

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

## INSPIRED TO DO SOMETHING?

**SUPPORT** the work of City of Joy: The City of Joy and V-Day's Congo related work would not be possible without the generosity of countless individuals. This outpouring of giving and solidarity has fueled women's healing, helping young Congolese women transform their pain into power.

**GIVE JOY DONATE** today [CityOfJoyCongo.org/donate](http://CityOfJoyCongo.org/donate)

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# CITY OF JOY THE FILM

*City of Joy*, the film, tells the story of the first class of women at City of Joy, and chronicles the process by which such a revolutionary place came to be, from its origins with the women survivors themselves, to the opening of the center's doors. Directed by first-time director Madeleine Gavin, produced by Allyson Luchak, executive produced by Dan Cogan, Geralyn White Dreyfous, Regina K. Scully, Amy Rao, and Wendy Schmidt, co-produced by Jenny Raskin, and shot by cinematographer Taylor Krauss, the film provides an unprecedented window into the lives of the women the center serves. It also gives the audience a glimpse into the unlikely friendship that develops when a devout Congolese doctor, Dr. Denis Mukwege, (2017 Nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize), radical playwright and activist, Eve Ensler, (Tony Award winning writer of *The Vagina Monologues* and founder of V-Day and One Billion Rising) and a charismatic Belgian - Congolese human rights activist, Christine Schuler Deschryver, (Director of the City of Joy) join forces to create this safe haven in the middle of violence-torn and underserved Eastern Congo.

Through the course of the film, we meet the women of the first class to go through the program and learn about their pasts, fears and hopes. One of them is Jane, age 38, who survived unthinkable violence and healed herself during her time at City of Joy. Her story guides us through the film.

# TURNING PAIN TO POWER





# TO DATE 1117 WOMEN HAVE GRADUATED FROM THE CITY OF JOY

Since opening its doors in 2011, 1117 women have graduated from the CITY OF JOY, healed themselves, been nurtured, learned new skills, empowered themselves and joined into a network of love and revolution. These 1117 women have released massive trauma and horrific memories. They have danced, sung, learned their rights, performed plays, developed agricultural skills, come to love their bodies. They have become leaders in their communities. They are no longer stigmatized for being raped.

These women are forces of energy and determination, entrepreneurs of small businesses, initiators of collectives, restaurants owners, farmers with new land, educators and advocates on sexual violence, volunteers in a self-created recruiting network for new women at the center, journalists, immigration workers, tailors, students, herbalists. The list goes on. 42 graduates are employed at V-World Farm, a large sustainable farm run by V-Day Congo.

City of Joy serves 90 survivors of gender violence aged 18 to 30 at a time. As we approach 2019, the City of Joy has graduated OVER 1100 WOMEN LEADERS.

## CITY OF JOY IN BUKAVU, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

City of Joy is a transformational leadership community for women survivors of violence, located in Bukavu, in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a region plagued by an ongoing proxy war for the area's vast mineral resources. As the regional conflict has played out since 1996, widespread political upheaval, displacement, disease and unimaginable sexual violence have ripped apart communities. While the devastation is deep, Congolese communities are moving forward with an eye on building a peaceful and equitable future.

City of Joy was conceived, is owned, and is run by Congolese staff. It was founded by Christine Schuler Deshryver, Dr. Denis Mukwege and Eve Ensler. Today, Christine, who serves Director of City of Joy and V-Day Congo along with the staff including graduate Jane Mukunilwa who is portrayed in the film, oversee the center's day-to-day operations. Dr. Denis Mukwege, founder of the Panzi Hospital and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, and serves in an advisory role and is not involved in the day to day operation of the center. Eve Ensler, founder of V-Day and One Billion Rising, and V-Day support and fund the center.

City of Joy has flourished since it first opened its doors in 2011, providing a place for women to heal themselves from their past trauma through therapy and life skills programming, while arming them with the essential ingredients needed to move forward in life - love and community.

Women leaving the City of Joy have had the opportunity to heal from their emotional wounds, live in community, recognize their leadership potential and gain valuable skills they can apply to their lives, future ventures and engagement in civic life. The

transformation is breathtaking. In a society that has for the most part rejected women survivors of violence it is extraordinary to see a group of women so empowered and determined.

Through an intensive program, women are successfully learning invaluable skills that they can apply to their lives as leaders in Congolese community. Graduates have integrated back into their communities as true leaders, sharing the skills and information they learned at the City of Joy with their peers and families, starting non profits (including orphanages and homes for the elderly), launching small businesses, leading at the community level, working as journalists and farmers, and returning to school to further their education. In so many ways, the center is a success. A gleaming example of what is truly possible when you give women the time, space and care they need - so much is unleashed.

## CITY OF JOY SERVES 90 SURVIVORS OF GENDER VIOLENCE AGED 18 TO 30 OVER A 6 MONTH PERIOD.

In 2016, *Time* magazine wrote about City of Joy in its March international cover story on rape entitled, "[The Secret War Crime](#)". In the article survivor and staff member Jane Mukunilwa was interviewed about the program:

*The therapy, says Mukunilwa, lets women understand that the rape was not their fault. The life skills and leadership training gain them confidence, and the nurturing atmosphere enables them to build support networks that last long after the program finishes. Graduates are expected to establish women's*

*support groups when they go home and become leaders in their community. "People think that, after being raped, you are just a victim," says Mukunilwa. "What City of Joy taught me is that life goes on after rape. Rape is not the end. It is not a fixed identity."*

City of Joy staff keep in close touch with graduates as they transition back into life outside of the program, via text, phone, and in person visits. Many return as alumna to celebrate new graduating classes and there is a vibrant community of alumna in Bukavu and throughout the country.

### ORIGINS

The idea for the City of Joy was homegrown. When Dr. Denis Mukwege of Panzi Hospital invited Eve Ensler to travel Bukavu in 2007 to meet with and learn from women survivors of violence, she was most interested in knowing

what solutions they felt would work in the face of such horrible violence. It was these women who birthed the idea of the City of Joy, saying what they most wanted was a place to live in community so that they could heal - in essence, they wanted a place to **turn their pain to power**. And so the City of Joy was born. Under the leadership of Belgian - Congolese activist Christine Schuler Deshryver and in partnership with women survivors, construction for the City of Joy began in August 2009. The first class of women began in June 2011.