



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

# CONFRONTING CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY



## NATIONAL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST 2008-2009



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Detachable Full-Color Poster

POSTMARK DEADLINE: **February 1, 2009**

SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



## NATIONAL Peace Essay Contest 2008-2009

### Confronting Crimes against Humanity

#### SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## WHAT DO ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS RECEIVE?

### *College Scholarships*

State-level selection categories include the fifty U.S. states, Washington, D.C., U.S. Territories, and American students abroad. First place state-level winners compete for national awards.

**I National award, first place: \$10,000\***

**I National award, second place: \$5,000\***

**I National award, third place: \$2,500\***

(\*national awards include state award amounts)

**53 State awards, first place: \$1,000 each**

### *Invitation to the Awards Program in Washington, D.C.*

First-place state winners are invited to Washington for the awards program. The Institute pays for expenses related to the program, including travel, lodging, meals, and entertainment. This unique five-day program promotes an understanding of the nature and process of international peace-making by focusing on a region and/or theme related to the current essay topic. Program activities have included

- taking part in a simulation exercise in which students assume roles of national and international leaders, examine issues, address crises, and then formulate and propose solutions;
- meeting with U.S. government officials and political leaders;
- participating in briefings by highly-regarded practitioners and foreign government officials;
- visiting historical and cultural sites; attending a musical or play;
- sampling international cuisines from some of Washington's most interesting ethnic restaurants.

## INTRODUCTION

The international system has witnessed dramatic changes in the recent past. Developments around the globe and at home challenge us to rethink the role of the United States in the international community. What is our nation's place in this increasingly complex global picture? How do we best promote respect for human rights and the growth of freedom and justice? What can we do to nurture and preserve international security and world peace?

The United States depends on knowledgeable and thoughtful students—the next generation of leaders—to build peace with freedom and justice among nations and peoples. In the belief that questions about peace, justice, freedom, and security are vital to civic education, the United States Institute of Peace established the National Peace Essay Contest to expand educational opportunities for young Americans.

### *The National Peace Essay Contest:*

- promotes serious discussion among high school students, teachers, and national leaders about international peace and conflict resolution today and in the future;
- complements existing curricula and other scholastic activities;
- strengthens students' research, writing, and reasoning skills;
- meets National Content Standards.

## WHEN IS THE DEADLINE?

**Entries must be postmarked by February 1, 2009.**

## WHAT DOES THE INSTITUTE PROVIDE TO HELP STUDENTS AND TEACHERS PARTICIPATE?

This guidebook contains, in addition to the requirements, last year's national winner's essay as a sample. Also, we have created a study guide for teachers and students.



# NATIONAL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST 2008-2009 TOPIC AND QUESTION

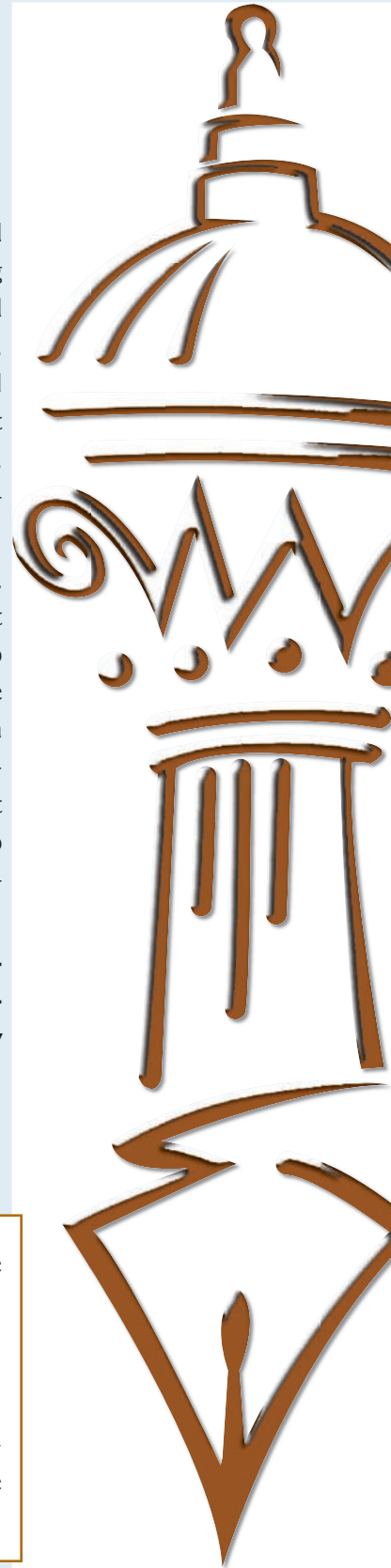
## ***Confronting Crimes against Humanity***

