

Student stands up against genocide

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World Without Genocide, a human rights organization located at William Mitchell College of Law, hosted the second annual Summer Institute for high school students from August 14-16 in St. Paul. The three-day program, Children of Genocide: The Holocaust, Rwanda, and Darfur, focused on the children that suffer from genocide – as child soldiers, victims, survivors, and refugees – and the connection between genocide and the prevalence of hate and violence in our communities and around the world.

Jaelyne Palmer, who attends Hopkins West Junior High in Minneapolis, participated in the Institute as a first year student. She had the opportunity to meet with two local Holocaust survivors, learn about the psychology of hate, and participate in leadership development training.

Rachel Beecroft, Programming and Operations Coordinator of World Without Genocide developed the Institute to train the next generation of leaders. She believes that violence and genocide happen for many complicated reasons, but they also for a very simple one – "because people let them happen." She envisions a world without genocide, and teaching youth about

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these issues as well as the tools to stand up for human rights – both locally and globally – is a crucial step in the prevention of genocide.

Palmer and other students met with John Bagwell of the Enough Project in Washington, D.C., an organization that focuses on human rights issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Darfur. Bagwell told students that the extraction of minerals in Congo continues a bloody conflict that has left over six million people dead in twenty years. Those minerals are used in all small electronics products, including cell phones and laptops. The Enough Project's campaign, the Conflict-Free Initiative, encourages schools, communities, and cities to buy electronics only from companies not using 'conflict minerals' from Congo.

The Summer Institute gave students skills to become advocates for human rights in their schools, communities, and beyond. Students like Palmer will use that advocacy training to promote the Conflict-Free Initiative in their schools and communities this year.

World Without Genocide, headquartered at William Mitchell College of Law, promotes education and action to protect innocent people, prevent genocide, prosecute perpetrators, and remember those whose lives and cultures have been destroyed by genocide. Visit www.worldwithoutgenocide.org for more information.