

Zonta Club of Grand Rapids
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2009-2010

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Zonta NewZ



Helping improve the legal, political, economic, health, education and professional status of women and girls locally and internationally.

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African Women Win Promise of U.S. Protection

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(WOMENSENEWS)--The Lord's Resistance Army has displaced an estimated 300,000 people in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo since leaving Uganda in 2005 and abducted and killed hundreds of people, according to the United Nations.

Women are disproportionately burdened by the displacement, forced to take care of their families without access to their farms and businesses. The 23-year-old extremist northern Ugandan Christian rebel group originated from tension between northern and southern Uganda, the latter where the Ugandan government is based. However, the group has not had a coherent political ideology for years and largely preys upon civilian communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Central African Republic now, according to Resolve Uganda, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization.

At a May 25 signing, President Barack Obama promised to vigorously implement the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, which increases humanitarian aid for communities afflicted by the group's violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Sudan.

Lydia Lakwonyero, a 24-year-old journalist working for a radio station in northern Uganda, welcomes the law. She fears that the region's governments will not be able to protect people in the Democratic Republic of Congo from the kind of menace the Lord's Resistance inflicted on Uganda from 1987 to 2005, when it was forced out by the Ugandan military. "Sometimes I can't even sleep at night. I fear for the DRC very much,"

Lakwonyero said about the eastern Congo region in a phone interview. She spoke from Uganda a day before Obama signed the bill into law. "I can assure you that the same thing my people suffered, they will. I definitely support the new bill. I do not trust that our government can do it alone."



A family in an LRA-impacted community in the Central African Republic. Credit: Paul Ronan, Resolve Uganda

Terrorizing Ugandan Communities

Lakwonyero remembers when the Lord's Resistance Army, LRA, terrorized communities in northern Uganda. Five years after the group's departure, women still remain in camps for the displaced.

"The LRA used sexual violence, rape as a weapon," she said. "During the war period, the LRA rebels particularly targeted girls in schools, abducting many. Some managed to return, but their lives were never the same." Rights groups say that since its ouster from Uganda five years ago, the Lord's Resistance Army has been abducting women, conscripting children and killing countless civilians in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Sudan, and the attacks have been escalating. Now the group faces a potential crackdown. The legislation signed by Obama earlier this week requires him to produce within 180 days a detailed strategy to permanently end the group's atrocities.

The new law also allocates \$10 million a year to support reconciliation and justice processes in Uganda, where historical regional tensions between northern and southern Uganda created an incubator for violent groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army.

The law is the most widely co-sponsored Africa-specific legislation in U.S. history, according to Resolve Uganda.

Wisconsin's Democratic Sen. Russell D. Feingold, chair of the U.S. Senate's Africa Subcommittee, introduced the bill, which picked up 64 co-sponsors. Massachusetts Democrat Rep. Jim McGovern, co-chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, introduced the bill in the House, where it gained a staggering 201 co-sponsors across party lines, according

to a Library of Congress legislative-tracking site. Obama earlier this week signed the most widely co-sponsored Africa-specific law in U.S. history. Supporters hope it will defend women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Sudan from further atrocities.

Sense of Growing Urgency

The urgency of developing a new strategy to tackle the Lord's Resistance Army is part of what drew both members of Congress to the bill. "Recent reports indicate that, rather than being weakened, the LRA today is stronger and strategically more sophisticated than it was just last year," said Florida Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, before the final House vote.

The law represents the culmination of a five-year grassroots campaign by American college students and Washington-based advocacy groups such as Resolve Uganda, Invisible Children and the Genocide Intervention Network. Forty-nine Sudanese, Ugandan, Congolese and American groups released a statement after the signing, welcoming the law, Resolve Uganda said.

Campus-based groups such as Invisible Children drew attention to the Lord's Resistance Army through large, eye-catching events. In one called "Displace Me," held in 2007, over 68,000 individuals slept outside in 15 cities to draw attention to the regional conflict driven by the Lord's Resistance.

