

October 2007 Decision

October 17, 2007

Hi everyone,

I had a wonderful birthday and yes I have made my decision of what I'm planning on doing with my life. I am going to start a nonprofit organization in the US called Participate Now!! It will be a very small foundation and I will tell you more of the details when it is finalized and legal. I have retained a law firm in Connecticut to draw up the necessary documents – scary but exciting! I have decided to keep on doing what I do best which is to be me. I teach, inspire, influence and I make things happen and I'm going to continue doing that. The reality is I'm now 56 (but feel 30) and I have MS – now is not the time to slow down because there's so much to do. My MS is okay – I think I have it fooled for the most part although it reminds that I have to pace myself and rest. Before I came to Africa in 2004 a friend gave me a magnet of an Eleanor Roosevelt quote "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". I believe in mine – I want to live in Zanzibar and make a difference. I affect people, I learn from others and my life is incredibly rich.

I have spent the past few months journaling, talking, listening and meditating hoping to learn what is the next right step for me. I have another magnet that says "The obstacle is the path" – isn't that the truth!!! I have considered consulting, lecturing, trying to make lots of money but that's just not me. In the end I'm not exactly sure what my job description is but I make a difference and that's what counts to me. I had read a book called The Invisible Cure by Helen Epstein. It's a wonderful book about AIDS in Africa – the history, the people and the situation today. I was half way through the book, underlining like crazy and so excited that she "got it" that I emailed her (I do things like that). It was supposed to be a short email but of course it wasn't and she was so kind – she read the entire thing and replied. I had told her all that I was doing and that I was trying to figure out what to do next. She told me that I should concentrate on small business as people need to be economically productive. That helped me to focus because that is really where my heart is and what I do best – I have been a small business consultant for many years. I have helped people to start and grow their businesses. I understand how important it is to gain self respect and dignity through providing for your family – I raised my two boys alone and it wasn't easy.



This is where I spent my birthday – relaxing on the Indian Ocean – have I told you lately that I am the most fortunate woman in the world? I love living in Zanzibar - you never know what will happen next – here are giraffes (not real ones) going down the main street in Stonetown. There is always something to make me smile even when I'm having a frustrating day. And here is a beautiful rainbow that I saw one morning from my lovely penthouse. I believe that my job is to wake up every morning and pay attention to all of the gifts that I have. My best days are when I can appreciate every moment that I have and share that wonderful awe with others.



I visited my friend Rupa (with her friend Havi) in Arusha. Rupa is a lawyer working for the Russian judge at the Int'l Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The first night we went to a party with a number of the lawyers and judges – now that was an experience. The Tribunal is amazing – there are hundreds of lawyers and staff working many different trials at the same time. They are trying some of the more important cases right now as the Tribunal is coming to the end in the next year or so. In the center are some of the defense lawyers on break strategizing their next round of questioning of a witness. Here I am on the right with Judge Byron who is the president of the Tribunal – he's from St Kitts and has a huge responsibility. I saw him at the party but didn't take a photo - he was very kind and let me take a picture at the end of the next day. The Tribunal was totally overwhelming on many levels for me. First – these lawyers are from all over the world and doing their best to work together effectively to dispense justice to war criminals. They were some of the most interesting people I've ever met. Second I sat in on 4 different trials and still I'm not quite sure how to process what I felt. I was sitting not 10 feet (with a glass wall in between) from a witness who had been the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the genocide. There was a trial for a songwriter who they say incited many killings with his songs that were quite popular with the people who killed. I came home and read a book about the genocide with my "cheat sheet" – the list of detainees which listed the charges and the verdicts. I can't begin to explain Rwanda, the genocide or their politics but I can tell you that my heart goes out to the people – how to go on after so much bloodshed, fear, distrust and sorrow?? These lawyers listen to witnesses every day who say "No it wasn't me – it was someone else". I can't begin to comprehend any of it and I find that very frightening. Rupa is now working on the judgment for the former Minister of Defense who was one of the key figures during the genocide. I want to go back to Arusha for that verdict and will sit in on a few days of trials while I'm there. I hope to visit Rwanda some day and learn more about the strength of the people. The bottom line is – it's all about the people isn't it? How to help people to stay alive, to heal and live together.



