



The Refugee Experience
ACT Koleinu “Your Voice” - Jewish World Watch
Time: Approximately 1 Hour

Goals:

The participants will learn about the life of a refugee in a tangible way and will use this knowledge to educate others. People will walk away with more knowledge about the Sister Schools Project that benefits Darfuri school children in refugee camps in Chad.

Objectives:

The participants will feel empowered to advocate to the White House for the people of Darfur and support the Sister School project.

Materials:

One two gallon container (or two one gallon containers)
One roll masking tape
One clear container holding 1 ¼ cup of rice
One tarp
PowerPoint from Jewish World Watch
Clip from Tracy McGrady’s documentary 3 Points
Projector and screen
TV with DVD player (optional)
Advocacy postcards
Pens

Space Needed:

The program should be held in a space with ample room for all of the participants to sit and watch a DVD and get up and move into small separate groups.

Time Table:

Set up beforehand: Create three large squares side by side with masking tape on the floor. Make sure that the whole group could tightly fit in all three squares combined. Have the projector, screen, and tv set up for the PowerPoint slides and clip from 3 Points.

00:00-10:00 Introduction\Background:

- Jewish World Watch is an organization that was founded in 2004 by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis and Janice Kamenir-Reznik as the Jewish response to the Genocide in Darfur. The organization has grown into a global coalition to end Genocide and other mass atrocities.

- Darfur is the westernmost region of the country Sudan, the largest country in Africa. Just Darfur is about the size of Texas, or Spain. For over five years, JWW has worked to end the ongoing genocide in Darfur, where 400,000 have been killed and over 2.7 million displaced since 2003. In Southern Darfur there’s at least a little bit of rain, so almost all

of the people there live in small farming villages. In northern Darfur, however, it's completely dry. So the people that live there travel throughout the year looking for land and water for their animals to graze on.

Decades ago throughout the year, on a cyclical basis, these Arab nomads and the farmers got along pretty well – the nomad's camels and cattle would fertilize the villager's crops, feed on some green leaves and drink some fresh water. When climate change began ravaging Africa, Darfur was not spared, and with less water every year meant that the nomads had to travel further south, and earlier in the year, to find resources for their animals. Instead of fertilizing crops, they were trampling crops. And the farmers, for that matter, started fencing off more and more land to grow the same amount of crops, because crops were failing. This meant fencing off land traditionally held aside as migratory routes for the nomads. This caused conflict to increase between nomads and farmers over scarce resources.

When Omar Al Bashir, a very racist Arab Muslim, took power he appointed all his friends and took away any power from African Muslims. Frustrated young men, denied any sort of power or voice in their government or communities, joined forces in rebel armies and in 2003 these rebels attacked a government held airport in the north of Darfur. What Omar al Bashir's government decided to do was to "get at the fish by draining the sea." They decided that the way to put down the rebellion was to annihilate any and all civilian that might support the rebels – and that meant destroying the African tribes of Darfur.

The Sudanese army, with their airplanes and helicopters, bombed Darfur villages and in the chaos and panic that followed, the Janjaweed "evil man on horseback" were given the government's permission to loot, rape, murder and destroy all the African people of Darfur.

Currently, 80-90% of Darfuri villages have been destroyed, up to 400,000 people are estimated to have been killed, nearly 3 million people have been displaced, and are living in abject conditions in refugee camps. In total, 4.7 million people in Darfur are affected by this conflict on a daily basis, and need help and constant humanitarian aid just to survive.

10:00 – 20:00 Refugees:

- Ask: What is a refugee? A refugee is a person who has to flee in order to avoid danger or persecution.
- Describe the "system" of genocide used by Sudanese President, Omar Al Bashir in a way that the students can relate to. Explain: "You are the residents of (use neighborhoods that many of them come from) Beverlywood. Tonight, while you and your families are fast asleep, President Obama, our leader who is sworn to protect us, decides he no longer likes the residents of Beverlywood. In fact, he feels that your very existence is a threat to his power and blames all problems the US faces on your community. So while you are sleeping, he sends the United States Air Force to bomb Beverlywood. 50% of all of the residents of Beverlywood perish in the bombings. The President is aware of this so he calls up the leaders of the Crips and Bloods to ask them to finish the job. Their payment is whatever loot they can take. The survivors of the Beverlywood massacre head west to West Los Angeles. The people who live in West Los Angeles have heard about the tragedy and take in the survivors.

Unfortunately, the President finds out about their act of defiance and that next night, when the residents of West LA and the survivors of the Beverlywood massacre are sound asleep, he again sends the United States Air Force to bomb West Los Angeles. Knowing that the Crips and Bloods are on the way, the survivors flee further west to Santa Monica. The residents of Santa Monica are not so pleased to see the refugees but in spite of themselves, they take them in. That night the bombing starts the cycle again but this time there is nowhere else for the survivors to go.”

