

Michel Chikwanine

Only 20 years-old, Michel Chikwanine has already endured, and overcome, more pain and strife than most of us could bear.

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Michel grew up amid the terror of the Great War of Africa. Separated from his father, who was tortured for his political beliefs, Michel witnessed the death and decay of a war that would claim the lives of 3.8 million people, his father included.

Forced to leave his home country as a refugee at the age of 11, Michel travelled to 35 African countries, witnessing first-hand the problems faced by the developing world, but also the beauty of the communities and the people who live there.

In 2004, after five years of hiding in Uganda, Michel, his mother and younger sister were granted a one-way ticket to Canada by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They have made their home in Ottawa, Ontario, ever since.

Michel is an experienced motivational speaker having addressed thousands of people across Canada and the United States. Recently Michel captivated a crowd of over 7,500 youth and educators with his keynote address at Free The Children's National Me to We Day at the Ricoh Coliseum in Toronto, Ontario

Michel graduated from St. Patrick's High School in Ottawa, where he won the Mousa Abdel-Hussein Memorial Award for supporting multiculturalism. He also won the Spirit of the Capital Youth Award for Personal Courage.

Through his speeches, Michel inspires youth to be a positive force in the world and to believe in their ability to enact change.

Michel is a devoted Manchester United fan and in his spare time he likes to practice his African drumming. He loves talking to people and learning their stories, following the words of Nicole Levesque who said, "You would never hate a person whose story you know."



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To book Michel please contact Marianne Woods at 1.647.259.3455 or Marianne@freethechildren.com



Presentation Topic

Me to We: Hope for Change

Inundated by stories of wars, atrocities, poverty and more, society has become increasingly desensitized to global challenges that should shock us. When people are no longer outraged at the wrong being done in the world, there is little hope for change.

Positive change in the world is possible, but it requires the collective will. No longer moved by statistics, people need to hear the first-hand stories of those who live inside the numbers. Michel Chikwanine is one such person, and to hear him tell his story is to awaken your social consciousness and to revitalize your desire for change.

Michel tells the story of his childhood in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite witnessing the atrocities of the Great War of Africa, including the torture of his father, his own torture and the rape of his mother, the message Michel conveys is one of hope. While his experiences are heart-breaking, his passion and his belief in the capacity for change is truly remarkable.

Only 19-years-old, Michel is already an accomplished and experienced public speaker. He has addressed audiences across Canada including a crowd of over 7,500 youth and educators during National Me to We Day at the Ricoh Coliseum in Toronto, Ontario.

Hearing Michel tell his story is a life-altering experience. Participants leave with a new perspective on their own life, a sense of social responsibility and a desire for change.

Audio Visual Requirements

- Handheld wireless microphone
- LCD Projector
- White Screen for projection suitable to size of room/audience
- Sound system to be hooked into speaker's laptop

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Testimonials

Michel, you are such a special force in this world because of these atrocities, and I want you to know that your story has reinforced in me a strong will to do what's right, to pursue greatness, and to inspire others to care for one another. I have read many books and watched many documentaries dealing with similar issues that you have faced, but while they have motivated me to investigate further, to donate money to charities, and to teach/awaken my students to the realities that are often ignored, it wasn't until I met you that I have demanded more of myself. I am more passionate about the causes that affect humanity since I met someone, the real flesh and bone, who has had a profound impact on me. Thank you.
I wish you the deepest love and compassion. Your contribution to the human race will undoubtedly reign forever.
- Todd Hedell, English Teacher, Vista del Lago High School, Moreno Valley, CA

Michel's story went beyond inspirational. As an aspiring activist, his speech embodied why we need to create change.

- Robin Wilding, 15, Pickering College, Newmarket ON

As educator who is trying to promote positive change in the world, Michel's presentation is a perfect teaching tool. A fantastic story told by a fantastic orator.

- Brian Murray, Teacher, Pickering College, Newmarket ON

Michel Chikwanine spoke at my school recently and he was amazing! Although he is young, he has already been through horrific experiences, and yet he is one of the most optimistic, happy people I have ever met! He was incredibly inspirational to the teenagers that he spoke to, encouraging them to get involved in the world and to try to make a difference. The audience was in tears and then were on their feet applauding! He is a very special person and an awe-inspiring speaker.

- Riley Carney, student at Kent Denver School, Eaglewood CO

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