

Bowdoin College 1st place Submission

Kristopher Anthony Klein '12. Bowdoin College, Uganda CLASSROOMS FOR PEACE: Creating a place for education at Bright Destiny Academy in Kati-Kati Village, Lacor, Uganda

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY:

Two decades of civil war and child abduction have irrevocably transformed Northern Uganda. Moreover, the Acholi children of Northern Uganda have suffered collateral damage from the war: starvation, malnutrition, many born with HIV, and most of all, orphaned. These children face enormous obstacles from the day they are born.

Bright Destiny Academy is a kindergarten school which was opened in 2007 by Gulu native, Pat Robert Larubi. With scarce funds, Larubi built three brick rooms, hired 3 local teachers and opened his school. He did not have the funds to install a roof, floor, or furniture for the school. In 2008, I found him online through a networking site. We had been corresponding for a half a year when I received a grant from Bowdoin College to travel to Uganda to teach HIV/AIDS awareness and English. I witnessed the psycho-social effects of the Lord's Resistance Army, the guerilla force which had terrorized Northern Ugandans and my students. At times I felt powerless because I could not reverse the fear that still remained in their hearts. All I could do was invest the time and energy to create a positive environment in my classroom. Each day I hoped that I could save one more student from fear through education. Love, laughter, and learning were the ingredients I brought to them.

During my stay, I contributed most of the money Bowdoin College provided me to a fund I created for the children – the Akena's Children Scholarship Fund. This fund placed Ugandan Shillings into a Barclays bank account that develops interest over time. My idea was that intelligent students with financial hardships would be given scholarships that would pay for their education. I left Gulu in August 2009 with my goals unfinished; the school still had no funds to build a roof, install a floor, purchase desks or continue its lunch program.

PROPOSAL:

The goal for my Davis Project for Peace grant is to return to Gulu and finish the work I started 3 years ago. First, I will finish building 3 classrooms by installing a foundation made of wood for the floor, rebuilding and plastering the walls and finally placing a metal roof over the school.

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I will take full control of hiring and construction – employing the services of Richard Galabuzi and his Gulu based construction company, *Gulu Galabuzis*. Second, I will place funds in the Akena's Children Scholarship Fund that will provide the most promising students of Bright Destiny a scholarship to pay for their fees at the school.

As part of this scholarship fund, I will establish an Attendance Incentive Plan, where perfect attendance or close to do it would permit the student's family a discount in tuition prices. Third, I will finance the lunch program, which will underwrite one year's supply of food for the students at the school.

With the construction of 3 classrooms, the orphans will be given their first experience to learn in a clean and comfortable setting – a privilege these students are not given in their own homes. The classrooms will stand as a testament to the orphans and residents of Kati-Kati Village that education is the greatest power mankind can have, and its accessibility to the community will illustrate for the first time that education will become a tangible reality for my students, and an alternative to war.

I respectfully request your support to help me build Bright Destiny Academy and allow the orphans to move forward with their lives, so that they can be able to learn about a world full of possibility, without the shadow of war.

CONCLUSION:

I am pleased that my proposal creates a scholarship that will continue to grow through the years. Gulu is not just a city in Africa, but it is my adopted home where I lived with the Acholi. The omnipresent influence of war has beleaguered the Acholi children. What makes this proposal's goal substantial is that there will be widespread effects from our investment in Bright Destiny Academy. Education is the tool which unites us all – allow the orphans of Bright Destiny Academy to be given that same privilege of learning and living as we have here in the USA. The classrooms will become a sanctuary where students are taught about peace and tolerance; it is the location where the creation of ideas occur, some of which will one day reverberate throughout the world.

Thank you.