



IN A NEW LAND: THE STORIES OF RUSSIAN REFUGEE YOUTH

September 2004 marks the beginning of Venice Arts' newest Social Art Initiative, *In a New Land*. This photo documentary project teaches Russian immigrant and refugee teens to tell their stories through the lens of a camera. The teens will explore their developing cross-cultural identity and their experience as refugees. They will also investigate the similarities and differences between their immigration and that of earlier immigrants and refugees.

Images to be collected will be personal—home life, celebrations, and family, as well as public—environmental portraits of the people and places on Santa Monica Boulevard, the main commercial thoroughfare in the Russian-speaking community; portraits of activities at Plummer Park; and youths' school and social-life, whether centered in the Russian community or as part of the broader, diverse West Hollywood community.

West Hollywood is home to a Russian-speaking population of nearly 30%, including families that fled persecution, economic hardship, and/or anti-Semitism in the former Soviet Union. *In a New Land* is one of only 5 "California Story" projects with youth selected for funding, state-wide, by the California Council for the Humanities.

April 15, 2005 will mark the opening exhibition at West Hollywood's Plummer Park. A subset of work will also be shown in April at the Central Library in downtown Los Angeles, as part of a California Reads project being held by the California Council for the Humanities. The full exhibition will move to the Venice Arts' Gallery in June.

In a New Land is a collaborative project between Venice Arts and the City of West Hollywood through its Russian Advisory Board and Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission. It is supported by a grant from the California Council for the Humanities through its *New Californians Story Project* and by funds and in-kind support from West Hollywood.

For nearly 11 years, Venice Arts has been providing free art programs to youth in Venice and other communities, with an emphasis on photography, video, and digital arts. Past Social Art Initiatives have included *The Girls Project*, photographically exploring female identity in four communities across America, and *Picturing Race*, documentation of the United Nation's World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa (2001), as well as race and identity in Los Angeles (2002). Venice Arts' documentary program is led by its creative director, Pulitzer Prize nominated photographer, Jim Hubbard.