

Sample Letter to the Editor. From *The Minnesota Daily*, May 3, 2007

DIVESTMENT

What would you do if I told you that your tuition is helping pay for the arming of a brutal militia that rapes women, kills men and throws babies onto bonfires?

Let me explain: The genocide in Darfur began in early 2003 when the Sudanese government armed the Janjaweed militia to suppress a rebellion in the long-marginalized region. Since that time, the Janjaweed has killed more than 400,000 civilians and 2.5 million more have been displaced.

This is where the University of Minnesota comes into play. The University invests in companies that pay for the violence, and through these investments, the University facilitates genocide. By divesting, which is essentially un-investing, from these companies, the University can actively help end the genocide.

Divestment sounds like a difficult undertaking, but it is, in fact, so simple that the University could divest by the end of the year.

When I first heard of divestment, I worried that it would impoverish the rest of Sudan, which would be counterproductive. Actually, that won't happen. The Sudan Divestment Task Force developed a model for targeted divestment, which will hurt neither the institution divesting nor the ordinary Sudanese civilians.

The next big question is will divestment have an effect on ending the genocide? I would like to say yes, but in truth, I cannot guarantee it, but there is really no downside to divestment. We know that targeted divestment will not hurt anyone, so we might as well try it as a way of encouraging peace in Darfur.

The University, though, is dragging its feet on the issue. Forty-two other universities, including Brown, Harvard and the University of California, have already divested. As top universities, they have all made the choice to be not only research and teaching institutions, but moral leaders as well. The University of Minnesota should be as driven to divest, as driven to lead the world in social justice, as it is to discover.

So, back to my original question. What will you do to help us end the violence in Darfur? The most effective thing you can do to encourage the university to divest is to write a letter to the editor of the Minnesota Daily. Let's get the word "divestment" on every student's tongue. Then we can hold the University accountable for its actions and it will have no excuse for not divesting.

Hannah Baldwin
STAND president