

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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‘CHILD RAPE CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA BRINGS FILM CREW FROM PHILADELPHIA’

Working against significant First World apathy, and the specter of a cultural miasma of traditions, poverty, AIDS and wounded children in today’s South Africa and sub-Saharan regions, a Philadelphia woman with a life’s mission to help will be traveling in December with a small group to places in the heart much of the world has forgotten.

Margot Hyland, founder of ‘Catherine’s Inspiration for Kids’, a non-profit in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania (www.cifkids.org), is herself a native of South Africa and a rape survivor (at the hands of two white South African police during the Apartheid era). Now, 24 years after leaving her homeland and its people behind, Margot will return to film a documentary, meet with clinic and treatment workers, and plan for a huge African March of Millions; (www.africanmarchofmillions.org) next year to draw attention to what is now called the ‘child rape crisis’ in this part of the world.

The ‘dirty secret’ about these kids, numbering in the thousands, is that males in these regions who are infected with the AIDS virus that has ravaged the entire African continent, are taught that sexual relations with a young virgin will cure them of their disease. The result, documented by the World Health Organization and others, is a ‘rape culture’ in which young children, some hardly beyond the toddler age, are sexually abused by adult males. As the ‘child rape myth’ is expounded (back by research) by rural Muti-men, Sangomas and Natural Healers, the ruin in the lives of already bitterly impoverished young people, is truly tragic on a massive scale.

The 2002 World Health Organization ‘World Report on Violence and Health’ indicates that medical clinics in Johannesburg, South Africa, report that young men who may be members of gangs, can view rape as punishment for women who are caught flirting, and even as a matter of family honor. Laws and policies to protect women in many areas are inadequate, perpetrators are often not prosecuted, evidence or testimony by the female victims can be disallowed, and the man can be excused of his deed if he ‘marries’ the victim. Social norms provide for the male’s ‘sexual entitlement’, and females have few options to refuse sex.

Suzanne McCleric-Madlala, an anthropologist, lecturer and researcher at the University of Durban-Westville, South Africa, says that both AIDS and the ‘child rape myth’ have put young girls and even infants at risk. "The rapist believes that having sex with a virgin can cleanse them of AIDS," says Suzanne. She adds that child rape is also committed to avoid contracting the

AIDS virus from older women. Tragically and with the most horrifying impact on the young, many of these victims are under 8-years of age.

Margot's film will be a documentary with the working title 'Love in Action: the Healing Journey of Margot Hyland'. Experienced film-maker Zachary Rosenau and Steven Fischer will work from the script by journalist Julian Phillips and Margot Hyland, to explain the situation in South Africa today for Western audiences.

Scheduled on-camera interviews include social workers, doctors and nurses, some of the victims themselves, legal system workers, orphanage providers, a group of the Sangomas or traditional healers, CNN South Africa bureau-chief Charlayne Hunter-Gault, and others. How this social problem is being handled, what the impact is on the victims, and what reforms are needed, as well as Margot's plans for the 2006 protest African March of Millions and her work with CIFKIDS, will be included in the finished film.

Margot will travel with the film-makers and others, departing early in December, 2005, and post-production will happen after she returns in January, 2006. Distribution and additional funding for the film as well as the protest march are in process, with a number of film distribution companies contacted and organizations already in touch with the film-makers. The goal of the documentary is to inform concerned people in wealthy nations about this outrage and travesty in child rights, which most of the world has conceded in United Nations child welfare treaties and agreements.

CIFKIDS is inspired by Margot's late mother, Catherine, who died in 2003, and who worked for many years supporting orphanages, a Bible School, and more in South Africa and elsewhere. Margot has been the featured subject in several major Philadelphia-area newspapers and radio interviews, and is committed to continue her ferocious advocacy for these awfully impacted and impoverished young people. A Philadelphia-area newspaper journalist will also be traveling with her in December, and possibly journalists from California and Germany.

This is truly a story of the quiet heroism of one woman facing the dragons of ignorance, disease and social collapse in a strange land. But Margot, a mature Woman of Color, is determined that she will not remain 'quiet' for long. Her tenacity and courage will surely serve the victimized children well. They could not ask for a more dedicated advocate. As Margot puts it: "I never start anything that I am not able to complete. This crusade happens to be one of those projects that I have no intentions of abandoning until the 'madness' of 'child rape' and 'women rape' is punished, and dealt with to the fullest extent of the Law in every country we begin to work."

For more information, or to contact Margot for an interview, visit the CIFKIDS website at www.cifkids.org, or call 610-828-6761, or toll-free at 877-243-5542. Margot's e-mail is mihyland@cifkids.org.

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