From 1987 to 2005, the movement terrorized countless Ugandan women with sexual violence, slavery and abductions and abducted over 60,000 children from northern Ugandan communities, according to Human Rights Watch.

About 2 million Ugandans were displaced by fighting between the Lord's Resistance Army and the government and were forced by the government in 2001 to live in squalid camps, according to Enough, an anti-genocide project of the American Center for Progress, a progressive Washington think tank.

Women suffered disproportionately, as they faced high levels of sexual violence within the camps and were disconnected from the land they farmed to feed their families, said Paul Ronan, co-founder of Resolve Uganda.

Shifting the Operation

Since the Lord's Resistance Army was ousted from Uganda it has largely operated out of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Sudan, where government leaders say its forces have been diminished.

Researchers and local communities, however, rebut that. Some say brutal attacks have been underreported and could get much worse. Earlier this year, Resolve Uganda's Ronan traveled to different parts of east and central Africa where the Lord's Resistance Army has been operating. He was heartened by the signs of rapid rebuilding in northern Uganda since 2005, when the Lord's Resistance Army was driven out. But he was discouraged by the escalation of the armed movement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as the Central African Republic and Sudan.

"There's been a huge impact on Congolese women," Ronan told Women's eNews in a phone interview from his Washington, D.C., office. "There are high levels of internal displacement and they can't access their fields. Many Congolese women and girls have been abducted and forced to do sexual acts with the LRA commanders; women who escape say that's a common occurrence."

Violence linked to Lord's Resistance escalated after a U.S.-funded joint regional military operation in December 2008, which was led by Uganda, failed to capture the top Lord's Resistance Army commander. After that, the rebel army scattered throughout the region and retaliated by murdering 800 civilians, abducting women as sex slaves and conscripting children over the next two months, according to Human Rights Watch. In December 2009, the Lord's Resistance Army killed 321 civilians in three days and abducted 250 people, according to a March 2010 Human Rights Watch report.

By Rebecca Harshbarger
WeNews correspondent
Thursday, May 27, 2010

54% = Increase in the number of doctoral degrees earned by women over the past decade; the number getting their master's degrees jumped 57%

“Stuff happens to you, and then there’s stuff that you happen to.”

— Ursula M. Burns, The first African-American woman to be named CEO of a Fortune 500 company

Service Committee

Girls Learning Day: This year’s event was a great success as evidenced by the feedback we received from the girls. Thanks to all who helped bring the event to fruition.

Jerica, the Zoo Student whose birthday is two days after the Girls Day trip, came into the office this afternoon & gushed about the awesome boat ride. She loved the entire experience, from start to finish, including the British Lady, the experiments, the reversible Zonta Bag she got, the plane, seeing zoe plankton, bunnies, deer, swans, riding on the boat, going downstairs where it was warm, and

upstairs where it was windy, and that it stopped raining & the afternoon was perfect. :-)

She has that day locked into her memory, and was able to recount details with surprising clarity.

She said, "That was so fun, I could do that every day!" I told her to go to college, and maybe she could be a Zonta lady who helps sixth grade girls get the free boat rides, and her smile got even bigger and brighter.

Thank you so much for making a big difference in this very sweet, hard-working young girl's life.

- Marissa

Pad and Pillow Projects:

We will be selecting the next sewing date at the June meeting to work toward completing our pads. Look at your calendars and see if Saturday, June 12th, would work.

YWPA Scholarship: We received word that our candidate, Brittney Reilley from Mona Shores in Muskegon, was not selected to win the District level scholarship. She will attend the book event in September to receive a Club level scholarship of \$250.

Membership Committee

Any member who recruits two or more new members by convention at the end of June 2010 will be receiving special recognition at the International Convention.

Three guests have been invited to attend the June meeting.

The challenge is on ladies!



Ways & Means Committee

Sparkle Sales: We have filled two online orders since last month and our supply has been shipped to and received by former member Amy Hone in San Antonio in preparation for the convention.

