

## **African Snow**

### **What would Wilberforce want us to do about today's 20-million slaves?**

Most people imagine slavery to be a thing of the past. That its abolition, almost 200 years ago, eventually ended the cruelty and injustice it inflicted on men, women and children.

It is this ignorance I am asking you to help us fight – For the sake of people like Sabina. Only 12 years of age, she was sold to a brothel in India where she was tortured and raped.

When Wilberforce won his long fight against slavery there were 4-million slaves. Today almost 20-million are in slavery- with their number growing daily. Sabina, for example, became one of more than a million girls and women forced to work in India's red light districts. Since Wilberforce's day, cotton fields have been replaced by brothels. Galley slaves have become child soldiers - forced to kill, steal and be 'sex slaves'. Cooks and maids are now lifelong bonded labourers.

Most of today's 20-million slaves are women and children, just like little Sabina. You will understand, as Wilberforce did, it is not possible to fight every case of slavery - though CMS is committed to responding wherever we can. Rather we must attack the cause. That's why you are receiving this unique request.

Your help is urgently needed if we are to ignite a fresh movement against slavery that will eventually cut it off at its roots. I am asking you to help us fund the presentation of a remarkable new play, African Snow. A play to fight slavery? Absolutely. Please let me explain why. African Snow is more than a piece of powerful theatre. It is to be the centre-piece of a programme of resources and action on behalf of those imprisoned in slavery. A programme as impressive as the play itself.

Written by award-winning playwright Murray Watts and performed by the renowned Riding Lights Theatre Company, African Snow is one of the most moving pieces of theatre I have ever seen. Set in the 19th century, it shows the Gospel in action through the eyes of a black abolitionist and white slave trader John Newton. Using the lens of the past it drives home the reality of slavery today and the hope for change the Gospel provides. More powerful still, the cast includes descendents from both sides of the historical slave divide – an enormous living testimony to the Gospel at work.

The plan, providing funds are available, is to stage African Snow throughout the UK in 2007, marking the 200th anniversary of Britain's abolition of the human slave trade. African Snow could reach thousands of open hearted and compassionate people across the UK. Each to be resourced as a voice and an activist to end the scandal of slavery for today and tomorrow. However, there is a significant cost involved. WE must raise £100,000 to tell the story and so capture the conscience of our nation. To face this overwhelming challenge we are going to need an extraordinary outbreak of generosity. That is why, on behalf of Sabina, and millions like her, please do all you can to help.

Thank you so much.

Yours sincerely, Tim Dakin, General Secretary

**Church Mission Society, Partnership House.**

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