



# Human Rights Foundation

---

Annual Report 2007

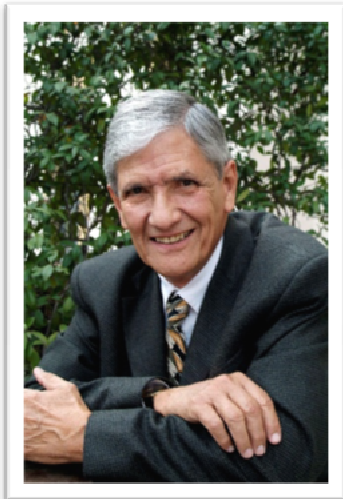
## Table of Contents

---

Message from the Chairman	2
Message from the President	3
About the Human Rights Foundation	4
2007 Program Report	5
Media	16
Financials	18
International Council, Directors, and Staff	20
Get Involved	23
Contact Us	23

## Message from the Chairman

---



Early one morning in 1960, I awoke to find a machine gun's cold muzzle pressed to my forehead. I was twenty-three years old when agents of Fidel Castro's political police detained me. Two weeks later, a sham tribunal convicted me of "terrorism" and "sabotage" and sentenced me to thirty years' imprisonment. I was locked up because I refused to place on my desk at work a slogan expressing approval of communist ideology.

My fellow political prisoners and I endured brutal beatings, mutilations, extended solitary confinements in total darkness, forced starvation, inhumane psychological and biological experiments, and other horrors. I remained incarcerated in Castro's gulag for twenty-two years. Even now, memories of my friends' agonies continue to haunt me. But their proud unbroken spirits, and the final brave shouts of "freedom!" as many of them faced the firing squads, continue to inspire me.

In 1987, Ronald Regan appointed me U.S. Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Commission and I headed the American delegation that helped indict Castro's Cuba for repeatedly violating human rights. We brought about a sea-change in world opinion.

When I agreed to become a member of the board of directors of the Human Rights Foundation—of which I am now chairman—I recognized the emergence of a powerful, principled, and unambiguous new voice, one that I am proud to support. As a nonpartisan organization dedicated to defending freedom in the Americas, HRF returns to the classical liberal ideals that animated the original human rights movement—the right of all individuals to be free from arbitrary detainment or exile, from slavery and torture, and from interference in matters of conscience.

I hope you share my belief in the moral importance of HRF's work, and will support our effort to free the oppressed and ensure the vitality and stability of democracy in the Americas.

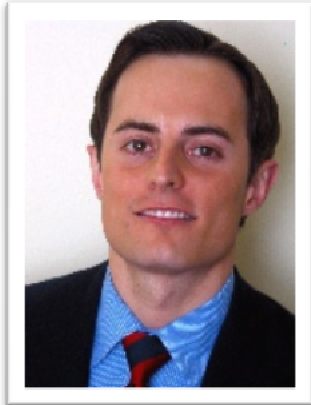
The accomplishments of 2007 are only the beginning!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Armando Valladares" with a stylized flourish below it.

*Armando Valladares*  
*Chairman*

## Message from the President

---



Recent political trends reveal a wave of authoritarianism spreading throughout the Americas like never before. A growing number of elected leaders are launching assaults on human rights and civil liberties in their countries in large executive power grabs, often under the pretense of populist reform. The Latin American movement to eliminate individual rights is gaining enormous traction, and its profoundly repressive and anti-democratic tactics need to be monitored and exposed. There is no organization that dedicates itself exclusively to defending the founding freedoms of democratic society—political and civil rights—in the Americas. The Human Rights Foundation was created to fill that void.

HRF was incorporated in mid-2005, and began its work in August of 2006 when it moved into new offices in New York City's Empire State Building. 2007 represented our first full year of operations—it was a great year. From

legal reports to rock concerts, from letter-writing campaigns to viral videos, from policy prescriptions to direct aid, and from campus chapters to international chapters, it has been a year replete with accomplishments. HRF was catapulted from near-total obscurity to a position of growing recognition and respect in the human rights community—a testament not only to the passion and dedication of our small staff, but also to the acute hemispheric need for more voices of integrity and reason in the cacophony of international NGOs. We are still far from reaching the size and standing we would like, as is our goal, but our progress in 2007 was remarkable nonetheless.

Most important of all has been the amazingly encouraging response we have received. After Venezuelan political prisoner Francisco Usón, whose case HRF advocated for more than a year, was finally released in December, Mr. Usón's lawyer praised our involvement:

*We are so grateful to HRF. Whereas other international human rights organizations have utterly abandoned Venezuela's political prisoners, HRF was a beacon that kept up the international pressure that was so crucial to keeping Francisco [Usón] alive and ultimately bringing about his freedom. Thank you!*

HRF was the only organization that visited Mr. Usón in prison, and has been the only organization performing in-depth work on the majority of our cases. The sentiment expressed by Mr. Usón's defense attorney is not unique; it has been a recurring theme as Latin Americans continuously approach us with their amazement over the existence and quality of our work. Too many of the people we are trying to help never believed, until they learned about HRF, that anyone outside of their countries—let alone in the United States—noticed or cared about the erosion of their individual liberty. HRF may become the cure for what ails human rights organizations.

With the support of those committed to the defense of genuine liberty, we can stand up against the trend toward collectivism and away from individual rights. Together we can safeguard freedom in the Americas. Thank you for your interest in HRF's accomplishments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Halvorssen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

*Thor Halvorssen*  
President



# About the Human Rights Foundation

---

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) defends and promotes fundamental human rights in the American hemisphere. Our staff works directly to intervene on behalf of those persecuted, jailed, harassed, tortured, or enslaved in the Americas.

HRF works to free political prisoners and to draw the world's attention to those places where the media and the world want to look the other way. We expose and denounce tyranny—whether fascist or communist governments (such as Pinochet in Chile or Castro in Cuba) or authoritarian governments masquerading as democracies (such as Chávez in Venezuela or Correa in Ecuador).

## Mission

The Human Rights Foundation is a nonpartisan organization which aims to bring together persons—regardless of their political, cultural, and ideological orientations—in the common cause of defending human rights and promoting liberal democracy in the American hemisphere. HRF recognizes the inalienable rights that protect the individual from arbitrary state and legal actions. HRF believes that all American nations must acknowledge and protect the freedom of their citizens; it stands for the possibility of fully democratic American states, limited by the rule of law, that honor and uphold the principles of liberty.

As an organization dedicated to raising awareness both about the nature of freedom and the vulnerability of freedom in the Americas, HRF centers its attention on the founding principles of individual liberty. Although current debates about whether it is possible to define universal economic and cultural rights are useful and important, those debates tend to divide those who would otherwise be strong allies in the struggle for rights. Our working definition of human rights sidesteps these debates and returns to the ideals that originated and animated the human rights movement: freedom of self-determination and freedom from tyranny.

