

## **Personal Statement Regarding the Creation of the ISC-ICC**

### **Christina M. Hartman, Co-Chair & Founder**

*This statement was read at the June 25, 2001 launch of AMICC, the American Non-Governmental Coalition for an International Criminal Court. The ISC-ICC serves on the steering committee of AMICC.*

The Independent Student Coalition for an International Criminal Court was created over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend this past November. It began as a petition signed by students and professors at various East Coast colleges and universities. The petition was directed at then-President Clinton, asking that he ensure the United States' signature to the Rome Statute before the December 31, 2000 deadline. Throughout the month of December, as the organization's Co-Chair and Founder, I spent a great deal of time at college campuses in DC and New York helping to collect signatures for the petition. It was also during this time that Co-Chair William Lim was recruited to allow the organization a balance between two major focal points: the District of Columbia and the U.S. Congress and the City of New York and the United Nations Headquarters.

Sitting at tables outside of the main dining halls at the Catholic University and George Washington University in DC, I was surprised by the apathetic reactions of most students to the petition. When the ICC was explained to them as a court that would hold individuals accountable for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, most students would shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, it sounds like a good cause. Sure, I'll sign it." Still more students would be in such a rush to get into the dining hall that they would sign the petition without even asking what it was for, just wanting to get past us without having to listen to what we were saying. The most shocking reaction I encountered was from an American student who told me flat out, with a straight face, "I don't believe in genocide. Why should I? I've never seen it." In fact, rare was the American student who seemed to comprehend what was meant by "war crime" "genocide" or "crime against humanity."

It was this reaction to the court by young U.S. citizen after U.S. citizen that prompted me to continue my efforts with the coalition after our initial goal – U.S. signature to the Rome Statute – had been met. Thus, the student coalition continued to exist into the year 2001, with new goals and a growing membership. The goal of the student coalition today is to see that the U.S. ratifies the Rome Statute. We work to realize this goal through the activism of our membership, and the education of American citizens about the Court. Our organization works to teach students why they, as Americans, should care about the plight of those people outside our country's borders.

As our Harvard Law School coordinator, Donovan Rinker-Morris, recently wrote in his essay for the application to attend the Preparatory Commission:

*“Why should Americans care about the plight of minorities and other groups outside our borders? Several philosophic arguments suggest that there are links between what happens to other individuals and what happens to ourselves – but these obtuse arguments are either disbelieved or inaccessible to mainstream American thought. The impact of a massacre in Rwanda on the interests of most concern to Americans – the price of certain commodities, lifestyles of celebrities, etc. – is highly dubious. Aside from the transitory psychic connection formed during a few seconds of the six o’clock news (if the editors choose to cover a particular crime), most Americans will not know and will not care about what happens abroad without being taught how to care.*

*Courts teach people how to care about events in their community – local, national, or global – in a way the media alone cannot. Where the media may show some cases of suffering, a court shows both the suffering and the struggle to achieve a semblance of justice afterward. Through the prism of a courtroom, a host of competing principles are brought into clear focus, which eventually percolates to the entire community that observes and participates in the argument. Thus, the ICC’s most important achievement in America is likely to be the education of Americans about world events.”*

The Student Coalition currently maintains a presence on 23 college and university campuses, and this number has been growing continuously throughout the year. We reach over 500 people through our electronic mailing list, and we are receiving increasing numbers of responses through our online home at <[www.isc-icc.org](http://www.isc-icc.org)>.

We are proud to be representing our American peers at Eighth Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court this fall, and we look forward to the day when the United States will reflect our efforts through the ratification of the Rome Statute.