

## Francis Bok

Francis Bok is a native of Southern Sudan. At the age of seven, he was captured and enslaved during an Arab militia raid on the village of Nymlal on May 15, 1986. Mr. Bok saw adults and children brutalized and killed all around him. He was strapped to a donkey and taken north to Kirio.

For ten years, he lived as the family slave to Giema Abdullah, forced to sleep with cattle, endure daily beatings, and eat rotten food. Called "abeed" (black slave), Mr. Bok was given an Arabic name - Dut Giema Abdullah - and forced to perform Islamic prayers.

In December of 1996, Mr. Bok escaped to the nearby town of Matari, where he was enslaved by local policemen for two months. But an Arab truck driver helped Mr. Bok escape and eventually to reach Khartoum, the capital. In Khartoum, Mr. Bok was arrested by the security forces and jailed for seven months. After being released, Mr. Bok escaped to Cairo. In 1999, the United Nations resettled him in North Dakota. Mr. Bok is now an Associate at the American Anti-Slavery Group in Boston.

On May 23, 2000, Mr. Bok spoke out for the first time at a Capitol Hill ceremony with Senators and Congressmen, sharing his message: "We cannot rest until my people are free." On September 18, 2000 Mr. Bok spoke alongside Coretta Scott King, widow the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Boston Freedom Award ceremony.

On September 28, 2000, Mr. Bok became the first escaped slave to testify before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in hearings that were broadcast live on C-Span. Later that day, Mr. Bok met with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. On October 21, 2002, he was invited to the White House for the Sudan Peace Act signing ceremony - where he spoke with President Bush at length, perhaps becoming the first former slave to meet an American president since the 19th Century.

Mr. Bok has spoken to tens of thousands at colleges, faith communities and grassroots organizations across the country, including heading a panel on slavery at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government ARCO Forum. Mr. Bok has been featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, in the New York Times and Essence Magazine and by dozens of other newspapers, radio, and television shows, including National Public Radio and Black Entertainment Television.

On April 28, 2001, Mr. Bok launched the website iAbolish.com while appearing on stage with the band Jane's Addiction before an audience of 40,000. He has been honored by the Boston Celtics as a "Hero Among Us" for community service, and in December 2001 he carried the Winter Olympic Torch on its national relay tour.

His autobiography, *Escape From Slavery* has received outstanding reviews from *Entertainment Weekly*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *The Boston Globe* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.