We believe that all human beings have the rights to:

- ❖ Express themselves freely.
- ❖ Worship in the manner of their choice.
- ❖ Associate with those of like mind.
- ❖ Acquire and dispose of property.
- ❖ Leave and enter their countries.
- ❖ Be accorded equal treatment and due process under law.
- ❖ Be free from arbitrary detention, exile, slavery, torture, and from interference and coercion in matters of conscience.

We seek, in particular, to sustain the struggle for liberty in those areas where it is presently under threat.

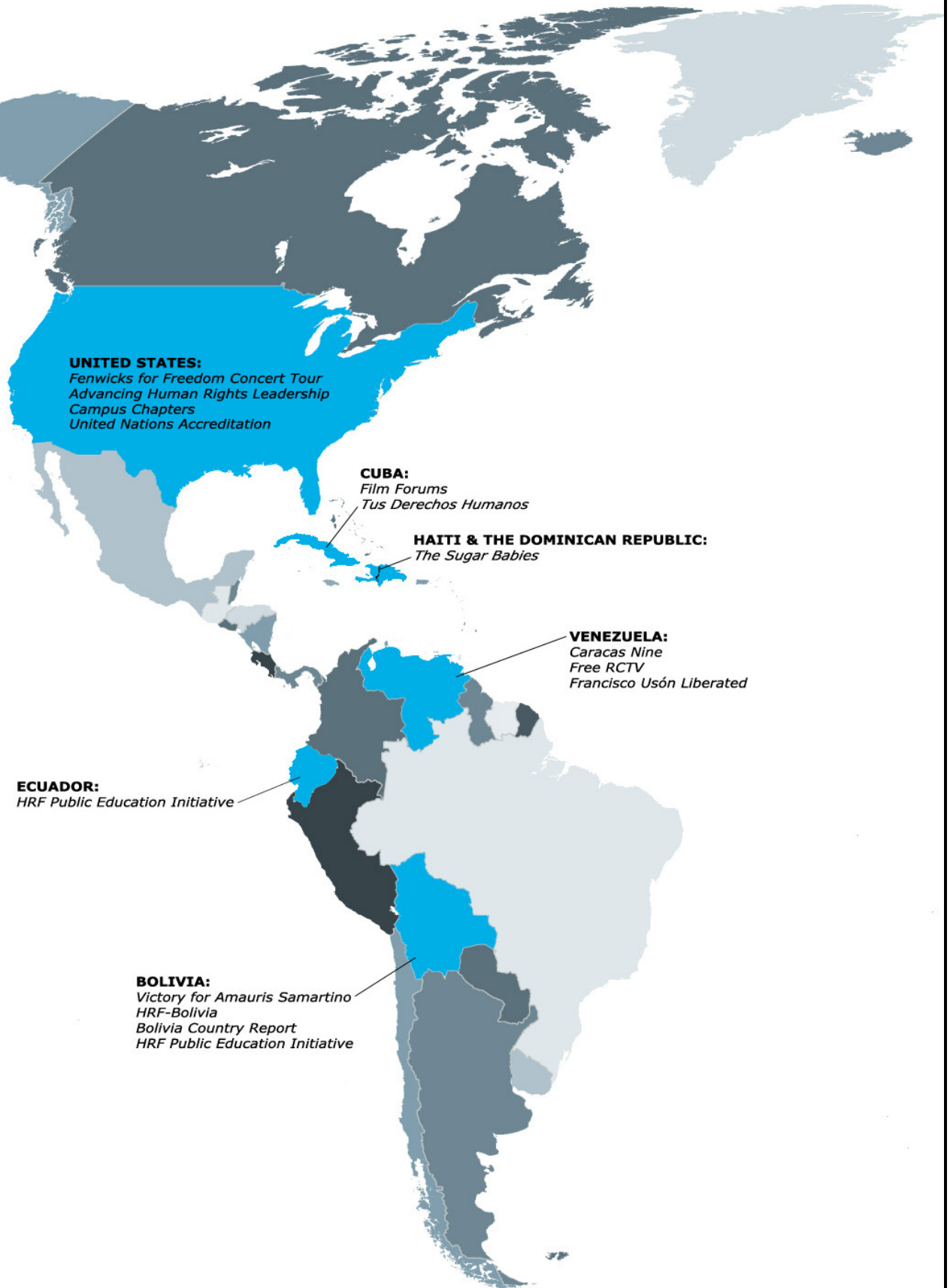


## Transparency

HRF is committed to a policy of transparency. When HRF takes a case or makes a determination, we show—rather than just tell—what we know and believe. In each case, we are as open and clear as we can be about why we perceive a rights violation and how we arrived at our position. We disclose fully all relevant case information, regardless of whether that information strengthens or weakens our position. We welcome public criticism to ensure that we do not stray from the highest standards of research and analysis. Most importantly, we view our integrity as our most powerful weapon in the struggle for liberty throughout the Americas.

# 2007 Program Report

---





## VENEZUELA

### The Caracas Nine

*Nine victims of political persecution in Venezuela*



The Caracas Nine is a project launched by the Human Rights Foundation in October of 2007 to expose the violence, persecution, and warfare that Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's government is openly waging against the media, civil society, and Venezuelan democracy. The Caracas Nine are nine Venezuelan men and women who have been persecuted, injured, tortured, and/or imprisoned on trumped up charges from the Chávez government. They have been arrested, attacked, subjected to death threats, had explosive devices thrown at them, and had their families harassed and threatened. Some have been jailed and subjected to torture, which has now been institutionalized in Venezuela. HRF has ongoing investigations of each case, and is using these nine individuals as representative cases to spearhead the effort to bring immediate global attention to the human rights crisis in Venezuela, and encourage other human rights organizations to stop turning a blind eye and to shoulder their responsibility. All casework is available at [www.CaracasNine.com](http://www.CaracasNine.com). A 4-minute short film created on the subject has had a staggering response with more than 296,000 views on YouTube.

### Free RCTV

*Exposing censorship of independent media*

On May 7, 2007, HRF launched the Free RCTV campaign to protest and expose Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's decision to shut down Venezuela's most popular TV station, RCTV, an independent broadcaster which aired editorial material critical of the Chávez administration. The government shut down RCTV on May 28, seizing hundreds of millions of dollars of the station's equipment and immediately identifying Globovisión, the last remaining independent broadcaster, as its next "counterrevolutionary" target. HRF organized a campaign in which supporters and allies sent hundreds of thousands of letters to Venezuelan ambassadors across the world protesting Venezuela's crackdown on free expression. HRF brought the RCTV case to the attention of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and was supported in its efforts by Venezuelan movie star María Conchita Alonso, generating significant Latin media about the campaign. The campaign website—[www.FreeRCTV.com](http://www.FreeRCTV.com)—remains as a record of Venezuela's sad descent toward the abolition of freedom of expression. Our efforts were essential in providing international media with an understanding of what was at stake and its significance for Venezuela. Visitors to the website numbered in the millions and included media, public policy analysts, foreign government officials, and the public.



