

## **STUDENT ANTI-GENOCIDE FORUM ATTRACTS NATIONAL ACTIVISTS**

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Middle school Student Forum will take place at 10:00 AM on Thursday morning February 7, at Kent Denver where a gathering of 500 students is anticipated.**

Today students are traveling on a journey, which will not only impact their lives, but direct them on the correct path for their future endeavors within their community and the world. With younger students becoming globally aware the need for experiential education and opportunity for self-expression has become crucial.

“Change the world. It just takes cents” a student driven, adult mentored middle school initiative has set the standard for young students to stand up and be heard on world issues. Their goal is to Save Darfur, help humanitarian aid organizations, and support Darfuri children in over populated refugee camps, and in countries such as Israel and the United States, which have granted asylum to Darfuri refugees. More importantly they, together with their peers, Darfuri and American, aim to raise the level of Darfur awareness and action throughout Colorado

Based upon the success of this middle school initiative, and that there was little or no organized middle school Darfur programming available, the “Change the world...” team was encouraged to develop a nationwide middle school initiative. Over one short year local and national educators, schools and organizations have adopted or implemented components of the program, amongst which is Linda Hooper - “Paper Clips”, Tim Nonn from “Tents of Hope” – a national campaign based in San Francisco, Save Darfur - who have listed the entire program on their website, a supplementary school in Indianapolis, as well as several youth movements.

A highlight of the project is the gathering of students to speak as one voice against genocide. The first Middle school Forum Against Genocide, held in 2007, attracted attention and participation from State and City officials, local activists, educators and students representing 4 Colorado schools. The second Forum will indeed have a greater impact on our community.

The attending schools will be prepared. Students will have studied the background to this 21<sup>st</sup> Century genocide, the UN Children’s Bill of Rights, the Olympics, the impact of China’s silence on

Darfur and the purpose of Divestment from Sudan, thus qualifying the student voice to speak out, loudly and clearly. “The Forum is theirs. This is the students opportunity to demonstrate their influence on society” says Sara Kornfeld, educator and activist.

Fully comprehending the value of empowering American youth and their leadership development three prominent national activists will stand alongside Colorado’s students as they raise their voice through poetry, music, audiovisual, or the rendering of an extract from a legal declaration.

“Motivating, guiding and empowering the young is a way of ensuring our future” exclaims **Mohamed Yahya**, *Executive Director of Damanga Coalition for Freedom and Democracy* – a Darfuri refugee granted asylum in the United state, and more recently American citizenship. Yahya, who will be the keynote speaker at the Forum, will also spend 4 days in Colorado meeting and speaking to students and adult groups. This Denver visit has been co-sponsored by Professor Shaul Gabbay, at the Institute for the study of Israel and the Middle East (ISIME) at Denver University who will host Mr Yahya all day on Tuesday February 5, 2008.

**Adam Sterling**, *Director of the Genocide Intervention Network Divestment Taskforce* and recognized student activist, involved in dozens of successful and developing targeted Sudan divestment campaigns around the world, has taken time from his demanding schedule to visit Denver, meet students and participate in the Middle School Forum Against Genocide. Sterling’s commitment to Darfur, the stress of his demanding work, the trials and tribulations of an activist are prominently featured the newly launched film “ *Darfur Now*”.

**Michael Ditchfield**, *President and Chief Executive Officer of The 16th of May Foundation* and former Manchester United Soccer player, brings an extensive background in humanitarian causes and professional sports to the Foundation. Believing strongly that “Something will work only if the people at the bottom can offer feedback. Give them a voice.” Therefore Michael Ditchfield will stand together with Colorado’s students and give the people of Darfur the voice the world needs to

and must hear. As a high level sportsman and advocate for social justice Ditchfield, who recently returned from Sudan, will serve as the Forum Master of Ceremonies.

The ultimate goal for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Middle School Forum Against Genocide is to show students they have the power to be agents for change and that they can make a difference.

Sponsors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Middle School Forum Against Genocide BMH-BJ Congregation, Bnai Brith Youth Organization, Colorado Agency for Jewish Education, The Denver Campus Upper School, Kent Denver School, South Middle School, Annunciation School, The Political science Department at Metro State University, The Greenberg Foundation for Tolerance in Co, Springs.

For more information or to participate in the Forum please contact:: Sara Kornfeld, Founder of Change the world. It just takes cents™ at 303-596-8210 or Elaine Lichterman at 303-514-3092