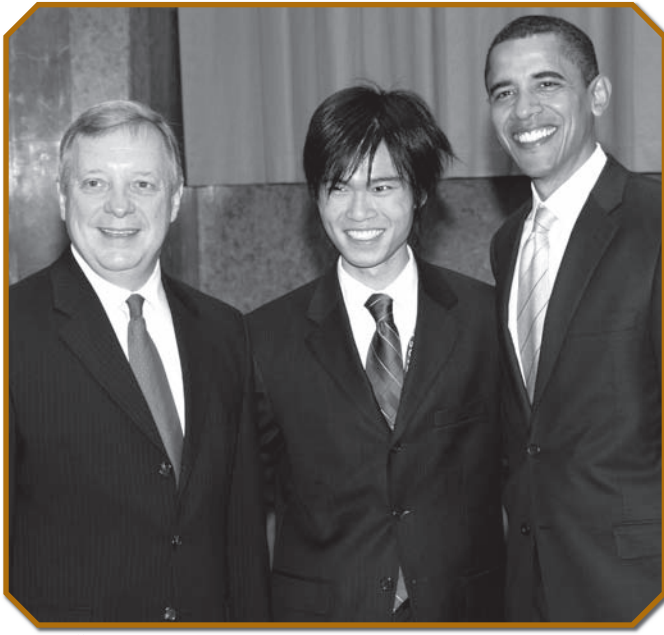
The high number of civilian deaths caused by the war in Darfur underscores the need for concerned governments and organizations to find effective ways of protecting civilians from mass killing and targeted attacks in conflicts. With the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the United Nations laid important groundwork for saving civilians. Adopted by the UN General Assembly, the document represented a shift from the long-held principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states to a new principle of national and international responsibility to protect civilians from genocide and other crimes against humanity. However, in contemporary conflicts, implementing this responsibility runs into various forms of opposition from governments and international organizations.

According to international law, crimes against humanity are specified acts—such as murder, enslavement, torture, and rape—committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations. Although many policymakers, experts, and practitioners recognize the need to protect civilians from crimes against humanity, there is little consensus on the best way to achieve that end. Governments and international organizations have sought to use various methods—media campaigns, diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, and military interventions—to save populations from crimes against humanity, with varying degrees of success. Many governments resist outside interference in the affairs of sovereign states, while the record of international responses to mass violence against civilians indicates that the UN, concerned governments, and non-governmental organizations find it difficult to act quickly, cohesively, and effectively.

**In a 1,500-word essay, discuss how international actors (the UN, regional organizations, governments, and/or non-governmental organizations) can improve their capacity to implement the responsibility to protect civilians from crimes against humanity during conflict.**

- Briefly describe two foreign conflicts that involved crimes against humanity. Describe the sources of each conflict and the circumstances in which the crimes took place.
- Discuss and analyze the roles that the international actor(s) played in responding to the crimes.
- Were they effective? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Drawing on your analysis, recommend two or three specific measures that international organizations, governments, and/or non-governmental organizations could take to respond more successfully to crimes against humanity.





*Illinois winner Yi Lu poses with Senator Richard Durbin and Senator Barack Obama (June 2007).*

**You may download the study guide [www.usip.org/npec/sg09.pdf](http://www.usip.org/npec/sg09.pdf) as well as this guidebook [www.usip.org/npec/gb09.pdf](http://www.usip.org/npec/gb09.pdf).** You may also request additional copies of the materials through our Web site, [www.usip.org/ed/contactus/ordermaterials.php](http://www.usip.org/ed/contactus/ordermaterials.php) or by emailing [essaycontest@usip.org](mailto:essaycontest@usip.org).

