

Michel Chikwanine

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A former child soldier, Michel Chikwanine has already endured and overcome unimaginable pain and struggles. His passion and belief in the possibility for change make him a truly remarkable individual and humanitarian.

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Michel grew up amid the terror of the Great War of Africa. He witnessed the torture of his father, who was singled out for his political beliefs, the rape of his mother and endured torture of his own. Much of Michel's childhood was ravaged by the death and decay of a war that claimed the lives of 3.8 million people, his father included.

Forced to leave his home as a refugee at the age of 11, Michel has since travelled to many African countries, witnessing and researching firsthand the challenges facing the developing world, but also the beauty of the communities and people who live there.

Today, Michel is a United Nations Fellow for People of African Descent, an accomplished motivational speaker, leadership facilitator and award-winning author of a children's book entitled *Child Soldier: How Boys and Girls are used in war*. Addressing audiences across the world, he has spoken to over 500,000 people. From 2007 to 2009 he was on Oprah's O Ambassadors Roots of Action tour, where he coordinated and facilitated a speaking tour as well as leadership workshops which largely reached students at resource-poor schools. He's worked on various global initiatives with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Martin Sheen and Magic Johnson including being on the Advisory Board of General Romeo Dallaire's Child Soldier Initiative.

Sharing his personal story, Michel has captured the attention of national media, including CBC, CTV and major daily newspapers as he inspires people to believe in their ability to find purpose in life.

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