University students in Caracas clash with armed pro-government forces. The student protests began in response to the shutdown of RCTV.

## Francisco Usón Liberated

*Victory for freedom in Venezuela*



Ramo Verde, where Usón was incarcerated. The prison lacks running water, medical care, and any semblance of human dignity.

On Christmas Eve 2007, after more than a year of a worldwide HRF campaign for his release, prisoner of conscience Francisco Usón was freed by the judge presiding over appeals in his case. Usón, a retired army general and former cabinet minister in the government of President Chávez, was sentenced to five-and-a-half years of prison in a maximum security jail for his televised pro-human rights statements which were deemed “defamatory” of the armed forces. Although the conditions of Usón’s release are outrageously severe—they include that he not comment about his case; not participate in any political events, marches, protests, or gatherings; not run for public office; and that he submit to a psychiatric evaluation—he is now at home and away from prison where his life was in constant danger (he survived two “accidental” adrenaline injections which almost caused him fatal heart attacks). Usón told HRF that “this is only the beginning—working with HRF, I will labor to free every last one of the political prisoners I left behind. Despite what we are living, nobody can control our consciences—we are a country of free men and women.”



HRF President Thor Halvorssen celebrates with Francisco Usón and his wife Maria Eugenia in their home in Caracas two days after Usón was granted conditional release on Christmas Eve.



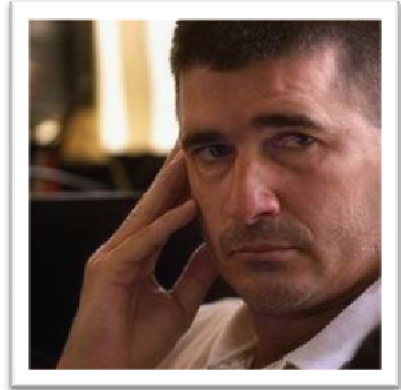


## BOLIVIA

### Amauris Samartino

*Victory for freedom in Bolivia*

In January of 2007, the Bolivian government detained dissident Amauris Samartino for having expressed his public criticism of the Bolivian and Cuban governments. HRF immediately filed an amicus curiae brief on Samartino’s behalf. HRF declared Samartino a prisoner of conscience and a political prisoner of the Bolivian government. Initially he was threatened with deportation to Cuba. Due to international pressure he was expelled to Colombia. The Bolivian Constitutional Tribunal subsequently condemned Samartino’s expulsion as unconstitutional and “illegal” in a decision which was openly influenced by HRF’s argument. Shortly after the court decision, HRF ran print advertisements in two prominent Bolivian newspapers to educate the Bolivian public about the case and its implications. Samartino has since been granted political asylum in Norway. The case put HRF on the map inside Bolivia.



Amauris Samartino, HRF’s first prisoner of conscience.

### HRF-Bolivia

*HRF’s first international affiliate chapter*

HRF’s successful advocacy for Amauris Samartino generated extraordinary interest in Bolivia for HRF’s work, leading to the creation in March of 2007 of HRF’s first affiliate office by a group of jurists and think tank personnel with sterling reputations and a passion for defending human rights in their homeland. The press conference held to announce the opening of HRF-Bolivia enjoyed huge popular support and garnered coverage in every major national newspaper and two major television stations. Significantly, the tribal chieftains of Bolivia’s key native organization were present at the event. HRF-Bolivia began operations immediately and has been actively working as a watchdog organization, bringing violations of human rights in Bolivia to the public’s attention through research and reporting, media outreach, censure of Bolivian government personnel, educational efforts, and collaboration with other local human rights groups.



A conference at the Santa Cruz Bar Association celebrating the creation of HRF-Bolivia.



Left to right: Dr. Hugo Achá, President, HRF-Bolivia; Dr. Fernando Cuéllar, President, Santa Cruz Bar Association; Thor Halvorsen; Yusby Méndez-Bachstetter, Legal Director, Human Rights Foundation.



HRF President Thor Halvorsen (center) with Bolivian tribal chieftains and community leaders from Bolivia's "social movements."



A conference at the Santa Cruz Bar Association celebrating the creation of HRF-Bolivia.



## Country Report

### *Judicial terror threatening the rule of law in Bolivia*

HRF released a 2007 report on the horrific violations of human rights that have been occurring under the informal Bolivian system known as "communal justice." Communal justice currently allows local leaders to impart justice directly for crimes perpetrated by members of their indigenous communities, bypassing the Bolivian legal system. Communal justice cases have included death sentences for women accused of adultery, as well as sentences that involve beatings, stonings, hangings, and burnings. President Evo Morales has recently proposed a new Bolivian constitution that would grant communal justice official legal status and make it the *only* system of law available to indigenous communities, with no right to appeal and no due process guarantees for the accused. HRF's report exposes these practices and makes several policy recommendations, and has received much attention in the Latin American press for bringing alarm to an extremely harmful yet seldom-discussed problem. HRF's open letter to President Morales calling attention to these issues sparked a firestorm in Bolivia of dozens of television and media discussions, including a Bolivian cabinet minister mocking HRF on primetime television. The impact was so significant that the Bolivian government felt compelled to publish an open response to HRF attempting to deny culpability. We were told by the head of HRF-Bolivia, "You cannot fathom the impact HRF's letter had on the government. It stopped them in their tracks and reignited important constitutional debates across the country."





# CUBA

## “Tus Derechos Humanos”

*Simplifying human rights education*



HRF produced and distributed within Cuba a guide about human rights titled *Tus Derechos Humanos* (“Your Human Rights”). *Tus Derechos Humanos* breaks with the tradition of boring, throwaway human rights pamphlets by combining informal and engaging language, high production value, and presentation specifically tailored to Cuban culture. As a primer on the fundamental human rights of every person, it is strongly based in international human rights law, especially the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is, in effect, a practical manual about what makes an individual free, and Cuban recipients of these guides have repeatedly expressed joy over a publication unlike anything they had ever seen before, one which gives strong hope and moral sustenance. *Tus Derechos Humanos* is available for download at [www.TusDerechosHumanos.com](http://www.TusDerechosHumanos.com). More than ten thousand copies have been distributed inside Cuba.

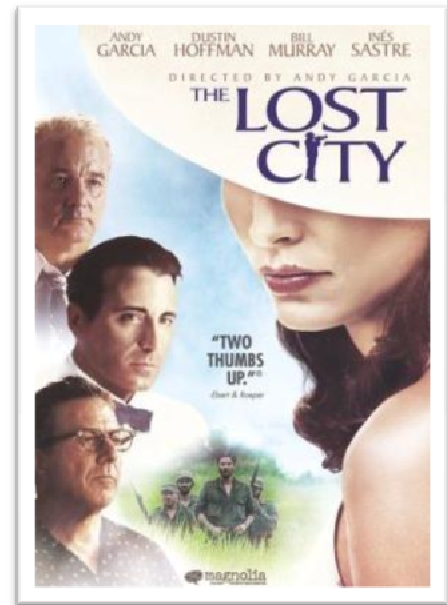


HRF composed *Tus Derechos Humanos* with the assistance of a Miami focus group of recent Cuban refugees. The focus group gave comprehensive feedback to help ensure that the HRF guide was relevant, effective, and compelling for people living in Cuba today.

