

Celebrating the “Five P’s” - Plus One
Denise C. Hogan

March 2008 will see the celebration of two festivals centered upon the development of young women. Presented by a public/private collaborative, the emphasis is upon introducing the young woman to possibilities for self-realization as a whole person, unique among others, self-sufficient and ready to take her place as a contributing member of the various communities to which she belongs. The foci of the festivals are five aspects of a woman’s life, each of them important to individual growth and self-awareness. These aspects are designated “The Five P’s,” and describe the theme of the festivities.

Aside from the *Personal/Interpersonal* aspect of a woman’s life, in which she defines herself and is defined by others, four other *P’s* are cited. These are: the *Professional* (she might become a nuclear physicist, a Nobel Prize winning poet, or a corporate executive); the *Philanthropic* (she might take upon herself the role of improving and enhancing the lives of others, with little or no remuneration, even in so selfless a manner as Mother Teresa); the *Political* (she might succeed in a quest to hold institutional, local, or national office); and lastly, the *Planetary* (she might become another Jane Goodall, caring for and protecting the planet’s interrelated family of animals, plants, and humans). What cause for celebration!!

Still, these five important “*P’s*” are each and all dependent upon an essential sixth: the *Pedagogical* or educational. Someone must teach this girl. Someone must mold her values, and inspire her to great achievements. Whether her education be informal, without access to standardized schooling, or formal and prescribed, whether she

lives in the affluent West or in one of the world's developing nations, someone must teach her. Education (pedagogy) is essential to human life and human development. The concern to educate our children is universal and underlies the impetus behind the collaboration of an American woman and a Kenyan man, bound in fast friendship, striving together to educate Kenyan girls along with Kenyan boys.

Harrison Kilonzo completed with honors a major in business administration at the University of Maine in Presque Isle, where he encountered Denise Hogan, who taught at the university and whose husband served as president. Each was committed to the pedagogical ideals of the other. Kilonzo returned home to Kenya in 1991. The two friends were reunited in 1995, when Hogan and her husband made a visit to Kenya shortly before their relocation to Danbury, Connecticut. That reunion was the start of a ten-year collaborative effort, with Hogan overseeing the shipment to Kenya of discarded and out-of-date books from the Danbury School System, and Kilonzo nurturing his vision of a community library and a secondary school to prepare students for responsible citizenship. After Hogan's second visit to Kenya in 2004, the trustees voted unanimously to name the library in her honor – an unexpected tribute to an ordinary American teacher.

The Denise C. Hogan Library in Kenya is located in rented rooms in an overcrowded housing complex in the Kasarani Division of Nairobi. Now an officially registered Non-Governmental Organization with a collection of 15,000 volumes, the library has become the largest collection of textual and resource material for a community of some 60,000 persons. However, the library's influence reaches far beyond the sprawling district in which it is located. Many books are loaned on a rotational basis

for the use of elementary school teachers and students during the period of an entire school term (3 months). This ensures that the students as well as the teachers have access to a text. Many books are trucked to Garissa, where the central offices of the Kenya National Library Service are located. From Garissa, they are transported by camel to the nomadic dwellers of the arid north. (This is known as “the camel library.”) However, the majority of the books remain in the library, catalogued and stacked on rough wooden shelves, available to district residents, students at the library-affiliated secondary school, and students at the various colleges and vocational training schools whose libraries lack these resources.. Technical, technology- and business-related texts, as well as those pertaining to the health-care professions provide valuable information to business owners and managers, teachers, doctors, nurses, and other health care workers. This latter class of books (in the “*P for Professional*” category) are specialized texts shipped from the two universities where Hogan taught.

It is clear that the motivating aspect in the lifetime development of both Hogan and Kilonzo was the *Pedagogical*. Their mutual dedication to the education of girls and women clearly demonstrates this fact. Keeping Kenyan girls in school keeps them from forced marriages, from a lifetime of digging someone else’s fields, from a position as second, third, or fourth wife without rights of inheritance, or from becoming “inherited” themselves, given to a male relative of a deceased husband and obliged to relinquish all assets to him. Finally, and perhaps most dramatically, keeping Kenyan girls in school helps to keep them from the dangers of having to earn their livelihood on the streets, with all that that entails. The opportunity to complete a structured educational curriculum or training program empowers Kenyan girls and women and opens to them the previously

undreamed of *personal, professional, political, philanthropic, and planetary* possibilities celebrated in the coming festivals in Santa Barbara, California, and Sedona, Arizona.

Here we might mention Wangari Maathai, who as a young Kenyan woman in 1964 completed a degree in Biological Sciences from Mount St. Scholastica College in faraway Atchison, Kansas. In 1971, she earned the Ph.D. from the University of Nairobi where she later taught Veterinary Anatomy. Over time, Maathai realized her dream to found the Green Belt Movement, a pan African campaign launched to teach African women the importance of the planting of trees, not only as essential to the survival of the planet, but also to the eradication of poverty, and the prevention of international conflict over the world's diminishing resources. Wangari has served in the National Council of Women of Kenya as well as in the Kenyan Parliament. In 2004, Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize, the most notable among the recognitions of her many achievements as an advocate of human rights, democracy and environmental conservation.

Wangari Maathai serves as a powerful role model for Kenyan girls and young women, as a teacher (*Pedagogue*), a *Professional*, a *Political Philanthropist*, and a *Personal Planetary* force. The Denise C. Hogan Library in Kenya is a modest participant in Maathai's efforts to recognize women as the keeper's of the planet's health and longevity, the eradication of poverty, and the avoidance of violent conflict.

One woman, well-taught, should be celebrated. One library, well-stocked and encouraging the education of females, should also be celebrated. And supported.

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