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**From the Selected Works of Barbara Lewis**

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Spring 2012

# What the heart remembers: The women and children of Darfur

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# What the Heart Remembers:

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## The Women and Children of Darfur

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**Abstract**—In 2009, the University of South Florida (USF) Libraries received from the organization Waging Peace a collection of materials which included transcripts of interviews with female genocide survivors and original children's drawings depicting the atrocities of genocide in Darfur. These materials are particularly significant in that they were used as evidence of genocide in Darfur in the International Criminal Court. The children's drawings have been digitized by USF and are an important element in the development of a web portal for the new Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center. These drawings also inspired the performance piece *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur* staged by the USF Theatre and Dance Department. This article focuses on the library's acquisition and digitization of these materials, the ongoing efforts to develop a web presence, faculty outreach, and the multidisciplinary collaboration between the library and other USF departments in this project.

*[The following article is an expansion of a paper presented at the "Case Studies IV" session at the VRA + ARLIS/NA Joint Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in March 2011.]*

### INTRODUCTION

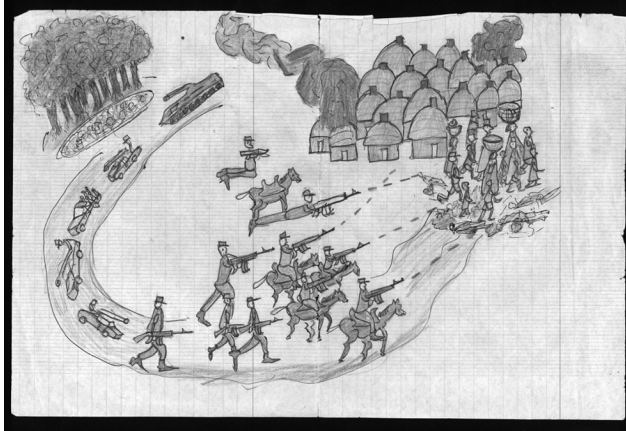
The development of collaborative creative projects, and particularly those that cross multiple disciplines, can provide an exciting avenue for the work of a librarian, especially when that project begins with the library. *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur* is the result of such a collaboration.

Several years ago an incredible story about Darfur was told to a commencement audience by Rebecca Tinsley. As chair of Waging Peace, an organization that "campaigns against genocide and systematic human rights abuses"<sup>1</sup> with a particular focus on Africa, her message was one of both horror and hope. Brief

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1. Waging Peace, <http://www.wagingpeace.info>.

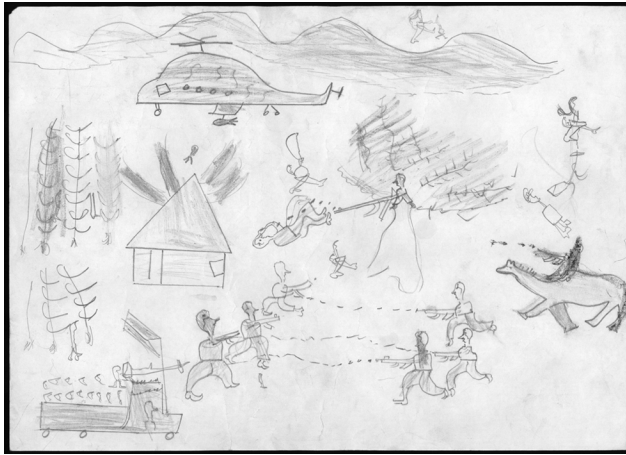


**Figure 1.** The young boy was eight when his village in Darfur was attacked in 2004. His drawing describes this attack in which Janjaweed forces (on horseback) and Sudanese forces (in vehicles and tanks) worked together to burn his village and kill civilians, which led to the displacement of the survivors. <http://digital.lib.usf.edu:8080/usfldcFedoraCommonsViewers/USFLDCfclIMAGEViewer?pid=usfldc:W36-00008-A>. Drawing collected by Waging Peace. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

exchanges of contact information following that speech led to Ms. Tinsley visiting the University of South Florida. An important partnership was formed when she agreed to place a substantial amount of the Waging Peace archives in the newly formed USF Libraries Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center collection. The donation included startling drawings created by Darfuri children depicting the horrors of genocide. These drawings were created when Anna Schmitt, a Waging Peace researcher, was on a fact-finding mission at refugee camps in eastern Chad. While conducting interviews with the Darfuri refugee women about the atrocities they had endured, she gave paper and pencils to the children, six through eighteen years of age, and asked them about their dreams for the future and their strongest memories. Nearly all of the children drew pictures of attacks on their villages. The resulting drawings, a sample of which are shown in Figures 1–5, are currently touring the world to raise awareness of the crisis in Darfur. In November 2007 they were accepted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague as contextual evidence of the crimes committed in Darfur by the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed militia group.