## Cuban Film Forums

*Fighting censorship with the power of cinema*

Pursuant to our belief that film and entertainment are the most accessible and impactful information vehicles of our time, HRF has begun a program which supplies civil society institutions and private individuals with copies of movies and documentary films which would otherwise be unavailable to them—and in most cases, forbidden by law—due to strict government censorship of all media. The Film Freedom Circles program includes a growing catalog of titles whose issues and themes are of particular relevance to life in Cuba today, and assists Cubans in organizing small, private film screenings for their peers by distributing film discussion guides along with the movies. Feedback has been incredibly enthusiastic, and participants report that this is an excellent program for opening the minds of Cuban youth to the ideals of freedom and democracy. Films exhibited in Cuba include *Hammer & Tickle*, *The Singing Revolution*, *Freedom's Fury*, and *The King of Communism*.







## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC/HAITI

### “The Sugar Babies”

*Exposing modern-day slavery*

HRF was fiscal sponsor of the human rights-oriented feature-length documentary *The Sugar Babies* which denounces the economic exploitation of Haitian sugar cane workers in the Dominican Republic. The perpetrators are companies whose owners live in the United States and obtain hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. taxpayer subsidies (they are big campaign donors to both Democratic and Republican parties). The film names those responsible for what can only be described as modern-day slavery, and exposes the conditions that families and especially the “invisible” children are subjected to on a daily basis. Composed of gripping field testimonies and hidden camera footage obtained during 18 months of documentation, *The Sugar Babies* is extremely powerful and has strong potential to shame the perpetrators of these horrors into ending their abuses. Already, those whose crimes the film exposes have united with Dominican Republic government officials in a desperate campaign to keep the film from showing. They have thus far tried bribing the film’s producers, bribing journalists assigned to cover the film, fabricating a (false) legal argument that the film violates copyright law, and distributing propaganda. HRF is planning aggressive publicity to accompany the film’s launch and distribution. More information is available at [www.SugarBabiesFilm.com](http://www.SugarBabiesFilm.com).



HRF President Thor Halvorssen discusses *The Sugar Babies* at the Montreal International Haitian Festival where a two-day human rights conference took place to discuss modern slavery in the Caribbean.



## UNITED STATES

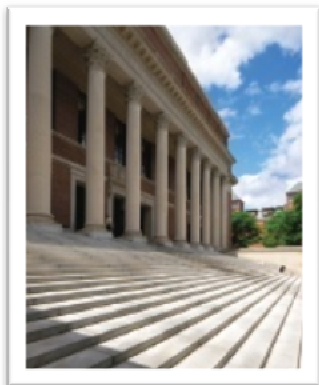
### **The Fenwicks for Freedom**

*Rock concerts in New York, Virginia Beach, Charlotte, Jacksonville, and Miami*

Popular and beloved third wave ska band the Fenwicks, whom critics have described as a “manic cross between Madness and The Marx Brothers,” embarked on a two-month concert tour in October and November of 2007 to promote the ideas and work of the Human Rights Foundation. From the Knitting Factory in New York to Studio A in Miami, the band used their stage to entertain their devoted fans and to educate about the Venezuelan human rights crisis, raising awareness about HRF’s Caracas Nine campaign. HRF literature and promotional “swag” were distributed. All of their shows included a rousing, participatory chorus of “Free Venezuela”—a cover song whose lyrics the Fenwicks rewrote to raise awareness about the crimes of the Chávez government—an instant hit with every audience.



The Fenwicks, with frontman Steven Schub, perform at the Knitting Factory in New York in the opening show of their two-month tour promoting awareness of HRF’s work and solidarity with Venezuela’s political prisoners.



## Campus Chapters

*Promoting student activism for human rights*

HRF created campus chapters at Harvard University, Columbia University, and George Mason University in 2007, and aims to create at least four more chapters in 2008. By working to invigorate campus discussions on human rights, these chapters represent a much-needed alternative to human rights groups unconcerned about the threats to human rights in the Americas. HRF's activities on campus are crucial building blocks in the creation of grassroots action and publicity networks for human rights.



## United Nations Accreditation

*Pursuing a voice at the center of human rights influence*

In 2007, HRF completed and submitted its voluminous application to the United Nations seeking UN accreditation for official consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Once accepted, accreditation will provide HRF with a formal, internationally-credible platform from which to directly and constantly denounce attacks on individual rights whenever and wherever they occur, regardless of political context. HRF believes firmly in the importance of adding more voices to the UN, and plans to repeat the application process as many times as necessary regardless of possible rejections.

## UPCOMING: International Chapter Development

*HRF's mission from global to local*

Building on the successful launch of HRF-Bolivia, HRF intends to create similar international affiliate chapters throughout Latin America. Plans are underway for the creation of HRF-Venezuela in mid-2008, which will be chaired by former Venezuelan political prisoner Francisco Usón whose case HRF worked rigorously on until his release in December 2007. HRF also aims to establish HRF-Ecuador, HRF-Nicaragua, and HRF-Colombia in the coming three years.



## Advancing Human Rights Leadership

*Educating key players and human rights activists*

HRF has met and continues to interact with European parliamentarians, UN senior officials, government officials from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, and in the United States with representatives from the White House, the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, and cabinet level appointees. HRF educates these key leaders about the hemispheric crisis in individual rights and advises government action that would support human rights work and promote a free society and stable democracies in the region. HRF continues to make inroads into international NGOs and UN affiliated organizations. HRF personnel spoke about human rights at more than 25 events in 2007, ranging from being one of three featured speakers at the American Enterprise Institute conference on hemispheric threats to addressing student groups across the country.



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon discusses Hugo Chávez's shutdown of independent media with HRF President Thor Halvorssen in New York.



Senator Joe Lieberman gives a thumbs-up to HRF Chairman Armando Valladares.



Estonia's Member of the European Parliament Tunne Kelam with HRF Chairman Armando Valladares at a memorial ceremony for the victims of communism.



# Media

The innovative work of the Human Rights Foundation earned significant recognition in 2007 in both the U.S. and international press. HRF and its work were featured in a total of eighteen (18) English-language and thirty-four (34) Spanish-language news articles—including a feature on HRF staff in the *New York Times*—as well as scores of independent blogs throughout the hemisphere.

Representatives of HRF made noteworthy contributions to media coverage of Latin America, including a *Wall Street Journal* editorial by HRF Chairman Armando Valladares and a *New York Post* editorial by HRF President Thor Halvorssen. When Cameron Diaz was forced to apologize after brandishing a bag in Peru with a Maoist political slogan, *Page Six* quoted Halvorssen on Hollywood's double standard for right-wing versus left-wing dictatorships. Halvorssen's comments were picked up by news wires and covered in scores of media outlets, including a segment on E! Entertainment Television. He also appeared in multiple television interviews in 2007 speaking about the rise of authoritarian populism in Latin America, including repeat appearances on CNN, Mega TV, and Fox Business; in two short years we have reached a point where these stations regularly have HRF on the air for expert opinion on hemispheric human rights issues.

