

ROSEVILLE
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: February 23, 2009
Item No.: 5.a

Department Approval

City Manager Approval



Item Description: Human Rights Essay Contest Winners

BACKGROUND

Each year the Roseville Human Rights Commission holds an essay contest for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students within the Roseville Area School's boundaries. This year more than 240 students from RAMS and Parkview School entered the contest. Commissioners conducted an anonymous review of the essays. Names of the students were not known until after the winners were selected.

This year students chose a current news event in which they believed there was a human rights violation. Students were asked if there was anything being done to bring justice to the situation and what they could do about it?

Commission Chair David Singleton will speak on behalf of the Commission and recognize the following students and teachers:

First	Meghan Brady	8 th Grade Parkview	Mr. Ebert
Second	Connor Polydoroff	8 th Grade RAMS	Mr. Ueland
Third - Tie	Sammy Shaker	7 th Grade RAMS	Mr. Lauinger
Third - Tie	Jingyang Dong	8 th Grade RAMS	Mr. Johnson

Honorable mentions (in alphabetical order)

Jordan Burich	8 th Grade RAMS	Ms. Archer
Anne Raymond	8 th Grade Parkview	Mr. Ebert

The first, second and third place winners will be invited to read their essays. Each honorable mention will receive a certificate.

COUNCIL ACTION

No City Council action necessary.

Prepared by: Carolyn Curti, Communications Specialist
Attachments: A: Winning Essays

**Meghan Brady
8th Grade - Parkview
Mr. Ebert
First Place**

Think Before You Buy

When I saw trendy clothes or a pair of shoes at the store, I never thought about how they were made or how they got there. That was before. Now I know that many famous designers and stores use sweatshops for the manufacture of their products. Sweatshops are places where people work in horrible conditions and get paid next to nothing. I think that it is a violation of human rights to have poor, innocent people making things for us and earning barely enough to get by. These people don't earn enough money for food, housing and clothes for their families, let alone money to send their children to college. They are just trying to manage and they have to endure awful conditions and treatment. I think that it is wrong for people to have to work in that kind of harmful environment.

Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay." Countless people get sick or die each year due to fatigue caused by overwork in sweatshops in many countries, including China, Indonesia, India, and Mexico. Some people work 12 or more hours per day for seven days a week. People work so hard and for so long and most get paid less than \$1.00 an hour. That can't be right, can it? It is not right for these people to be working so hard in such terrible conditions.

Many people who work in sweatshops have tried to form labor unions. Their attempts have failed because of union busters, who are usually local thugs and criminals hired by the companies. Article 23, Section 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection

of his interests.” Workers can’t receive better wages, benefits, or rights because anytime any organization gets formed, it is immediately destroyed.

Low wages, no benefits, long hours, and cramped and unsanitary conditions are what people have to tolerate every day when they go to work at a sweatshop. Numerous people die every year from exhaustion caused by overwork, injury from machinery, abuse by managers, and sickness due to unclean surroundings. Some factory managers and supervisors even rape, abuse, and assault the workers to scare them into not leaving, even though they are abused. Article 23, Section 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.” These people definitely do not work in favorable conditions; they work in very harmful environments.

I think that it is appalling that children also work in these types of environments. Many companies that use sweatshops prefer hiring children instead of adults because many can work faster and the companies can pay them less or even nothing at all. Article 23, Section 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.” Many companies that use sweatshops hire children who are ineligible to work. About 250 million children who are between the ages of five and fourteen are hired at sweatshops to work full time, doing very dangerous jobs. I do not think that these companies should take advantage of these vulnerable children.

People who work in sweatshops don’t choose to work there. They are forced to because they can’t find any other job, and they need money to support their families. I think that this issue is a major violation of human rights. Many organizations are trying to

raise awareness about this problem. The organization SweatFree Communities prepared the "2008 Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide" to let people know which companies use sweatshops and those that don't. In response to criticism, Nike has started a system to try to improve working conditions at supplier factories. I think other companies like Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, and Reebok should try to do the same thing. There are many things that we as individuals can do to try to stop this problem. It is important to create awareness by telling people you know about this issue. We have to pay attention to the countries and companies that use sweatshops and stop buying their products. Stopping sweatshops will not be easy, but with hard work and determination someday we can reach our goal, starting with one person at a time.

