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DROP THE DEBT

NEWS & ACTION FROM JUBILEE USA NETWORK, WASHINGTON, DC | FALL 2008



3RD ANNUAL GRASSROOTS CONFERENCE A SUCCESS!

Jonathan Awasom, Brian Swarts, Katy Windschill, Lorena Rodriguez, Chris Westling, Pierre Wadner, and Bakary Seckan smile for a photo at the 2008 Grassroots Conference. See p. 6 for a conference report back.

Photo by Erin Roscoe

JUBILEE ACT MAKES PROGRESS IN SENATE, BUT TIME IS RUNNING OUT – FINAL PUSH NEEDED!

By Kristin Sundell, Director of Advocacy & Organizing

Thank you for your tireless advocacy on behalf of the Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation (HR 2634/S 2166) over the past two years! Thanks to you, the Jubilee Act overwhelmingly passed the US House of Representatives on April 16th and passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June.

The Jubilee Act requires the US Treasury Secretary to advocate and negotiate with other international leaders to expand eligibility for international debt cancellation to 24 deeply impoverished countries that were left out of past debt relief initiatives. The Jubilee Act urges that debt cancellation be provided without conditions requiring the implementation of economic policies that deepen poverty or degrade the environment and instructs the Treasury Secretary to begin development of responsible lending guidelines to prevent future debt crises.

In order for the Jubilee Act to become law, it must be passed by the full Senate and signed by President Bush. Time is running short as Congress may adjourn for the year as early as



CALL YOUR SENATOR TODAY...

and ask him or her to support passage of the Jubilee Act (S 2166) by unanimous consent. We need every Senator to support the bill – just one “no” can block the passage. Please call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. Let the operator know what state you’re from and s/he will connect you with both of your US Senators. Introduce yourself and ask your Senator to fight global poverty by supporting the Jubilee Act. **YOUR VOICE IS CRITICAL:** Take action now!

Check www.jubileeusa.org for the latest legislative updates and news on the Jubilee Act.

September 26th. Because of the limited time remaining, lead Jubilee act sponsors Senators Casey (D-PA) and Lugar (R-IN) are pursuing Senate passage by unanimous consent, a process that allows bills with broad bipartisan support to pass the Senate without requiring time for debate on the Senate floor.

But passage by unanimous consent requires the agreement of all 100 US Senators – passage can be blocked by any individual Senator with objections to the bill. That’s why now more than ever your Senators need to hear from you! Please call your US Senators today and ask them to support passage of the Jubilee Act (S 2166) by unanimous consent. You can reach the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. Let the operator know what state you’re from and she will connect you with both of your US Senators.

As we push as hard as we can for passage of the Jubilee Act, it’s important to remember that all our hard work is not lost if the bill does not pass this year. The tremendous progress the Jubilee Act has made in this congress puts us in a strong position to approach the new administration to request their international leadership on issues of debt and global poverty and even if the Jubilee Act is signed into law this year, our vigilance and advocacy will be necessary to ensure that the Act is fully implemented.

Thanks again — please keep pushing and praying for the Jubilee Act to pass this year! If not, don’t give up— we’ll be back at it, stronger than ever next year. Watch your email boxes for the latest updates and action requests or check out www.jubileeusa.org.

WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: OUR PICTURE NEW

by Mercedes Mack, National Field Organizer

Tell Senator McCain and Senator Obama that you want our next President to be a leader in the fight against global poverty. Take a picture with your friends and send it to us at Jubilee (we will deliver it to the campaign offices for you) — be the change you wish to see in the world!

"1, 2, 3: EVERYONE SAY: 'DROP THE DEBT!'"

Forty excited voices yell as the first photo of the *Picture New Leadership on Global Poverty and Debt* campaign is taken. The picture is beautiful; full of the smiling faces of people who truly believe that the world can and will change with a little push from folks who care.

With the new presidential administration comes an opportunity for restoring and rebuilding right relationships with the international community. *The Picture New Leadership* campaign provides a way for people to communicate with the candidates in a powerful way, asking them to be leaders in the fight against global poverty by making two commitments:

1. **Appoint a Secretary Treasury who will make the fight against global poverty a priority.** The new appointee will represent the United States on the boards of the IMF and World Bank and should work within these international fi-



The first official photo of the Picture New Leadership Campaign, taken at the 2008 Grassroots Conference. Photo by Pierre Wadner

ancial institutions to provide full debt cancellation without harmful economic conditions to all the impoverished countries that need it to fight poverty. He or she should also work with international partners to address the issue of odious and unjust debts and create a new framework for responsible lending in the future.

