

Lee Rosenthal: Taking a Stand Against INJUSTICE

BY BETH PANITZ

“Never again! Never again!” shouted 13-year-old Lee Rosenthal. He raised his voice in unison with thousands of other demonstrators—including actor George Clooney—who rallied in front of the U.S. Capitol on April 30, 2006. They had gathered to demand an end to the genocide (deliberate and brutal destruction) of the Black-African Muslim population in Darfur, Sudan.

Although the victims live half a world away from Lee’s home in Westfield, New Jersey, he felt he could not stand idly by while Arab rulers in Sudan unleashed the Janjaweed (a brutal militia whose Arabic name means “devils on horseback”) against innocent farmers in Darfur. The bloody civil war pits the Arab Muslim central government against Black-African Muslims in Sudan’s western region, who

rebelled against decades of racial discrimination. The Arab leaders responded to the uprising by sending Janjaweed soldiers to crush the rebellion. In the process, they have mercilessly burned villages to the ground, destroying homes and crops. Since February 2003, more than 400,000 people have been killed or have died of starvation or disease, and more

than two million have been left homeless.

When Lee first heard about the genocide in Darfur, he knew it was wrong. Although he couldn’t single-handedly change the situation, he could take a stand against injustice and also encourage others to do so.

Lee decided to publicize the “Million Voices for Darfur” campaign, an effort to send a million postcards to President George W. Bush demanding that he take a stronger leadership role in protecting the people of Darfur. Lee distributed more than 600 postcards, handing them out in his neighborhood and including them in his bar mitzvah invitation this past summer, along with a letter urging people to mail the postcards.



SAVE DARFUR!
Mail in the postcard in this issue. To find out how else you can help, visit www.ajws.org/darfur.



Meet Lee

Age: 13
School: Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union
Favorite subject: Biology
Hobbies: Tennis, chess, biking, and reading
Favorite Jewish Book: *The Wise Men of Helm and Their Merry Tales* by Solomon Simon
Favorite Holiday: “It’s a tie between Pesach and Hanukkah. What I like about both of them is the family gets together.”

Lee refused to stand idly by when he heard about the atrocities in Darfur.

“I for one cannot stand by and go about my life normally while so many are suffering and dying,” Lee writes in his letter, citing the Torah’s mandate *lo ta’amod al dam rei’ekha*, do not stand idly by while your neighbor’s blood is shed), which requires us to speak out against injustice in the Jewish community. Lee takes this obligation one step further, and extends his responsibility to include creating justice within the world community. “It’s time we take a stand against the Janjaweed. It’s time our government acts. It’s time the genocide in Darfur ends.”

As a Jew, Lee feels a special sensitivity to those who are experiencing genocide. Judaism values *tzedek* (justice) and aims to create a fair and just world. “What’s happening in Darfur is unjust,” says Lee. “As Jews, we know firsthand the horrors of genocide, having lost six million of our own in the Holocaust.”

At his bar mitzvah ceremony on June 17, Lee stood proudly. He had learned not only to read from the Torah, but also to live by its words. In his *d’var torah*, Lee implored everyone to send a postcard to President Bush demanding help in Darfur. “Each one of us can save a life,” urged Lee.

meet Lee