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Students are eligible to participate if they are in grades nine through twelve in any of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, or if they are U.S. citizens attending high school overseas. Students may be attending a public, private, or parochial school correspondence program. Entries from home-schooled students are also accepted. Previous first-place state winners and immediate relatives of directors or staff of the Institute are not eligible to participate. *Previous honorable mentions are eligible to enter.*

**We encourage students of all backgrounds and ability to participate in the contest.**

Students must have a contest coordinator who can review the essays and act as the key contact between participants and the Institute. It is to the student's advantage to have a coordinator review the essay to make sure it is complete, has all the necessary forms, is free from typographical and grammatical errors, and addresses the topic. See the next section for further information about the contest coordinator.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTEST COORDINATOR

The contest coordinator is the key contact between students and the United States Institute of Peace. The coordinator may be selected by the student and can be any adult—teacher, parent, youth leader, etc. Coordinators do not need to contact the Institute prior to submitting essays.

### **In schools and organizations, the coordinator**

- oversees the selection process for essays submitted to the contest;
- ensures that essays are conceived and written by students and represent the students' own thoughts;
- reviews the essays to ensure that they follow the guidelines, and to check for grammatical and typographical errors;
- signs each student registration form to certify compliance with the rules;
- registers online as a coordinator (see page 6) and submits one copy of the completed coordinator registration form along with four collated copies of each student's essay accompanied by a copy of the student registration form.

## HOW WILL YOUR ESSAY BE JUDGED?

Essays are sent to state-level judges—qualified experts selected by the Institute who evaluate the essays according to the criteria described below. National winners are selected from among the first-place state essays by the Institute's board of directors. The decisions of the judges are final. The Institute reserves the right to present no awards at the state and national levels, or to reduce the number of awards if an insufficient number of deserving entries is received.

**Participants are notified in May of their essays' status.** Students and coordinators should not contact the Institute for information about the status of the essays.

An excellent essay uses well-researched ideas and facts to hold together logical and compelling argument(s) and presents thoughtful solution(s) to the problem. It also reflects a student's ability to organize complex facts and ideas, to bring in his/her own interesting perspectives and ideas to the analysis and recommendation(s), and to pay attention to writing style and mechanics (grammar, syntax, punctuation).

## WHAT ARE THE ESSAY REQUIREMENTS?

For the purpose of the National Peace Essay Contest, an essay is a three-part paper that lays out and develops a position in response to the essay contest question. Researching the topic to gain a greater knowledge about critical issues raised in the question and to find examples that support your points is crucial. However, the essay should be more than a research paper, a narrative description of events, or a statement of opinion.

### *Your essay should have the following structure:*

**Introduction:** Introduce the subject and *state your thesis*. The objective is to demonstrate that you understand the essay contest question and have formed a response to it.

**Body:** Develop your arguments and assertions using research and analysis. The process of analysis may include comparing and contrasting, differentiating among several ideas or events, critiquing a variety of perspectives, interpreting results, or drawing inferences. *Be sure to identify the sources of your information or ideas using a standard citation method.*

**Conclusion:** Summarize the research and analysis presented in the essay and set forth your conclusions. Drawing on ideas already presented, you should demonstrate that your conclusions support the thesis you put forward in the opening paragraphs. Your aim is to convince the reader that your thesis, facts, and analysis are reasonable and valid.

**Credit the Sources of Information and Ideas:** *Use a standardized method and style such as MLA or APA to consistently give credit to the sources of the ideas and information used in your essay. Use in-text citations, footnotes, or endnotes to give credit to the sources of your information or ideas. Also include a bibliography or a references list to list the works that you have cited in your essay or have consulted in order to write your essay.*

Essays that use a variety of sources—academic journals, news magazines, newspapers, books, government documents, publications from research organizations—fare better in the contest. *General encyclopedias are not acceptable as sources.* Essays citing encyclopedias in notes or bibliography may be disqualified. *The Internet or World Wide Web should not be the only source for your essay.* When citing Internet

sources, include the following information: author(s), title of work, Internet address, and date information was accessed.

### *Your essay must*

- address all parts of this year's contest question in English. Essays on previous year's or other topics will be disqualified;
- **NOT** have your name, teacher's name, or school name anywhere on the essay;
- be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white 8½ by 11 inch (letter size) paper with left and right margins at 1¼ inches each. Font must be no smaller than 12 point Times or similarly sized font;
- have a title and page numbers;
- have no more than 1,500 words (approximately five pages). The word count limit includes all words in the text but does not include the bibliography and notes;
- follow accepted standards regarding attribution of quotations, arguments, and ideas of others;
- include standardized citations and a bibliography with Internet sources listed separately.

