



AT WILLIAM MITCHELL COLLEGE OF LAW

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## ***Tents of Witness: Genocide and Conflict*** **Summary Report, September 2014**

### **Introduction: The Exhibit**

Several years ago, World Without Genocide developed *Tents of Witness: Genocide and Conflict*, a traveling exhibit designed to be displayed at colleges, schools, faith institutions, and public spaces as the cornerstone of several days of human rights programming. The exhibit features ten 8' x 12' canvas tents, similar to those used in some refugee camps today. Each tent depicts a genocide or other mass atrocity: the Native Americans, Armenians, the Holocaust, the genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur, and the conflicts in Argentina, Congo, and North Korea.

The tents' designs were created by people from the various cultures or groups. The exteriors of the tents are painted to highlight significant elements of the country's or group's culture. The interiors depict the richness of the culture before the conflict; the conflict itself; and the post-conflict challenges of transitional justice, adaptations in a diaspora, and the situation for refugees in Minnesota. This information is depicted through large laminated photographs with short, easily-understood captions. Each tent also includes text of a short monologue, told from the first-person point of view, about a victim or a survivor of the culture; these monologues are either read aloud at the exhibits or are affixed to the tents to be read by the viewers.

The exhibit also includes five standing banners, each 7' in height, highlighting facts about refugees worldwide; definitions of refugees, asylum-seekers, and immigrants; the United Nations Convention to Prevent and Punish the Crime of Genocide; and other related information.

Additionally, there are five 'action stations.' These stations provide hands-on opportunities for viewers to learn more and to become directly engaged with the issues.

- At one station, people make and decorate paper butterflies. This project is in collaboration with the Houston Holocaust Museum, which is collecting 1.5 million paper butterflies to represent each of the 1.5 million Jewish children killed during the Holocaust. The butterflies will be on exhibit at the Museum in 2014.
- At a second station, participants learn about the role that the minerals used in small electronics, such as cell phones, play in the violence occurring today in Congo. They write postcards to the CEOs at leading electronics producers such as Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, and Motorola urging

greater attention to the issue of these 'conflict minerals' and viewers are encouraged to become thoughtful consumers themselves.

- At the third station, viewers address the issue of human trafficking, a global and local problem from Bosnia to Cambodia to Minnesota. They write to the *Village Voice* and urge action to prohibit the use of backpage.com to sell sexual services of those who are prostituted and trafficked against their will.
- At the fourth station, participants learn about the problem of child soldiers, highlighted in the tents for the Holocaust, Congo, and Cambodia. The viewers make red handprints saying "Stop!" These handprints, part of a global campaign, are sent to the United Nations urging that more be done to end this terrible problem.
- At a fifth station, people learn about medical professionals who are complicit with torture. They write letters to their state elected officials, urging them to hold medical professionals accountable for torture.

The exhibit provides education that relates to a number of disciplines: history, current events, sociology, psychology, gender studies, economics, political science, global studies, human rights, and legal studies. It is designed for general audiences from age 13 through adults; the language is intentionally easy to understand for viewing by non-native English speakers.

### Goals of the Exhibit

There are several goals for *Tents of Witness: Genocide and Conflict*.

- The tents teach the history of genocide, illustrating clearly that 'never again,' proclaimed after the Holocaust, has, instead, become the story of genocides occurring over and over again on nearly every continent and with groups targeted based on race, ethnicity, religion, and national origin.
- The action stations engage ordinary citizens, including youth, in steps to protect innocent people and remember those whose lives were destroyed by violence.
- There are stories in each tent of refugees from these conflicts who now live in Minnesota. These stories help to celebrate our newest neighbors, understand their histories, and reduce xenophobia towards those who often are perceived as 'different.'

### Opportunities

Funding is sought to offset rental fees for Minnesota venues, maintain development and upkeep of the exhibit, and provide for administrative support.

