

Save Regina!

Update — September 12, 2005

Last night, I sat in Regina and David's living room, taking notes as David shared in detail how members of his political party rescued him one night in November, 1997, after four months on death row, from a dark, filthy, 5'x7' jail cell crammed with twelve prisoners. David had been convicted of treason by Laurent Kabila, the new president of Congo.

When the prison guard grabbed him, David expected to be taken immediately to be executed. Instead, within hours, he was on a plane to Brussels with orders to watch for someone who would give him the victory sign. That person would tell him his final destination. No names would be used. In fact, few words. The tall, black contact handed him a folder then quickly left. His last words to David were, "We are sending you to the United States to save your life."

David leaned back into the over-stuffed couch and grinned. "Oh, I was so happy! In high school, on TV, the news, everybody in Congo talks about freedom in the United States. I think, the United States is far from Congo, far from Europe. Kabila can't get me anymore. Everybody says in the United States - freedom. I was very, very excited!

He did not know that Regina lived in the United States. There were rumors she had fled Congo, maybe to America -- rumors, that's all. He had not seen his pretty wife since October, 1994, one month after their wedding when she had left on a lorry to speak about democracy in the villages of another region of Congo, 416 miles away.

For the whole, riveting story, you're going to have to wait for the book. I'll tell you this much. After they described their incredible reunion, Regina chuckled, "After that, David would not let go of my hand." Her husband's eyes shone, "I would not let go. I could not let go."

Sounds a lot like our "Save Regina" effort, hey?

We all know it's not yet over. While Regina's lawyer has asked us to stay out of the media until her hearing is over, we are still praying, seeking donations for the "Regina Bakala Fund," and working behind the scenes.

Regina and David are back to living their normal, hectic lives. Throw in weekly trips to Chicago to meet with Attorney Mary Sfasciotti and report to the Chicago branch of the Department of Homeland Security, as well as the tenuousness of waiting to know when their decade-long struggle will be over. They pray, they *really* trust, they weep, they laugh, they support each other, they enjoy their kids, they struggle to make ends meet. ...Hey, they sound like Americans!

Regina is learning through role-playing how to handle herself in a courtroom, not to tell her story but to just answer the questions, to answer directly, not to expand on a yes or no answer, to speak with clarity and confidence, to stay engaged and not to blank out when she's scared. Mary Sfasciotti promised to be tough on her

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and she is. Regina is gaining confidence.

Surprise — We have a second book in the offing! I found a children's author in the parish who is starting to work on a book for and with our school kids to honor all that they did to kick-start and help our effort! Knowing that the adult content in my book would be off limits for kids, the idea for a children's book had been tromping around in my brain for months. A few weeks ago, a former colleague on staff, Barb Schwartz (who knows a ka-jillion parishioners), pointed me toward Mary Ann Ludwig, a retired school librarian! Get this — of our own St. Mary's School — yee-hah! Mary Ann also has training as a children's writer, has always wanted to do something like this, and was positively thrilled to be asked! Is this another "GOD thing," or what!?

We're looking into non-profit status for the Save Regina Committee so we can approach some corporate donors for help. We need an accountant willing to volunteer for the non-profit record-keeping. Got anyone in mind?

Fund-raisers. Stay tuned. ...and if you have an idea or would like to help, email us at contactus@saveregina.org. Meanwhile, please spread the word to those on your e-mail lists that they can now contribute directly online by credit card (using PayPal): www.saveregina.org.

Thank you for keeping this effort in prayer!

Pray for Regina and David, Lydia and Coco, Mary Ann who will be working on the children's book, me as I write Regina's story, and for the families of our whole wonderful team. Please ask God to guide us regarding non-profit status and to open the hearts of some big donors, okay?

May God bless you and your families!

Gratefully,

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For More Information on how you can help, please visit:

www.SaveRegina.Org

or email us at:

contactus@saveregina.org

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