



Grace with ITLP Teaching Artist and Board member Nilaja Sun

Introduction of Grace Gachocha Nakaka:

Grace has passionately worked with ITLP since 2008 as a teaching artist and Director, Grace is a key leader for an outreach program in Tanzania that offers sports and creative arts to youth. She was one of the key presenters in the first ever International Teaching Artist Conference that took part in Oslo, August this year. Grace is currently in an MA program at Columbia College Chicago that is enriching her skills in the arts so that she can fulfill her dream of offering the arts in public schools in Tanzania.

Grace's Speech:

What words come to mind when you think of ITLP? They could be empowerment, confidence building, creativity, English improvement, support and so on. When I think of ITLP the words that come to mind are RIPPLE EFFECT, but what is a ripple effect? To give you picture, I will recite the first verse of a poem by James W. Foley titled *Drop a pebble in the water*.

*Drop a pebble in the water
Just a splash and it is gone
But there's half-a-hundred ripples
Circling on and on and on
Spreading, spreading from the center
Flowing on out to the sea
And there is no way of telling
Where the end is going to be*

Executive Director Marianna Houston dropped a pebble in the sea in 2005 and the ripples have spread so far across the world touching lives in Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Africa and India. I will share the ripple effect in Tanzania.

In 2005 the ripples touched the lives of students in Akeri School who expressed their dreams so well that it had an amazing impact and gave birth to ITLP. The ripples continued 2006, 2007 then 2008 they reached a young woman on her way out of the University of Dar-es-Salaam. A woman who loved the arts but was not sure if she wanted to take the risk of venturing into the arts for her career since it is not much of a career in her country. That woman is standing before you today and the ripple effect made a profound impact and changed her life completely. The summer of 2008 in Arusha was when I realized my true self in the arts co-facilitating the theatre workshop with Eric Booth an Internationally recognized arts education Scholar and practitioner.

I started seeing the ripples through the students as they expressed themselves, something which is not common to them. Two students especially were touched Asmaha who wrote to me, "*Your image has cemented itself within my mind, you have enlightened me on the world of art I am proud of you, I see far because I've stood on the shoulders of giants, you are among them.*" Bryson, another student, said to me, "*You are brave and have ventured into the arts I too would like to follow your example.*" I am proud to say Bryson has started a Drama club that he runs twice a week for a number of orphans in his area. Many more students were also touched and are now reaching for their dreams.

Today I am in a Masters program at Columbia College Chicago, my goal is to start an organization that will offer the arts in public schools in Tanzania empowering Teachers and students through the arts, giving them a chance to be critical thinkers but most importantly continuing the ripple effect. So much more can be said but I will pause and take this moment to invite you all today to be part of this AMAZING RIPPLE EFFECT.

Thank you.