



Walking the Talk on Genocide

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This past year, Nazareth College partnered with the Eastman House and other organizations to lead a community wide conversation on genocide and war, under the title of "Witness: Know War/Know Genocide." More than 20 organizations offered programs under the "Witness" umbrella. These programs included photographic exhibits, speeches, theater productions and music. As best we know, Rochester is the only community that organized this kind of examination of the truth of genocide

On a number of occasions I spoke and wrote about the need to speak out about genocide, remembering Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel's observation that in the face of evil silence and indifference are the greatest sins.

I am very pleased to report that the Nazareth Trustees understand that responsibility and have "walked the talk." Recently, the Executive Committee accepted the recommendation of the Investment Committee to adopt a policy regarding investments in Sudan in light of the genocide taking place in the Darfur region. The policy states that the College will not make any direct investments in companies identified as "worst offenders" on the Sudan Disinvestment Task Force List.

With respect to indirect investments (i.e., managed funds that in turn might invest in worst offenders), we do not have the ability to direct which specific securities will be held by the managers of those funds. We, however, will request managers of such funds to consider disinvestment in worst offenders. In addition we will calculate the estimated endowment distribution from these indirect investments, if any, and use that distribution for educational programs about genocide.

In adopting this policy, the College joins an impressive list of schools that have adopted similar policies. That list includes Amherst, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Oberlin, Princeton, Trinity, Stanford, University of Rochester, University of Pennsylvania, Williams and Yale. The policy is also consistent with the U.S. government's prohibition on U.S. companies doing business in that area.

Darfur has been embroiled in a deadly conflict for over three years. It is estimated that over 400,000 people have been killed and two million people have been forced from their homes. While some people are able to escape to the neighboring country of Chad, thousands die because of the lack of food, water, or shelter. The world has not seen such a calculated campaign of displacement, starvation, rape, and mass slaughter since the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Adoption of our investment policy itself may have a very small impact on the genocide in Darfur. Collectively, however, schools might have a significant effect. Most importantly, the policy sets an example for all of us about the responsibility to speak out about such atrocities.