2. **Create a new cabinet-level Department for Global Development.** This department would bring together U.S. foreign assistance initiatives from over twenty government agencies where they currently reside to coordinate policy and ensure poverty focused aid and development.

LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN JOIN THE CAMPAIGN:

1. Gather a group of classmates, co-workers, faith community members, friends, or anyone else you want to be in the picture.
2. Create a sign that clearly displays the campaign message: "Picture an End to Global Poverty: Cancel debts! More and better aid!"
3. Take a picture of the group & the sign together and ask everyone in the picture to sign the petition you can find at www.jubileeusa.org/leadership/petition.html
4. Send a copy of your picture with the petition and your name, address, phone, email address and anything else you want to tell us about the picture via email to mercedes@jubileeusa.org or snail mail to: Jubilee USA Network, 212 E Capitol St NE, Washington, DC 20003.

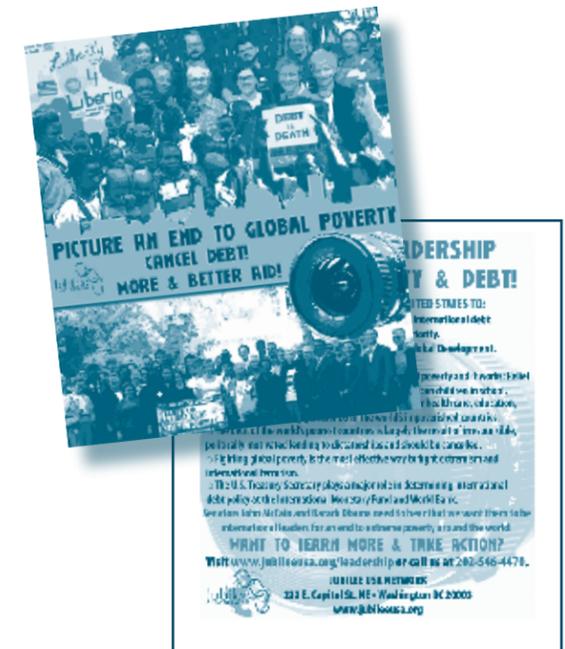
Jubilee USA will personally deliver your pictures and petition signatures to the campaign offices of Senators Obama and McCain. We hope this new campaign will inspire you to take action and get your voices heard (and pictures seen!) by the presidential candidates.

WANT TO DO EVEN MORE?

You can also support the *Picture New Leadership* campaign by hosting the special *Picture New Leadership* banner that will be traveling around the country this fall. This traveling debt banner will be hosted by groups and congregations across the United States that will use the banner's time in their community as an opportunity to organize special *Picture New Leadership* photos and events. The time that the traveling banner is in your city is an opportunity for you to use your creativity to make an extra impact! Pictures taken with the banner will be delivered to the national offices of the presidential candidates. If you are interested in having the banner come to your community contact Mercedes Mack at Mercedes@jubileeusa.org or 202-783-3566.

PICTURE NEW LEADERSHIP PALM CARDS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

Use them to promote the Picture New Leadership campaign in your community!



ORDER YOURS AT WWW.JUBILEEUSA.ORG.



BOLD NEW LEGISLATION TO STOP VULTURE FUNDS INTRODUCED

Also known as the "Stop Very Unscrupulous Loan Transfers from Underprivileged countries to Rich, Exploitive Funds Act," the Stop VULTURE Funds Act (H.R. 6796) was introduced by Representative Maxine Waters, and co-sponsored by Representatives John Conyers (MI), Luis Gutierrez (IL), Maurice Hinchey (NY), Barbara Lee (CA), Gwen Moore (WI), Donald Payne (NJ), and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL) on August 1, 2008. This bill, strongly supported by Jubilee USA, would help to safeguard the gains of debt relief

from vulture funds. Vulture funds are private investment funds that buy up the debts of poor countries at reduced prices, usually for pennies on the dollar. They then sue these countries to recover the original value of the debts plus interest. Under the Stop VULTURE funds act, any lawsuit demanding more than the amount the investment fund paid to buy the debt of a protected poor country, plus 6% interest per year would be considered usurious and illegal. Call your US Representative today and ask that s/he co-sponsor the Stop VULTURE Funds Act. For more information on vulture funds, visit www.stopvultureculture.org.

IMF RESPONSE TO FOOD & FUEL CRISIS: MORE LOANS TO HELP THE POOREST?

On July 1, an expert panel at the IMF gave a briefing outlining the IMF's research findings on the food and fuel crisis, and the Fund's policy responses. IMF Director Dominique Strauss-Khan stated that "Some countries are at a tipping point. If food prices rise further and oil prices just stay the same, then some

governments will be unable to feed people and at the same time maintain stability of their economy." The IMF proposes increasing loans to poor countries through their Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility to help deal with the crisis. More loans to more poor countries? Debt activists have some concerns about that. Assistance is needed immediately – but as grants, not loans.

