



Multi Nation Program

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Driven by a passion to ensure a fair, inclusive and just democracy exists in Hungary, Balázs Tóth is the director of the Law Enforcement and Human Rights Program at the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC), a human rights organization focused on protecting the rights of asylum seekers and foreigners in need of international protection. He also helps monitor the human rights performance of law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. A lawyer, scholar, and journalist, Tóth is widely published on issues related to ethnic profiling criminal investigations and human rights violations within complex systems of increased criminalization.

Prior to traveling to the U.S. for the first time, Tóth thoroughly prepared himself through research and inquiry, posing questions regarding the phenomena of mass incarceration in the U.S. Wanting to understand how the land of liberty had become the land of incarceration, he set out to meet with nonprofit leaders working to address prison system abuses, court system regulation and accountability; as well as law enforcement agencies (U.S. Department of Justice, Los Angeles Police Department, Office of the Inspector General of the New York Police Department) to learn more about current climate in the U.S. toward crime and punishment. He also explored strategies to bolster the fight for human rights in Hungary, including methods to increase organizational effectiveness for nonprofits.

Returning to Hungary, Tóth has committed to building the capacity of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee by restructuring the organization to ensure that the organization has an executive director in place, as someone who will be primarily responsible for management. Currently, the organization does not have such a position. Additionally, he will commit to working with his organization to double the size of their individual donor base, using it as a key strategy to gaining momentum and support from an engaged citizenship. Tóth's meetings with national nonprofit experts in Los Angeles, Washington DC and countless nonprofits around the country gave Tóth new ideas for how to increase his organization's impact. Tóth and his organization immediately began a strategic planning process as soon as he returned from his fellowship so that he could directly apply what he observed in the U.S. to his organization.

Very soon into his fellowship, Tóth recognized the fact that the U.S. has a legal system that makes it difficult to prove racial bias, and that this system could not be used as a model for Hungary. Instead, what Tóth did discover were the deep historical roots that the U.S. has in civil rights movements. Tóth spent time visiting the South, specifically Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama, meeting with civil rights leaders and visiting some of the most important sites that were central gathering places and points of inspiration for those fighting for change. This experience was transformational for Tóth, who was able to recognize that he and his fellow Hungarians are not alone in their struggle for social change and justice.

Leaders bettering the world around them.