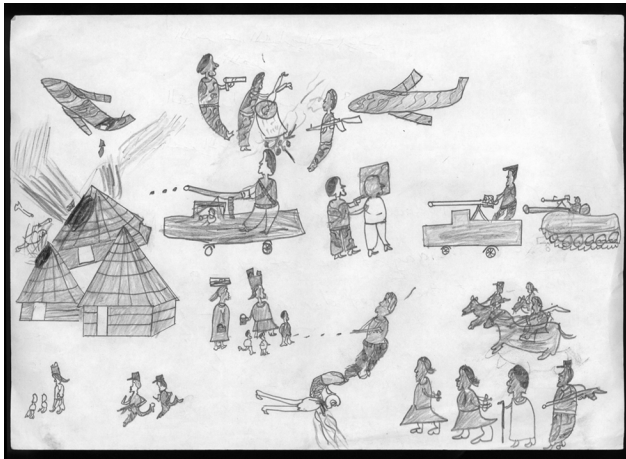
## **FACULTY OUTREACH**

During Ms. Tinsley's visit to the University of South Florida Library, a casual discussion about the difficulty of successfully communicating the atrocities that affect a culture of marginal interest to the industrialized world led to her musing about the possibility that the performing arts could do so more effectively. The librarian for the College of The Arts recognized that these drawings could provide inspiration for disciplines in the arts, and she used the drawings to promote the library's initiatives and the new USF Libraries Holocaust & Genocide Studies

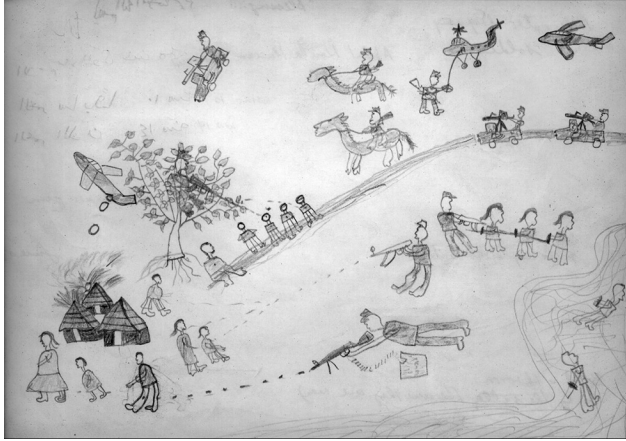


**Figure 2.** A twelve-year-old Darfuri boy created this drawing which depicts his village in Darfur being attacked when he was eight years old. The drawing shows crops that were destroyed by a militia group, people being killed, and houses being burned down. Militiamen on camels, some on foot, and others in trucks, are seen attacking the village. <http://digital.lib.usf.edu:8080/usfldcFedoraCommonsViewers/USFLDCfclIMAGEviewer?pid=usfldc:W36-00107-A>. Drawing collected by Waging Peace. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

Center. At about the same time, Fanni Green, a professor of theater, and Jeanne Travers, a professor of dance, were searching for ideas for working collaboratively. When the idea of developing a project based on the children's drawings was proposed, they were hesitant to create a performance piece focused on genocide.



**Figure 3.** The young boy was nine when his village in Darfur was attacked by Sudanese government forces and Janjaweed militias in 2003. This drawing depicts in detail some of the exactions committed by the Janjaweed (on foot and on horses) and the Sudanese forces (in tanks, machine-gun-mounted vehicles, and planes). <http://digital.lib.usf.edu:8080/usfldcFedoraCommonsViewers/USFLDCfclIMAGEviewer?pid=usfldc:W36-00012-A>. Drawing collected by Waging Peace. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.