Funders include

- St. Joan of Arc Church, 2012
- Laura Jane Musser Fund, 2012
- Minnesota Interfaith Darfur Coalition, 2012
- Rimon: The Jewish Arts Foundation, 2012

- Minnesota Idea Open Grant, 2012
- Anderson Foundation, 2014
- Friends of World Without Genocide, 2012-2014

We publicized this opportunity widely. We printed and distributed brochures about the exhibit, included information on our website, and promoted the exhibit at all of our public events. The result has been very positive. The exhibit has been hosted from Moorhead to Rochester, at colleges, schools, and faith organizations, and about five thousand people have seen it to date. The exhibit has been displayed as the cornerstone of human rights programming that included films and speakers; as an adjunct to other events already planned; and as a required part of high school classes. At one location, the planners invited survivors from each of the targeted groups to be at the exhibit and to speak informally with the viewers; this provided an outstanding richness and level of engagement for the viewers and honored the survivors and their stories.

We increased our administrative support for the exhibit in response to requests from hosting organizations. We now provide the following:

- Press releases that organizations can use to contact their local media.
- Fliers and postcards for organizations to publicize the exhibit in their community.
- Comment cards for viewers to complete after viewing the exhibit.
- Teaching materials for educators to use with students before and after viewing.
- Very user-friendly instructions for set-up and take-down, as well as easily-transported containers for the exhibit materials (tents, poles, action station materials, etc.).

### **Impact of the Exhibit**

The exhibit's impact can be judged in several ways: by the comments viewers write; by interest in hosting the exhibit a second or third time; and by the number of people who have seen it (see the information in Table 1 below).

- **Viewers' comments** included the following responses from 75 comment cards collected at an exhibit in spring 2013:

In response to ***"Please rate the exhibit's effectiveness in educating about different genocides,"*** with categories of *outstanding*, *good*, *fair*, and *poor*, 53 of 75 respondents, or 71%, rated it *outstanding*, with the remaining 29% rating it *good*. Numerically, with *outstanding* scored as 4.0, the overall rating was 3.71.

***Open-ended comments*** about the exhibit's overall effectiveness included:

\*I thought it was all very well put together.

\*This is an excellent way to stop bullying by encouraging UPSTANDERS.

\*Critical info given but not too much to overwhelm.

\*Would recommend to all age groups.

- \*People don't know how bad this is because they don't pay attention to what can possibly happen to us as well.
- \*Was very informative.
- \*I didn't know much before I came here.
- \*Love the tent concept.
- \*Please bring this exhibit back. Put it up in a library or subway [underground tunnel system] so more of the general public can see it.
- \*Everyone should see it!
- \*Wonderful way to teach.
- \*Excellent displays!
- \*Thank you for spreading this information.
- \*Having survivors share their experiences was very powerful.
- \*Very sad and very enlightening.
- \*Wonderful volunteers at each tent.
- \*So very well done. Thank you!
- \*Keep presenting this wider and wider!
- \*Thank you. Very sobering and interesting.
- \*Great setup of before, during, and after info.
- \*Compelling – sobering.
- \*Found it moving and interesting.
- \*Was very effective and useful.

In response to the question ***“What was the most interesting thing you learned?”*** viewers said:

- \*The conflict still going on in the Congo and the information about the products that are conflict-free.
- \*How little we do to prevent or respond to these events.
- \*This exhibit reinforces what I've known and it's good to have possibilities to take action.
- \*This is a world issue and we cannot close our eyes.
- \*Congo's 'mineral war.'
- \*The Armenian genocide.
- \*The current genocides happening.
- \*How there are more nations suffering. How people could do such a thing to these innocent people yet they feel no guilt at all.
- \*I am just in awe of it all.
- \*I learned a lot about genocide.
- \*How many people have died in the Congo.
- \*North Korea's genocide. And Cher is Armenian!
- \*I didn't know what was going on in the Congo.
- \*Victims' stories.
- \*Rwanda.
- \*Native American history in Minnesota. Violence against women on reservations.
- \*Number of people whose lives were taken.
- \*That many people died; many people were starving.

