



## Girls Go Global!

St. Paul, MN - Monday, June 25, 2007 - New Moon News



## Global Girls Day

is an event of  
Girls International Forum

Greetings! A team of New Moon editors and GEB members just returned from presenting at the 2007 Global Girls' Day, an event sponsored by the non-profit Girls International Forum (<http://www.girlsforum.org/>), and held at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. New Moon sent girl editors Georgia, Ari, and Libby to present a two-hour workshop called "TAKE ACTION! Using Letter-Writing to Fight for Girls' Education Worldwide." The girls presented the workshop to a diverse group of participants who were at Global Girls' Day to learn about issues facing girls' access to education around the world.

New Moon and Girls International Forum have a long history. Girls International Forum (GIF) was first started in 1994 by the Minnesota girls and women who attended the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. In 2006, GIF hosted an international summit for girls from around the world to take action on global issues. Teams of girl activists from India, South Africa, Kenya, Indonesia, Israel, and the U.S. met to address issues like education, HIV/AIDS, and violence against women. New Moon presented at the Summit--click here [1] to read a report from former GEB member and over-the-moon Carly.

This year, Girl Summit Leaders from across North America--including teens from Minneapolis, Chicago, Canada, and California--organized Global Girls' Day with the help of six talented young women mentors, including founding members of GIF. Almost 100 girls ages 10 to 18 from around the Midwest attended Global Girls' Day to learn about and take action on Girls' Education, HIV/AIDS, Gender-Based Violence (domestic abuse and sexual assault and harassment) and Human Trafficking.

In the morning, GIF Summit Leaders facilitated workshops for girls to learn more about these issues. Several exciting organizations, including Civil Society, TVByGirls, the Minnesota AIDS Project, and Asian Media Access put together afternoon sessions on taking action on these issues.

The New Moon team got to listen in on the morning session on girls' education, where Summit Leaders showed a fascinating woman-directed movie on education in Egypt, presented facts on girls' education, and led discussions on the obstacles girls face to accessing education and some of the solutions that can improve those problems.

Some girls participating in the workshop commented that they were amazed to learn about so many girls who dream of going to school more than anything else. As one teen girl who had just begun school in Egypt for the first time in her life put it, "I feel enlightened." Think of THAT next time you're bored in school!

At lunch, we heard from a wonderful speaker from the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota. A Hmong refugee herself, as well as a graduate of Mt. Holyoke College, Columbia's School of Public Administration, and the University of Pennsylvania's Law School, ThaoMee Xiong told us she was drawn to speak at Global Girls' Day because of her strong belief in girls' potential. It was chilling to hear her tell the audience that she thought the future CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, world leaders, and even President of the United States were in the room. ThaoMee told girls, "No matter what kind of a background you come from, if you take advantage of the opportunities offered to you, you can be anything or do anything you want." She was speaking from experience. At age 28, when she heard about a crisis for Hmong refugees in Thailand, she boarded a plane for Bangkok without having a job or knowing a word of Thai. Yet her work paid off: she created a powerful documentary of a young Hmong refugee woman's life, and helped bring 8,000 refugees to live in the Twin Cities.

ThaoMee ended her speech with a charge to participants: "Take it upon yourself to improve others' lives using the opportunities you have. People like Susan B. Anthony worked way too hard for us to stop [fighting for girls and women]. In honor of all the women that fought before us, I challenge you to fight for what's right...We have to work against institutions that oppress the poor, people of color, and women. The only thing stopping us is our internal fear."

Inspired by the speech, we began our TAKE ACTION presentation on how girls can use the power of their voices to write letters on girls education (or any other issue) to decision-makers like newspaper editors, U.S. Congresspeople, and other leaders. We gave girls a roadmap for a successful letter, and shared moving stories from girls around the world to include as anecdotes.



At the end of the day, all of the Global Girls' Day participants regrouped to hear about what other groups had done. It was inspiring to hear stories from sexual assault survivors, learn about what local women do to fight human trafficking, and hear the passion in girls' voices as they described their issues. We also enjoyed an amazing performance from Edna Stevens (pictured) and Universal Dance Destiny (<http://www.universaldancedestiny.com/>), whose combination of hip-hop and African dance was incredible. It was a great way to end an exciting day!

P.S. Want to learn more about girls' education? Check out these wonderful sites:

The United Nations Girls Education Initiative - <http://www.ungei.org/>

The Global Fund for Women - <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/cms/content/blogcategory/21/59/>

CARE - <http://www.care.org/careswork/whatwedo/education/basic.asp>

Women's eNews - <http://womensenews.org/>

Then make your voice heard!

[1] <http://newmoonnews.blogspot.com/2006/07/new-moon-in-action-at-international.html>