

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NEVER AGAIN COALITION 2015

With your help, we accomplished a lot in 2015. We want to share the highlights with you so that you are informed about what the Postcard Brigade, the Never Again Coalition and our partners are able to do when we band together for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan.

JANUARY

NAC was a co-sponsor of the "Anne Frank: A History for Today" exhibit at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, January 15 to April 14. The exhibit encouraged visitors to learn more about scapegoating, antisemitism, racism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide as well as human rights, democracy, and conflict resolution. Additionally, the exhibit challenged visitors to engage with current events and to take an active role in their communities and government.

FEBRUARY

NAC's 2nd Annual Chocolate for Congo Benefit raised \$4620 for Eastern Congo Initiative! Last year we raised \$3600 so we see this as a true success. Fifteen restaurants and bakeries participated. We are so grateful to them and to all of those wonderful people who went out and indulged in delicious chocolate creations to help make a difference for people in the DRC.

As part of United Synagogue Youth's Spring Conference, we participated in an evening of social action projects. Teens signed postcards to companies about "conflict gold". We believe these postcards were useful in getting Cartier, Penney and Target to take initial steps towards conflict free gold.

MAY

We collected 26 pounds of old electronics for *Eco-cell* to help address the issue of conflict minerals. One NAC member held an electronics recycling drive at a local church. We also collected items throughout the month. Partnering with *Eco-cell*, a large number of old electronic devices that contain conflict minerals, such as cell phones, were recycled. *Eco-Cell* partners with numerous organizations doing great work, such as the Enough Project and the Jane Goodall Institute.

JUNE

On June 1st, Senator Merkley co-sponsored S. 713, the International Violence Against Women Act of 2015. This was a PB ask!

JULY

Tom Perriello was appointed Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region and the DRC on July 6th. This was a postcard ask of ours since Senator Russ Feingold left the position in February. Special Envoy Perriello continues the important work that this position demands as the region is in an incredibly critical time with multiple countries at risk of destabilizing, such as the Central African Republic, Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC.

JULY Cont.

July's fifth annual Pamper for a Purpose was another success, raising \$1018 for Jewish World Watch's work in DR Congo and the Sudans! We're very grateful to Pamper founder and activist Denise Wetherell, the other practitioners who joined her, Denise's daughter Anna for her flower hair clips, and NAC member Nancy Dawson for her donation of handmade jewelry.

On July 29th, Congressman Blumenauer co-sponsored House Resolution 394, the bipartisan effort to end the violence perpetrated by Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in central Africa. This has been a continuing postcard ask.

The Postcard Brigade, along with many other groups, had been asking President Obama to speak out against the violence in Sudan and South Sudan. President Obama visited Africa in late July. While he was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, he met with leaders involved in the peace process in South Sudan and gave a speech in which he mentioned the Sudanese government's persecution of its own people and condemned the civil war in South Sudan.

AUGUST

On August 26, Portland became the sixth city to pass a Conflict-Free Resolution, and they did so unanimously! The implementation of the policy outlined in the resolution will ensure that cellular devices and other key communications equipment purchased by the city do not contain minerals that are sourced from mines connected to killing, child abductions, or sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. NAC has been supporting this effort through postcards, letters and attending meetings with city officials and staff for the last two years. This is a real success – thank you for your help in making it happen! As Amanda R. Ulrich, Campaign Director for Portland's Conflict-Free City Initiative, said after the vote, "Today, all the people of Portland should feel proud, and congratulate our City Council for doing the right thing."

NAC saw the need and advocated successfully for an important Dear Colleague letter to be written to Attorney General Loretta Lynch. And although Congress was in recess, we managed to get two Oregon congress people to sign on. Our partners at JWW were successful getting two California representatives to sign too! With Congressman Blumenauer taking one of the leads in co-authoring the letter and Congresswoman Bonamici as a signatory, nine members of Congress signed a letter to the Attorney General about the disbursement of funds from the settlement by the French bank BNP Paribas. In May 2014, BNPP pleaded guilty to doing business with three countries we have or had sanctions against: Sudan, Iran and Cuba. Seventy percent of that business was done with Sudan. The settlement was over 8 billion dollars. This was a landmark case.