**THOR HALVORSEN**  
**"La lucha por los derechos humanos no tiene fronteras"**  
 PROMUEVE La Fundación de Derechos Humanos ve con preocupación el tema de la violación a los derechos, cuya clara muestra es la expulsión del cubano Amador Samartino.

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**  
 MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2007 • VOL. CCLXIX, NO. 33  
**Castro's Gulag**  
 Like thousands of other Cubans, I was arrested in the middle of the night. Fidel Castro's police raided my parents' home, struck a machine gun in my face and took me away. It was 1960 and I was 22 years old.  
 The news that the Cuban dictator is gravely ill floods my mind with memories of my years spent in captivity. I believe that those of us who were political prisoners know his legacy better than anyone. For 22 years, I was an inmate in his vast prison system, mostly confined to an island gulag, for crimes I did not commit.  
 Like the majority of Cubans in 1959, I cheered Castro's victory over Fulgencio Batista, a dictator on friendly terms with the U.S. Castro called himself the enemy of all dictatorships; he had a cross hanging round his neck and he swore that Batista. But most of them were innocent people eliminated in Ernesto "Che" Guevara's psychotic quest for what he and Castro called the "new man."  
 The impunity of Castro's dictatorship was marked by its cruelty. A prisoner in my block, Julio Tan, once refused an order by a prison guard to dig weeds. The guard struck him with his bayonet, another until he bled to death in just a matter of minutes. My friend Pedro Luis Botel, a student leader and courageous opponent of Batista, went on a hunger strike in 1972 to protest his treatment. On the 49th day of the strike, Castro personally ordered that Botel be denied drinking water. Botel died of thirst, in horrific agony, five days later.  
 The tactics regime included the such as reptiles and rats; have prisoners lose all blindfolding prisoners, yet, and then lowering told are filled with crocs that had their teeth set upon prisoners with backs. Usually, these first. All of this was documented by a visited Nations. The vimeva.  
 for Cuba will be much a, Pol Pot and Jeng Sari Germany. It will also include the numbers of victims, of fire, murder, exile, famars and blood. Castro ne of the cruelest of all sented his own people. y will also include the a governments, intel- to fought ferociously violations of human atorships, yet ap- many of these intel- and accomplices in n people, Rafael Cor- uld president of Ecuar- a there is no dictator- ready shown that he critics at the point of mocracy, is the new population of politi-

**NEW YORK POST**  
 LATE CITY FINAL  
 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 2007 / Sunny to partly cloudy, 76 / Weather: Page 38 \*\*  
 www.nypost.com  
 25 CENTS  
 25¢

**Hugo & the Media Kings**

**THOR HALVORSEN**

Our TV screens in America, we see Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his army of thugs cracking down on the hundreds of thousands of students protesting the shutdown of the nation's last truly independent TV station. Yet, inside the story of "the dictator vs. the forces of freedom" is a tale of two Venezuelan media kings — one heroic, one craven.

Chavez's shutdown of RCTV late last month (by refusing to renew its broadcast license) was meant to be the final move in his drive to shut down all independent voices.

In the eight years since he took the presidency, journalism has become one of Venezuela's most dangerous professions. The government and its supporters have regularly harassed, frequently beaten and sometimes killed reporters. Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House and Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and others have all condemned the Chavez government's war on the media.

RCTV had broadcast for 50 years and had become a strident critic of the Chavez regime. As the last major voice reporting anything but the government line, it was the country's most popular TV station.

The hero is RCTV's director, Marcel Granier — who received no legal notice of the shutdown. He first learned of it when Chavez announced that RCTV would be punished for criticizing the government, for being "bourgeois" and for "coup plotting." (As a final insult, the government two days before the shutdown produced a judge who ordered RCTV's equipment seized and

"loaned" to a new government station that has now replaced it.) In response, Granier has risked his life and fortune for the sake of freedom of expression. He has kept his TV reporters working; they're now broadcasting news segments on the student protests via YouTube, other Web sites and viral videos. The Congress' vice president has called for his arrest for "destabilizing."

A Venezuelan official openly described the RCTV closing as part of a plan for "communicational hegemony" over information and programming. One free TV station remains, Globovision, but its coverage is not nationwide and its viewers are limited to Venezuela's middle class.

Plus, a day after the RCTV shutdown, Chavez called for a probe of Globovision and threatened to cancel its license. He also taunted the station's director: "Are you prepared to die?"

Regime apologists will point to one other "independent" station, the privately held Venevisión — which brings us to our media villain.

At first, Venevisión did indeed harshly criticize Chavez. But in 2004 Chavez accused the station's owner, New York-based Gustavo Cisneros, of being behind a plot to overthrow the government. After a private meeting between the two (attended by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter), Venevisión changed course: Political commentary disappeared; opposition marches and statements by opposition leaders began getting

short shrift; news became entirely rosy coverage of government activities.

How deep is the collusion between Cisneros and Chavez? Consider a December 2006 phone conversation between Cisneros' senior deputy at Venevisión, Carlos Bardasano, and Jesus Romero Anselmi, head of the government TV channel, Venezolana de Televisión. (The recording was posted anonymously on YouTube.com; "mirror sites" have defeated the regime's attempts to suppress the record.) In the call, the executives agree that "together, we are unstoppable." They also joke about how Venevisión might undergo a name change to reflect government ownership.

Cisneros, a Fifth Avenue socialite, is a media giant. He's on the board of Univision, the United States' largest Latino broadcaster; his firm owns dozens of radio, TV and other telecom properties.

He's also wont to attend media conferences in the United States, delivering speeches about the media's duty to ensure that the public gets the information it needs and ensure government transparency. But back in Venezuela, Venevisión executives have yet to even make a statement about the RCTV shutdown. Of course, Cisneros also stands to benefit enormously from the ad revenue that used to go to the rival channel.

Fascism doesn't triumph without help. Thor Halvorssen is president of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation, which chronicled the shutdown of RCTV at Free-RCTV.com.

**Chavez: Silencing all free voices.**

for Cuba will be much a, Pol Pot and Jeng Sari Germany. It will also include the numbers of victims, of fire, murder, exile, famars and blood. Castro ne of the cruelest of all sented his own people. y will also include the a governments, intel- to fought ferociously violations of human atorships, yet ap- many of these intel- and accomplices in n people, Rafael Cor- uld president of Ecuar- a there is no dictator- ready shown that he critics at the point of mocracy, is the new population of politi-

ed in the early 1960s, egiance to the most ment humanity has in American caudill- iance to communist tsky's line—the per- lan President Hugo

s from Fidel Castro, se outlives even its —practitioners.