And back in Zanzibar I spent a lot of time with the members of ZAPHA+. I can never thank the people at Clinton Foundation enough for all that they've done for the PLHAS (people living with HIV/AIDS) in Zanzibar and for me. I was so fortunate to be able to spend two years learning about HIV and giving support to ZAPHA+ (Zanzibar Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS). I am no longer working for Clinton Foundation but I will always be the volunteer consultant at ZAPHA+. And for me yes it is all about the people – they are the ones who are living with this deadly disease and it is deadly. On the left is a photo of one of our members, twins, their grandmother and their mother in the red kanga. The twins had just tested negative for HIV and

everyone was very happy. Sadly though the mom died last week and another one of our members (he was 37) died yesterday. Yet what is important to know is that many of the ZAPHA+ members went to the funeral today – they truly support each other. There has been the illusion that ARVS (anti-retrovirals) are the magic bullet. Clinton Foundation helped to bring the first ARVS to Zanzibar on March 24, 2005 and there are hundreds of people alive today because of them. But there is so much more to be done and we can never forget that. I often take photos of parents and their children at ZAPHA+ - they are the future and the parents want to do all they can to provide for them in the time that they have. The twins will be taken care of by their grandmother – how is she going to cope? In the center is Mbarouk – he obviously loves his son very much and wants the best for him – as any parent would. Hawa loves having her picture taken with her girls. Her daughter in the white dress is on her way to the hospital because she's having trouble with her eyes and she's in a lot of pain. But you would never know that would you?? I am amazed at the strength of so many of the people that I am in daily contact with.



And yes the women do have children – people do not stop living their lives just because they are HIV+. Every single woman that I know at ZAPHA+ is hungry for any information available to help them have healthy children. Here is Asha and her new baby Fatma – there is now a new test available in Zanzibar where they can test the children around 3 months. That is a huge step forward as now the children can be treated if necessary. Here is Najim - I do love the fathers and their kids. And then there is Tausi with the two Faisals – one is her son and the other is the son of her friend Amina. Many people believe that Africans have no trouble with adherence to the ARVS – that they can easily remember to take their meds 2 or 3 times a day. I find it difficult to take a regimen of antibiotics after the second day – I am utterly amazed how difficult it can be for people who are HIV+. Adherence is not easy and a number of our members fasted during Ramadhan which meant they didn't take their meds during the day. What people don't realize is that most of the ARVS here are what they call first line drugs. If you stop taking them or build up a resistance then you have to go to second or even third line. And the second line drugs are not just 2 or 3 a day but more and the side effects are much worse. As it is now many people I know have bouts of shingles, thrush, fever, pneumonia, more malaria than usual and horrible skin rashes. Yet I see them coming into the office where they spend time with others watching TV or talking and I very seldom hear them complain unnecessarily.

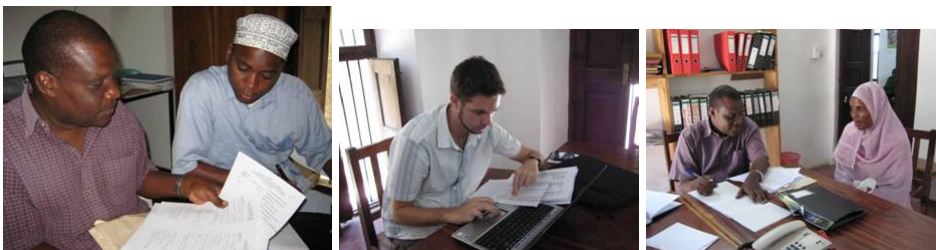


I've been very busy these past few months overseeing the management of the \$22,000.00 that I raised this past year. As you can see the tent was well worth every penny – it's used for support

group meetings, formal functions when donors visit and for training for income generating activities. We have just rented an additional smaller space where we're going to do sewing and soap making and I'm going to buy another small tent for the open area there. So – this is where the money has been going.

Tent	200.00
Salary for assistant coordinator in Pemba	1,500.00
Salary for manager of support groups	1,500.00
Small business project	12,000.00
Childrens toys and postage	500.00
Travel/Admin	800.00

That's \$16,500 and I haven't decided yet how to spend the rest. It's difficult to get donors to pay for salaries and especially if it's a new person (go figure). They would rather pay for "activities" and expect that the people will manage it as volunteers. Good idea but people need money to eat so getting paid for work that they do is paramount. I am taking a page from CHAI (Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative). They started out as a "gap filler" – where there was a need they came in very quickly and filled the gap. In the case of Zanzibar – they brought in the ARVS and saved many lives. Usually an NGO or a government has to write a lengthy complicated proposal and budget and it can take up to a year or more to be approved. Many people can die in that time. What I'm doing is very small scale and I'm trying very hard to make sure that I'm effective with the way that I spend the money. I'm living here and so I get to see exactly what happens to it. If I see a need I do everything possible to find a donor but if there's an immediate need or if it's too small an amount for a proposal then I can take care of it. ZAPHA+ has been desperate for an assistant coordinator in Pemba (we have about 150 members there). We are doing some projects there but the members don't have the skills to type the reports and need help with managing the finances. I also believe that support groups are a key for PLHAS to become their own advocates and it's important for us to get someone who can manage these groups and help them grow. We need someone who can train the members to be facilitators and to help them branch out into the rural areas to help others. It would be hard to write a proposal for her salary so I'm going to cover it – I have found an absolutely wonderful woman who is excited to come and work with us (and she's going to start next week – hurray). The salaries of \$1,500.00 are for 6 months depending on how ZAPHA+ decides to structure it. But at least that will give us some experience with setting up the programs, find out whether or not they are effective and then ZAPHA+ can include that in future proposals.