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Human Rights

U.S. Enforcement of Immigration Laws with Workplace Raids

In recent years, the United States government has adopted an alarming policy of conducting workplace raids to enforce immigration policies. I think such raids are a violation of human rights for three reasons, one because the people are doing work for our country, two, because the workers are separated from their families and may be deported, and three because the policies violate the constitution and global human rights conventions.

People immigrate to America because they want a better life and some can't earn a living in their home countries. They came to the U.S. and started looking for work. On December 12, 2006, six Swift meat processing company facilities were raided by government immigration officials. They were located in Colorado, Texas, Nebraska, Utah, Iowa, and Minnesota. These raids were part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE has reported an estimated 1,282 Swift employees have been detained. Only a few have been charged with^a crime. The others were kept until proper documentation was verified by ICE. Anyone without documentation was deported to their home country.

Both legal and illegal immigrants were arrested and separated from their families. Many parents had to let their children go and be kept by caretakers. One caring school teacher named Barbara Kremer gave shelter to 24 immigrants who feared returning to their homes. Many legal immigrants did not have their papers with them at work, so they were arrested. The ones that didn't have papers at all were arrested and deported.

I think deporting illegal immigrants violates their human rights. The Fourth Amendment explains how people have the right to be safe from unreasonable searches and seizures. These raids clearly violate this constitutional right. I think these government raids also violate the Eighth Amendment which states, "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." I feel being deported is cruel and unusual punishment because parents are separated from their children and their lives are shattered. They came to the United States for a reason, to earn a living and have a better life for their families.

There are many articles in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights that these raids clearly violate. For example article number five says, "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment." In bursting into workplaces and corralling people because of their race, ICE breaks all of the rules in article 5. In article nine, which states "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile." The ICE raids violate this because targeting workplaces and arresting people because of their race is arbitrary. Of all 30 articles on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I think at least half of those have been abused by ICE with their policy of workplace raids.

There are many efforts being undertaken to bring justice to this situation. There are many lawsuits being filed against ICE on behalf of the workers. Many human rights campaigns are taking action on this issue. Some of these organizations are creating petitions to fight against this undocumented immigrant issue. One petition, "Petition Alleging Violations of the Human Rights of Undocumented Workers of the United States of America," challenges government discrimination against immigrant workers. Many of

the petitioners are undocumented immigrants living illegally in the U.S. These workers are poorly paid and denied economic rights. These immigrants make up 5% of all employees in the U.S. They work for little pay, and do the most undesirable jobs that nobody else wants to do.

I can actually do many things about this issue. I can share my knowledge with people such as my friends, family, and other relatives. If I inform them, they could inform other people and soon enough, a lot of people would know about this issue. The more people that know about this issue, the better. If I were one of the immigrants who got arrested in the swift raid, I would do exactly what most of them are doing. Get a lawyer, ^{and} file a lawsuit. Also, when I am old enough to vote, I will support candidates who are in favor of immigrant rights.

I hope I have demonstrated that this is a serious human rights issue that deserves more attention. Immigrants are an important part of our society and deserve the same respect and justice that the rest of us expect.

Human Rights Essay

The world is not perfect. This is the conclusion made by humans over thousands of years. However, people have tried to make the world a better place since the dawn of time, by setting down rules for the treatment of others that should be followed by all people. The main set of rules for the treatment of all humans in the world is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, created by the UN. Sadly, not all countries follow these rules. An example of this is the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Tibet is located in Central Asia, and it is about a quarter of the size of India. In 1950, the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet. They were not accepted by the Tibetan people, so in 1956, rebellions broke out in Amdo and eastern Khan. It was cruelly crushed by the Chinese in 1959, as they killed tens of thousands of Tibetans. It was at this time that the 14th Dalai Lama and some of his government principles fled to India, where they have stayed to this day.

China claims that the Chinese occupation of Tibet is leading to prosperity and technological advancement. It can be plainly seen from the way the Tibetans react to the Chinese that this is not the case. Over 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed since the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and the Chinese have allowed 6 million Han Chinese to settle in Tibet. There are now more Han Chinese in Tibet than Tibetans. In addition, Tibetans are prohibited from carrying or having a Tibetan flag. In their own homeland, they have fewer rights than the Han Chinese living on their land. Tibetans are abused, threatened, starved, and beaten by the Chinese government. This is all in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone is born with the same rights. So

those Tibetans in their home country, in the eyes of the UN, are no different than we in the United States. Then why are they being treated differently than us? Are they not human?

