



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP CLUB MAGAZINE

Mtree Teen Voice





Global Citizenship Education Program

Our learning-in-living global citizenship program nurtures sensitive, concerned, and responsible youth to be aware of current global issues.

The curriculum was developed upon a core value of interconnectedness. By tearing down the mono- or di-perspectives on a specific issue, participating youth from Kenya and other countries, share their ideas and opinions in equal footing for a practical action plan in visual ways.

We included reflective writings of youth members who participated in Mtree's GCED program over the years in this magazine.

INSIDE OUT

BY AIDEN CHO

When I went to Kenya this summer, my view of the world changed. First of all my experience was great because of the warm welcome that I received from other members. They made me feel like I was part of something really special. I guess that also influenced me to give the same treatment to the local Maya community kids. Every day, I would go to their school and every time I see the kids, they were full of passion. They wanted to learn and loved being at school. They were extremely depressed when they were told I would no longer be at the school. This was very different than what happens in our school. Kids in our school say that they feel miserable going to school. They are always happy when teacher does not show up. They play video games and are easily distracted in class. Kids in our school take this special privilege for granted. They think that education is what everyone gets and there is nothing special about it.

Until I went to Kenya, I also thought the same way. However, after the memorable trip, my whole perspective changed. For example, I was always trying to buy the shoes that other kids have but in Kenya the kids did not even have shoes. They walked to school barefoot and the school was not close at all. The kids in Kenya walked for 45 minutes straight. One day, a kid did not show up. Later next day, all teachers including me learned that he could not come to school because his mom kept him in to finish chores. I learned two things that day. First, education is not the most important to the parents in Kenya. Secondly, the kids want to go to school, but the background environment is what is keeping the kids from receiving proper education. I also learned that money is not everything. Before I went to Kenya, I always wanted new things but after I saw the kids in Kenya and how happy they were just to receive learning opportunities changed my mind. They did not care what clothes they were wearing. They would wear the exact same clothes everyday, but they did not care. They were happy the way they were. I was shocked but glad to realize this.

I should not just look up all the time, instead I should look around and see people who have less material wealth but necessarily are happy with their lives.

Through this time in Kenya, I learned that what really matters are inside but sometimes I need to take it out to spread the impact. That is why my friend Amy who also participated in GCED program and I decided to create a club at our school. It is called Youth United. We made this club so that we came spread the awareness of what is happening outside of U.S. and especially in Kenya. Our club is having a fundraiser in May. We are trying to raise money to support kids in Maya Community and Middle Eastern war zones with water supplies. This all movement began because I had a life changing moment in Kenya. I hope to go there again one day.



KENYA

my story of

BY AMY PARK

When I thought about Africa, I felt like I was a victim to what the writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes as “the danger of a single story”. America has a single story about Africa, which is that all Africans are depressed and living impoverished lives. However, two summers I spent in Maya community made me realize how wrong I was.

I participated in Mtree’s GCED program. Part of GCED program was assisting Mtree’s art program, “Brush with Hope”. While interacting with kids in Maya, I could not get one thought out of my head. Kenyan kids were much happier than me while they only had little while I had much more material wealth than they did. I saw the kids in my class were so thankful to have a little bit of paper and some paint while I waste a lot of paper and do not even think about it.

In California, or more specifically at my school, there is this enormous pressure to be good at everything. Everyone around me always seems to be better and if I am not my perfect self, I will not be accepted anywhere. I have always had this pressure to be smart, pretty, kind, athletic, musical, and the list just continues. I have been putting on a mask of this perfect person when I am just not. However, when I got to Kenya, I was very touched by the way that I was immediately accepted into the community and they would accept me even with my imperfections.

The feeling of happiness that I got when I was in Kenya made me want to go every year, which is another story that I want people to hear. Although the story of sadness should still be considered, I believe that this single narrative is detrimental to the hope that we need in order to inspire the kids to dream and achieve their goal. I hope that by sharing my experience I can create a path to spark the interest of getting to know every side rather than the single story around the world.



D · R · E · A · M · I · N · G

BIG

BY RACHEL PARK

During the summer of my first visit to Kenya in 2016, my friends and I talked about what we wanted to do and experience. However, we did not know exactly what to expect due to the filtered media and shortage of publicity on certain aspects of life in Third World countries. When we got there in August and visited the school, I was surprised at how many smiling faces greeted me. Even though we claimed to not know what to expect, I believe there was a significant amount of influence from the mass media and constant pictures of unhappy children and adults. My first week there, I was able to experience the generosity and joy of the little 9 year olds I got to help teach art to. Everyday I arrived at the school, it was always a heartwarming sight to see my students excited to learn more about art. I particularly enjoyed hearing the upcoming hopes and dreams of these children. I saw students' creativity grew throughout the full week of the program. Unlike copying each other's painting in the beginning, each student began to express and engage in their own creative mind with imaginations and preferences later on.

This year, for GCED program, we collaborated with local Kenyan students. We had the opportunity to visit different homes in the area and interview families on various components of their everyday life. Through GCED program, I was able to find that the top priorities and pressing needs of this particular community were water, accessible medical care, and education. At the end of our project, all the members of GCED created a presentation to show to the Maya community reflecting the lessons and necessities we learned. We also shared our personal experiences and plans to provide support and a helping hand where it was needed.

Overall, by joining Mtree last summer, I was able to listen to and be more educated on Maya community, which provided a wider lens on the world surrounding me and my community. After the two summers of visiting Kenya, I fully realized that everyone can find a way to help others in their own community or various others whether it is through a small helping hand, a volunteer trip, or a donation. It really depends on the person and what they are capable of doing or offering. No matter how big or small the help is, it will find its way into someone's heart and mind, leaving an impactful mark that spreads and making kids keep dreaming big.



