

# Helping Bill O'Reilly

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Opinion

By [NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF](#)

Please, readers, help Bill O'Reilly!

After Mr. O'Reilly denounced me in December as a "left-wing ideologue" (a charge that alarmed me, given his expertise on ideologues), I [challenged him](#) to defend traditional values by joining me on a trip to Darfur. I wrote: "You'll have to leave your studio, Bill. You'll encounter pure evil. If you're like me, you'll be scared ... and you'll finally be using your talents for an important cause."

A few days ago, I finally got my answer. Mr. O'Reilly declared in his column: "I do three hours of daily news analysis on TV and radio. There's no way I can go to Africa."

No need to give up so easily, Bill. With a satellite phone, you can do your show from anywhere.

But maybe Mr. O'Reilly's concern is cost, so I thought my readers might want to give him a hand. You can help sponsor a trip by Mr. O'Reilly to Darfur, where he can use his television savvy to thunder against something actually meriting his blustery rage.

If you want to help, send e-mail to [sponsorbill@gmail.com](mailto:sponsorbill@gmail.com) or snail mail to me at The Times, and tell me how much you're willing to pay for Mr. O'Reilly's expenses in Darfur. Offers will be anonymous, except maybe to the N.S.A. Don't send money; all I'm looking for is pledges. I'll post updates at [nytimes.com/ontheground](http://nytimes.com/ontheground).

(Note: pledges cannot be earmarked. It is not possible to underwrite only Mr. O'Reilly's outgoing ticket to Darfur without bringing him home as well.)

Sure, this is a desperate measure. But with several hundred thousand people already murdered in Darfur and two million homeless and living in shantytowns, the best hope for those still alive is a strong dose of American outrage.

Worse, all the horrors that we've already seen in Darfur may be remembered only as the prelude. Security in the region is deteriorating. African Union peacekeepers are becoming targets, and the U.N. has warned that if humanitarian agencies are forced out, the death toll may rise to 100,000 per month.

Just as dangerous, the government-supported janjaweed — the brutal militia responsible for the slaughter — is now making regular raids across the border into Chad. There is a growing risk that Chad will collapse into war as well, hugely increasing the death toll and spreading chaos across a much larger region.

Last week, the United Nations agreed to plan for an international force. It will be nice if the force materializes — but even that half-step is probably almost a year away. The solution isn't American ground forces, but a starting point would be American resolve to put genocide at the top of the international agenda. Unfortunately, Mr. Bush barely lets the word "Darfur" past his lips.

The best way for President Bush to honor Coretta Scott King isn't simply to recite platitudes at her funeral today, but to push loudly and forcefully to stop genocide. Was the essential message of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. about the need to be seen at funerals? Or about standing up to injustice, like a genocide in which infants are grabbed from their mothers' arms and tossed onto bonfires?

The reality is that the only way the White House will move on Darfur is if it is flooded with calls from the public — and that will happen only when the genocide is brought home to living rooms around America.

According to the Tyndall Report, which analyzes the content of the evening newscasts of the broadcast networks, their coverage of Darfur actually declined last year. The total for all three networks was 26 minutes in 2004. That wasn't much — but it dropped to just 18 minutes during all of 2005.

ABC's evening news program had 11 minutes about Darfur over the year, NBC's had 5 minutes, and CBS's found genocide worth only 2 minutes of airtime during the course of 2005.

In contrast, the networks gave the Michael Jackson trial in 2005 a total of 84 minutes of coverage. There aren't comparable figures for cable networks like Fox, but Mr. O'Reilly and other cable newscasters pretty much ignored the Darfur catastrophe.

Mr. O'Reilly has a big audience and a knack for stirring outrage. Lately, he (quite properly) galvanized an outcry over a ridiculously light sentence for a sexual predator in Vermont. The upshot was that the sentence was increased. Good stuff!

So imagine the furor Mr. O'Reilly could stir up if he publicized the hundreds of thousands of rapes, murders and mutilations in Darfur. He could save lives on a grand scale.

Join the pledge drive! I'm starting with my own \$1,000 pledge to sponsor Mr. O'Reilly's trip. Please help.

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*For more on the exchanges with Mr. O'Reilly, see Mr. Kristof's [weblog](#).*

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