20:00 – 35:00 Activity:

- Choose 3 people to stand in each of the three squares on the floor.
- 1. Square #1: The person standing there has lived in that square of Santa Monica their whole life and now has a family of 5. In fact, their great-grandfather settled that square of Santa Monica and built a prosperous farm there. That farm now provides all of the produce for the people of Santa Monica.
- 2. Square #2: This person’s family has been living on this square of Santa Monica for so long, they can count back to 8 generations when an ancestor dug a well on the land and found water for the whole community. Now that well provides water for all of the residents of Santa Monica and a livelihood for their family for those 8 generations including their newest grandson.
- 3. Square #3: This person moved to this square of Santa Monica when they were little and their parents realized there was a lot of trade going through this area. Their parents set up a market to control the trade and provide all of the basic necessities to the residents of Santa Monica. Her family has lived on this square of land for many years that they inherited from their grandmother, a travelling merchant.
- Have the remaining students (the survivors of the bombings) all stand up and try to all stand within the limits of the three squares. Be sure that all the participants fit within the borders of the squares and explain that these three people now have to share everything with all the new refugees from the Beverlywood and West Los Angeles massacres. Ask the participants if now there is enough food at the market to feed everyone now living in Santa Monica? Would there be enough water for everyone to drink? What would happen to all the goods in the trade market? Even if you’ve lived in Santa Monica your whole life, one day you wake up late in the morning and there is a huge line to get water, and after hours of waiting you may still not get water that day. Discuss this topic and then have everyone return to their seats. Do you think that this would create resentment within the community of people who lived in Santa Monica? How do you think the survivors feel having no other options?
- Ask the participants: How much water do you think the average American uses a day (have them consider everything we use water for- drinking, bathing, carwash, laundry, flushing the toilet, washing dishes, etc.)? Get a few numbers and explain that the average American uses 100 gallons of water a day- enough to fill up two large trash cans. How much do you think a refugee gets a day? Get some guesses and explain that every refugee gets about 2 gallons of water daily (show water container).
- Ask participants: How many calories do you think you ate for breakfast? Take guesses- if you had a bowl of cereal with banana, milk, and an ice-blended coffee drink you probably ate about 550 calories. The average refugee gets 700 calories of



rice a day (hold up container of rice), which is a little more than you may have eaten for breakfast.

- Lastly, explain that all the people in the room live in some kind of shelter, whether it be a house, condo, apartment, or trailer, we all have a solid roof over our heads at night. When refugees arrive at the camps they receive one blue tarp to make their shelter (hold up tarp and show slide).

35:00 – 1:00:00 Tracy McGrady and Conclusion:

- If you had \$1,000 to help the refugees, what would you do? Have everyone split into small groups and discuss their ideas, have them consider their lives, what they value most, and what they would want if they were stranded in the middle of the desert in these conditions. After about 10 minutes bring them come back together and have each group share their idea for how to help the refugees.
- Tracy McGrady of the New York Knicks heard about what was going on in Darfur and went on a trip to see what he could do about it. Here is a video that he made when he took his trip. Pay attention to what his ideas were. (play clip)
- After the clip, ask what Tracy was planning to do to help (build an indoor swimming pool and/or a soccer field), discuss if you think he had good ideas and what the pros and cons are of this ideas.
- After spending a few more days in the refugee camps and LISTENING to what the refugees felt they needed to improve their lives, he heard the same thing over and over again: “Education”, the people in the camps wanted an education so that they could continue their tribal lives even if they were not living in their native land. Because of his experience, Tracy decided to create and fund the Sister Schools Project, to build schools in the refugee camps designed to be able to be transported back to Darfur when it was safe for the villagers to return to their land.
- Jewish World Watch has partnered with Tracy as well as several other NBA stars that call themselves the Darfur Dream Team to build, staff, train teachers and provide all supplies for the school and the students. The project has completed the Sudan Djedid and the Ali Dinar B schools which are serving over 4,000 children. Work has begun on building a third school called the Daresalem A school. What are ways you can help to make the Daresalem school a reality? Discuss fundraising ideas as a group.
- Refugee relief is just one thing Jewish World Watch does. It keeps refugees alive and in the case of the Sister Schools Project, gives them a chance for a better future. But what kind of future is there if your entire life is spent in a refugee camp? Relief is a short-term goal. The long-term goal is to create a future for the people of Darfur where they can return home and live a peaceful, productive life. We do that through advocacy. Advocacy is telling your leaders what’s important to you and why it should be important to them. Our leaders work for us, and are paid by our tax dollars. If ending the genocide is important to you, you need to advocate for that. If the Whitehouse gets enough phone calls, postcards and emails saying that the citizens of this country want the genocide in Darfur stopped. You can bet that it will become a priority for this President.
- Have everyone fill out postcards to the Whitehouse advocating for the people of Darfur and thank everyone for their participation in making a difference.