

# **Telling Stories, Changing Lives**

With Former Child Soldier and Author Ishmael Beah,  
And Storyteller and Human Rights Activist Laura Simms

**February 18 – 21, 2009**  
**Columbia, MO**

Ishmael Beah and Laura Simms will recount the story of their meeting at a UN conference on children affected by war, and the way stories bound their lives together into a “found family.” They will talk about their various efforts to use writing and story performance to aid refugees and others traumatized by conflict and displacement. An internationally diverse panel of respondents from MU and the community will discuss their experiences in working with those traumatized by war. Photographs by Gina Bramucci will put a human face on the struggles people confront in war-torn countries. Laura Simms storytelling concert for adults, her storytelling workshop, a documentary film screening and an event for teens will provide a richly diverse residency experience.

**Laura Simms** is an award-winning storyteller, recording artist, teacher, writer and humanitarian. Her remarkable performances of traditional stories interwoven with personal narrative have earned Laura Simms worldwide recognition and honors since 1968. She brings her expertise to collaborative projects worldwide, exploring social issues, peacemaking, creativity and community disaster dialogue. Author of The Robe of Love, her newest book, Becoming the World, has served thousands of teachers worldwide in addressing issues of tolerance and resilience. Through the power of story she has become the American “mother” of Ishmael Beah.

**Ishmael Beah** stands as one of the world’s most tireless advocates for child soldiers and an eloquent spokesperson for the healing power of sharing the stories of one’s life. In his New York Times best-selling memoir A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, published in 2007, Beah, now twenty-seven years old, tells a riveting story, revealing for the first time the experience of child soldiers told through their own eyes.




Book and CD signing at these events. Books and CD’s available for purchase.

## **PUBLIC EVENTS ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CAMPUS**


**Photography Exhibit: Global Journalist, The Face of Refuge in Darfur, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda** by Gina Bramucci. Lee Hills Hall Rotunda, 8 AM – 6 PM daily, February 7 – March 7.

Wednesday, February 18

**Ishmael Beah and Laura Simms Public Lecture, 7 PM, Jesse Auditorium. Free for students of all ages, others \$8.** Beah and Simms will read from their writings and share their stories in a presentation that captures their joint witness to the healing power of story. 

Thursday, February 19

**Public Reception for Ishmael Beah and Laura Simms, 5:30 – 7:00 PM, Reynolds**


**Journalism Institute. Free.** Beah's, Simms and panelists books and CDs will be available for purchase, and they will be available for signing from 6:30 – 7:00 PM. 

**Panel Discussion "Narrative as a Pathway to Reconciliation", 7:30 PM, Waters Auditorium. Free.** A presentation by Ishmael Beah and Laura Simms with respondents from MU and the community.


## **PUBLIC EVENTS AROUND COLUMBIA**

Friday, February 20

**Storytelling and Compassionate Action, a Conversation with Laura Simms, Launer Auditorium at Columbia College, 1001 Rogers St. Admission \$5.**



**7:00 PM** Laura's books and CDs will be available for purchase and she will be available for signing. **7:30 PM** Milbre Burch will interview this dedicated humanitarian about her international work employing both traditional and personal storytelling. With question period for the audience. 

Saturday, February 21

**Laura Simms Storytelling Workshop, 9:30 - 11:00 AM, Columbia Public Library, 100 W. Broadway. Free.** A workshop aimed at teachers, librarians, storytellers, community workers, youth workers and the interested public on telling stories of peace and justice as pathways to reconciliation. Free, but registration with the library is required. Limit 40 participants. Registration begins Tuesday, February 3. Call 573.443.3161 or email Sarah Howard [showard@dbrl.org](mailto:showard@dbrl.org). 

**Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars Film Screening and Community Roundtable, 1:30 PM, Ragtag Cinema, 10 Hitt St., Admission \$6.** "Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars," is a film by Zach Niles and Banker White which documents the band's inspiring determination to fight back against the trauma of war through music. Following the film, director Zach Niles, Beah and Simms will join community members in a round table discussion of issues including human resilience in the aftermath of impact of war, the power of music and story, and the meaning of home and family.

**Telling Stories, Changing Lives with Ishmael Beah, 5:30 – 7:30 PM. Activity and Recreation Center (ARC), 1701 W. Ash. Free.** Learn how the power of music can spread the message of non-violence through hip hop, rap and dance both in Africa and here in Columbia. For teens. Presented by City of Columbia C.A.R.E. Program.

**Making Peace, Heart Uprising, A Storytelling Concert for Adults by Laura Simms, 7:30 PM, Launer Auditorium at Columbia College, 1001 Rogers St. Admissions \$10.** A solo performance of stories which tap into the magic inherent in both myth and our everyday events. Sign Language interpreted.  

Presented by Kind Crone Productions with the collaboration and support of Columbia College Department of Humanities/Speech Communication, Columbia College Unity in the Community Program, MU Center for the Study of Conflict, Law and the Media; MU School of Journalism, MU Black Studies Program, MU Diversity Initiative, MU Department of Women's and Gender Studies, MU Department of Theatre, MU International Center, United Nations Association of Mid-Missouri, Mid-Missouri Organization of Storytellers, Columbia Public Library, City of Columbia C.A.R.E. Program, and Ragtag Cinema. Financial assistance for this project has been provided by City of Columbia Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Columbia Human Rights Commission, National Storytelling Network, and MU Alumni Association.