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Ugandan conflict survivor speaks to IIT students

By Utsav Gandhi

CAMPUS EDITOR

(Photos by Jean-Emmanuel Gueby)



"But, you have a tape... after one month you can watch and remember about us..." With these words from Tony, the central figure from the documentary just shown, lingering in their minds, many in the crowd sat speechless, unable to determine how to react. Slowly, the audience present at the MTCC Auditorium on Thursday night broke into what was at first an uneven and then a full-fledged applause. The documentary had ended with a prophetic statement: "the film may be over, but your story starts now." Audience members were left to ponder and discuss the stories they had just heard - and some wanted to help out, right there.

Documenting the trauma faced by children living in war-torn East Africa, and profiling an organization based in San Diego, CA that aims to alleviate this suffering by mobilizing assistance all over the US, Invisible Children is a non-profit organization founded by college

students. It uses film, creativity and social action to end the use of child soldiers in Joseph Kony's tyrannical rebel war in northern Uganda, which threatens the peace and stability of that region. The organization has hosted 5000+ screenings of their first documentary, Invisible Children: Rough Cut. Invisible Children volunteers were on our campus along with David, a Ugandan survivor, at an event hosted by the Office of Spiritual Life and Service Learning to screen a shorter 35-minute film, Tony. This documentary chronicles the life of the title character, as he builds a rapport with some visiting UCSD teens (connecting with them over Jennifer Lopez, rap music and MySpace), then fulfills his dream of visiting the US, but experiences the death of his close friend Nate, a volunteer with Invisible Children from Raleigh, NC, due to a bomb explosion at the FIFA World Cup Final screening in Kampala.

The filmmakers came across hundreds of

children crammed together in cities, sleeping under verandas and bus parks. They were there because they walk each night to sleep in a safe environment (called "night commuting") in order to escape abduction from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In America, it's easy to change the channel when something makes you uncomfortable, but with the conflict spreading through central East Africa, it's not possible to do so anymore. In America, you can call 911 in an emergency, but what about countries like these where cellular reception itself is poor and does not provide as much coverage? The imagery was visceral - kids walking around with swollen bellies, babies being born helpless against their environment. Their faces, their eyes - they tell stories that words can't.

But they have hope. The hope of getting an education, of making it big - as Uganda's next teachers, doctors, members of Parliament. And Invisible Children is instrumental

in making this possible. Not only have they sustained a successful volunteer ("roadie") and mentorship program, they have also organized these screening events and support days, such as the 25th of April, 2011 - where they ask volunteers to speak up by staying silent for 25 hours and contributing \$25, to mark 25 years of the civil unrest. They even accept monthly donations as per the donor's wish, if that is more convenient. It is important for the public to be aware of the atrocities being committed, even as you read this (the current conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo has killed more people than WWII - it's the single most bloody conflict in human history) and to reach out in any way possible, so that children in Africa don't have to live in fear of getting abducted and don't have to give up dreams of a good education.

Interested? Check out Invisible Children at <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/>.

Really, why go Greek?

By Elaine Erwin

TECHNEWS WRITER

To non-Greeks, the Greek community might be seen as a big mystery: some people are interested in knowing more about Greek life but don't know how to get involved, some people aren't sure why anybody would choose to join a sorority or fraternity, and some people don't even know what these types of organizations are.

To begin with, a sorority or fraternity is an association made up of females or males, respectively. It is a social organization with emphasis on academics, leadership, and service. Greek organizations typically operate via historical traditions and rituals.

At the Illinois Institute of Technology, Greek life began in 1898. IIT has been home to over a dozen Greek chapters over the years. Today, we have seven fraternities and three sororities: Alpha Sigma Phi, Delta Tau Delta, Omega Delta, Phi Kappa Sigma, Pi Kappa Phi, Sigma Phi Epsilon, Triangle, Alpha Sigma Alpha, Kappa Phi Delta, and Zeta Pi Omega.

Every other week, representatives from each Greek chapter meet to discuss various aspects of Greek life at IIT. This group is known as Greek Council. Recently, at a Greek Council meeting, a forum was held to ask those present why they chose to "go Greek," and also why they have stayed in their respective Greek organizations.

Why did you go Greek?

"I didn't want to join the stereotypical Greek life. IIT offers something much different; we all have our weird quirks," [Cheryl McDermott, Zeta Pi Omega].

"I wanted to find the social aspect that IIT is missing and wanted to make friends that have a common value set," [Jeff Bednarz, Sigma Phi Epsilon].

"There were no girls in any of my classes and I wanted to be a part of a sisterhood," [Lisa Kwiatkowski, Alpha Sigma Alpha].

"I wanted to establish a sense of community and be a part of an organization that has a shared vision," [Clay Houser, Delta Tau Delta].

"I liked the diversity of people all working towards a common purpose," [Anne Brask, Kappa Phi Delta].

"I wanted a sense of friendship and community," [Edward Glantsman, Pi Kappa Phi].

Why did you stay Greek?

"I stayed to have more control of my life and to give me leadership opportunities in finances, philanthropy, social, and brotherhood," [Alexander Welk, Delta Tau Delta].

"My organization provides me with a sense of purpose. It gives me networking, resources, and a chance to shape IIT into what I want it to be," [Jasmine Shah, Alpha Sigma Alpha].

"I stayed because of the friendship I made

with other members," [Cesar Urgiles, Omega Delta].

"I stayed because my sisters became my family and my support. Without them, I would not be the person I am today," [Lauren Gillmeister, Kappa Phi Delta].

"I stayed Greek to learn how to become the upstanding and honorable man that I know I can be, if I stick to my values and work with my brothers to become better every day," [Jacob Ernst, Phi Kappa Sigma].

"We are inspired to do great things with our lives. The sense of sisterhood keeps me motivated," [Marina Beke, Zeta Pi Omega].

"I feel at home in my fraternity," [Nate Hurst, Alpha Sigma Phi].

"The traditions that have been passed down throughout the years in my fraternity are amazing, and just as strong as they were when it was founded," [Ryan Tillman, Triangle].

If you are in a Greek organization, maybe you'll think about how you would answer these questions yourself. If you aren't in a sorority or fraternity, hopefully this will give you some insight into Greek life and why some of your classmates choose to "go Greek."

If you would like more information about Greek Recruitment, please contact Greek Council's VP Recruitment, Sean O'Halloran, at vp.recruitment@iitgreek.com.