**Figure 4.** Sudanese soldiers are abducting women at gunpoint and leading them away from their village. Some soldiers are hiding in trees and ambushing villagers. Airplanes and helicopters target homes and set them on fire. <http://digital.lib.usf.edu:8080/usfldcFedoraCommonsViewers/USFLDcfcIMAGEviewer?pid=usfldc:W36-00523-c>. Drawing collected by Waging Peace. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

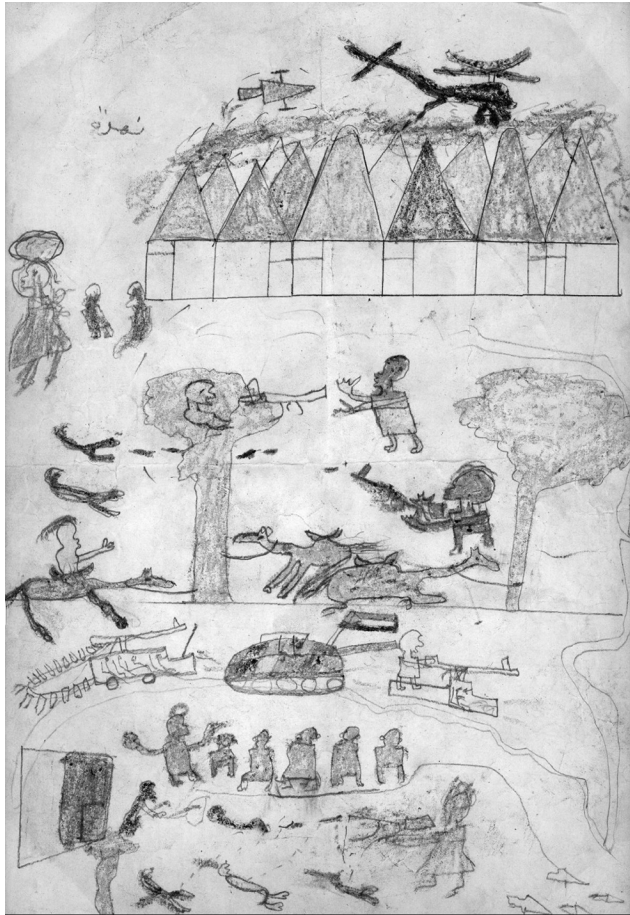
Nevertheless, they were invited to look at the drawings and hear the story behind them and their acquisition. The power of the images was the catalyst for a two-year process resulting in the original production *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur*.

## DIGITIZATION

When the traveling exhibits end, the originals of the Darfuri children's drawings will be archived at the USF Tampa Library. However, to ensure the preservation of these valuable images and to make them available worldwide, the materials were sent to USF between exhibition dates to be digitized. In addition to the drawings, the exhibits also included photographs taken in the refugee camps and petitions from the refugees to the United Nations. All items in the exhibits were digitized by the Digital Collections and Services staff at the USF Tampa Library using a Microtek ScanMaker 9800XL scanner and ScanWizard software. Both sides of each sheet were digitized since many sheets had drawings and/or writing on the front as well as the back. The drawings were scanned as artifacts, with margins on all sides so that the entire image was captured. The scanning was done in 8-bit RGB color, 600 dpi resolution, and the masters are saved as uncompressed TIFF files. Web presentation copies are 300 dpi JPEG2000 files.

Using Adobe Photoshop, minimal editing was performed on the images, including straightening, level balancing, and color correction, all done with the originals in hand to ensure accuracy. As the editing process began, there was an initial concern about the writing on the drawings. Since it was in Arabic, the digitization staff was not sure whether there might be any information about the artist and, unfortunately, retribution is still an issue for the people in the camps. The staff at Waging Peace

**Figure 5.** The Sudanese military are hiding in trees and shooting Darfuri civilians. The drawing also depicts houses burning after being bombed by military helicopters and jets. Reinforcements, including armored tanks and trucks mounted with heavy machine guns, are coming into the village. <http://digital.lib.usf.edu:8080/usfldcFedoraCommonsViewers/USFLDCfclIMAGEviewer?pid=usfldc:W36-00517-b>. Drawing collected by Waging Peace. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.



assured the USF team that the children had been instructed not to put that kind of information on their drawings, so none of the writing was removed from the presentation copies. A student who reads and writes Arabic was hired to translate the text on the drawings so that the children's words are presented along with their images.

To ensure accessibility, each image was cataloged in the MARC data format using both Library of Congress and *Art & Architecture Thesaurus* subject headings. The images were deposited into CORAL, the library's digital asset management system which utilizes the Fedora Commons data repository. Static replication and redirection of the database was used to enable the contents of the repository to be crawled and indexed by search engines such as Google and Bing, thereby improving the discoverability of this important collection. In addition, a catalog record for the overall collection was added to the library's online catalog and to the OCLC WorldCat database.

### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The creative process and the development of the performance piece began with a poem written by Fanni Green, the theater professor, in response to the library mate-



rials and a movement phrase created by the dance professor. These elements became the starting point for the script and the choreography. Professor Green described the process as follows:

The journey began with a strong desire to work with one another. Each of us admired the other's commitment to explore social issues, to engage with interdisciplinary and multicultural work. The project seemed a perfect match for us. When initially approached about creating a project focusing on Darfur, we were uncertain and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the topic of genocide. Then we saw the children's drawings and read Tinsley's work; it was as if we had been summoned. Finally, it was the faces and the eyes of the women and children, seemingly looking into our faces and our eyes. Though silent, they sent us on this journey.<sup>2</sup>

Research about the culture, history, customs, clothing, and the national and international response to the crisis in Darfur was conducted. The librarian for the College of The Arts was able to provide an extensive list of all of the resources available in the library related to Darfur: videos, databases, music, books, and articles. The list was composed of permanent links to the library records in the online catalog which indicated the availability and location of the materials. As Ms. Tinsley was in the process of writing her book *When the Stars Fall to the Earth: A Novel of Africa*,<sup>3</sup> she sent the manuscript chapter by chapter to the librarian who then forwarded copies to the two directors.

The College of The Arts librarian was always available for consultation in the research process and provided ongoing assistance regarding library resources and services, which the directors later noted gave them the confidence they needed to begin the project. After their research, the directors created an outline of what needed to be covered thematically and how many sections and pieces should be developed. Throughout the entire process, the cast, crew, and directors followed the outline closely, and it became the framework from which the performance piece was developed.

The audition process took place at the end of the spring semester with the idea that the student actors and dancers would work together in the same class to shape the performance piece. Together the faculty and students created an environment where exploratory work was to take place. The plan was for the directors from the School of Theatre and Dance to avoid developing the performance piece themselves, but to let the process evolve with the students. This was unsettling for the students because the rehearsal process normally begins with the director having an idea or a vision of what he/she wants the performance to accomplish as well as what the show should look like.

The first four pieces were written as poems and evolved into the script. The first piece, initially prepared to jumpstart the creative process, provided an inroad into shaping the imagery. The children's drawings and interviews with the women pro-

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2. Fanni Green, in discussion with the authors and Jeanne Travers, January 19, 2011.

3. Rebecca Tinsley, *When the Stars Fall to Earth: A Novel of Africa* (Crockett, TX: LandMarc Press, 2010).

**Figure 6.** Production photograph from *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur*, Section XII: "Resilience and Hope: Now is Not the Time." The full company is featured. School of Theatre and Dance, University of South Florida.



vided a poignant inspiration for Professor Green to create the text for the piece, and the text created the imagery needed for Professor Travers to visualize the movement.

These first poems were given to the designers to begin their process, and slowly the visual elements took shape. A videographer created a video background to be incorporated into the scenery, while the rest of the design team and technical crew began crafting the lighting, scenery, and costumes. The background was created in part by using numerous photographs taken from books as well as video images from the library collection. The music research was done through a music database that resides on the library web page, but finding the right music for the performance was a significant challenge. Instead, musicians were brought in to write a score based on traditional music as well as on the choreography which had already been developed.

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

The process began for the students in the spring semester. The directors brought together a group of students and did some text and movement exploration with them to cast a company for the ensemble. A portion of the script and choreography were developed during a three-week intensive summer session. When the students returned for the fall semester in late August, regular work began with a combination of day and evening rehearsals focusing on both choreography and script.

Students were involved in the design and technical processes, including sewing costumes, building and painting scenery, hanging and focusing lights, and serving as research assistants, stage managers, and the technical run crew for the production. Another student designed an informational display for the theater lobby. The use of library materials supported the research and the work being produced. However, throughout the process, the students were drawn to and explored what was depicted in the children's drawings. With a compact disc of the drawings provided by the library, the directors, student actors and dancers, designers, and the technical crew continually referred to them for inspiration.

The performance piece (Figures 6–9) that started with several poems and gestural studies evolved into a collage divided into twelve sections:





**Figure 7.** Production photograph from *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur*, Section X: “Love Duets.” Esophia Higgins and Jermaine Thornton are featured. School of Theatre and Dance, University of South Florida.

