

**Good Morning,**

My name is Simon Kaufman, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Herzl/RMHA Upper School, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation “Change the world. It just takes cents”™ student activist.

Since August, 2006, RMHA students have taken a Service Learning class focusing on social responsibility. We have learned through history, geography, economics, and other subjects about genocide, global issues and in particular, the genocide in Darfur. We have stood up, spoken out and taken action to make a difference in the lives of the oppressed.

We created our student movement, called “Change the world. It just takes cents.”

Through this student led, teacher mentored learning experience we have represented the voice of the voiceless, and fundraised to rebuild two schools in Darfur. We have helped raise local and national awareness about the atrocities in Darfur, by bringing together key individuals, whose work addresses humanity, justice, and sustaining life. They have kept us up to date about global issues and guided us towards appropriate action.

Our efforts have included meeting and speaking alongside John Prendergast – director of ENOUGH!, Rev Carl Wilkins, who, among other heroic acts, used only his words to stand up to weapons threatening the lives of orphans during the 100 day Rwandan genocide, Adam Sterling of Genocide Intervention Network and *Darfur Now*, Mohamed Yahya – founder of the Damanga Coalition for Freedom and Democracy and Pastor Heidi McGinness who travels annually with Christian Solidarity International to Sudan to redeem and rehabilitate Sudanese slaves.

We fundraise through group T-shirt sales, and other efforts. We collaborate with Human Rights agencies such as Amnesty International, Save Darfur, and others to raise awareness and action. We help showcase scenes from Darfur through photographic exhibits of works by prominent activists, Mia Farrow, Brian Steidle, Izabela Lundberg, Aaron Cohen and others.

Elie Wiesel said: *"I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor and never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."*

I choose student activism because I want to make a difference.

I use the lessons learned from Eli Wiesel to be an activist for what is right and just.

The following words have served as guide in my decision to be a "Change the world. It just takes cents" activist.

"TZEDEK TZEDEK TIRDOFF – L'MAAN TICHYEH"

Justice, Justice shall you pursue, so that you might live (Deut 16:20)

The word tzedek - Justice is repeated, urging us to pursue justice through just means, and that there should be Justice for ourselves...AND...for the other.

That is why we are here today – to learn about, and seek justice for the other, the victim, ...the oppressed, ...the mutilated, ...the deprived, those lost,... and the survivor.

There are alternatives to going to war against perpetrators of human rights...Assemble the evidence, collect witness accounts and present it to the UN Security Council as if it were a grand jury. Call for an arrest warrant against the accused, and demand that they be punished.

This is exactly what the International Criminal court stands for.

Justice for the other – by just means.

So, **what is Justice** ?????

*Alexander Sozhenitsyn, the Russian novelist, dramatist, and historian says:*

Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognize the voice of their own conscience also recognize the voice of justice.

And **What is genocide** ? It is the systematic destruction of a group.

There was the Holocaust in Europe, the Armenian, Cambodian, Croatian, Native American Rwandan and now the Darfur genocide.

*Who will be next?*

History repeats itself and clearly demonstrates that there is no greater crime than taking a person's life, because of who they are.

Humanitarian relief alone is not enough. Yes...They need food, water, shelter, medical relief and security, but until the perpetrators and their sponsors are prosecuted and punished, violence will continue. More than anything else – the victims need JUSTICE.

Accountability is a powerful motivator.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), has said ‘*genocide is not a crime of passion; it is a calculated offense*’.

He's right.....

On March 31, 2005, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1593, referring to “the situation prevailing in Darfur since the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2002” to the ICC Prosecutor.

On May 2nd, 2007, the Court issued arrest warrants for Sudanese humanitarian affairs minister Ahmad Muhammad Harun and Janjaweed militia leader Ali Kushayb accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, Sudan, a non-member of the ICC, claims the court has no jurisdiction over this matter, and refuses to hand over the suspects.

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Chief Prosecutor issued an arrest warrant for President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir on five counts of crimes against humanity and 2 counts of war-crimes. And today, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 we await the charge of Genocide to be leveled against President Omar el-Bashir.

With all this done...it is imperative that we choose to stand by the victims.

There is much work to be done...for the present and the future.

It must be us – you and me – taking action.

This is OUR world. ....We CANNOT allow the perpetrators of genocide to go unpunished.

We MUST hear the call to action, and stand united in preserving our future, and the future of humanity. We CAN make things right

There are hundreds of thousands living in refugee camps, with limited food and water, Children without the security of family to provide the love they so desperately need.

This is a serious call to action.

In our lifetime we have seen the impact of tragedy upon a nation and the world. Natural, uncontrollable disasters have also left an indelible imprint on many lives and greatly influenced our values. Genocide is an atrocity...a malicious act against mankind – something we can prevent.

At this time I ask you to rise...to think about the effects of the earthquake in Haiti, the victims of a natural disaster, to honor the loved ones lost, the survivors, and those who are rallying to help Haitians rebuild lives, homes and their future.....*Thank you..be seated*

## So, what can you do....????

- Become better informed about genocide and its global impact
- Keep attention on Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and areas where atrocities impinge on Human Rights
- Join a movement opposing genocide
- Be an upstander and speak out
- Call for action...use your cell phones - call 1-800-GENOCIDE to connect with our President to remind our government that we must support Darfur and the ICC
- Spread the word – use the technology we understand best....Facebook, Twitter, Youtube
- Petition, write letters, rally, and lobby for increased support for humanitarian aid, peacekeeping forces, and justice for Darfur;
- Support Sudanese civil leaders in making their voices heard in negotiations towards sustainable peace

The smallest fundraising effort, the shortest letter, the informative word...every positive action is your way of saying ..."We will not tolerate genocide".

Remember....**YOU** have the power !!!!!

So.... I ask you, no... I beg you to join me, "Change the world. It just takes cents", and people like Professor David Akerson, KatieJay Scott , Al-ghlai Shegifat, Izabela Lundberg, Dr Tinay, Mr Yai and his daughter Asheng, in our joint endeavor to ensure that each person has the right to be productive members of a respectful, peaceful society.

Do not be silent...Raise your voice Colorado... Call for Justice for all victims of genocide.

Before I welcome to our Forum our Emcee - Professor David Akerson - I'd like to urge you to record your reactions to any part of this Forum, in writing, for publication-in prose, in poetry, and in drawing- on the paper provided, using the pens provided. At the end of the Forum, please deposit the pens and the papers with your reactions in the boxes at the back of the auditorium.

And now, Professor Akerson...