- \*The millions lost.
- \*I didn't know about Armenia.
- \*I did not previously understand the 'metals' motivation for conflict in the Congo.
- \*Very little is being done about ongoing genocide.
- \*The breadth of the problem.
- \*The Rwandan genocide took place in such a short window of time.
- \*How widespread genocide is and how little the world does to stop it.
- \*The incredible amount of crimes against women.
- \*How prevalent this practice was and still is.
- \*The global suffering of the human family. The endurance of people who survive and are humanized by their incredible ordeal.
- \*More awareness of the Armenian killings. How much shorter children in North Korea are than in South Korea.
- \*Very sobering. Too many people die. So many countries and people's lives are changed forever.
- \*About Congo – the metal for electronics. Most of the world takes part in having metals but only a few understand the problem.
- \*All of it!
- \*How many people suffered. That people still do this.
- \*The sites of concentration camps. The rate and number of killings.
- \*The individual stories are amazing!! Thank you!
- \*How devastating some of the genocides were.
- \*Prosecution efforts are spotty. North Korea's expansive oppression of their own people.
- \*How many, many were raped in Rwanda.
- \*Too many deaths.
- \*All the people in Rwanda that died.
- \*Rwanda.
- \*That a lot of women were being raped. That Anne Frank died two weeks before liberation.
- \*That in the 1970s American Indian women were sterilized.
- \*How many actually died.
- \*Groups were despised. The cruelty of people.
- \*I didn't know how many there were.
- \*Numbers.
- \*What's going on today in Congo.
- \*The event/tents is precise and organized. They put all places of genocide and groups into one event, which is very good.

- **Hosting the exhibit again:** Educators in Rochester, Minnesota plan to make the exhibit a required part of their secondary-school curriculum, having it on display for a week every spring and integrating it into the permanent social studies curriculum. This provides strong support for the value of the exhibit as an educational tool. One respondent wrote on a comment card, "This needs to be incorporated into school curriculums. I have pushed for this to the Minnesota Department of Education."

## Data

The table below shows the information about the exhibit displays since receiving the Minnesota Idea Open grant (2012), including those displays that are scheduled in the immediate future. Audience size is only an estimate, since tickets are not required and large groups are not reliably counted.

**Table 1. Exhibition Dates, Venues, and Attendance: 2012-2014**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Tents Displayed</b>	<b>Audience Size and Composition</b>	<b>Related Programming</b>
June 20-21, 2012	William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul	Holocaust, Congo, Darfur, Rwanda	25 educators and professionals	World Without Genocide's Summer Institute for Educators and Leaders
August 14-16, 2012	William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul	Holocaust, Congo, Darfur, Rwanda	90 students and community members	World Without Genocide's Summer Institute for High School Students
August 28, 2012	The Women's Club, Minneapolis	Holocaust	100 community members	Gala, <i>Tuesday in the Park with World</i>
September 11-14, 2012	Concordia College, Moorhead	Argentina, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo	300 college students	<i>Child Soldiers, Child Victims and Children's Rights</i> program
October 1-4, 2012	White Bear Lake High School, White Bear Lake	Congo, Darfur, Rwanda	200 high school students	Genocide awareness campaign
December 3, 2012	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	American Indians, Argentina, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Darfur, Holocaust, North Korea, Rwanda	1,000 college students faculty, and staff	Human Rights Week program
January 25-31, 2013	Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Minneapolis, MN	Argentina, Bosnia, Holocaust, Rwanda	150 high school students	Catholic Schools Week program
January 30, 2013	University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	Congo	60 college students and community members	Film and discussion event, <i>What's in Your Pocket?</i>
February 27-	Minnesota	American Indian,	500 college	Dr. Michael Fagin Pan-African