THEY NEED HELP *NO,* WE NEED HELP

BY HANNAH PARK

I remember the first time I went to Maya community, a small rural village in Kilif County of Kenya. The beautiful red earth, the lively culture, the cheerful children, and the welcoming community overwhelmed me with joy. I remembered how much fun I had last year. With the combination of genuine fun, constant laughter, amazing people, and phenomenal food, how could I not have fun? If there had to be one bad thing, it was the bathroom malfunctions, but even then, I was used to it because “out of order” signs are quite common in bathrooms in America.

The activities that we did every day in Maya was much more than my body was used to. Every morning we would quickly eat breakfast and rush to the school. The GCED participants would assist in classes of Mtree’s Creative and Collaborative art program “Brush with Hope” in the morning, then after lunch, we would have our own separate group meetings about what it means to be a global citizen and a global leader and prepare ourselves for the open discussion we were going to have with community leaders at the end of the week. In between, there was a lot of dancing, running, laughing, and playing games with kids in Maya.

Spending morning times with children was what made the entire experience more enjoyable. The kids not only taught us how to sing some of their songs and catch grasshoppers, but they also taught us the most memorable lesson: how to be good people. During our art class one day, the kids were asked to describe their dream job. Although at first most of them described jobs that they would be obligated to do but after much persuasion, they started telling us their real dreams. One wanted to be a doctor because her sibling was sick, and she wanted to grow up and heal her sibling one day. Another dreamed of being a teacher so that she could help educate her community. Another wanted to build houses so that he could build a stronger one for his entire family. These kids were somehow able to maintain their childish fun, but display their mature and unselfish desires.

During the open discussion with community members, I can still remember their gentle but urgent request: they need help. They need people from around the world to stop looking at them as the example for poverty, but as the

possibility for more. They need a way to educate for future doctors and teachers so that their children’s dreams do not remain as just dreams.

To be honest, from how media portrays Africa in America, I only saw the pictures of the sad, hungry, and sick children scattered across barren land. To a certain extent, I saw that, too. I saw young kids carrying their younger siblings like a parent would, I saw people carrying jugs of water to wash their clothes, I saw children running miles and miles just to get to school in the morning, and I saw the same children unable to eat lunch because their house was too far. Those obstacles were all there, but I just could not help but to emphasize their joy despite all of this. Their genuine smiles and willingness to spread it to everyone was something that I longed for in America. They are not hopeless, rather hopeful.

Through this time in Kenya, I once again experience the joy and beauty of working together. As a group, all the members of the GCED group made the Global Citizenship Club. It is hard to tell where all of this is going to lead to in the future, but we know that every little step will lead to a greater difference. Our job is not merely supporting less fortunate people in Kenya but being connected and growing together with them because we know it is not us helping them, but it is us helping each other.



NEVER STOP SMILING NEVER STOP *DREAMING*

BY CAITLIN CHUNG

Since I was little, I had seen millions of commercials on TV and ads on the billboard shedding light on the terrible situations African children went through to survive one day. I saw the starving children living in small cramped houses and mothers struggling to carrying buckets full of dirty water. As I grew older, that image was stuck in the back of my mind. That was what I was prepared to see in the summer of my freshman year in highschool when I decided to book the tickets to Kenya to participate in Mtree's GCED program.

I mentally prepared myself. I told myself I should be prepared to be heartbroken looking at the children that will be staring at me with half starving, sullen eyes. But as every story goes, there was a twist. As I rumbled onto the school grounds on the half beaten bus, I was greeted by a swarm of children, aging about six to fourteen. They were all barefoot and wearing ragged clothes but they wore the most beautiful smiles I have ever seen in my entire life.

During the program, I spent the morning times assisting in "Brush with Hope" classes and I would like to share one, very special experience that I had. One of the assignments we gave to the students to draw was to illustrate their dream. Everyone in my class went up and shared eagerly until it came down to one shy little girl. Her name was Shamila. She walked shyly up to the front of the class and held up her drawing. It was a picture of a girl, painted in bright pink. When we asked her what she was doing, Shamila pointed to me and said, "She's a teacher. When I grow up, I wanted to be a teacher like Cate and help educate the kids here so that they can go to college". She was a timid little girl. Always staying behind the crowd when going to lunch and keeping to herself in class. But at that moment, I saw what I believed to be the strongest look of determination and passion I have ever seen.

Even months after my trip, I caught myself telling and retelling that story of Shamila to all my friends and family. I wanted to show that there was hope and talent that rested inside these kids. My plan was not to raise enough money, bring them to the U.S., and give them an Americanized

education and live here. Most of the kids there wanted to stay in their hometown to be a person to help benefit their small, beloved community. Some like Shamila dreamed to be teachers and educate kids in the community school that is currently closed due to lack of teachers. Some others wanted to become drivers to drive their family and friends back and forth from Nairobi where they could get jobs. I wanted to be there to support these young dreamer's dreams and goals that fed off of their selfless love of their friends, family, and community. My experience in Kenya motivated me and this school year, with the constant support from my family and friends, I was able to put on the first fundraiser at school and raised around \$1,460, publicizing these children's burning desires and passion.

Last year, I learned that the biggest dreamers among us may not have the most luxurious lives or be exposed to mountains of opportunities. The biggest dreamers are the ones who fed and held onto the shed of hope, love, and encouragement that were shown to them. Last summer, I was fortunate enough to be part of an organization that allowed me to have an opportunity to shed one beam of hope and love onto these kids. And I hope that thousands more will be shed onto them throughout the years to come, and that a thousand more people will be given the chance to learn from them one of the most valuable lessons I learned: to never stop smiling and to never stop dreaming.