S. ambassador to n Rights, is chair- man Rights Foun- All Hope: A Mem- tional Book Net-

Individual television stations in Latin America also feature HRF regularly. We are a favorite target of criticism on state-run television in Venezuela, especially on "La Hojilla"—a scatological public pillory done in the style of a people's tribunal—where we are regularly denounced as enemies of the revolution. When our first international chapter, HRF-Bolivia, opened in Santa Cruz in March of 2007, HRF appeared in every major national newspaper and as a prime time guest on two major television stations. HRF's open letter to Bolivian President Evo Morales criticizing proposed constitutional amendments sparked dozens of television and media discussions in Bolivia, including a Bolivian minister mocking HRF on primetime television.

2007 also brought substantial accomplishments in HRF's internet presence, especially via the Free RCTV and Caracas Nine campaigns. May and June, the height of the RCTV crisis, brought more than three million hits to HRF's websites, and the launch of the Caracas Nine campaign brought over one million hits in November and December. HRF produced viral videos for both campaigns, distributed via YouTube, which together were viewed by more than 230,000 people and put HRF at #39 on YouTube's list of All-Time Most Viewed Non-Profit Channels. The "Caracas Nine" video clip was so popular it spurred an independent "Caracas Nine" group on Facebook.com, a "Caracas Nine" MySpace profile, and a link on the Drudge Report. Its impact and reach extended even to the government of Venezuela, whose state-run television station Venezolana de Televisión (VTV) aired and criticized the video in an attempt to discredit HRF and deny the video's accusations. All videos are available at [www.youtube.com/HumanRightsFdn](http://www.youtube.com/HumanRightsFdn).

# The New York Times

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 2007

## A Maverick Mogul, Proudly Politically Incorrect

**By JOHN STRAUSBAUGH**  
**THOR HALVORSEN** is a hard man to pin down. If you ask him whether he's a human-rights activist, a free-speech advocate, an anti-Communist, an anti-fascist or a

of his portfolio of controversy-stirring efforts. Established with a small amount of his money, his nonprofit Moving Picture Institute has raised about \$1.5 million in donations to date to pay for, promote and



### NUEVO Día

SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA - MARTES 20 DE MARZO DE 2007 - ÉPOCA II - AÑO 19 - NÚMERO 7.600 - 16 PÁGS. - PRECIO DE LA EDICIÓN \$5.400 - INTERIOR \$5.450

## 'Nos preocupa que disidentes al Gobierno no tengan derechos'

Thor Halvorsen, presidente de la Human Rights Foundation (Fundación de Derechos Humanos) llega a Santa Cruz con la intención de abrir una oficina regional que funcionará en el Colegio de Abogados de esta

#### ENTREVISTA

El presidente de la Human Rights Foundation, Thor Halvorsen, llegó a Santa Cruz de la Sierra para inaugurar una oficina regional de esta institución de defensa a los derechos humanos.

Según Halvorsen, la situación en Bolivia es preocupante porque hay serias denuncias de violaciones de derechos humanos. "Hay casos que no han sido investigados ni mencionados por el gobierno", dijo Halvorsen al explicar que en el directorio de la oficina regional hay dirigentes sociales como Wilmar Díaz Drozpea, Teófilo de la Fuente, activista de izquierda como Juan Claudio Lecchín y el constitucionalista Juan Carlos Urdeda, entre otros.

¿Cuál es el motivo de la visita a Bolivia de la Fundación Human Rights?

Estamos en Bolivia porque hemos sido contactados por movimientos sociales, jurídicas, intelectuales, obreros y sindicalistas que quieren y ven una necesidad para que nosotros abramos una oficina aquí en Santa Cruz. Sería Human Rights Foundation.

¿Más allá del caso del disidente cubano Amaris, qué otros casos de violación de derechos conoce de Bolivia?

El caso de Cristian Urdeda (joven victimado durante los



entrambamientos de Cochabamba que el hecho sea un caso que no ha sido investigado ni mencionado por el gobierno, es verdaderamente preocupante.

No sólo los derechos se violan cuando son los individuos, sino también se violan con lo que pueda suceder nacionalmente, cuando la sede del Tribunal Constitucional de Bolivia es atacado sabidamente, eso es que se acerca una crisis política institucional enorme.

¿Se está viendo, los periodistas ya han sido víctimas de amenazas, ya mismo he visto cómo líderes cívicos y de movimientos sociales reciben mensajes de texto en sus teléfonos.

¿Cuáles son los parámetros para medir si hay violación de derechos humanos?

Me gusta mucho la inspiración del intelectual que pasó décadas de años preso en la Unión Soviética, Natan Sharanski, que entiende qué es el autoritarismo, el cambio de los

diablos esas m pacible situación c perro gobierno s Le espe done sus t aper z que / los no qu

La oposición dice que el gobierno de Morales sigue la línea de Chávez y Fidel Castro.

Todo ciudadano puede tener inspiración de donde quiera. Si quiere ser inspirado por Fidel hacerlo siempre y cuando no se comporte como él.

El proyecto de la Asamblea Constituyente, el cambio de los

**Page Six**  
**Richard Johnson**  
 richard.johnson@nypost.com

With Paula Froelich  
 paula.froelich@nypost.com

Bill Hoffmann  
 bill.hoffmann@nypost.com

and Corynne Steindler  
 csteindler@nypost.com

### Cameron apology falls flat

NOT everyone buys **Cameron Diaz's** apology for traipsing around Peru carrying a bag emblazoned with a red star and the words "Serve the People," Communist icon Mao Zedong's most famous political slogan, printed in Chinese. **Thor Halvorsen**, president of the Human Rights Foundation, told Page Six, "It is bad enough that Diaz wears a bag quoting history's most prolific butcher, but what's even worse is that she is of Cuban heritage and really should know something about the true history of communism. There is a double standard here that boggles the mind: Had she worn a bag quoting Himmler or Pinochet, she would likely face career annihilation, and rightly so."

While the Mao bag is ultrachic on the Upper West Side and college campuses, in Peru, the "Serve the People" slogan evokes memories of the bloodthirsty Shining Path terrorists who left nearly 70,000 dead. "I sincerely apologize to anyone I may have inadvertently offended," Diaz said in a statement. "The bag was a purchase I made as a tourist in China, and I did not realize the potentially hurtful nature of the slogan printed on it."

