Metro Student Reaches 20 Million People During Human Trafficking Tour

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A student from Metropolitan State University reached 20 million people worldwide during a human trafficking advocacy tour in Nigeria this September. The tour was called “Bringing the Story Back Home” and featured Bukola Oriola, a student in Metro’s individualized studies program. Oriola is the founder of a nonprofit called The Enitan Story. Next year, she will return to Nigeria to continue teaching college students about human trafficking.

“Bringing the Story Back Home was a huge success,” Oriola said. “I’m grateful to everyone who supported [it].”

Oriola was born in Nigeria and is a survivor of human trafficking. She used her story to help illustrate and humanize the issue.

During the tour, Oriola and other volunteers visited five colleges and universities over the course of three days. While on these campuses, they spoke about the dangers of human trafficking and what can be done to identify and prevent it.

Despite low funding, Oriola said the tour brought impressive results. Of the 772 participants surveyed after the events, 95 percent said they left the event knowing more about human trafficking than before. Likewise, 94 percent said they wanted to get involved with prevention. Support for a return tour was strong among those surveyed; a full 98 percent said they would like the opportunity to participate again.

The tour had support from several organizations. Oriola said the U.S. Consulate played a pivotal role in the tour. “Having the U.S. Consulate behind the project was like the icing on the cake; it really made people listen and know that I didn’t come to joke,” she said. “This is serious business and an issue that we need to pay attention to.”

Other sponsors included Google, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, and Metropolitan State University. Metro’s Student Senate gave $4,684 towards the tour.

Next year, Oriola and The Enitan Story plan to return to Nigeria to continue their work. Their tour is scheduled to run from March 8 through March 17, 2016. Oriola said this second tour will focus on the issue of human trafficking rather than on one particular story. “In 2016 … the story already went home,” she said. “I think going back is very important so that we keep the flame burning. We don’t just go one time and then disappear.”

As a result, The Enitan Story has decided to start a campaign called Students Against Abuse and Slavery International. “We can get students, not only in Nigeria, but Metro State and other colleges in the United States, in Nigeria, and other parts of the world to join this campaign as a student body,” she said. “The goal will be to work towards prevention.”

A few things will change on the next tour. Rather than visit five schools in three days, they will visit three schools in three days and invite other schools to attend.

During the September tour, many students were busy or were off campus. That will not be the case in March, so more students will be reached.

Oriola said additional funding would be an important part of the next tour. More money would allow more survivors to attend. Ideally, a survivor panel would be able to answer student’s questions. She also hopes an administrator from Metro can come to answer questions about the university and its admissions policies.