Unfortunately, this seems to be the Chinese opinion of the Tibetans. China is a founding member of the UN, so they are the most obligated of all countries to follow the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. From the way the Tibetans have been treated, it seems that China is outright disobeying this declaration. This declaration is also being violated in that it states that all people should have the right to govern themselves. The Chinese government has forced the Tibetan government into exile in India and has put in their place Han Chinese, who will always be in favor of China, not Tibet.

One of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also states that every person will have the right to chose and follow their own religion. Since the 1950 occupation, 6000 places of worship have been destroyed by the Chinese. The Chinese are forcing their own Communist system upon the Tibetans, in which they discourage religion and encourage atheism and agnosticism. This is in direct violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that every person has the right to have their own religion, and are not obligated to follow the religion of the state. One of the other major religious problems was the choosing of the Panchen Lama, a religious leader that is traditionally chosen by the Dalai Lama. The 14th Dalai Lama chose young Gedhun Choekvi Nyima, in contrast with the People's Republic of China's choice of Gyancaïn Norbu. The choosing of the Panchen Lama is traditionally a religious affair, so the Chinese government should not interfere with religious matters. Gedhun Choekvi Nyima and his family are currently under "a hidden identity for protection and privacy",

as stated by the People's Republic of China. Gyancaïn Norbu is now held to be the real Panchen Lama, though the Tibetan Government in Exile know him as the Panchen Zama, literally fake Panchen Lama. This is another example of the oppression of Tibet by China.

Most of the people reading this essay will ask, "What can we do about this?" The easiest way is to simply log on to www.freetibet.org and find out what you can do for Tibet. Other ways you can help are to get petitions signed for restrictions upon China, to help give the Tibetans more money, starting more rallies for Tibet, and writing letters to high government officials about Tibet.

One of the most unfortunate things about Tibet is that countries still seem to be trading with China in the same way they have for years. No country is forcing trade restrictions upon China because of Tibet, even though they have the right to force restrictions upon countries that break UN laws. This is probably because China provides most of the world with materials and items. It seems as though countries have just forgotten about the Tibetans. But people should never forget about Tibet. For Tibet emphasizes the struggle of the underdog in a dog-eat-dog world. Tibet stands for the idea that all people are created equal, and they all have the same basic human rights as everyone else. If we forget about Tibet, then we will have forgotten the Holocaust, the Civil Rights Movement, the Belgian Congo, and almost every other human rights movement in the history of the world; for they all embody the idea that all men* are created equal, from the day they are born to the day they die, from now and to forever.

*The word men is used here to symbolize all mankind, not just males. It is used for a more powerful expression, not as a symbol of bias toward males.

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Human Rights Essay

TASER Abuse

Human rights are the most basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. According to the United Nations, a violation of human rights would occur when an individual or group breaches any part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or any other international human rights instrument. However, certain groups of people or countries must also follow more specific laws and regulations. For law enforcement officials, they must also follow the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A violation of any of them would be a violation of human rights.

Over 300 people have died since 2001 because of the abuse of TASER guns. Currently, one example of a human rights violation would be the abuse of the usage of TASER guns by law enforcement officers. TASER guns are weapons that use Electro-Muscular Disruption technology to cause neuromuscular incapacitation and strong muscle contractions through the stimulation of sensory and motor nerves. TASER guns are effective on everyone, including people with high pain tolerance, making it very useful to law enforcement officers to get control of the person they are dealing with. However, when the use of TASER guns becomes excessive and improper, TASER guns become abusive weapons.

There are several reasons why TASER abuse is a violation of human rights. First, the excessive use of TASER guns creates severe pain and suffering, which in certain circumstances can be classified as a form of torture. This torture violates the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officers, the Bill of Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Second, the excessive use of TASER guns breaches the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. Third, the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials says that before being deployed, weapons should be carefully evaluated. There has been little to no research on TASER guns and what effect they have on humans. The United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, Article 8, states that the code cannot be broken or it is a violation of human rights. The three reasons listed above indicate that TASER abuse breaks the code. Therefore, it is in violation of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines torture as, "...any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted...on a person for such purposes as...punishing him for an act he committed, or is suspected of having committed..." When a TASER gun is fired at a person, that person experiences severe pain and collapses instantly. Often, the reason why the TASER gun is fired in the first place is that a police officer wants to get the person being stunned under control, during either an argument, or when the person refuses to do what the police officer requests. This fulfills the definition of torture. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states,

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.” Amendment VIII the Bill of Rights also states, “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, or cruel and unusual punishments inflicted”. Based on these statements, TASER abuse is a violation of human rights.

