

HOPEREVO.COM and Jen Lemen Go To Africa PLAN Rwanda Trip: May 19-27, 2008

Jen Lemen will visit Grace (12) and Lillian (9), the daughters of Odette Umurerwa, a genocide survivor from Rwanda currently living in the United States.

Odette and Jen met on a schoolyard playground one year ago. At that time, Jen realized Odette was in a very difficult and dangerous situation with few resources and limited access to proper help. Over time the two women forged a friendship and found a way for Odette to start over again. Because of the sensitive nature of this situation and ongoing issues related to Odette's future and her safety, her advocates have requested this part of her story remain private for now.

The following plan represents Odette and Jen's shared passion for empowering women, encouraging girls and spreading hope throughout the world. Our strategy for this trip addresses the need for literacy tools as well as a strong focus on the importance girls' empowerment and education.

On this trip, Jen will distribute a small independently published book written by Odette Umurerwa and illustrated by Jen Lemen.

"Let's Learn How To Help Ourselves and Others" tells the true story of Odette's experience as a seven-year-old Tutsi girl living in poverty in a refugee camp in Uganda. Frustrated by the lack of underwear, shoes and pencils and the inability of their parents to provide, Odette (age 7) and her brother Inocent (9) decide to organize fifteen of their friends into a cooperative they name "Society." By sharing their chickens with the other children, Odette and Inocent empower the group to sell chicken eggs and pool resources to provide for one another's basic needs. The children's efforts result in a vibrant year long microfinance project which finances the education of five of the children and provides small loans to adults in need until war comes and the children must flee with their families once again.

Written in Kinyarwanda with English translation on each page, the story functions as a literacy tool, a practical example of a microfinance project and a girl's empowerment piece. Odette's simple and compelling narrative places special emphasis on the ingenuity of girls to not only help themselves but to come up with solutions that benefit the community as a whole.

The book is currently in production and will be printed in a lightweight zine format. Five hundred copies will be printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks. A certain number will be given to Bright Academy in Nyagatare, a small boarding school where Grace and Lillian study and live part of the year in their mother's absence. A certain number of copies will be reserved for teachers who are giving basic literacy lessons to children for an hour or so a day under the trees in

Umutara and the surrounding villages. We are exploring other distribution options throughout the country.

Jen will distribute hope notes created by the HopeRevo.com community. HopeRevo.com will create a template of Kinyarwandan phrases chosen by Odette Umurerwa that convey the power, ingenuity and creativity of young girls and the importance of education for girls especially. HopeRevo.com and JenLemen.com will invite young girls and women from the United States to take these phrases and create an Artist Trading Card size hope note.

100 Hope Notes will be distributed in person at Bright Academy in Nyagatare, Rwanda. We trust that these artful and beautiful notes will have a transformative affect on the women and girls who create them. Each contributor will receive personal updates via email and blog about the trip and will be invited to cultivate an active interest in efforts to empower girls in Rwanda. We hope this effort will mark the beginning of an exchange of encouragement between American girls (ages 7-12) and Rwandan girls who each have unique experiences and stories to offer the other.

Odette Umurerwa is a mother of two, natural-born community organizer, brilliant storyteller and Kigali trained chef, specializing in African cuisine. The microfinance project Odette initiated as a young child was the first of many projects that benefited her friends, family and community. Odette is passionate about girls' empowerment and believes African women are the hope of the continent.

Jen Lemen is a writer, illustrator, blogger and immigrant advocate living in Silver Spring, Maryland. Jen's essays have appeared in Good Housekeeping, The Huffington Post and Imagining Ourselves, an online exhibit created by activist and novelist Isabel Allende for the International Museum of Women in San Francisco.

BUDGET

Ticket: \$1640 RT airfare (due April 10)

Lodging and Transportation: \$300 (due May 19)

Immunizations for Travel: \$700-900 (due April 16)

Layout and Printing of "Let's Learn How to Help Ourselves and Others": approx. \$1500 for 500 copies (due May 10)

TOTAL: \$4300-4500

