

15-year-old from U.S. speaks in Paris to support education in Africa

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Zuriel Oduwole, age 15, is an education advocate and filmmaker. Since the age of 9, Oduwole has travelled the world to film documentaries and convince world leaders to invest in girls' education. Photo from: AFP/ Paul Gypteau

Zuriel Oduwole looks like a regular teenager. She has braces on her teeth. She wears sneakers on her feet. But this 15-year-old is on a mission. Zuriel wants girls in Africa to get a good education. She fights for this cause.

Zuriel lives in Los Angeles, California. She was born in the United States. Her parents were born in Africa. Zuriel wants African leaders to make new laws. The laws should say girls must go to school. She thinks they should go until age 18.

Changing Education In Africa

In some countries in Africa, girls are forced to get married. They marry very young. They may be only 12 or 13 years old. After that, they do not go back to school. Zuriel thinks this is very unfair.

Other times, girls must work. They must make money to help their families. That also keeps girls out of school.

Zuriel wants to change this. She has been working on her goal for a long time. She started when she was 9 years old.

Children Of Ghana

That year, she made a movie. It was about Ghana. That is a country in Africa. Zuriel got to interview the former president of Ghana for her movie.

In Ghana, Zuriel saw something she would never forget. There were so many children on the streets in Ghana. Most were girls. They were selling things.

Zuriel decided she could help. She made more films. She has made five in total. Since then, she has met with many more world leaders, too. She has met more than 24! She tells them why education for girls is important.

A Speech In Paris

Last weekend, Zuriel was in Paris, France. She gave a big speech. The crowd was filled with young people. Thousands of people listened to Zuriel. She told them how poverty harms girls in Africa.

Zuriel asked the people to picture their girl cousin. What if she had to get married when she was only 12? The marriage could be to a man much older, Zuriel added.

This problem is caused by poverty, Zuriel said. She thinks rich countries can help. They can give more money to poorer countries.



Normal Teen Planning For College

Believe it or not, Zuriel has never gone to school herself. Her parents taught her at home. They started when she was 3 years old.

Next year Zuriel will go to college. She is starting early. She will be only 16 years old. Her top picks are Harvard and UCLA.

Zuriel has had so much success. She has made an impact on the world. But she says she is just a normal teenager.

"I play sports," she said. "I have friends I hang out with." She just does her work on the side, she said.

Zuriel's Career Goal

Zuriel has big goals. She wants to be president of the U.S. one day! She will have to wait a while though. You must be 36 years old to run for president. It is the law.

Until then, Zuriel will keep working. She will keep fighting for African girls. She says: "I am unstoppable!"