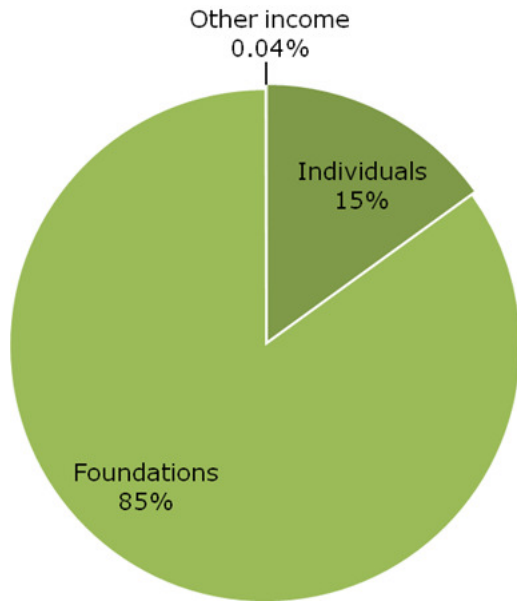


# Financials: 2006

---

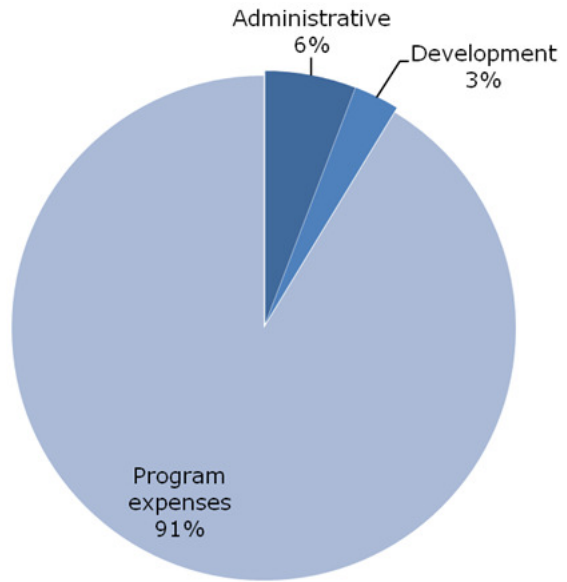
## 2006 INCOME

Individuals	\$ 62,060
Foundations	350,212
Other Income	155
<hr/>	
Income	\$ 412,427



## 2006 EXPENSES

Administrative	\$ 19,125
Development	9,516
Program Expenses	300,518
<hr/>	
Expenses	\$ 329,159

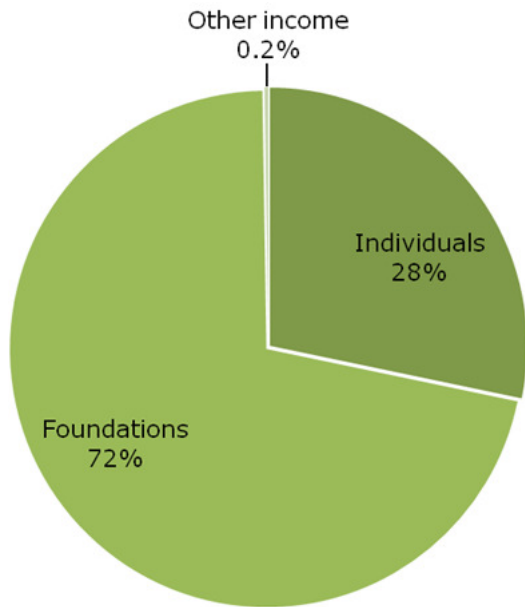


# Financials: 2007

---

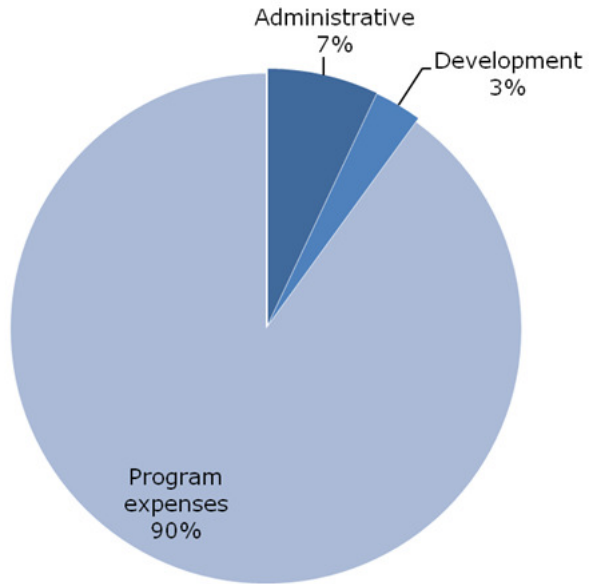
## 2007 INCOME

Individuals	\$ 222,201
Foundations	562,151
Other Income	1,965
<hr/>	
Income	\$ 786,317



## 2007 EXPENSES

Administrative	\$ 53,344
Development	22,862
Program Expenses	685,846
<hr/>	
Expenses	\$ 762,051





# International Council, Directors, and Staff

---

## International Council

**Kenneth Anderson** is a professor of law at Washington College of Law, American University and a recognized authority on international human rights. He has served on the board of directors of Americas Watch (the precursor to Human Rights Watch), served as general counsel to George Soros' charitable foundation, the Open Society Institute, and founded and formerly directed the Human Rights Watch Arms Division.

**Vladimir Bukovsky** is a Soviet dissident, author, and human rights activist who spent a total of twelve years in Soviet prisons, labor camps, and forced-treatment psychiatric hospitals for his opposition to the Soviet regime. He has written numerous books based on his experiences, including his bestselling autobiography *To Build a Castle: My Life As a Dissenter*.

**Palden Gyatso** is a Buddhist monk who spent 33 years in Chinese prisons and labor camps for resisting the Chinese occupation of Tibet. He eventually escaped across the Himalayas into India, smuggling Chinese torture instruments as material proof of human rights abuses in Tibet. Since then he has published his memoir, *The Autobiography of a Tibetan Monk*, and worked to publicize the plight of Tibet's political prisoners.

**Garry Kasparov** is widely considered to be the greatest chess player of all time. In 2004, Mr. Kasparov founded the Committee 2008: Free Choice group of Russian freedom advocates with the stated purpose of working for fair, democratic elections in Russia in 2008. He retired from chess in 2005 to devote himself fulltime to writing and human rights advocacy.

**Mart Laar** was twice prime minister of Estonia. He led Estonia's Singing Revolution, a peaceful four-year struggle for freedom, and then led the struggling Baltic nation from a collapsing socialized system to a thriving economy after occupation ended. He is the author of *War of the Woods: Estonia's Struggle for Survival, 1944-1956*.

**Armando Valladares** is Cuba's most famous prisoner of conscience, a living symbol of resistance, steadfast conviction, and unbendable perseverance. After 22 years of torture, forced labor, and solitary confinement in Cuban prisons, he was released in 1982, and published his memoirs in the international best-seller *Against All Hope: A Memoir of Life in Castro's Gulag*. After his release, Mr. Valladares was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where his focus on Cuba led to the exposure of Castro's horrific prison system.

**Álvaro Vargas Llosa** is one of Latin America's foremost political analysts. He has authored or co-authored 12 books focusing on human rights, economics, and the history of Latin American politics, and has also been an op-ed page editor and columnist at the *Miami Herald* as well as a contributor to the *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, BBC World Service, and *TIME Magazine*.