G8 MEETING — A LOT OF TALK, LITTLE ACTION ON FOOD CRISIS

As part of the G8 summit in Japan from July 7th-9th leaders discussed the global food crisis and released a statement on Global Food Security outlining their response. The G8, some of the richest industrialized countries of the world announced their intention to use \$10 billion to fight the food crisis, but almost none was in the form of new commitments.

FUNDING THE WORLD BANK'S LOW-INCOME LENDING ARM (PART II)

On Wednesday, June 25th, the House Financial Services committee passed HR.6306, which renews the United States' commitment to fund the World Bank's low-income lending arm (called IDA - the International Development Association). However, the committee made it clear that the US should work within the World Bank to achieve some very specific reforms, both on the kinds of conditionality it imposes and the way the World Bank Inspection Panel is run. Amendments were added instructing the US representative to the World Bank to use his/her vote to work for debt cancellation for Haiti and work to convince non-Paris Club bilateral creditors not to sell their debt claims on low-income countries to vulture funds. Language from this bill is likely to be incorporated into the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill.

DRC: AVOIDING ANOTHER GENERATION OF INDEBTEDNESS, DEPENDENCY AND IMPOVERISHMENT

by Maurice Carney, Friends of the Congo

On a recent visit to France, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) President Joseph Kabila, sought Nicolas Sarkozy's help in lobbying the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to forgive Congo's \$10 billion debt and provide more loans to the Congo. Nearly all of this debt originates in the colonial regime of the Belgians, who controlled the Congo from 1885 until 1960 or in the brutal and corrupt western-backed dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko who ruled the Congo from 1965 until 1997.

The odious debt accumulated by the Belgians during their colonial reign was transferred to the independent government of the Congo in 1960 and became a part of the current debt that the Congo owes to the international community. In essence, the Congolese people paid for their own genocide and enslavement under Belgian colonial rule.

Five years after independence, the western installed dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko began. Billions of dollars of additional odious debt was accumulated during Mobutu's reign as the IMF, World Bank and western countries loaned billions to maintain him in power and secure his allegiance during the Cold War. Much of this money was siphoned into Mobutu's personal Swiss bank accounts. Despite warnings from their own in-country appointees in the 1980's, the World Bank and the IMF continued to provide loans to the Mobutu regime.

The Congo is eligible to have its \$12 billion debt cancelled, but only if it makes it through the IMF and World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program. HIPC requires the implementation of neoliberal policies that have set the stage for the Congo to be carved up for the taking by logging and mining companies, with little regard for benefits to the Congolese public, the rights of local communities, or protection of the environment. Meanwhile the Congo spends a third of its budget on debt repayment while 80 percent of its population lives on 30 cents or less a day and over 70 percent of its population is malnourished.

The recent proposal of the \$80 billion Grand Inga Dam project has primed the Congolese people for another generation of impoverishment and debt. If implemented the project could saddle yet another generation of Congolese people with crippling



Polio immunization in the village of Botoma, Equator province, DR Congo. Photo by Richard Franco/Flickr.com

debt while initial analysis raises concerns as to whether the Congolese people will benefit from the dam project.

Today, Congolese social activists are joining in partnership with social activists in the West to break the hold of the World Bank and other multilateral institutions have on the Congo and its peoples.

The debt audit required by the Jubilee Act (S 2166) currently before the US Congress is certainly in order. Such an audit would determine the extent of the illegal and odious nature of Congo's debts and provide grounds for canceling them outright. Money freed through debt cancellation ought to be placed in a locally controlled development trust fund for the benefit of the Congolese people.

FALL ACTION EVENTS CALENDAR



STAND UP AGAINST GLOBAL POVERTY AND DEBT: OCTOBER 17-19

STAND UP and TAKE ACTION is a worldwide call to take action against poverty and inequality and for the Millennium Development Goals. Over three days between Oct. 17th-19th, millions around the world will gather to literally STAND UP together, read the stand up pledge, and TAKE ACTION to show that they refuse to stay silent or inactive in the face of poverty. Last year, over 43 million people stood up in at least 6,540 events in 127 countries to demand that world leaders keep their promises to end poverty and inequality.

This year, we're calling on Jubilee groups and congregations to stand up and take action on the weekend of October 17 - 19th. The STAND UP is also a great opportunity to take a group photo as part of the "Picture New Leadership" campaign. As you stand together and read the STAND UP pledge, have someone hold a sign reading "Picture an End to Global Poverty - Cancel Debts, More and Better Aid." Then snap away! Be sure to send your photos, petition signatures and the number of people that participated in the STAND UP to the jubilee office - Mercedes@jubileeusa.org or Jubilee USA, 212 E. Capitol St. NE, Washington, DC 20003.

