

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Vilcek Foundation announces

“Caring and Advocating for Torture Survivors”

A Lecture by Dr. Allen Keller

Director, Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture

Date: Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Location: Bohemian National Hall, 321 East 73rd Street, New York, NY 10021

Time: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Reception: 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Admission: Free, but reservations are required due to limited space

RSVP: RSVP@vilcek.org or 646-395-8270

Press Contact: Anne Schruth at 212-472-2500 or anne.schruth@vilcek.org

Meeting the Complex Needs of Torture Survivors

Dr. Allen Keller to Discuss Bellevue/NYU Program

Hosted by The Vilcek Foundation

New York, January 10, 2011 — The Vilcek Foundation, in cooperation with the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture (PSOT), will host a lecture by Dr. Allen Keller, director and founder of the program, on the critical need to provide recovery services to survivors of torture. Presented on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, at the Bohemian National Hall in New York City, Dr. Keller will discuss the comprehensive care PSOT offers to torture victims and their families so that they may regain their health and begin to rebuild their lives.

To represent the hundreds served by PSOT every year, Dr. Keller will describe the harrowing experiences of several individuals. The Tibetan-born artist Samten Dakpa, who, when still a teenager, was arrested and tortured for painting classic Tibetan images, as part of the effort to suppress Tibetan culture. According to Dr. Keller, by the time Mr. Dakpa came to PSOT, he was in excruciating pain and could barely hold a paintbrush. Since then, Mr. Dakpa has received medical and mental health care, as well as social and legal services, to aid in his recovery — which is ongoing. Cheikhna Mahawa was severely beaten by police in Mauritania because he organized protests to improve education for the poor. Having received medical and psychological treatment, Mr. Mahawa is now pursuing a doctorate degree and teaching mathematics at City College of New York. Both Mr. Mahawa and Mr. Dakpa will be attending the event.

Dr. Keller will also explain how and why academics, scientists, and artists are among those most often targeted by governments that use torture to achieve their ends. He will detail the crucial roles that research, education, and outreach play in offering a multidisciplinary approach to ease the short- and long-term suffering of survivors from around the world.

Dr. Jan Vilcek, President of the Vilcek Foundation, said, “The importance of the work of Dr. Keller and his staff cannot be overstated. Although this is a difficult topic, one that most of us would prefer not to think about, the practice of torture affects us all, whether directly or indirectly, for many immigrants seeking asylum in this country carry with them the effects of trauma that, left unaddressed, will seriously impede their ability to build self-sufficient lives here.”

PSOT was founded in 1995; in 2010 alone, the program served more than 680 people from 80 countries, about 140 of whom were new clients. It is estimated that more than 400,000 survivors of torture now live in the United States, and the number of people seeking the help of the team at NYU/Bellevue continues to rise every year.

The Vilcek Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the Foundation, to honor the contributions of foreign-born scholars and artists living in the United States, was inspired by the couple's careers in biomedical science and art history, respectively, as well as their personal experiences and appreciation for the opportunities they received as newcomers to this country. The Foundation hosts events to promote the work of immigrants, and awards annual prizes to prominent immigrant biomedical scientists and artists who make outstanding contributions to American society.

To learn more about the Vilcek Foundation, visit www.vilcek.org.