
Taylor University News Source

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Darfurian Refugees: Taylor University's Theatre Class to Perform Their Stories

Ft. Wayne, Ind. - Taylor University announced today that its Community Based Performance Troupe will perform *Voices Unheard*, an original production based on the stories of Darfuri Refugees currently living in Ft. Wayne. The performance is scheduled for Saturday, December 8 at 8:00 p.m. at the Come2Go Ministries facility in Ft. Wayne.

The students interviewed Darfurian refugees and collected personal stories from them. These stories tell of the horrors of living under the corrupt government of North Sudan. *Voices Unheard* also dramatizes what officials have described as an "ethnic cleansing" campaign by a group of Arab militiamen known as the Janjaweed. Some stories also depict refugee life here in the United States and the struggles of adjusting to life in a foreign land. *Voices Unheard* also illustrates the Darfuri's extreme longing to help friends and family still trapped in Darfur.

Dr. Linda S. Welker, a theatre/performance studies professor at Taylor University, and her students desire to promote awareness of the crisis in Darfur in addition to highlighting the difficulties of refugees who flee to the United States. Since there is a large population of Darfurian refugees living in Ft. Wayne presently, the class wishes to encourage awareness for the larger community to become involved in helping the immigrants adjust to living in the United States. The desire of the class also is to tell the stories of those who are still trapped in the dangerous area of Darfur. The students hope to spur the audience to action by way of signing petitions, giving money, and committing to pray for the Sudanese people and its corrupt government.

Welker, the adaptor/director of *Voices Unheard*, encourages the students to take on the complete character of the refugees. Eight students will perform the individual narratives they heard and transcribed in their performative evocation of the voices of the Darfurian people.

Three seniors, two juniors and two sophomores comprise this diverse class. Some of these students have had little or no acting experience but have delightfully surprised Dr. Welker. She says..."Each of the students in the class has shown amazing sensitivity to the Darfuri people. They demonstrate deep empathy in their particularly realistic performances." Taylor University is expecting a large crowd and is excited to make an impact on the lives of the Darfurian Refugees living in Ft. Wayne and possibly those still living in Darfur.

The performance is co-sponsored by two Fort Wayne non-profit organizations: The Reclamation Project and the Circle of Friends who provided connections to the Darfuri refugee community. *Voices Unheard* is being performed in Fort Wayne as a gesture of friendship. It is a hallmark of community-based performance to perform back in the community of the group being performed.

The performance is free and open to the public. A voluntary donation will be received in support of the local Darfur refugee community. For ticket information contact Judy Kirkwood at 765-998-5289.