### *You must submit*

- four stapled, legible, collated copies of your essay, along with the completed registration form, to your contest coordinator well in advance of the **February 1, 2009** postmark deadline. If you registered online, include the essay ID number found on your registration form at the top right corner of the first page of each of the four copies. Attach one copy of your student registration form to the top of the first essay copy. Your coordinator will submit your essay entry packet to the Institute with the coordinator registration form;
- the student registration form must be signed by the student and the coordinator;
- the word count section of the registration form must be filled out with an *exact number*;
- a coordinator registration form must accompany the student's entry.



## DIRECTIONS FOR ENTERING THE CONTEST:

**! To expedite the winner selection process, we ask that you complete your registration form online.**

### *Student:*

- Let your coordinator (see page 4) know about your intention to enter the contest. If your coordinator is not from your school and does not belong to an organization or a club, give your school name and address to your coordinator.
- Follow the essay guidelines carefully to write your essay. When the final draft is ready, ask your coordinator to review it to make sure you have followed all the guidelines and directions.
- Go over the list at the bottom of this page to make sure you have all the information you will need to register your entry through our Web site. Online registration is mandatory for students and coordinators. (See below: Note about Internet Access)
- Get your coordinator's ID number. (If your coordinator has not registered, show your coordinator the coordinator section of this page.)
- Go to [www.usip.org/npec/register](http://www.usip.org/npec/register). Follow directions to fill out the student registration form.
- After submitting your information, print out two copies of the registration form. Send one copy to us, and keep one for your records.
- Include at the top right corner of the first page of your essays the registration number found on your registration form. If you have already printed out your essay and made copies, write it by hand.
- Look over the essay submission checklist on page 7.
- When your essay is ready, give one signed copy of your student registration form and four stapled copies of your essay to your coordinator.
- Be sure to keep a copy of the essay and registration form.

**! You will need to have the following information on hand when you go online to register:**

#### **If you're a STUDENT**

- Essay title
- Exact word count
- Student name, address, home phone, e-mail
- Grade in school, anticipated graduation date, gender
- Coordinator registration ID and name
- School name and address

### *Note about Internet Access:*

If the coordinator and the student(s) do not have easy access to the Internet, the registration forms on page 8 and 9 of this guidebook may be used. You may ignore the instructions regarding the contest coordinator ID number and/or essay ID number if this is the case. We will process the registration forms and essays without any penalty or prejudice.

### *Coordinator:* (see page 4)

- Before students begin to write their essays, and after students have their essays ready, review the essay submission checklist (on page 7) with students.
- Go over the list at the bottom of this page to make sure you have all the information needed to register online. Online registration is mandatory for coordinators and students unless Internet access is not possible (See Note About Internet Access below).
- Go to [www.usip.org/npec/register](http://www.usip.org/npec/register) to register as a coordinator.
- Follow directions online to fill out the coordinator registration form. Print out a copy of the registration form to include with the student entries. If you find errors or would like to update the information after printing the form, make the change by hand and put your initials next to each change. Keep a copy of the form for your records.
- Give your students your coordinator ID number listed on the coordinator registration form. The students need this information to fill out their student registration form online.
- Collect the student registration forms along with the essays. Sign each student's registration form to certify that the essay is the student's work.

**! You will need to have the following information on hand when you go online to register:**

#### **If you're a COORDINATOR**

- Coordinator name, address, phone, e-mail
- Student's school address if different from the coordinator's affiliation
- Information on how you heard about the contest, how you received the contest guidebook and/or study guide, and whether you used the study guide
- Number of students who participated by writing an essay
- Number of essays submitted this year

## ESSAY SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- Have you made sure that your name, school, or city do not appear anywhere on the essay manuscript?
- Is your essay no more than 1,500 words long?
- Have you filled in the word-count section on the application form?
- Is your essay written in English?
- Does your essay address all parts of the contest topic?
- Have you given your essay a title?
- Have you scrupulously followed accepted standards regarding attribution of quotations, arguments, and ideas of others?
- Does your essay have standardized citations and a bibliography?
- Are your Internet sources listed separately from your other sources?
- Is your essay typed, double-spaced, with left and right margins set at 1 ¼ inches, on one side of white 8 ½ by 11 inch paper? (Please do not put essays in binders.)
- Have you numbered the pages of your essay?
- Has your contest coordinator completed the coordinator registration form?
- Have you filled out, printed out, and signed the student registration form? (Read the pledge carefully. In signing it, you certify that the essay is your own work.)
- Has your contest coordinator signed your student registration form?
- Have you made four legible, collated copies of your essay, including the bibliography?
- Have you stapled each copy of your essay?
- Have you attached your student registration form to the top copy of your four essays?
- Have you made a copy of your essay and the student registration form to keep for your own records?

