

## Minneapolis, MN Family Church meets with African Soul American Heart

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On Saturday, March 14, Deb Dawson, co-founder and CEO of [African Soul American Heart](#) (ASAH), traveled to Minneapolis to meet and speak with the Minneapolis Family Church about her non-profit organization.

Her project is based in a remote area of South Sudan in a small village called Duk Payuel, where the Dinka tribe lives. Their history very much depicts a community's struggle for peace. Deb shared that Duk Payuel was a peaceful place until rebels attacked, breaking in and fighting between tribes. Sudan became split between the South, where the majority of its people were Christian, and the North, where the majority were Muslim. Their long history of fighting was hoped to have ended in 1992 when U.S. President George H. Bush signed a peace agreement between the North and South. Yet, even with the agreement, peace had not come. Unbelievable shootings and genocide of the village people were still prevalent. The most vulnerable were the children of the village, who lost their parents and siblings and whose futures were up in the air. Many of these lost children, whom they called the "lost boys," escaped to Ethiopian Refugee camps, and were later offered to move to the United States by the U.S. government.

One of these "lost boys," Joseph Akol Makeer, settled in Fargo, North Dakota with many others. He married and had three children and pursued his education at North Dakota State University (NDSU). During his time as a student there, Joseph followed his dream of standing up and helping village girls who dropped out of secondary school due to lack of access to menstrual napkins and sanitary items. The only option for these girls was to stay at home with their guardians who, along with other village elders, often times forced them to get married as young as 14 years old. Joseph instead wanted to see the girls get an education for the future of their village. This is how the project started.



Joseph approached his English professor at NDSU, after which he was introduced to Deb Dawson. He expressed his passion and dream to help girls who were left behind in the village by producing a documentary film about the reality of his village and the girls' situation. Deb agreed to help spread awareness and made reusable sanitary napkins and pads and collected underwear to bring to the girls.

In 2007, John Dow, director of the clinic Doctors Without Borders and worked in the same village in Sudan, came to Fargo from upstate New York to help raise funds for Joseph and his team to visit and film his village. Although South Sudan was a country with some of the worst conditions and a country where nobody wanted to go, Doctors Without Borders traveled there on a mission to save the village. It was later that year in December that Keiko Foss, a 2075 Unificationist couple, met Deb during a speech engagement.

Keiko was inspired and donated to support the making of Joseph's documentary film. At the event on March 14, Deb showed a video clip of a compound located on dry land donated by a village chief. Keiko became emotional when she recognized the compound dining hall and kitchen were designed by her later husband John.



The villagers were excited to see the making of the compound, but after John ascended unexpectedly, the people were saddened that the progress of the buildings would not continue. But on May 18, 2013, John and Keiko's son, Rygo, insisted on carrying on John's legacy of love and passion. Since then, Rygo has sponsored one girl from the village, and spent time there inspiring girls to speak English and played volleyball with them under the hot sun in 90-degree weather. Keiko herself has been sponsoring one girl and have exchanged letters for over five years.

ASAH has been producing over ten years of footage now, capturing many wonderful stories and news of the girls' growth and achievements. "I am so proud of the girls and Deb's tireless hard work and determination that has led them to this point," Keiko said.

Now more than ever, Deb needs the support to help guide the girls' individual success through education and training, with the goal to better the village and help the elder and younger generations.

Click here for more information on [African Soul American Heart](#).

## Protecting, Educating, and Empowering Orphaned Girls

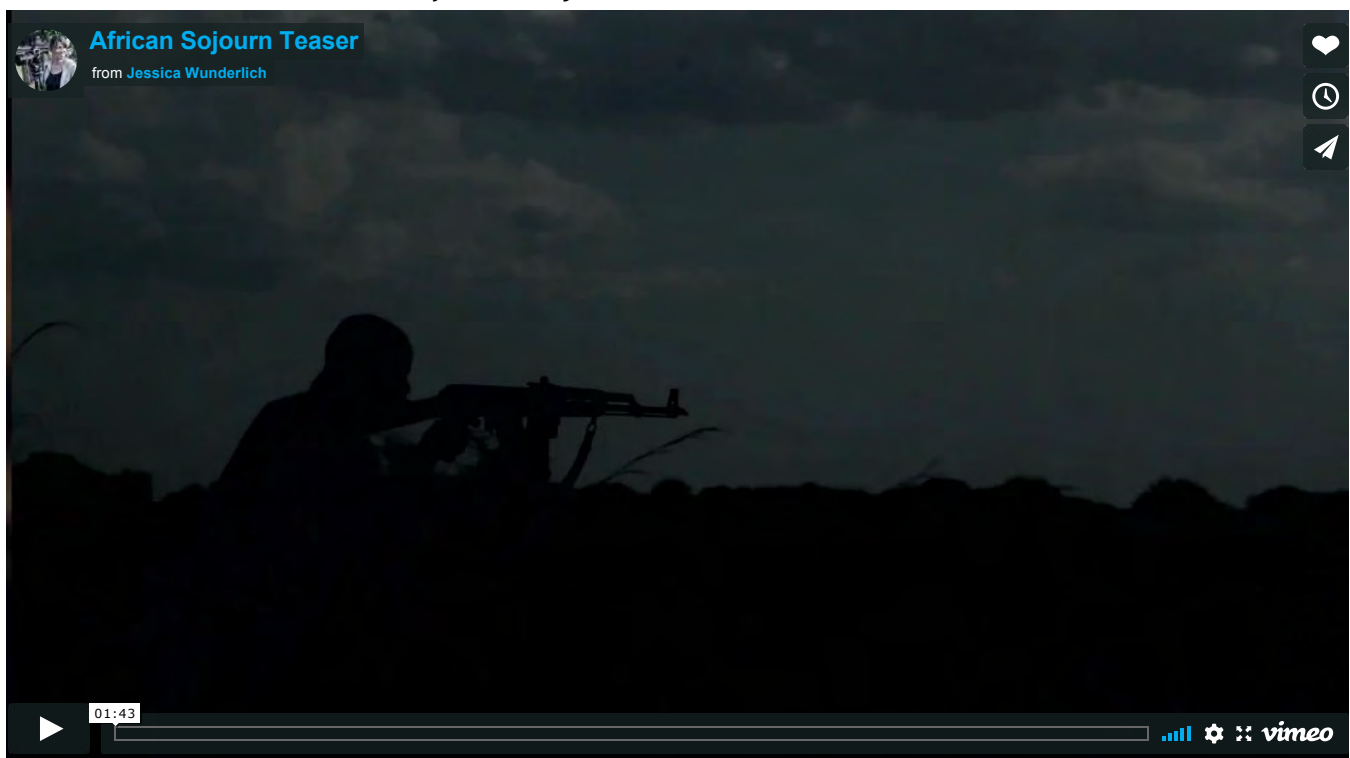
ASAH Protects, Educates, and Empowers orphans from the Republic of South Sudan all the way through school so that they will have the skills and knowledge to help their communities and their country restore and sustain peace.

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### ASAH Film Release

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