



DRAWINGS from CHILDREN of DARFUR

by [Deale Hutton](#) (Oswego)

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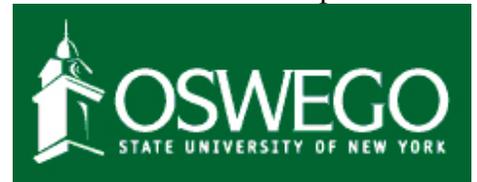
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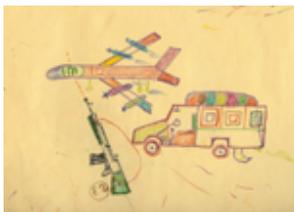
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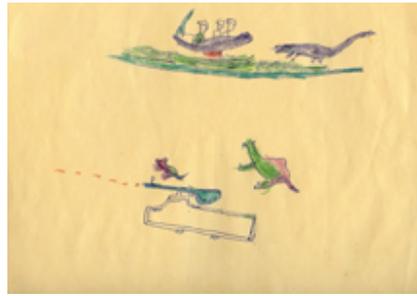
One of our [goals](#) at [SUNY Oswego](#) is to increase world awareness in our students: "...expand curricular and co-curricular activities in departments/programs to promote students' community and political engagement for addressing the issues of their communities and their world." To help achieve this goal, Mary Beth Bell, [Penfield Library's](#) Director, wanted an exhibit focusing on the genocide in Darfur. We felt the genocide in Darfur is a most important issue, and that our students may not be aware of the situation. As art librarian and curator of our library exhibit space, I went searching.



A 2005 exhibit of children's art at Rowan University led me to Dr. Jerry Ehrlich. Dr. Ehrlich was a volunteer with [Doctors Without Borders](#) and cared for the sick and dying at a displacement camp. The conditions in the camp were deplorable. Jerry brought with him paper and crayons, and children, ages 8-11 drew images of their daily life. The violence the children lived with everyday in their villages is portrayed in these drawings. And, yet, some of these drawings are poignantly ordinary.



The violence in the Darfur area has not diminished. It is, in fact, entering a new horrible phase. According to the [New York Times, Sunday, March 2nd, 2008](#), the janjaweed (Arab militias) and Sudanese governmental troops are carrying out a series of attacks "using air power, ground forces". The United Nations estimates are that 58,000 people recently fled the area due to the fighting. Now a "more deadly pattern is returning, and with it fears are rising among villagers, aid workers, diplomats and analysts that Darfur is headed for a new cycle of bloodletting and displacement on a vast scale". The government drops bombs on villages, then the janjaweed come in and burn, kill and rape the people and take their possessions. At least 200,000 people according to estimates are believed dead from attacks or from hunger. Current news reports indicate gang rape is now a popular form of intimidation.



The original drawings are on tour; however, Jerry sent a cd and permission to reprint. 181 images arrived on cd. We titled [our exhibit](#) Drawings from Children of Darfur. Because of the nature of the drawings, children's work, the drawings were printed in 8 ½ x 11 format in color (originals are on beige paper). Reprinting 181 drawings was quite a task, but maintaining the flavor of the originals was vital, and I wanted to 'plaster' our walls with drawings. The drawings were hung by string—retaining the feel of children's 'refrigerator art'. So the viewers would perceive fun drawings one would make at school, and then the shock of violent images.



In addition to the drawings exhibited, Dr. Darius Makuja from LeMoyne College and a native Sudanese gave a lecture in our Lake Effect Café. The title of his lecture was: Genocide in Darfur: Oil Interests and International Community's Inability to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in Sudan. Dr. Makuja is a brilliant speaker, and his lecture tied the atrocities to global politics, especially oil acquisition by the Chinese. He showed a short powerful video giving background information in interview format with people tortured and abused in Darfur. Also, SUNY Oswego has a "Lost Boy" from the Sudan on campus. He attended and spoke of his exodus from Sudan to individuals after the lecture.



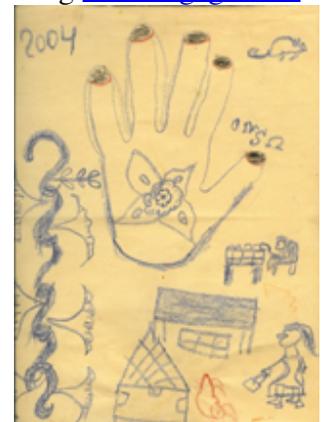
Although publicity for our event was challenging, posters were placed around campus, the Office of International Education sponsored the opening reception, and numerous emails were sent to departments and individuals via our liaisons and administrators. Attendance was good—many

students came (I am guessing 50) and quite a number of faculty. Benjamin, one of our students from Sudan, takes an Adolescent Psychology class. His professor, Bonnie Marini and her students (all 84 of them) came into Penfield Library to see the exhibit. This was very compelling for our students—to see the drawings and talk with a fellow student who had been forced to leave his country.



Shannon Pritting, head of Access Services, and I decided to put these images on the tv in our lobby during the exhibit. Also, after checking with Dr. Ehrlich we decided to share these powerful drawings via the [SUNY Digital Repository](#). This excellent resource allows people worldwide to view these images and in a unique fashion adds to the awareness of the crises in the Darfur region.

Not only did we achieve our goal of increasing global awareness for those who attended our opening reception and lecture, those who were in our library, those who attended the class, but I have a list of 22 names (students and faculty) who are interested in getting involved to help end the atrocities in Darfur. One of my summer projects is working with the students still in the area and see what we want to do. [Wish us luck](#). Improving [civic engagement](#) is important for our students and is a worthy goal for all of our libraries.



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