

Editor's Note

Two days after I arranged with Gloria Baker Feinstein to publish her extraordinary images of Uganda, and of orphaned children there, a church I visited featured a group called the Children's Choir of Uganda. Those events occurred independently, a coincidence probably best not elevated to the level of "synchronicity," but I did notice common traits between the choir's performance – just three girls and two boys, dressed in white – and these photographs. Both exist in a context of deprivation and terror, and both bring with them life and joy.

As the Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez once explained, a work of art can be said to be complete when the perfect and the imperfect are in equilibrium. No one goes out looking for art. One merely puts himself or herself into a state of openness. What brings these Ugandan children and some adults to us, now? "Of the 24.7-million people living in Uganda, East Africa, 13 million are under the age of 15," Gloria Feinstein has written, "and 2.2 million have lost one or both parents to the two-decade-long civil war or to AIDS." She points out, also, that the whole of Africa has 12-million orphans today and, according to a UNAIDS report, will have 18 million by 2010.

The stories, poems, essays, and photographs in this issue do not back away from such facts and realities, which one poem here recalls as "slaved land" and another as "terrible dreams." We know we have achieved the level of art when such visions of difficulties find balance with another truth, one just as tough. Take a look.

—Robert Stewart