On August 26th, after 20 months of war, South Sudan's President Kiir finally signed his name to a peace deal for the people of South Sudan. Our postcard messages, joining with the voices of other activists, made a difference. Our appeals were heard: President Obama pressured South Sudan's leaders for a peace deal during his trip to Africa in late July. This peace deal raises our hopes, but there is much work to be done.

SEPTEMBER

NAC participated in the 2nd annual Tour de Goz Amer organized by i-Act to raise money for the Little Ripples preschool program in the Darfuri refugee camp of Goz Amer in eastern Chad. With about 60 supporters, we surpassed our goal of \$2100 with an end result close to \$2500. This covers half the cost of one "pond" or preschool for 45 students for a year. Our work ensures that those students will not only receive an education but at least one nutritious meal each day too. We're very grateful to all who helped in this effort!

NAC was a partner organization for a Portland State University's Capstone class taught by Professor Waleed and entitled "Are We Too Violent?" Those students who chose to work with NAC examined two areas – *Funding of Violence* and *Famine as a Consequence of Violence* – in the context of the countries we focus on: Sudan, South Sudan, and DRC. The final projects were presented on December 1st.

OCTOBER

This year marked the 10th anniversary of Lisa Shannon's first Run for Congo Women, the precursor to Team Congo PDX. On October 18th, fifteen NAC members participated in the Cause + Event run/walk for Women for Women International. This year's 57-member Team Congo PDX brought in over \$1222. This money will support programs for forty Congolese women, each of whom will receive a monthly stipend for basic necessities like food, medicine, clean water, clothing and shelter for her family. She'll graduate with new skills so she can earn an income and provide for her family. Thank you to all who participated in this year's Team Congo PDX.

On October 7th, Senator Merkley co-sponsored Senate Resolution 237 which supports the US continuing its work to stop Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army. This was a PB ask.

On October 23rd President Obama reauthorized the U.S. support for an additional year to the African Union Regional Task Force for finding Kony. This has been a repeated PB ask!

NOVEMBER

NAC was a community partner for the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education's symposium, "Confronting Extremism: The State of Hate Today" at PSU on November 8th. The film *HATE*, a documentary depicting the resurgence of antisemitism in Europe, was followed by a discussion in which local panelists reflected on the challenges posed by racism, extremism, hate groups and hate speech in our own community.

I-Act took its 22nd trip to the Darfuri refugee camps in eastern Chad. A large part of this trip was implementing the first Little Ripples Ponds, the new in-home preschool model. In October, NAC co-chair Lauren Fortgang and i-Act program director Sara Christine Dallain visited the Foundation School preschool at Congregation Neveh Shalom and shared stories about the preschool-aged children in the camps. The students then made artwork that was brought over to share with the preschoolers in refugee camp Goz Amer. NAC members, through our September's *NAC Rides for Refugees*, helped fund the first ponds!

DECEMBER

On International Human Rights Day, December 10th, Jewish World Watch and i-Act delivered over 1,400 signatures from the #Restore2100 petition asking for the US government to help restore the Darfuri refugees' rations back to 2,100 calories per person/per day. The petition was delivered to various levels of the US government including the Administration, the US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, State Department and USAID. Thank you to everyone who helped raise awareness of this issue, and to those of you who signed and gathered signatures!

In addition to the work we do, we are so happy and proud of our partners in the field, Jewish World Watch and i-Act. 2015 was an especially hard year for people all over the world who have been forced to leave their homes. Men, women and children in Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo continue to be at the top of that list despite the conflicts in those countries being under-reported. We couldn't do any of our work without your support.

We'll end this year with a quote from President Obama, a reminder that we must keep reminding him, other elected officials and ourselves: *Remembrance without resolve is a hollow gesture. Awareness without action changes nothing.* With your help, we will continue to utter the phrase "Never Again" as long as we must and we will work towards a better tomorrow. Thank you!