**Four copies** of each essay must be submitted with the student registration form or the essay will not be forwarded for judging. The Institute will not be responsible for entries arriving after the judging process begins due to mail delivery problems and errors resulting from hand-written documents and registration forms that are incorrectly filled out. Essay submissions must be **postmarked no later than February 1, 2009.**

### For more information:

Phone: (202)429-3854

Fax: (202)429-6063

E-mail: [essaycontest@usip.org](mailto:essaycontest@usip.org)

**Web:** [www.usip.org/npec](http://www.usip.org/npec)

### Mail the essays and registration forms to:

United States Institute of Peace  
National Peace Essay Contest  
1200 17th Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-3011

## UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

[www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote post-conflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict-management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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**For additional help writing your essay, use our online study guide: [www.usip.org/npec/09sg.html](http://www.usip.org/npec/09sg.html).**



**Please register online. Use this form only if the Internet is not easily available.**

**USIP USE ONLY**



## 2008–2009 STUDENT REGISTRATION FORM (Type or print in black ink.)

ALL INFORMATION IS REQUIRED. INCORRECT, INCOMPLETE, OR ILLEGIBLE INFORMATION MAY LEAD TO DISQUALIFICATION.

### Student Information

Essay Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
First M.I. Last Suffix

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Grade in School \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Gender  M  F Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Students living outside the United States must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for the National Peace Essay Contest.)*

Home Telephone Number ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

How many words (counting articles and quotations) are in your essay? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you share your essay with others? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_

*(Was it published in a school newspaper, posted on a bulletin board, discussed in your youth group?)*

*Note: Publication or sharing of essays is not required.*

How did you hear about the contest? \_\_\_\_\_

### School Information

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

### Coordinator Information

Coordinator Name \_\_\_\_\_

Coordinator ID number (if coordinator registered online) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (if different from school information) \_\_\_\_\_

### Certification Information

I pledge that this essay is my own work. I agree to abide by all guidelines and requirements of the National Peace Essay Contest. I understand that my essay will not be returned and will become the property of the United States Institute of Peace to use at its discretion.

Signature of Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed this essay and found that it meets the requirements of the National Peace Essay Contest. To the best of my knowledge, this essay is this student's own work.

Signature of Contest Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**(FORMS MAY BE PHOTOCOPIED.)**

**Please register online. Use this form only if the Internet is not easily available.**

**2008-2009 COORDINATOR REGISTRATION FORM**  
**(Type or print in black ink.)**

Coordinator Name (Please circle) Dr. Ms. Mr.

\_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ M.I. \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ Suffix \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to student:  Teacher  Parent  Club Sponsor  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School or Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Best time of day to reach you \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Subjects Taught \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Levels Taught \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you participated in the contest, including this year? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about the National Peace Essay Contest? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you obtain the contest guidebook?  downloaded PDF  Mail  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you use the NPEC Study Guide? Yes  No

How did you use it? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive materials for next year's contest? Yes  No

Check one demographic description that best fits the student's school:

Urban  Urban-suburban (suburb of large metropolitan area)

Rural-suburban (suburb of medium to small city)  Rural

**Participation Information**

Total number of your students participating in writing an essay this year \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of essays submitted this year \_\_\_\_\_

Course or club name if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Use of contest:

Graded class assignment  Optional extra credit  Optional no credit

Club  Not affiliated with an organization  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the space below to provide the Institute with any additional information about how you used the essay topic with your students, club, or group.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## **Reintegrating Children, Building Peace: Interaction, Education, and Youth Participation**

In 2002, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan solemnly declared, "To accept the use of child soldiers in conflict is to accept the destruction of our future, one child at a time... we must reclaim them—every one of them."<sup>1</sup> It is critical to understand the legacy of child soldiering and its implications for peacebuilding in order to help young soldiers rejoin civil society. Today, based on case studies of Sierra Leone and Uganda, we, the UN task force, shall develop a holistic reintegration program that fosters reconciliation through harmonious interaction between ex-child soldiers and their communities, addresses education with youth participation, and collectively empowers the war-torn communities towards lasting peace.

