGO providing photography-based educational support to refugee youth in San Diego and along the Thailand/Burma Border. As a documentarian, Takeda also follows survivors of the atomic bombs that were dropped on Japan who now reside in San Diego and Tijuana.

Marisa Ugarte is the Executive Director of the Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition, and brings more than 20 years of experience in advocacy for exploited men, women and children, and in assisting and at-risk youth. With a Masters degree in social work and psychology, Ms. Ugarte spent three years developing social services programs in Tijuana, Mexico. She is founder of the Binational Crisis Line in Tijuana, as well as the Domestic Violence Crisis Center for the Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, Tijuana (DIF Tijuana).

Lilia Velasquez, Esquire, is an internationally known immigration lawyer and human rights advocate who often represents asylum seekers and trafficked women and children. "La Flama," as she is popularly called, intervenes and provides assistance to young women seeking asylum from torture in countries in conflict. She trains lawyers and judges from Costa Rica to Chile. She has recently been on human rights observation missions to Afghanistan, Argentina and Nepal.

Photography Exhibit

IPJ Rotunda

7:30am – 5:00pm

Children of Conflict – Images of Hope

The photos in this exhibit were taken by resettled refugee youth from East Africa, Southeast Asia, Colombia, Afghanistan and Iraq. Having fled from and survived the conflicts in their home countries, these young people are now making new lives for themselves here in San Diego. Through The AjA Project's *Journey* program, they have the opportunity to share their stories through photography and creative expression.