There are several cases of excessive use of TASER guns. In some occasions, people were shocked repeatedly with TASER guns even after they had already collapsed onto the ground, or did not present a threat to the security of the officer at all. Several incidents of this type of TASER abuse have been reported.

On March 20, 2008, Darryl Turner was shocked for 37 seconds after he got into an argument with his manager. The officer shocked Turner immediately after entering the room, when Turner was standing with his hands at his side, making no attempt to harm anyone. After he collapsed, he was shocked again. He died minutes later.

On January 15, 2008, Mark Backlund was shocked by a TASER gun on Highway 694. He was on his way to pick his parents up from the airport but got into an accident. There were five officers at the scene. He was listed as uncooperative, and then TASERed. He died soon after in the hospital.

On December 28, 2007, Emily Delafield, a wheelchair-bound insane woman, was shocked ten times within two minutes. She was apparently waving knives and hammers around on her sister's property. She died soon after.

On November 13, 2006, Kristina Fretter was shocked while in handcuffs at a police station. She was drunk and unconscious. She also died shortly.

These incidents of excessive use of TASER guns have violated Article 3 of the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officers, which states, "Law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty", and are violations of human rights.

"The development and deployment of non-lethal incapacitating weapons should be carefully evaluated... and the use of such weapons should be carefully controlled", states the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. The effects of TASER guns on people have never been studied before they started to be used on humans. According to Amnesty International, the only research that Taser International, (the manufacturer of TASER guns), has done on the effects of the TASER guns is having a company-paid farmer and doctor stun a pig and five dogs with a TASER gun. Taser International never researched the effects of TASERING a human. Using a weapon on a human before it is fully evaluated is a violation of human rights.

Finally, Article 2 of the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officers states, "In the performance of their duty, law enforcement officials shall... uphold the human rights of all persons." and Article 8 states, "Law enforcement officials shall respect the law and the present Code. They shall also... prevent and rigorously oppose any violations of them." This asserts that

any officer that violated the Code or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has violated the rights of humans. As of today, there have been many violations of the Code and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the abusive use of TASER guns. Therefore, TASER abuse is a violation of human rights.

Currently, there is not much that has been done about TASER abuse, because TASER policy is often a local issue. Individual law enforcement agencies decide the policies. People can help by lobbying in their own city to suspend the use of TASERs, or ask for more safety research on TASER guns. To improve a town's TASER policy, people can request information about TASERs, and then write to their police departments. They can also include advice on how to change the TASER policy. There have been many cases in which signed petitions have changed a town's TASER policy. There are also many other ways to change a town's TASER policy. Most of the time, regular people are the ones who act and because of them, many innocent lives can be saved.

TASER abuse is a violation of human rights in many different ways. It can be corrected if the TASER policy is improved. Let us work together so that there will be fewer violations of human rights, and the world will be a better place for many more people!

The Use of Child Soldiers Must Stop

Imagine that you are a young child walking around scared and unprotected because you were forced to fight in a war. You don't get to see your family and it is likely you may never see them again. One of your friends was just injured and you don't know if they will live or not. You are told what to do and have no control over your life. Everywhere you go you witness death and destruction. Everyday there are children in foreign countries forced to become soldiers who live in situations as terrible as this scenario or worse. Child soldiers are currently being used in 17 countries in Africa, Central America, and the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Colombia, India, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan. These innocent children's basic human rights are being violated. It should be a part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and an international law that children should not be forced to be soldiers.

There are many moral arguments against children being used as soldiers, but few laws or international agreements. In article 3 of the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights it says, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." Also Article 4 of the Universal Declaration says, "No one shall be held in slavery and servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms". If these children are forced to fight then they are being held in servitude. Also in article 5 it says, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Since children are getting hurt in battle so their captors are violating this human right. These declarations can be used as an argument against the use of child soldiers. But there needs to be specific statements forbidding the use of child soldiers in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in international laws.

Some people are trying to stop the use of child soldiers. President Bush passed a law that

says that any person who enters the U.S and has been involved with recruiting child soldiers can be prosecuted. If found guilty they can be jailed for up to twenty years, or up to a life in prison if their action resulted in the child's death.

