

Debut novel Harmattan to be given away free to highlight awareness of child marriage

Submitted by: Myrmidon Books Ltd

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Myrmidon will be giving away free today Harmattan by Gavin Weston (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Harmattan-ebook/dp/B007GQ0X3U/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1331234450&sr=8-2) via Amazon Kindle to help promote awareness about child marriage.

Today has been chosen to coincide with a conference about child marriage taking place in London, organised by the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD), Enabling Education Network (EENET) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Gavin Weston will be speaking at the event.

It is estimated that 10 million girls a year are forced to marry worldwide. There are numerous detrimental consequences associated with child marriage, with physical, developmental, psychological and social implications. In the West African country of Niger where Harmattan is set, it is estimated that 76% of girls marry before the age of 18. Teenage brides with older husbands often have limited capacity to negotiate sexual relations, contraception and childbearing, and are especially vulnerable to HIV and domestic violence.

Although Harmattan is a work of fiction it draws on the author's own experiences. After art college in London, Belfast-born Gavin Weston travelled across North Africa and spent some time as an aid worker in Niger where he worked as a volunteer dogsbody, artist and English teacher.

Gavin Weston explains: "Some years later my family and I sponsored a six year-old child from Niger through a British NGO and followed her progress with great interest for a further six years, when we were informed that the child had been married just before her twelfth birthday, much to our great shock. I knew about child marriage but assumed that children in such programmes were protected somehow."

"A woman writer friend stated that she did not believe that men could write as women; as an experiment I tried to imagine what could have happened to 'our' sponsored child from a first person perspective. Once started, I began to research the problem further and the book kind of took on a life of its own."

Today's conference brings together members of the first network in the UK to address the problem of child marriage and will provide a platform for information sharing, discussion and insights into on-going programmes and interventions on child marriage.

Gavin Weston: "I am delighted and honoured to be associated with such worthwhile organisations and very pleased to be invited to the conference."

Notes for editors:

For your free copy of Harmattan by Gavin Weston please download on March 12 from here. (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Harmattan-ebook/dp/B007GQ0X3U/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1331234450&sr=8-2)

Harmattan will be published in paperback on 22nd May 2012.

Founded in 2006, Myrmidon Books is an independent publisher of both literary and commercial fiction and is based on Newcastle upon Tyne. Website. (<http://www.myrmidonbooks.com>)

FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development) is an African Diaspora women's campaign and support charity that works in the UK and in Africa to transform harmful practices and to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights as central to the wellbeing of African women and girls.

If you would like to know more about the work of FORWARD or the child marriage conference please visit www.forwarduk.org.uk

UNFPA Child Marriage Fact Sheet.

(http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm#ftn2#ftn2)

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