



THE *Isabel Allende*

FOUNDATION



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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Working to End Gender Violence

#### Women and girls continue to be raped, tortured and exploited

*Three organizations leading the fight for women's rights to safety, dignity and self-determination receive the 2011 Espiritu Award: [www.isabelallendefoundation.org](http://www.isabelallendefoundation.org)*

SAUSALITO, CA, October 1 — Internationally acclaimed author Isabel Allende announced today the recipients of her foundation's annual Espiritu Awards, three organizations that through direct service, advocacy, legal action, education and economic empowerment work to ensure that women and girls can be free from discrimination, violence and sexual exploitation.

- **V-Day: City of Joy** [www.vday.org](http://www.vday.org)
- **Center for Reproductive Rights** [www.reproductiverights.org](http://www.reproductiverights.org)
- **Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)** [www.missey.org](http://www.missey.org)

"Women and girls are raped and horribly abused as a weapon of war, for the profit of others and even as entertainment," says Allende. "Those courageous activists who care for survivors of gender violence and challenge government apathy need all the support we can offer."

### About the Isabel Allende Foundation

Isabel Allende established her foundation in December 1996 to pay tribute to her daughter, Paula, who died at the age of 28. During her short life Paula worked as a volunteer in poor communities in Venezuela and Spain offering her time and skills as an educator and psychologist. She cared deeply for others. When in doubt, her motto was: What is the most generous thing to do?

For more information, visit [www.isabelallendefoundation.org](http://www.isabelallendefoundation.org). Additional information about the author can be found at [www.isabelallende.com](http://www.isabelallende.com).

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## The 2011 Espiritu Grantee Profiles

### **SPEAKING ABOUT THE UNSPEAKABLE**

**V-Day** is a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls. V-Day promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day's City of Joy is a revolutionary new community for women survivors of gender violence in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo. City of Joy will provide up to 180 Congolese women a year an opportunity to benefit from group therapy; self-defense training; comprehensive sexuality education (covering HIV/AIDS, family planning); economic empowerment; storytelling; dance; theater; ecology and horticulture. Created from their vision, Congolese women will run, operate and direct City of Joy themselves. "When I heard Eve Ensler explain that Congo is the most dangerous place on the planet to be a woman—a place where sexual violence has been used to torture and humiliate hundreds of thousands of women and destroy their families—I knew I had to help," says Allende.

**CONTACT:** [www.vday.org](http://www.vday.org)

### **CHANGING THE LAW:**

For nearly 20 years the **Center for Reproductive Rights** has used the law to advance reproductive freedom as a fundamental human right that all governments are legally obligated to protect, respect and fulfill. As the only global legal advocacy organization dedicated to reproductive rights with expertise in both U.S. constitutional and international human rights law, the Center brings ground-breaking cases before national courts, United Nations committees, and regional human rights bodies. The Center influences the law outside the courtroom as well, documenting abuses, working with policy makers to promote progressive measures, fostering legal scholarship, and teaching on reproductive health and human rights. "Reproductive rights are fundamental human rights; there is no distinction between them," says Allende. "By changing laws, the Center for Reproductive Rights helps women worldwide to achieve equality, self-determination and dignity."

**CONTACT:** [www.reproductiverights.org](http://www.reproductiverights.org)

### **GIVING VOICE TO SURVIVORS:**

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a vicious and heartbreaking crisis that is confronting nearly every country throughout the world and affects more than 2 million children each year. **Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)** is responding to that crisis by caring for, advocating for, and facilitating the empowerment of sexually exploited youth in Oakland, California, and working nationally to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and youth through education and policy development. According to Isabel Allende, MISSEY was chosen as one of the Espiritu Awards recipients this year because it is a small nonprofit with huge heart, and tremendous capability and determination. The staff is young, loving, informed and committed. "Girls and young women who are sexually exploited are victims, not criminals. They need care and protection," insists Allende.

**CONTACT:** [www.missey.org](http://www.missey.org)