**Ramón J. Velásquez** is a historian, university professor, and former president of Venezuela (1993-1994). He was jailed several times in the 1950s under the dictatorship of General Marcos Perez Jimenez for his public opposition to the regime, including co-authoring the *Black Book of the Dictatorship*, a truthful account of the human rights violations of the government. During his distinguished public service career he has been a senator, congressional deputy, minister of communication, and cabinet secretary.

**Elie Wiesel** was 15 years old when the Nazis deported him and his family to the Auschwitz concentration camps. He has published more than 40 works of fiction and nonfiction, including his internationally-acclaimed memoir *Night*, which ranks among the definitive works of Holocaust literature. A lifelong human rights advocate, he has won numerous awards for his work, most notably the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

**James Q. Wilson** is the Ronald Reagan Professor of Public Policy at Pepperdine University. He is the author of 14 books on the nature of human morality, government, and criminal justice. His textbook on American government is more widely used on university campuses than any other government textbook.

**Harry Wu** has worked tirelessly for nearly two decades to alert the world to the abusive and inhumane conditions in China's forced labor camps (*laogai*). He was a college student when he was first imprisoned in the *laogai* after he criticized communism, and remained in prison for 19 years, doing physical labor and witnessing the brutal deaths of countless fellow prisoners. He is the author of *Bitter Winds: A Memoir of My Years in China's Gulag*. He has received a number of awards for his humanitarian efforts.

## Board of Directors

Armando Valladares, Chairman  
Thor Halvorssen, President and CEO  
Ron Jacobs  
Eduardo Mendoza  
Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr.  
Robert A. Sirico

## Board of Advisors

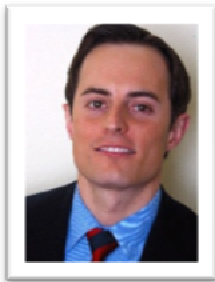
Charles Hoeflich  
Michael J. Horowitz  
Roy Innis  
Tom G. Palmer

## Staff



### **Celia Farber, Staff Writer**

Celia has worked extensively as a writer and a journalist. She has been a vocal and persistent critic of political correctness, especially the McCarthyism that dominated sexual harassment law in the 1990s. In 1999, she co-founded the non-profit organization *Rock The Boat*, which used rock music to stimulate independent thinking by arranging concerts around particular subjects that had been darkened by media censorship. She has written for numerous publications, including *Harper's*, *Rolling Stone*, *Esquire*, *Salon*, *Gear*, the *New York Press*, *Red Flags*, and others.



### **Thor Halvorssen, President**

Thor began advocating for human rights in 1989 in London by organizing opposition to South African apartheid. After completing his secondary education in the United Kingdom, he attended the University of Pennsylvania; there he became a judicial advisor for students charged inside the college judicial system. Thor's advocacy of individual rights earned him an Ivy Day Award from the university president for "protecting freedom of speech on campus." Having witnessed countless violations of freedom of speech and due process on United States college campuses, Thor was instrumental in creating and developing the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, serving as its first executive director and then CEO from its founding in 1999 until 2004. Under his decisive leadership, FIRE became the nation's pre-eminent student rights organization. He founded the Moving Picture Institute and the Human Rights Foundation in the spring of 2005, and has produced various documentary films about the struggle for human freedom.



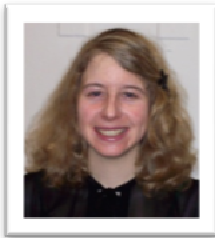
### **Kara Levy, Program Director**

Kara is a *cum laude* graduate of Harvard University where she majored in English literature and headed the Harvard Student Porter Program. She has created websites and implemented programs for the Adath Shalom Synagogue. She is actively involved in supporting numerous individual rights organizations.



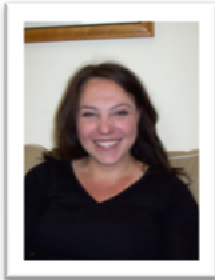
**Yusby Méndez-Bachstetter, Legal Director**

Yusby is a graduate of the Catholic University of Táchira, Venezuela, where she studied law. She went on to specialize in public administration law at the Central University of Venezuela. Afterwards, she taught public administration law at the University Bicentennial of Aragua, Venezuela. At the University of Salamanca, Spain, she completed post-graduate courses in political science and political corruption and economics. At the National Constituent Assembly in 1999 in Venezuela, she worked giving professional support regarding political rights to the Commission on Nationality and Citizenship. She was a part of the team representing Venezuela at the Inter-American Human Rights Conference in Costa Rica 2000. In Caracas, she was the Director of the Legal Investigation Center at the Academy of Political and Social Science.



**Anna Rosenblum, Program Officer and Executive Assistant to the President**

Anna graduated *cum laude* from Harvard University with a BA in classical archaeology. She went on to obtain a Master of Science in skeletal and dental archaeology from the University of London, where she graduated with distinction. Her undergraduate work has been presented at the American Spinal Injury Association and published in the Journal of the Harvard Hippocratic Society. She has held multiple jobs as a medical research assistant and done extensive volunteer work at the Boston Medical Center and at the Royal Free Hospital in London.



**Sarah Wasserman, Program Director**

Sarah graduated from Brown University with a concentration in international relations, focusing her studies on Latin America. She has been working with the Human Rights Foundation since its inception in 2005. Prior to joining HRF, she did public relations with GCI Group, a large Manhattan firm, and also worked in the development office at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). In college, she was actively involved with multiple humanitarian organizations, including Amnesty International and Habitat for Humanity.



**Manuela Zuloaga, Legal Counsel**

Manuela is a *cum laude* graduate of Universidad Católica Andrés Bello in Venezuela and New York University School of Law. As an undergraduate, Manuela did extensive research and analysis on the Venezuelan government's policy toward the rights of refugees, and participated in Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition, where she drafted pleadings on the general theory of human rights, freedom of expression, and due process. Manuela has worked as a law clerk in an international firm and as a pro bono attorney for several non-profit organizations.

# Getting Involved with the Human Rights Foundation

---



HRF President Thor Halvorssen and HRF Chairman Armando Valladares with Yelenna Bonner (widow of Andrei Sakharov).

## **HRF's Finances**

*Investing in free society*

HRF relies solely on the generosity of individuals, foundations, and corporations that share its commitment to individual rights. Because HRF is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. HRF does not receive any government funding.

## **Internship program**

*Training tomorrow's human rights defenders*

HRF's internship program provides excellent opportunities for students who want to get involved with civil liberties and human rights work in a vibrant, young organization. During 2006 and 2007, we had interns from Tufts University, the New School, and Harvard University.

## **Contact Us**

---

Human Rights Foundation  
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 809  
New York, NY 10118  
Ph: 212.246.8486  
Fax: 212.643.4278  
thor@thethrf.org

**[www.HumanRightsFoundation.org](http://www.HumanRightsFoundation.org)**



Human Rights Foundation

[www.HumanRightsFoundation.org](http://www.HumanRightsFoundation.org)