The conflict in Sierra Leone stemmed from its post-colonial societal crisis. Despite numerous coups, each successive Freetown regime was guilty of corruption and misgovernance.<sup>2</sup> This institutional collapse eventually reduced the vast majority of the populace into a state of deprivation and political exclusion, creating fundamental grievances.<sup>3</sup> As expelled citizens increasingly perceived bloodshed as legitimate, "it required only the slightest spark for this violence to be ignited."<sup>4</sup>

The civil war broke out in 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fought against the Sierra Leone Army (SLA). Without a social change program, the unpopular RUF perpetuated the war through resource exploitation and human rights atrocities. When "sobels"—SLA soldiers by day and brutal RUF rebels by night—emerged, the destructive chaos embroiled all other warring parties in a cruel pursuit for wealth.<sup>5</sup> To the RUF, defeating the SLA was less important than controlling diamond mines.<sup>6</sup> The diamond-driven war economy fueled the RUF with drugs that facilitated human exploitation—including child soldiering.<sup>7</sup>

Children played multiple roles in the RUF's terror campaign. Youths, abducted or induced into the army, composed 80 percent of the RUF.<sup>8</sup> Stigmatized, the abductees were forced to perpetrate heinous crimes against their own families and communities. Indoctrination and "brown-brown" drugs transformed children into fearless fighting machines.<sup>9</sup> Serving as human shields, cooks, porters, or diamond miners, children were perceived as cheap and disposable resources.<sup>10</sup> Girls often suffered sexual abuses, becoming "bush wives."<sup>11</sup> Many of them had "bush kids" when the war ended in 2001.<sup>12</sup>

The war in Uganda arose from deep-rooted causes. Ethnic and regional division under British colonization created a historical mistrust between the Acholi-dominated tribes in the north and the communities in the south.<sup>13</sup> Viewing the north as a "hostile and disturbed" region, each post-colonial southern regime further repressed the Acholi, eventually eliminating their sense of national identity.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Uganda's militarized political system cultivated a culture of violence, impunity, and vengeance.<sup>15</sup> Thus, armed rebellion against a regime was deemed "a normal course of political business."<sup>16</sup>

In 1986, a civil war erupted in the north with the goal of overthrowing President Yoweri Museveni. In 1987, Joseph Kony established the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to combat Museveni's Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF). With no clear political agenda, Kony directed the LRA with a cult-like mentality. As Acholi grassroots support waned, the LRA shifted the focus of the fighting from the UPDF to its own kinfolds. With Sudanese logistics support, the LRA has since sustained the war through child abduction and inculcating a belief in the spiritual powers of its violent leader.<sup>17</sup>

In northern Uganda, child soldiering has military, ethnic, and spiritual implications. Children, ninety percent of the LRA force, serve as soldiers, laborers, and sex slaves.<sup>18</sup> From Kony's perspective, the children of "wives" and his male soldiers are pure Acholi and will inherit his "spiritualism."<sup>19</sup> Inventing a "religious cocktail" that combines Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs, Kony speciously vindicates atrocities—mutilation, arson, sex slavery, and murder.<sup>20</sup> Through religious rituals and indoctrination, the LRA leaders have enslaved children with fear, shaping them into effective weapons against the UPDF and civilians. Today, the tragedy still continues.

In both Sierra Leone and Uganda, the impact of warfare on young soldiers is devastating. Indelibly scarred, one RUF child soldier bewailed, "I was branded [RUF]... [I] can't run away myself. Evil is with me all the time..."<sup>21</sup> Deprived of their innocence and of affection and education, child soldiers suffer severe disruption in their physical, mental, and moral development. Psychosomatic disturbances are among the most serious after-effects. In Uganda, "some children sit and look at running water and just see blood."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the trauma has distorted their identity and values. One Sierra Leone observer commented, "You won't believe how isolated they are. They are asking what will happen to them if there is peace. They don't know life without a gun."<sup>23</sup> Family rejection and community hostility only exacerbate this situation. Unless appropriate countermeasures are taken, former young soldiers will reenter a realm of crime or violence.

