



Monica Gilsanz with young friend at Circle of Peace School.



Student and teacher aboard the school van.



Learning to read and write.

My Circle of Peace School Story and the Importance of Starting Conversations

By Monica Gilsanz, Circle of Peace School Volunteer, Summer 2016

Education as a human right rather than a privilege is a concept that was instilled in me from my immigrant parents who came to the U.S. to pursue their dreams of becoming physicians. While a quality education should be accessible to every child despite location, gender, age, or socioeconomic status, the realities show stark inequalities. Ensuring that every student receives the education they deserve is a daunting challenge.

I was privileged to work, live, and learn from the COPS family and have committed myself to ensuring that others know about this spectacular group of educators.

However, this does not discourage the teachers and administrators at Circle of Peace School (COPS) in Makindye, Uganda. After spending two months as COPS's organizational and instructional intern, it is evident that, despite having few resources, COPS provides a community where students are nurtured and can grow as learners.

The beauty of COPS is their commitment to students and families through providing affordable education regardless of a student's socioeconomic status. Reducing or completely waiving tuition allow many students to attend. Witnessing registration at the beginning of term, I was able to see how many students are now able to access quality education. Unfortunately, waiving tuition puts a strain on the operations at COPS as they lack a stable flow of income.

The shortage of funds does not stop Principal MaryLove and Director Charles from providing students with an engaging and holistic school experience. They recognize that the classroom is not the only place where learning can take place. During my two months at COPS, students in both primary and nursery classes participated in numerous poem competitions throughout Kampala, a wildlife and tourism exhibition, and two field trips. Because students are continuously exposed to different aspects of the community, they will graduate with both academic and life skills, making them ready to take on the world.

Watching MaryLove and Charles transform students and make them good community members made me reflect on the roles and the responsibilities that individuals can take-on to better education globally. I encourage all COPS supporters to be a part of the effort. Your contribution to change does not have to be costly. Let's bring awareness to increasing access to quality education worldwide through conversations. Talk to your neighbors, colleagues, and family members about COPS and discuss what you can do for COPS.