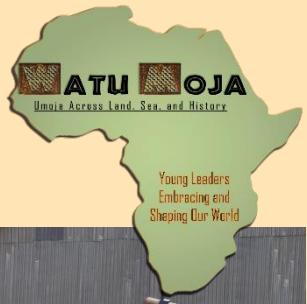


Watu Moja Team Nairobi -

Dispatch Four



When Basketball is More Than Just a Game

Jambo. First let me say that our young people are so cool. Word of their presence has spread throughout the community and everyone wants to see, touch, and get to know them, and of course the merchants want to sell their complete inventories to them. As they started the process of breaking the grounds to outline the basketball court, they were greeted with ohh! wow! and yes at every blow to the reddish ground. The kids here at the Raila Education Center in the heart of Kibera. I'm not sure the children know exactly what is going on here and why these young adults with the long braids and the locks keep showing up at their school. Not that the students are complaining. They love mobbing our group each time we show up. They love singing with the Camille, Shelby, Ebony, and Amadi. They love to hear G rap and Reet breakdance right there on the red clay. Half the kids now greet us with Ayinde's exploding fist bump.





I don't expect they will fully realize what is going on here until they see the poles, the goals, and the lines appear on their new basketball court. The children may not be alone in not understanding the mystery of what is emerging here in Kibera. There are political leaders here, community organizers, ministry leaders, educators, and neighbors, all celebrating the launch of our little modest recreation project. Apparently, as I am informed, there is much more going on. First, I have become keenly aware that such an investment, no matter how modest, from Afrikan Americans is a really big deal. People here are stunned to learn they are on the Afrikan American radar. Their incredibly humbling and loving reception challenges us to invite many other Afrikan American to join in

this marvelous connection with our Afrikan family. We have much work to do in fostering better understanding and building on our family ties.

I had no idea this project would also bring together previously conflicting sectors. Government, community, the private sector, the school district, the community, and ministries have all come together to ensure the reality of the basketball court. Our Kenyan ministry partner, Gideon Ochieng assures me this type of cooperation is unheard of in Nairobi. This is a most exciting and unexpected development and one that appears to be a new guiding principle as we continue to pursue community efforts in the Kibera's various neighborhoods.



The Honorable Kenneth O. Okoth, Member of Kenya's Parliament, breaks ground on the Raila Education Center Watu Moja Basketball Court as Deputy Principal Joan Amugune looks on

Finally, there is the sense of excitement at the prospect of people from the outside truly caring for the children here at the Raila Education Center. Deputy Principal Joan Amugune, a woman filled with God's spirit of joy, almost burst with glee in response to the fact we cared enough to help. Many of the children at the school have been orphaned. Many of them leave at the end of the school day to find some way of making money to pay school fees and rent. Principal Amugune works heroically as an educator, counselor, and mother figure, helping each student to fulfill their potential. She finds it incredible to know that people from the outside are willing to connect and express such love toward her children.

I thought we were just building a basketball court, but apparently we are building much more. I thought we just had a clever little idea that would serve as a novel accent to the other work we are doing. Despite whatever I may have thought, God's sense of creativity has overridden everything and turned a little idea into a community movement that holds so much promise.

I'm sure you share excitement with me in the fact that our young people are connected to such an important international movement. There is even the prospect that President Obama will come visit this court and shoot a few hoops. Be this the inevitability or not, these young people have effected a true and lasting change in the outlook of this school and this community. How cool is that.



Deputy Principle Joan Amugune and my wife share a moment of joy.



Your prayers and support are so much appreciated. Asante Sana.

Watu Moja