

October Newsletter

By Christina, Chalyn and Alena

Editors Note

Hello YHO!

This month saw us put on our event for this semester, the "Reconnecting Humanity" Symposium with our keynote speaker Kimmie Weeks. Kimmie Weeks at the age of 28 has gone through a lifetime of challenges and had many personal experiences which he shared with us. Many of us were touched, shocked and truly inspired by his speech and after, had a chance to talk to him in more detail about the work he has been doing.

Kimmie Weeks will also be featured on the upcoming feature African Voices-on CNN International on Saturday 17th Oct 2009 @ 2:30PM (ET) and Sunday at 1PM(ET), so do tune in!

<http://edition.cnn.com/CNNI/Programs/africanvoices/>

This month also sees us starting our volunteer tutoring at NeutralZone in Ann Arbor from 3-5pm everyday. If you want to volunteer please contact Melvin Chan mrchan@umich.edu for more details. ASB applications will also be sent out soon, so do sign up as spots are limited. This year's ASB will take place in Georgia, Atlanta.

Lastly, our topic for the October Newsletter focuses on Child Soldiers. We hope you take some time to read it, and more importantly learn something more about how this issue affects youth currently.

Happy reading!

Christina, Chalyn and Alena

Dates to Note

17th October

Stand up Against Poverty-Palmer Commons with a special web conference with Paul Farmer.

23rd October

YHO ASB applications due.



Child Soldiers



Who are these Child Soldiers?

Child soldiers are children who are suffering from injustice by being stripped of their innocence. These children soldiers are less than 18 years old and the youngest is 6 years. Most child soldiers are recruited against their will by being forced and/or abducted, but some are volunteers.

According to the Child Soldiers Global Reports 2004 (CSGR), children enlisted volunteer “as a means of survival in war-torn regions after family, social, and economic structures had collapsed.” Poverty struck country shows a high association between the increase rates of child soldiering. Furthermore, CSGR reports that children join because of poverty, unemployment, lack of access to education, or to escape domestic violence abuse. Some enlisted after seeing family members being tortured or killed by members. Therefore, child soldiers try to avoid the economic crisis and family situation to mend a broken home and even a broken heart.

Source~Child Soldiers Global Reports 2004 – Convention of the Rights of Children

Where in the world have Child Soldiers been used?

Through history and many cultures, child soldiers have been used in front-line combat. Currently, countries such as Chad, Sudan, Indonesia, Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma and Uganda still use child soldiers in their fighting. More often than not, it is militant separatist groups who manage to recruit these child soldiers. The largest percentage of child soldiers being used in combat is from African countries which are still experiencing internal conflict.

What is being done about this?

There are international laws targeted at children soldiers for at least a decade now; however, the practice of recruiting children into combat continues. But recently, criminal court systems have been set up to prosecute those guilty of recruiting children such as **Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)** and **International Criminal Court (ICC)**. The courts are targeting leaders of the militia group and holding them accountable for the actions they’ve done. To-date, the SCSL has convicted six individuals of the crime, which are serving 45 years in prisons. Yet this is only a very small number compared to the many groups the courts have yet to convict. It is a long battle against the culprits involved in recruiting child soldiers, but it has to start somewhere.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN appointed Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, “*Building national capacity to [prevent recruitment of children] is one of the most important challenges of the next few years.*”

<http://www.fpif.org/briefs/vol4/v4n27child.html>