To address this challenge, international and local communities have delivered programs to help them rebuild a civilian life. In Sierra Leone, for instance, Christian Children's Fund (CCF) implemented a community-based program in North Province.<sup>24</sup> While involving community leaders in selecting a construction project, the CCF held dialogue sessions exploring how to accept returning young soldiers. The discussion gradually opened the doors for forgiveness through traditional nonviolent conflict resolution, emphasizing children's suffering as soldiers. In the next stage, ex-child soldiers and other youths collaborated on the project, gaining a sense of cooperation and mutual understanding. This tangible construction process changed community members' hostile attitudes. Experiencing an increased confidence, community chiefs eventually advanced reconciliation via traditional rituals and moral tutelage. Finally, forgiven children received market-justified training in carpentry, tailoring, or tie-dyeing. Youths worked under the direction of a master who was also a mentor and moral guide to teach them how to behave in peaceful settings. Afterwards, micro-credit helped them to start up their businesses.



The program, initially implemented in fifteen communities, was then expanded to other areas, enjoying considerable success in terms of a remarkable reduction in criminality and increased reintegration of ex-child soldiers into their villages.<sup>25</sup> By 2003, 90 percent of former young soldiers in those areas had rejoined their communities.<sup>26</sup>

In 2004, a group of former LRA girls established an organization called Empowering Hands (EH) to support each other in Uganda's Gulu District. Instead of lamenting their hardships, these young women have utilized the skills acquired from the bush—such as midwifery and leadership—to develop income-generating programs.<sup>27</sup> To assist other women going through the reintegration process, they encourage their peers through support groups and share their experiences on radios.<sup>28</sup> As the support groups have expanded from five to twenty, EH currently works on a funding plan to help them develop their own businesses.<sup>29</sup>

The CCF program in Sierra Leone is systematic and educational. Peace education is woven into program components to nourish a harmonious interaction between youth and community. The Ugandan EH initiative, on the other hand, is plain but strongly participative in terms of youth leadership. Both programs have a common focus on income-generating activities. Structurally, however, they lack durable psychosocial and empowerment components, given the aftermath of child soldiering. Meanwhile, recent research reveals that reintegration represents one of the greatest opportunities to break out of the cycle of violence and hatred.<sup>30</sup> This implies that peace education may achieve its best effect if implemented in a more active way.

Therefore, we propose a holistic program—Harmony-Oriented Participation and Education (HOPE)—that emphasizes youth participation, comprehensive education, and enhanced psychosocial support. Targeting the whole community, HOPE contains four components. Firstly, program management ensures HOPE's success. It mainstreams HOPE among UN agencies, donors, and other stakeholders and establishes baselines and partnerships. Consulting with community leaders and youth representatives, management staff formulates a custom HOPE Curriculum that covers basic education, peace education, human rights advocacy, training, and psychosocial support. HOPE indicators—such as reintegration rate and youth crime rate—are used to evaluate progress and determine success.

Secondly, reconciliation facilitation fosters community reconciliation. It sponsors ex-child soldiers to seek forgiveness through their own proposals. Peace education, outreach, exchange, and traditional culture play an active role in renewing family and communal relations.

Thirdly, competence centers implement HOPE curricula to empower ex-child soldiers and other community members through courses, workshops, and other educational events. Based on market analyses and community development requirements, vocational training links livelihood opportunities. Encouraging youth participation in community governance, these centers endorse youth-group activities. A fund called HOPE Entrepreneurship and Leadership Promotion (HELP) supports job creation and civil society reconstruction initiatives. Furthermore, HELP may be used as an incentive to reinforce peace education.

Lastly, psychosocial assistance aids war-affected children to rebuild identity, self-esteem, value, and trust. It strengthens rehabilitation by galvanizing children to organize and participate in recreational and educational activities. Paying special attention to young women, it constructs a three-year psychosocial support network with follow-up and check-back services as suggested by Graça Machel.<sup>31</sup>

While the legacy of child soldiering challenges peacebuilding, youth reintegration creates a window of opportunity to reshape war-ravaged societies with a culture of peace, reconciliation, and cooperation. HOPE establishes an interactive platform that unifies and empowers the entire community towards a harmonious and self-sustaining society. By promoting peace education and youth participation, HOPE enables young generations to become both productive constructors and peace-torch carriers.

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