

We arrived in Denver on Monday afternoon for the Exhibit Darfur opening at the Ditto Gallery. The Gallery looked awesome with the windows wrapped in photography, and hanging wall exhibits in the first room. The second room had tables with different organizations set up such as ours, as well as The Center for Victims of Torture, Change the World, Project Education Sudan, Colorado Coalition for Genocide Awareness and Action, Center for Judaic Studies, Causecast, Nuba Water Project, Center for Refugee Guidance, Rocky Mountain Survivor Center, Save Darfur, among others. Jing restaurant (owned by Michael Ditchfield of sixteenthofmay.com) was a sponsor and had food & wine set up in the back.

The evening was packed with speakers, photographs, stories, testimonies, video and an unveiling of a new poster which will hopefully stir a movement for 2011. The building was packed with people and over-flowing and there appeared to be media and photographers present.

I was thoroughly impressed with Governor Ritter's experiences in Zambia and the work he has done to help Sudan among others.

We also heard from Speaker of the House - Andrew Romanoff

Jerry Fowler - President of Save Darfur

Gayle Smith - Enough Project

Adam Sterling & Sam Bell - Genocide Intervention Network

Ryan Scott - Causecast

Photographer Izabela Lundberg

Slave Hunter - Aaron Cohen

Michael Ditchfield - sixteenthofmay.com

Change The World, It Just Takes Cents

And many others...

Melissa Fitzgerald (actress) read a story she wrote for the NY Times. It was tragic and amazing. I urge you to check it out.

<http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/01/19/we-have-a-winner-your-turn-the-darfur-genocide/>

I also liked the personal experiences shared by Gayle Smith about her experiences living in Sudan. She said one of the things that bothers her the most is that the history of kindness of Sudanese people has been lost or forgotten in the mix of all the chaos happening there now. She shared one story about when her appendix burst in the middle of the night while she lived in Sudan. She stumbled to her backyard in pain and her neighbor heard her and rushed right over. He flagged down a passing taxi that had a passenger in it. The 3 of them rushed her to the hospital. When she woke up the next day, the neighbor, the taxi driver and the passenger were all there waiting for her still. That story was truly inspiring.

Aaron Cohen, a slave hunter, spoke about his experiences working with groups and governments to rescue slaves around the world. They have rescued 80,000 slaves thus far. He then introduced Ryan Scott of Causecast who generously funds his slave hunting escapades. Ryan is planning to launch Causecast in the next few weeks to help other non-profits and cause-fighting groups to succeed and connect with other like-minded folks. Basically social networking for causes.

There were several Sudanese speakers at the end of the evening. One of which had a quick wit and great sense of humor. He told a story about how he ended up in NY and then CO and then WY. He went to school in WY where one person asked him where he was from. He told them Africa and the person asked where that was. His answer was 'By Mexico'. He mentioned that then it became clear that people don't seem to know what is happening in the next state over, let alone Africa, and that's when he realized he was in trouble. (*Which he stated very humorously*).

I was thrilled to meet Adam Sterling and Sam Bell from Genocide Intervention Network and the movie 'Darfur Now'. These guys were so kind and humble and down to earth and genuinely interested in what others were doing for the cause, and how they became interested. They were so friendly and approachable. Adam reminded us that in Darfur the women have to sacrifice sending their daughters to get firewood, knowing they will be raped because if they send their boys, they would be killed. Sam reminded us to call 1-800-Genocide to urge your senators and representative for their support. If an issue does not get at least 100 calls each month, it does not even make the list of what gets reviewed by the Senator.

I was extremely thrilled to finally meet Michael Ditchfield of sixteenthofmay in person. Michael has been helping us get our Letters of Hope to refugees but I had not yet personally met him since we are not local to CO. His spirit just exudes kindness and joy and an eagerness to help. He is generous and thoughtful and hard working in his fight. He did a great job working with the Gallery owners, Jeff & Bonnie, to coordinate the evening and get the 2011 poster together.

The unveiling of the 2011 poster is a photo by Mia Farrow. It states "I am here now, what about tomorrow". My understanding is that there is a plan to launch a new initiative to create awareness for the 2011 referendum. This poster is being sold at the gallery and the original art piece includes Mia Farrow's signature.

Overall, I was thoroughly impressed with how the event went. I'd like to thank Jeff & Bonnie along with their staff, and Michael, for all of their hard work, kindness and support for having us participate and help to further the awareness. Denver folks definitely know how to come together for a cause. I loved how all the organizations there each had a different niche, and yet most of the representatives seemed to already know each other and everyone wanted to connect together to help and support and further each other's mission and collaborate for a greater good. I can honestly say that this aspect of it is not that common. I felt so welcomed as an out of town guest and I was genuinely inspired by everyone I met. I wish I would have had more time to speak with everyone. I loved getting to know the Denver Save Darfur group, and I look forward to working more with each of these people.

www.betheirmessenger.org

Links:

www.dittogallery.com

www.exhibitdarfur.com