

Placing Genocide Center Stage

Imagine if your child were abducted from school and forced  into a life of slavery that included raising other children groomed to become soldiers. This scene isn't just a nightmare for Filder Akech—it was her reality.

Ugandan rebels kidnapped Filder when she was 9 from her schoolyard, and for a year and a half, she cared for children born in the bush and forced to fight. Eventually, Filder escaped and now studies at a school in a village set up by Watoto, a holistic care program that serves abandoned and vulnerable children and women in Uganda.

Now Watoto is sharing a story of the children's courage and redemption through the Restored Tour: Child Soldier No More. Young people chosen from Watoto villages participate in the live theatrical productions of music, dance and song. The show chronicles the children's horrifying experiences and puts the spotlight on their restoration.

Team leader Joe Ogwal says restoration is a key message because half the choir has been through unimaginable atrocities such as being abducted from their homes and enslaved. But they have been rescued.

"The idea of the tour is to tell the world ... there is hope," Ogwal says. "The purpose of this is for the children to tell their stories and for us to raise awareness all across the world of what is taking place in Uganda."

Ogwal declares that faith is key: "We believe in Jesus. I know all around the world there are different belief systems, [but] everything that we do is centered on who Jesus is."

That premise makes it possible for the workers to commit to the long-term process of seeing the children become responsive Christians and responsible adults, Ogwal says.

“Our faith is critical. Without the faith we would not be doing what we are doing.”