And my baby is my entrepreneur project and where I think I'm doing the most good. Mzee Mohamed Mzee is my project manager and one of the most wonderful people I've ever met. He is kind and gentle and is very wise. Mzee is involved with ZEDO (Zanzibar Enterprise Development Organization) a small business NGO and he was my project manager with the Cheju Well Project. What we are doing in this project is very simple, on a very small scale and time consuming. But I believe that what we learn from this will be very valuable and the ripple effect of benefits will be wide although I will not be able to "quantify" it by checking off a list of just how many people are affected. I always ask – how do you quantify self respect and dignity?? Mzee and I surveyed 40 members who were interested in gaining small business knowledge. Then we

interviewed 15 of the candidates – that took 3 days to do and was eye opening. Of the 15 only one has more than primary education yet when Mzee asked them questions about their business they had a good idea whether or not they were making a profit. They just need to have some good business training to do be able to decide whether or not to continue in their business or how to make it grow.

My objective with this project is to do entrepreneur training different than others. Rather than having a workshop with objectives, strengths, weaknesses, way forward – I want to have the members take the time to understand what is involved in making and spending money. It's important to first know what their expenses actually are and then to consider exactly what kind of work they want to do – how many hours a day they want to work etc etc. Of course stigma is a large factor in this – one woman makes chapati (a bread) but can no longer sell it in her neighborhood because people are frightened so she has to go to the market which is far away. Another had had a revolving loan from a neighbor but when she tested positive the neighbor refused to extend the loan any longer because she said “you're going to die and you won't be able to pay me back”. Every one of them said that their priority is to eat healthy food because they know that they need good nutrition to stay alive and to fight this disease. That was the most important thing for each one – to feed themselves and their children – to gain some control over their lives. And the way to do that is to become economically empowered so that they have a choice.

We are also setting up a database and that's Edmund Coyne in the center. He's the brother of my daughter in law from San Francisco and is here for 6 months helping out – I need many many more like him. We are planning on interviewing each of our members (ZAPHA+ now has almost 500) and entering their information into the Access database. Our aim is to be able to link people together who are in the same business to support and mentor each other. One of the things we're learning now is which questions to ask – you can't just say “What is your business?” because most people have more than one business or they have had to change jobs since they got sick. Many of the women have been infected by their husbands and when they tested positive the husbands divorced them and the women are now solely responsible for their children (who are often positive). Many of these women have very little business skills – or at least they don't think they do. Running a household and raising children certainly requires skill.

We are only training 12 people – it will be small scale but very in depth and individual training. But that doesn't mean that it won't be effective or sustainable. Sometimes I get the sense from donors that small projects are dismissed as not being viable – they always want one on a “large” scale - that will reach the masses. Of course that is often the objective but in reality I'm beginning to wonder just how effective and sustainable large scale projects are. I want to learn more of the benefits of doing many small scale projects. I think that we can learn so much and then, if they want, ZAPHA+ can write a large proposal to a big donor for next year to do a larger scale project. Mzee and I are realizing that the bulk of the work is managerial work - the two of us spending time every day on the project. He will train 12 people for 5 days then give them a loan (no more than \$50) to start or grow their business. We have decided to charge only 5% (many micro-loans are often up to 30%) and the members will pay the loans to a fund that will be created within ZAPHA+. And then ZAPHA+ can decide what they want to do with that money – they can give out more loans or whatever they decide.

Mzee will be visiting the individual businesses many times over the next few months to give them actual on the job training and management support. This is a very time consuming project but I think that we're going to learn a lot so that we'll be able to help shape future projects. I have our reports available if you're interested in looking at them – please let me know as they're only 1 or 2 pages long and quite fascinating. We will be writing reports at every step of the way so that we can consolidate the lessons that we're learning. Our priority is to listen to the members to find out what their reality is and see if we can build on what they have been doing. By asking the question “why” we get many interesting answers that will help all of us to move forward.

So – that's my life at the moment. I am scared and excited yet I know that this next step is the right thing to do. I am going to stay in Zanzibar for now and do my work. I hope to learn more about small business and HIV and people living in poverty. I know that the work I'm doing isn't going to solve the problem of world poverty but maybe we can help to raise the quality of a few lives. As my friend Suleiman said "I'm rich when I have enough to give to someone else". This has been a wonderful Ramadhan and Eid for me – my Muslim friends are kind and generous. Many of them don't have money but they do care.

Self respect and dignity – such incredible wealth that we can help others to achieve.

Stay in the moment and relax and enjoy

Kathryn