

Testimony of Ana Slavin
Before the House Oversight National Security Subcommittee
At the Hearing, "Darfur and the Olympics: A Call for International Action"
June 7, 2007

It is an honor for us to represent high school students from around the country and be the voice to represent everyone who contributed to Dollars for Darfur at this important hearing. As Nick and I were developing Dollars for Darfur there was one aspect that was of primary importance; the involvement of high school students. While some view high school students to be consumed with merely the trials and tribulations of teenage life, we saw something more. We saw a generation with a desire to make a difference. Our generation has struggled to find an identity. We are now recognized for our activism. Through this challenge we have proved that given the right forum we *can* have an impact. Nick and I started Dollars for Darfur by simply inviting our friends to join our Facebook and MySpace groups and encouraging them to spread the word. The numbers grew exponentially: in just six months more than 7000 high school students had joined our groups. Teens across the country have devised creative and effective ways of raising money and awareness for the cause. For example:

At our school, Northfield Mount Hermon, Evan Abrams helped raise more than \$15,000 and amassed a Dollars for Darfur committee consisting of over 50 students. Evan and his committee sold pizza to dorms around campus and organized a series of tournaments held in our student center

Ryan Saxe from Nevada organized a walk through the Vegas Strip raising both funds and awareness

Christine Ocshner from Clearwater Central Catholic high school organized a school wide dress down day in which students could pay to dress in the clothing of their choice rather than their uniforms

Numerous schools like Deerfield Academy and Athens Academy held benefit concerts run and performed by students.

Students from Wyoming High School even went door to door through their community educating people about the situation and receiving donations

Through these efforts Dollars for Darfur raised over \$300,000 in just 6 months. The success of Dollars for Darfur demonstrates two things about our generation: we have extremely effective social networks that can be quickly mobilized and we are passionate about ending the genocide in Darfur.

I would like to read a few excerpts from the hundreds of messages that students posted on the Dollars for Darfur Facebook and MySpace sites to give you a sense of some of the incredible enthusiasm we encountered throughout the Dollars for Darfur Challenge.

Claire Helfrich from the American School of the Hague writes:

This is great, you guys. Here in the Netherlands, my high school has done a Save Darfur campaign as well. ... with all our efforts and money we can really make a difference.

Kristin Girouard from Oakton High School wrote:

Forget the imaginary lines that divide us from Africa. A suffering human being in Darfur is just as important as a US citizen, and furthermore, worthy of our attention, compassion and aid.

Finally, Alex Mandel from Solebury School posted the following quotation from Nelson Mandela: "Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great, you can be that generation."

Our generation knows that we will inherit a world with staggering problems. We simply can't wait for others to change the world – we must start now. Taking action to stop the Darfur genocide is of great concern to high school students. According to a recent survey of 18-24 year olds conducted by Harvard University's Institute of Politics, the crisis in Darfur was identified as the most important foreign policy issue after stabilizing Iraq. Our generation will vote in 2008 and we will support candidates who work to promote human rights.

We are grateful to the Save Darfur Coalition for supporting us and believing in this idea. We would also like to acknowledge the work that members of this subcommittee have done to help end the genocide in Darfur. We extend our sincere gratitude for convening this hearing and listening to our testimony.