FocuZ on Trafficking Event: The event will be held at the GVSU Loosemore Auditorium on September 10, 2010 from 7-9pm. It will include a dessert buffet and

coffee social time where we will hopefully screen a topical video and present info on Zonta and award our scholarship. To follow will be a keynote address by author Theresa Flores and trafficking survivor and a panel discussion moderated by Shelley Irwin of WGUV. Panelists include Malynda Jennings, trafficking survivor, Mary Pollock, Legislative Vice President, Michigan

NOW, Jeff Martineau, HOPE project, and a W.A.R. representative. PR and sales to begin July 2010.

Poker Fundraiser: Funds raised: approximately \$500. Next poker event is scheduled for November 10-13.

President's Message



LEGACY LANDMARKS WALKING TOUR

WALKING
WITH
WOMEN
WHO LEFT
THEIR MARK ON
DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS



Emily K. Chaney



WWW.GRPL.ORG/LOCALHISTORY
616.988.5400

Legacy Landmarks Walking Tour A Great Success!

The Vander Veen Center for the Book of the Grand Rapids Public Library and the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council co-sponsored a program and a guided walking tour on Saturday, March 6th. Both organizations were thrilled that 116 people came to learn more about women's history in Grand Rapids. The walking tour was based on a new brochure created by Marcie Beck of the local history department featuring "women who left their mark on downtown Grand Rapids. Besides Ms. Beck, JoEllyn Clarey of the Women's History Council and Gina Bivins from the Historical Society of Grand Rapids, lead scores of history enthusiasts on sections of the walking tour. Sunny weather prevailed and a good time was had by all. The brochure was funded by the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council, the Grand Rapids Historical Commission and the Grand Rapids Historical Society. Copies of the brochures are available at all GRPL branches.

—excerpt from the www.grpl.org

We should schedule an ATNOZ event to do this walking tour now that summer is approaching and weather will permit. It would be a great way to learn about Grand Rapids and the women who helped make it what it is today. Who knows, maybe some of them were Zontians!



Zonta Club of Grand Rapids

Member of Zonta International

Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide

Next Business Meeting:

Thursday, June 3, 2010

5:30pm Social
6:00pm Dinner
7:00pm Business Meeting

Pietro's Italian Restaurant
2728 Birchcrest Dr, S.E.

Please email vvandenberg@yahoo.com with your meal choice.

Program/Speaker: Linda Larson, Volunteer Coordinator, Disability Advocates of Kent County

Dinner: \$15.00, includes meal, tip, room rental and soft drinks. Other beverages can be purchased at the cash bar.

Important Dates

- June 25-30, 2010, Int'l Convention, San Antonio
- September 8, 2010, International Literacy Day
- September 10, 2010, prospective Book Event
- October 15-17, 2010, Fall Conference, Iron Mtn
- October 18, 2010, Anti-Trafficking Day for the EU; January 11, 2011, Human Trafficking Awareness Day for the U.S.
- Nov 10-13 2010, Poker Fundraiser, Lincoln Lanes
- Nov 25, 2010, Int'l Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women



DISABILITY  **advocates**
OF KENT COUNTY
Empowering Independence™



Mission Statement

"We advocate and facilitate action by persons with disabilities and the community to achieve equal access for all."
Disability Advocates began in May 1981 as the Grand Rapids Center for Independent Living. In May 2002, our name changed to Disability Advocates of Kent County so as to better communicate what we do and who we serve. Our agency provides a full array of services throughout Kent county, with a population of 600,000. Disability Advocates of Kent County is a free-standing organization defines its role in the community as a voice for advocacy on a level that has not been felt in this area before.

Disability Advocates believes that all persons:

- Have the right to live as independently as possible.
- Have worth, dignity and capacity to contribute.
- Have the right to affect decisions that impact upon the successes or failures in their lives.
- Have the right to make choices and to have a voice.
- Have the right to share or participate in community activities.