

Africa Yoga Project

Written by Shelley Lowther
Tuesday, 28 August 2012 10:36



Very often when I tell people who do not practice yoga about Africa Yoga Project, I am asked a fair and honest question: “Don’t kids in Africa need food more than they need YOGA?”

In the Kibera slums outside of Nairobi, Kenya over one million people live in an area the size of Central Park, in conditions that could only be called abject poverty. Only 20% of the residents have electricity, and clean water and sewage disposal are minimal and in most cases non-existent. So how does Africa Yoga Project (AYP) change so many lives and how does it help feed kids?

Empowerment.

The practice of yoga empowers people by providing a vehicle for physical, mental and emotional health. Yoga inspires positive action and builds strong and supportive communities. It works all over the industrialized world and in works in Kenya.

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Baron Baptiste, my teacher and the co-founder of AYP, teaches that while we cannot control our environment or our circumstances, we can control our reaction. By learning to respond to situations, to find our true selves and come from a place of empowerment and possibility--- we can change our lives by changing our outlook. One of the most debilitating aspects of poverty is not dirt floors or lack of resources, but a lack of possibility.

AYP uses yoga practice, meditation, self-exploration in the form of inquiry, performing arts, health education (particularly HIV/AIDS), community and relationship building and community activism as a vehicle for change, empowerment and possibility in a place that otherwise could easily be taken over by despair. AYP is a giant Land Rover of Possibility.

AYP brings truckloads of this hope and possibility to kids and young adults in Kibera and throughout Kenya. Trained by Baron and co-founder Paige Elenson, AYP teachers provide free yoga classes in 80 locations including orphanages, community halls, public grounds, jails, hospitals and schools, some of which AYP volunteers built themselves.

When you fund Africa Yoga Project, you are providing stipends for the 60 plus Kenyan yoga teachers to make these classes available to the public. The stipend these teachers bring home-- \$125 per month-- will feed a family of five for the entire month. So yoga really does feed kids.

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As an Africa Yoga Project Ambassador, I am traveling to Kenya next year to work with these young teachers, and to help the organization in any way I can. My goal is to study the model that has worked so well for AYP, and adopt parts of it to use here at home. Dancing Dogs Yoga will be identifying two at-risk young adults and putting them through our 200 Hour Yoga Teacher Certification Program. In exchange, these new teachers will go out and teach in local schools and community centers, and we will pay them with funds raised through grants and donations.

Next week, on Sunday, September 9, 2012, you too can be the change. Join us in Waterfront Park for Yoga Aid for Africa Yoga Project. This is our part in a worldwide effort as 20,000 yogis from 20 counties come together to raise \$1 million for charity. We're hosting a live DJ yoga party with vibrations that will be felt around the world! Join regional yoga teachers from the Dancing Dogs Yoga, Charleston Power Yoga, Savannah Power Yoga, Savannah Yoga Co-Op, Savannah Yoga Center, Yoga Chandra Center, The Art of Yoga, MBody Yoga, Awakening Yoga Studio, Instant Karma Yoga Center, Island Soma Therapy and MORE!

The event starts at 12pm with Opening ceremonies, followed by Lotus Flow with Kelley Boyd at 12:15pm, Yoga Chandra Center at 12:50pm, and Jivamukti with Brent Martin at 1:25pm. At 2pm, we will screen Practice Change, the Africa Yoga Project documentary, followed by a live DJ Yoga Party with certified Baptiste teachers Beth Thomas of Charleston Power Yoga, Kate Taylor of Savannah Power Yoga, Shelley Lowther of Dancing Dogs Yoga and DJ Aylin from Jacksonville, FL.. Join a team or register to become a challenger. We are asking participants to raise \$25, and Challengers to raise \$108 or more at YogaAid.com . Please choose Africa Yoga Project as your charity of choice.

To make a direct donation visit: www.yogaaid.com/shelleylowther1 or email karma@dancingdogsyoga.com

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