March 2, 2013	State University, Mankato	Congo, Darfur	students	Student Leadership Conference
March 11-15, 2013	University of Northern Iowa	American Indian, Argentina, Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur	300 college students	STAND program
March 21-23, 2013	Marriot Hotel, Minneapolis	Argentina, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo	350 high school students, educators, YMCA staff	Youth in Government's Model United Nations program
April 29-May 4, 2013	Northrop Community Education Center, Rochester	American Indians, Argentina, Armenians, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Darfur, Holocaust, North Korea, Rwanda	1,200 high school students and community members	<i>Tents of Witness: Genocide and Conflict</i> program
June 10, 2013	Minnesota State Fairgrounds, St. Paul	American Indian, Darfur, Holocaust, North Korea, Rwanda	320 high school students	Minnesota 4-H's <i>Youth Experiencing Leadership and Learning Outloud</i> program
June 19-20, 2013	William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul	American Indian, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Holocaust	25 educators and professionals	World Without Genocide's Summer Institute for Educators and Leaders
August 12-15, 2013	William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul	American Indian, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Holocaust	100 students and community members	World Without Genocide's Summer Institute for High School Students
September 26-October 13, 2013	Youth Performance Company, Plymouth Congregational Church, Plymouth	American Indian, Cambodia, Congo, Holocaust	300 high school students, members of Plymouth Church, members of the public	Youth Performance Company's production of <i>And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank</i>
October 10, 2013	William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul	Congo, Rwanda	200 professors, professionals, members of SOM	Sociologists of Minnesota annual conference
November 5-7, 2013	Normandale Community College, Bloomington	American Indian, Armenian, Bosnia, Darfur, Holocaust, Rwanda	129 college students, faculty, and staff	Normandale Community College commemoration of Kristallnacht Anniversary
December 9, 2013	William Mitchell	American Indian, Congo, Holocaust	106 members of the public	<i>Kristallnacht, the Kindertransports, and the</i>

	College of Law, St. Paul			<i>Genocide Convention</i>
January 30-31, 2014	Academy of Holy Angels, Richfield	American Indian, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Holocaust, Rwanda	800 high school and middle school students, faculty, and staff	Genocide Awareness Program, <i>Conflict in Congo</i>
February 1-7, 2014	Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Minneapolis	American Indian, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Holocaust, Rwanda	400 high school students, faculty, staff, and members of the public	<i>Spirit of '94: Genocide Education, Advocacy, and Action</i>
March 14, 2014	Congregation Shir Tikvah, Minneapolis	American Indian, Congo, Holocaust, North Korea	350	Leila Pergament Lowry's Bat Mitzvah service
March 24-25, 2014	University of Wisconsin- Stout, Menomonie, WI	American Indian, Argentina, Congo Holocaust, North Korea	400	UW-Stout genocide awareness program
April 11, 2014	Capitol Rotunda, St. Paul	American Indian, Congo, Holocaust, Rwanda	200	<i>Remembering the Children: The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide</i>
April 21-25, 2014	Harding High School, St. Paul	American Indian, Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Darfur, Holocaust, Rwanda, North Korea	1,200	Harding High School genocide awareness program
May 27-30, 2014	Centennial High School, Circle Pines	American Indian, Argentina, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, North Korea, Rwanda	1,500 high school students and educators	
June	St Joan of Arc Church	Cambodia	300	
July 27, 2014	St. Joan of Arc Church	Native Americans, Holocaust, Armenians, and Rwanda	1500	
August 11-14, 2014	William Mitchell College of Law	Congo, Holocaust, Bosnia, Armenians, and Rwanda	100	Summer Institute 2014
April 6-7, 2015 (tentative)	UW Stout			
<b>Total number of</b>	<b>Number of</b>		<b>Total viewers to</b>	



exhibits: 26	different venues: 20		date: 12,226	
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## Conclusion

Generous individual and foundational grants have made it possible for this exhibit to travel widely throughout the state. Without such funds, it is likely that few of the organizations would have been able to host the exhibit. This has been an extremely positive experience for viewers and also for World Without Genocide. The exhibit has enabled audiences, who otherwise might have no access to this information, to learn about critical historical and contemporary issues and to become engaged in advancing social justice.

### Tents of Witness exhibition highlights



Students and community members tour the tents



The tents on display at the University of Minnesota

Students at an Action Station



Survivors of different genocides engage with community members at an exhibit in Rochester



High school and college students and World Without Genocide associates paint the tents: (left to right)  
Cambodia, Armenia, and the Holocaust