Check out www.jubileeusa.org for special materials to help you, your community, and your congregation join with Jubilee USA to raise debt and global poverty on the Stand Up Weekend!

STAND UP SABBATH & SUNDAY: OCTOBER 18 & 19

Are you a Jubilee Congregation? Haven't yet participated in a Jubilee Sabbath or Sunday? Consider organizing a special service on STAND UP weekend - October 18th and 19th. Call on your church or synagogue to stand up and take action against poverty and debt. Go to www.jubileeusa.org for special STAND UP resources to engage your congregation.

CONGO WEEK: OCTOBER 19-25

From October 19-25, 2008, students will join in solidarity with the people of the Congo in breaking the silence about the tragedy that has occurred in the Congo and providing support to the Congolese people as they strive to heal their land.

We are asking students to take the following specific actions:

1. Organize an event or activity at your school
2. Encourage students at other schools throughout the globe to participate
3. Encourage your teachers to teach a class or do a lecture on the Congo
4. Organize a fundraiser or benefit event (party, fashion show, comedy night, etc.)
5. Request that your school issue a statement in support of the people of the Congo, calling for an end to the conflict and humane policies by world powers toward the Congo

For more information, go to www.congoweeek.org.

IMF/WORLD BANK ANNUAL MEETINGS, WASHINGTON, DC: OCTOBER 11-13

JUBILEE SABBATH/ SUNDAY: DECEMBER 13/ 14

A wonderful Jubilee passage, Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, which calls us to "bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners," is scheduled as the December 14th lectionary reading in many congregations. This is your congregation's last chance to participate in Jubilee Sunday in 2008. Worship resources for December are available on the Jubilee website. Visit www.jubileeusa.org.

JUBILEE MEETS COLUMBUS, OHIO!

by Nathan Fishman, Outreach & Congregations Fellow

Jubilee USA Network held its 3rd Annual Grassroots training and organizing conference from June 20th through 22nd, 2008, at the Xenos Christian Fellowship Center in Columbus, Ohio. The Grassroots Conference was great fun, and blessed by the presence of many of our loyal, long-time Jubilee grassroots members as well as many new enthusiastic faces. Check out audio downloads from the conference on the Jubilee blog and pictures at www.flickr.com.

Emira Woods' energetic, enlightening, and empowering, keynote address was an unforgettable highlight. Emira painted a powerful picture of the current moment in history as a time to bring our true values as a nation back into focus and be guided both personally and collectively by love. She had us all hugging the person sitting next to us!

After dancing the rest of Friday night away, the 120 conference attendees returned on Saturday for a series of workshops, strategy and training sessions.

Katy Windschill attended the conference as a representative from Jubilee Duluth (Minnesota) with her friends Lorena Rodriguez and Jonathan Awasom. Just a month later, Katy reported to us on a meeting she had with the district staff of Senator Tim Johnson (SD), having traveled across state borders to lobby as both her Minnesota Senators were already co-sponsors of the Jubilee Act. Katy said: "(I) asked for Johnson's support in cosponsoring the Jubilee Act. I had a lot of great com-



Emira Woods of the Institute for Policy Studies, speaking at the 2008 Grassroots Conference. Photo by Pierre Wadner

elling stats from the conference; it was great! I felt so much more equipped for the meeting. I also left introduction sheets and vulture funds materials with their office and will need to check back with them soon to follow up." Among the many statistics Katy used in her advocacy was a fact about Lesotho that still sticks with her, that this impoverished country, currently not eligible for debt relief, spends more on servicing its debt each year than it does on education.

I hope this 3rd annual conference was as memorable an experience for Katy and the other attendees as it was for me.

MOVING IN & MOVING ON: STAFF & BOARD CHANGES

We are sad to say goodbye to our two amazing fellows. Nathan Fishman, our spirited and dedicated Grassroots Fellow, has left us to study with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia. Danielle Pals, our brainy and effervescent Advocacy Fellow, will begin Georgetown Law in the fall. Blessings to you both – we will miss you. In their footsteps we welcome our new Advocacy Fellow Mimi Lytje, who arrives from Copenhagen with an extensive law background, and Outreach Fellow Carly Pildis, who has organized with the American Jewish World Service and volunteered in Ghana. We also welcome back Hayley Hathaway, former Jubilee intern, as the new Operations Coordinator, and Devon Davidson as our newest Coordinating Committee member.

"...proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee year for you..."

Leviticus 25:10

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