

Lead the Change

Written by Shelley Lowther
Wednesday, 28 September 2011 10:52



If you don't believe that one person with a vision can change the world, you have not met Paige Elenson. A senior Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga teacher, Paige is the founder of Africa Yoga Project. She embodies the concept of selfless service in action. Paige is the proof that one young woman with an idea can change the planet.

In 2006, Paige was on safari in Kenya with her family when she saw a group of young Kenyan men doing handstands in the middle of the bush. Though she had been warned to stay in the vehicle, Paige jumped out and began doing handstands with these young acrobats. Through this new relationship a bold idea was forming.

When Paige returned to New York, the acrobats contacted her and asked her to come back to Kenya to teach them yoga. What she did not know was that she would be staying in the slums of Nairobi, and what she saw when she arrived set an idea in motion.

The Africa Yoga Project was born. With the help of Baron Baptiste and the Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga Institute, Paige founded AYP and began not only teaching yoga to young Kenyans, but training them to be teachers.

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AYP uses the transformational power of yoga to foster unity, possibility and non-violence, and has reached thousands of young men, women and children in Kenya. Because I know from personal experience that yoga can change lives, I have been inspired by the amazing work AYP has done.

Today, AYP offers free Baptiste yoga classes to over 4000 students every week, while simultaneously building schools, funding education, health services, and training young Kenyans to teach yoga – thus creating jobs for people with no other outlets for employment. Now, kids from the slums are being trained as yoga teachers, and find jobs teaching middle and upper-class Kenyans as well as jobs in corporate settings. Kenyan youth previously without hope have job prospects and a way to feed their families.

I had the pleasure to personally meet Margaret Njeri, a young Kenyan woman who has lived through violence and devastating poverty, but who, through AYP, has a new life. Margaret teaches children, Women with HIV and people in prison, and has found a life of purpose, vision and service. She and Paige give new meaning to selfless service and have inspired me to get involved with AYP on a deeper level. I plan to travel to Kenya to teach yoga and help this amazing organization continue to empower people and create and lead the change.

If you want to know more about Africa Yoga Project, visit www.africayogaproject.org or get involved with an AYP fundraiser at Dancing Dogs Yoga. Check out the new book, Portraits of Empowerment and Peace, available on the AYP website.

Lead the change. Start with challenging yourself, and join us for the Yoga Aid Challenge to benefit Africa Yoga Project on Sunday, October 2nd at 10am. Any donation to Africa Yoga Project gains entry to this worthy event.

"I am because you are." – African Proverb

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