

Update – December 2016

Dear Friends,

My Christmas tree is in the stand with water but I'm not sure when I will have time to decorate it. Learning to balance preparation for family while trying to find a room in an extended stay hotel for a homeless family (father with five children) so they can have a Christmas off the streets with a little Christmas tree helps put things in perspective. And then there are the 40 elderly in West Dallas with scarcely enough to eat, the working-poor family that has adopted three children ages 18 months to five years taken into custody by CPS, and on and on....

Rajmonda

Rajmonda has two semesters remaining to receive her BA in sign language. We're so proud of her for all her hard work.

Containers

We shipped three 40 foot containers of aid this year. The first was to Kosovo, prepared in the Kosovo community facility in Bedford, TX. We were able to partner with another non-profit organization in order to ship a 40 ft. container of food to the same group. Neither of these two containers could have gone to this very needy area without the help of The Albanian American Heritage Community. We shipped a container to Jordan in November.

Our hope is to ship 12 containers to Jordan, Kosovo, South Sudan, Armenia and Gaza. This is possible only by working with other organizations that are committed in specific areas such as food, wheelchairs, and medical equipment.

Srebrenica & Kosovo

In May I traveled to Srebrenica through Croatia because of needs that have come to my attention. Many refugees from that city of 37,000 (now 7,000) live in Dallas. And so I knew the stories but even that did not prepare me for the pain of seeing the head stones of over 8,000 boys and men, ages 12 through 77. The memorial, a dark, drab, empty part of the U.N. compound with pictures and artifacts lining the walls, tell the story. One of those pictures in full color fills one wall and dominates the room. It is of a young woman hanging in the tree where she ended it all after the horrific events of that day.

My trip took me on to Kosovo. There another 1666 people, 200 of whom are children, are still missing. Families of missing persons live a different life from the one we live. How can there be any peace never knowing what happened to your child, spouse or parent?

The primary focus of my trip to Kosovo was on the 1,000 women registered as traumatized victims at the hands of the Serb Military in 1999. Their lives are fraught with difficulties not the least being the secret they feel they must keep.

Conclusion

Recently I watched the movie *The Great Debaters*. This was an African-American team that debated at many black colleges and finally Harvard in 1935. The mantra they recited over and over in order to prepare themselves was:

Who's the judge?

The judge is God.

Why is he God?

Because he decides who wins or loses, not my opponent.

Who's your opponent?

He does not exist.

Why does he not exist?

Because he is merely a dissenting voice to the truth I speak.

I've given this much thought. In this world of so much chatter and nonsense, how is one's voice heard – really heard. I'm reminded of the monk who carried a stone in his mouth until he was sure he had something to say. What is understood in that is that when we, in patience, are quiet enough long enough, we become aware of the still small voice within. And that voice speaks the truth.

As people of faith in a world gone crazy, we must learn to listen until we are able to speak truth to nonsense. As the incidences of abuse of minorities are increasing, I will not be sitting on the sidelines.

In gratitude,

Rae England