The Human Rights Watch has already put a lot of information out stating that people need to stop using child soldiers so that more people are aware of this issue. The U.S. Campaign to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers is made up of more than sixty U.S. Organizations. They are campaigning for U.S. ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention is trying to stop the use of child soldiers.

There are some things that we can do to help. We can write to the President of the U.S. because he has connections to other countries. The President can tell other governments that using child soldiers is wrong because it is violation the child's human rights. He can tell the governments that it should be against the law in their countries to force children to be soldiers. We can also help to stop the use of child soldiers by giving money or helping support the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Another organization we could give money to is Human Rights Watch because they are a main group that is watching this problem. We can also join the Human Rights Watch Children's Action Network. We need to create awareness so we need to tell the media and newspapers that they need to write about people in other countries using innocent children as soldiers. Finally, people need to know that major human rights documents don't say anything about children and their rights. We should make sure that major human rights documents have more information about children's human rights. If we do these things then we can help to stop the use of child soldiers.

These innocent children should stop being used as soldiers. It should be an international

law because children should have the right to be free and have fun and learn. When they are in the military they don't get to choose what they do and they never get time to play with friends or have the comfort of their family. Additionally, child soldiers may die young so by allowing this to happen the government is killing future generations. The kids that survive being soldiers may have mental health problems because they witnessed death and were forced to kill people. The use of child soldiers should be stopped NOW!!

HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY

Has there ever been a big problem with illegal immigrants in Iowa? Well, I went on the web to find an article that violated a human right. I think I found a good one. It is about a huge raid on illegal immigrants working in a meat plant. Not just any meat plant, the biggest kosher meat plant in the nation. The government had been planning this raid for months, the immigration authorities from the **Immigration and Customs Enforcement** were in coordination with the local authorities. In one day they arrested around 387 people. It only took four days to sentence 297 workers to 5 months in prison for false documentation. Two people got sentenced for one year in prison for the same offense, and 8 more were convicted of a different crime. The last twenty-seven were just put on probation.

Those arrested were mainly from Guatemala. They came into the court room in groups of 10 and they all had shackles on their hands and feet. They had a Spanish interpreter say their pleas for them because they could not speak English. One by one, they stated they had taken the job using fraudulent immigration documents and/or social security cards. Right after they were done with this, they were moved to another court room for sentencing.

The prosecutors made a plea bargain to plead guilty for the lesser crime to avoid more serious charges. A lot of the immigrants agreed to immediate deportation after their sentence was up. The National Cattle Congress in Waterloo held the hearing. The place had mobile trailers and a dance hall that was modified to handle the proceedings.

What I think violated a human right was that the immigrants were denied a meeting with an immigration lawyer. They were rushed through the prosecution process without due process. The police officers even say you have a right to a lawyer, they say it when they make an arrest. The immigrants should have the same rights in the prosecution process as if they were U.S. Citizens. The whole thing was over in four days, they had made the sentences for the workers and everything. This is why the American Immigration Lawyers Association protested.

This was the most sentences in a single day in the northern Iowa district. What is weird is it was most sentences in a day but only took four days to clear up. It is remarkable because immigration violations generally fall under civil statutes. Relatively few immigrants that were caught in raids have been charged with federal crimes like document fraud or identity theft. Even a law professor at Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon said "To my knowledge, the magnitude of these indictments is completely unprecedented."

Only a couple of workers had no criminal record according to court documents. Representatives from the Agriprocessors Inc. said that they were working with the government and that the owner of the meat plant had been looking for a replacement for the chief executive officer of the company. They are the largest producer of kosher meat, but with a large portion of their workforce gone, they will have a hard time maintaining that status. The economy of Waterloo will also be greatly affected. The owner will have to find a new source of workers from within the U.S.A..

In the Bill of Rights amendment 5, it states that no one shall be deprived of liberty without due process. This clearly shows that the arrested workers have the right to have due process. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 2, it states, "no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs." Just because the workers were from Guatemala does not mean they don't deserve a fair trial. What the immigration authorities did was violate a human right.

I could go to school and become a lawyer to help future immigrants that find themselves in similar situations. I could also become an immigration authority that helps immigration cases. On the other hand I could just be more aware and make my multibillion dollar company only hire U.S. citizens.

Even though it seems bad, some of what happened is actually good. You get food in prison and you don't have to pay for it. Some of the workers were getting paid very little. A little girl said, "She knew what time she would start but not what time she would finish." So as I found out in my researching this project, this is a bigger problem then I realized and we need to fix it.