- I. Prequel: Shall I Tell You of My Darfur?
- II. Prologue: Village Portraits
- III. Faces of a Man
- IV. Women and Children: Walking . . . Walking . . . Walking
- V. Adam’s Song
- VI. Teresa
- VII. Children at Play
- VIII. The Road to Water
- IX. The Camp
- X. Love Duets
- XI. Death, Burial and Sorrow: Let the Dead Bury the Dead
- XII. Resilience and Hope: This is Not the Time

#### **THE SYMPOSIUM AND SPEAKERS**

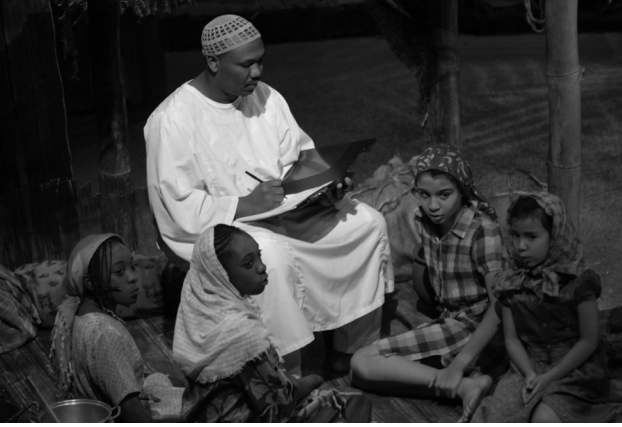
During one of the first meetings, Mark Greenberg, the director of the USF Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center, volunteered to take responsibility for developing



**Figure 8.** Production photograph from *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur*, Section X: "Love Duets." Esophia Higgins and Jermaine Thornton are featured. School of Theatre and Dance, University of South Florida.

the accompanying symposium,<sup>4</sup> thus freeing the directors to focus on the creative aspects and instilling confidence that this element of the project would be realized. Dr. Greenberg identified and contacted faculty members and students on campus who were doing significant research related to this subject. The plan was to schedule a speaker who had a research connection to genocide and/or Africa to address the audience after each performance. Early in the development phase of the symposium, a recent graduate of USF who still lived in the area was contacted to be one of the speakers. Mogtaba Mokhtar Maki was one of the "Lost Boys" of Sudan, who at age sixteen had been drafted to fight in the Sudanese army. He fled to a refugee camp in Cairo, where aid workers noticed his potential and were successful in their efforts to get him to the United States to further his education. This resulted in his attending the University of South Florida where he earned a dual degree in biomedical science and biochemistry. After being contacted about the symposium, his interest in the

4. "What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur," University of South Florida, College of The Arts, School of Theatre and Dance, <http://theatreanddance.arts.usf.edu/content/templates/?z=9&a=1987>.



**Figure 9.** Production photograph from *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur*, Section V: “Adam’s Song.” Mogtaba Mokhtar Maki and the children are featured. School of Theatre and Dance, University of South Florida.

project led the directors to invite him to attend a rehearsal and talk to the cast, thus becoming a resource for the actors. His presence gave validation to the performance piece. While he became engaged in the rehearsal process, it became evident that he wanted to become more involved with the project. Mogtaba Mokhtar Maki was therefore written into the show and became an important element in the performance.

Other symposium speakers included:

- Lianne Stewart, USF Social Science/Public Health student and member of the African Students’ Association;
- Manoug Manougian, a USF mathematics professor who was co-author and associate producer of the documentary *The Genocide Factor: The Human Tragedy*. The program was shown on PBS and the History International Channel and received a Special Jury Award for best documentary at the 2002 Houston International Film Festival;
- Rebecca Tinsley, the director of *Waging Peace*, who donated the primary source materials to the USF Library;
- Edward Kissi, a USF professor in the Africana Studies Department, who specializes in the history of United States foreign policy towards Africa, genocide, and its implications for global human security;
- Musa Olaka, a native of Kenya and the newly appointed assistant librarian in the USF Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center;
- Fanni Green and Jeanne Travers, the faculty members who created and directed the performance piece.

In addition, after each performance and talk, the student cast came on stage to answer questions from audience members about their experience in the development and performance of this original work.

