



Weill Cornell Medical College

# The Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights

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Issue No. 9 | December 2015

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## Evaluations

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### Total Evaluations to Date:

247 evaluations for 212 unique clients

## Upcoming Events

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### Working with Survivors of FGM and Sexual Violence

Monday, Dec. 14th, 7 PM  
402 E 67<sup>th</sup> St, Floor C1, Rm. A

### Fall Debrief

Rescheduled, TBD



Carmen Stellar '16 acknowledges faculty evaluators at the 3rd Annual WCCHR Holiday Party.

## Mid-Year Update

The Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights (WCCHR) turned five years old this year. Since its founding, the Center has conducted 247 evaluations for 212 unique clients. Thus far, 62 of our clients have been granted asylum, and 91 clients have been referred to continuing care, allowing them to gain access to necessary medical and social services.

This year, WCCHR trained 38 student volunteers and 11 faculty evaluators. We hosted student-faculty lunches and sent student volunteers to the annual Physicians for Human Rights conference.

Happy Holidays, and thank you for your continued support of the Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights!

## WCCHR Holiday Party

The 2015 WCCHR holiday fundraiser was a great success! We sold 110 tickets and raised a total of \$1,995.

The proceeds from the Holiday Party go toward our Client Fund, which is designed to cover expenses for necessary services that cannot be accessed for free or via referral to another agency.



Thank you to all the all faculty evaluators, student volunteers, and community members who attended this event. Special thanks to Sixpoint Brewery for their beverage donation, and to all our talented student performers.

## Student Leadership in the Creation and Operation of an Asylum Clinic

In November, student leaders and faculty mentors published an article in the Health and Human Rights Journal, detailing the design, principles, and implementation of the WCCHR model. The manuscript describes the foundation of the Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights, and provides a blueprint for medical students interested in establishing asylum clinics at their respective institutions. The article highlights the ways in which WCCHR fulfills its dual mission of service and education by conducting forensic evaluations for asylum seekers, and teaching healthcare professionals about the varied roles clinicians can play in the field of asylum work.

**Link to paper:** <http://www.hhrjournal.org/2015/11/student-leadership-in-the-creation-and-operation-of-an-asylum-clinic/>

## In the News

### CIA Torture is Unfinished Business

— Human Rights Watch, December 1st, 2014

Last year, a Senate report was released detailing human rights abuses sanctioned by the CIA during post-September 11th interrogation of detainees. The Human Rights Watch released a report on December 1st summarizing not only the torture that took place, but also the failure of the U.S. criminal justice system to prosecute the individuals responsible for these horrific abuses. Although the Human Rights Watch report details existing evidence that could be used in a criminal investigation, the Bush and Obama administrations have repeatedly resisted such investigations. Without criminal charges and the resulting consequences, the Human Rights Watch suggests that torture could continue to be a policy option for future administrations.

**Link to article:** <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/01/us-cia-torture-unfinished-business>

## Spotlight on...

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### Nicholas Hernandez, MS3

**Nicholas Hernandez** grew up in Bangor, Maine and graduated from the University of Chicago in 2010, where he studied Mathematics, Economics, and Chemistry. While studying economics, Nick became interested in issues of global inequalities and the unique health needs faced by developing economies and their constituents. Following graduation, he worked for three years at Harvard studying fundamental aspects of HIV infection and its interrelationship with cardiovascular disease. Currently a third-year MD-PhD student, Nicholas works in the laboratory of Jean-Laurent Casanova at Rockefeller University, studying rare genetic defects that result in susceptibility to infectious disease in young children. He is particularly interested in human rights as well as the social determinants of health, and looks forward to further appreciating their complexities as he continues to serve the asylum community with WCCHR.



### Joanne Ahola, M.D.

Dr. Joanne Ahola is a board certified psychiatrist on the voluntary faculties of the Weill Cornell Medical College and the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. She maintains a private practice in general and psychodynamic psychiatry. Dr. Ahola has been a member of the volunteer Asylum Network of Physicians for Human Rights since 2000, conducting psychological evaluations of asylum seekers. With PHR, Dr. Ahola has trained health professionals around the country in evaluating and documenting the psychological effects of torture and other forms of persecution. She has particular expertise in LGBT asylum, the one year filing deadline, and testifying in court asylum hearings. Dr. Ahola is a faculty evaluator and Medical Director Emeritus of WCCHR.