

Speech at Ditto Art Gallery Sept 21, 2008

Afeyok

Good afternoon, and welcome to Exhibit Darfur at Ditto Art Gallery.

I am Afeyok Fien, representing Arupe Jesuit High School,

Asheng

and Asheng Fien, representing the Annunciation School.

Afeyok

We are also student activists from "Change the world. It just takes cents"™.

"Change the world. It just takes cents"™ is the only middle and high school, interactive, educational initiative driven by school students from 20 schools in the in Denver metro area.

Asheng

As members of this initiative, we and our classmates have had the opportunity to develop a better understanding of the meaning of and the process of social action and social justice.

Afeyok

As Sudanese immigrants to the USA, it has been interesting studying about the Darfur genocide with our Denver school friends. This has made us want to unite with Colorado students and "do something" for those less fortunate.

Asheng

To date, Change the world it just takes cents has raised \$26,000 to rebuild the D-Kaire school in Korma, Darfur. Current efforts will benefit Darfuri refugees given safe haven in Israel as well as those who have settled in Colorado.

Afeyok

BUT our work is not yet done.

Through the new “Change the world...”™ Student Advisory Council, we students are mentored through the process of social action to raise community awareness. We are also encouraged to act by writing letters to local, national and international political leaders, activists, celebrities and the media. Our passion and concern is inspiring to all.

Asheng

We meet and hear the pleas of other Sudanese refugees to stop the genocide, and keep the fire burning nationwide by collaborating with projects spearheaded by Genocide Intervention Network, “Tents of Hope”, Amnesty International, Darfur Alert, Save Darfur, just to name a few. This afternoon, we stand together with STAND to learn and speak out for those, whose voices have been silenced by the Darfur genocide.

Afeyok

We speak out – loudly and clearly - at every opportunity.

Our latest initiative is making the recent massacre in the Kalma refugee camp known. Flyers are on the display table.... please take one, read it and call 1-800 Genocide.

Asheng

The annual “Change the world...”™ student Forum provides a unique opportunity for us to make the "necessary noise". We study topics relevant to genocide and world issues and creatively present our understanding of social awareness and activism.

Afeyok

One of the memorable achievements of the first generation group of “Change the World It just takes cents”™, was learning about the process surrounding the call for divestment. The highlight of that experience was standing alongside Governor Ritter as he signed the Colorado Divestment Bill into law.

Asheng

We represented Darfuri youth at the Denver and Colorado Springs “Dream for Darfur” and the “Olympic Torch Relay”. These were rallies denouncing China's involvement in Sudan.

Afeyok

This year we have been invited to Tennessee to re-dedicate the Children's Holocaust memorial and to present a workshop at the November Tents of Hope Ingathering of the Tents on the Washington DC Mall.

Asheng

Last week, we received an email from a friend in Darfur, accompanied by very disturbing photos of a recent attack. He wrote:

"attached is opposite to what your children in grade 8th are doing. They are collecting money to build a primary school while primary school children and their moms are massacred in the Kalma Refugee Camp. Please speed up and spend every effort to stop it. We believe this attack on children and women can be stopped from U.S.A. by adding further momentum to push the government in Sudan to stop its notorious acts against the children and women."

Afeyok

At a recent Denver community event, John Dau a Lost Boy of Sudan said,

"despite the hardship and atrocities we suffered, **we never gave up.**"

Being of Sudanese birth we fully endorse John Dau's words. We are Sudanese refugees, ourselves. We feel for the refugees in Darfur. We are from Southern Sudan and came to the US through Egypt. Even from the United States, we are deeply involved in being activists for our people. Our parents stand alongside us and my father goes back for frequent visits. My mom is here now. In 2011, there will be an election to decide if Southern Sudan will split away from the North. We pray for peace for the Darfuri people to return to their land and resume normal life. We pray for peace for

our people in Southern Sudan, as well, so they may live a life free of conflict.

Asheng

We will not give up! We have the freedom to choose our course of action.

We are young and we care.

We choose to work toward a future filled with hope, and equal opportunities for our counterparts in Sudan, be it Darfur, where genocide kills and displaces people, or in Southern Sudan, where children have been kidnapped into slavery.

Afeyok

We choose to continue to raise community awareness about the Darfur crisis.

We **choose** to stand up and be the voice of the children of Darfur, who deserve the security of parents and a home, three meals a day, and an education.

We **choose** to send a strong message to China, to Omar el-Bashir, to the International Criminal Court in the Hague, to the United Nations Security Council and the world.

Asheng

We choose to say, together with you, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