### THE LIBRARY’S CONTRIBUTION

During the two years that the performance piece was in development, the library was an active partner with the artistic team and assisted it with digitized images, primary and

secondary research materials, and links to electronic resources. Librarians responded to a wide variety of research questions and helped arrange the symposium held in conjunction with the performance. The importance of the collaboration was made clear to the public in the playbill acknowledgments: "The production was created in partnership with the USF Library–Tampa Campus and its Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center, Waging Peace, USF International Studies, and USF STAND Organization."

To complement and supplement the collaborative work that was conducted for the performance and symposium, the USF Libraries and the School of Theatre and Dance are now working together on a website to describe and promote the project. The purpose of the site is to "bridge art, academia, and community with an activist response to a global problem"<sup>5</sup> via the goal of bringing the performance and the collections to a wider audience. When launched, the site will provide an overview of the project, including interviews with principle participants, history of the situation in Darfur, multimedia content of the children's drawings, set and costume design, rehearsals, performances, symposia, a press kit, reading resources, and information about related courses at the university.

Meanwhile, development of the USF Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center collections continues. Substantial additions are being made to the print and image collections, and an oral history collection is growing by including audio and video interviews of genocide survivors and scholars. Recently, the USF Tampa Library hired Dr. Musa Olaka as Holocaust and Genocide Studies librarian. Dr. Olaka is originally from the great lakes region of Africa, and he brings to USF a wealth of personal knowledge about the events in Darfur, Rwanda, and Chad as well as a network of friends and colleagues to assist in the library's development of an African genocide collection.

Dr. Olaka understands the power of images to convey the devastation and trauma suffered by the children of Chad and Darfur. To complement the exhibits traveling the world, he created a web presentation of the Waging Peace Darfuri Children's Drawing Collection<sup>6</sup> which provides free online access to over five hundred images in the library's digital asset management system and their related metadata. In addition, the site contains information about the history of the region, timelines, summaries about the camps, and other resources that will add value to the researcher using this collection. Dr. Olaka and Dr. Greenberg traveled to East Africa in late 2011 to initiate partnerships with genocide survivor, education, and prevention organizations with the goal of preserving and disseminating additional primary source documents and survivor testimonies via oral history interviews.

The USF Libraries partnered with Network for Africa, a registered charity that works with communities in the aftermath of conflict and genocide, in a project that portrays the lives of people subjected to genocide in Africa. In February and March 2009, a team from Network for Africa spent several weeks in Chad and Uganda documenting conditions in refugee camps for Darfur genocide survivors, counseling the survivors, and offering them training on topics such as women's empowerment

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5. What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur website (site not yet active).

6. Waging Peace Darfuri Children's Drawings website, Waging Peace and the University of South Florida Libraries, <http://guides.lib.usf.edu/darfuri-childrens-drawings>.

and conflict resolution. Provided with photographic equipment by the USF Libraries, the team documented its mission via pictures and personal diary entries of daily activities. Using these materials, the USF Libraries developed a geospatial web interface of the mission. This website, Network for Africa–Chad Diaries,<sup>7</sup> gives the public and researchers the ability to pinpoint specific locations in Africa where refugee camps exist and where interviews with the women of Darfur are taking place. Similar projects are also underway with members of the USF faculty who travel to Africa and work with trauma survivors. Enhancements to these portals are continually taking place to give researchers worldwide electronic access to the materials at any time.

### EXTENDING THE MESSAGE

Even though the original performance and the symposium have now both concluded, the library and the creative team from the College of The Arts are actively engaged in extending the impact of the project. In addition to the development of the website which will further the work of the USF Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center as well as the creative work of the artists involved, the USF School of Theatre and Dance was recently invited to present *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur* at the International Collegiate Theatre Festival as a part of the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, during the summer of 2012. Excited by the prospect of performing this production abroad, a new cast has been assembled to revamp the production for this venue.

Everyone involved in the project felt a strong conviction that it had been successful in addressing Rebecca Tinsley's musing about the ability of the performing arts to successfully communicate the atrocities of Darfur. They established a goal to reach a significantly greater audience than could attend the limited run of live performances. Performing at the Fringe Festival will advance exposure of this important social issue to a larger, international audience.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Darfuri children's drawings are reproduced in this article with permission from Waging Peace. The performance photographs from *What the Heart Remembers: The Women and Children of Darfur* are reproduced with permission from the University of South Florida, College of The Arts, School of Theatre and Dance.

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7. Network for Africa–Chad Diaries, University of South Florida Libraries Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center, <http://guides.lib.usf.edu/chad>.

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