

## **MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS**

**A SPEECH DELIVERED BY MARGARET MUNENE AT THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SEMINAR HELD AT WHITESANDS HOTEL ON THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2017**

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you on this very exciting subject of mentoring. Please indulge me on the practical examples I will share because most of them will be drawn from my own personal experiences as this is what I can best vouch for.

I will tackle the subject by answering three questions;

- How can we mentor the next generation of leaders?
- Who is a leader or what is leadership?
- Who are the next generation of leaders (NGLS)?

Let me begin by defining terms;

**NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS-** I will assume any younger person in your life is a next generation leader

**LEADERSHIP-** The leadership I will be speaking about is leadership by influence. In my view, true leadership doesn't need a title, it's cultivated.

Who is a true leader?

I like the definition by John Quincy Adams.

“If your actions inspires others to dream more , learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader” True leadership has nothing to do with a title, authority or seniority. It is about inspiration through influence.

We have leaders and followers and you can become a follower even while holding a leadership position.

Are you a leader or a follower?

To find out whether you are a leader or a follower, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you go above and beyond?

Followers do their jobs and that's it. It rarely occurs to them to go to beyond their basic functions.

Leaders on the other hand see their job description as the bare minimum. They do more whenever and wherever they see an opportunity to do more.

2. Are you Accountable?

When mistakes are made, followers are quick to blame circumstances and other people.

Leaders on the other hand are quick to accept accountability for their actions. They do not worry that admitting mistakes will make them look bad because they know shifting blame will make them look worse. They admit and seek corrective measures and learn from their mistakes. It is very difficult to

learn from a mistake unless you first admit you made the mistake.

### 3. Are you focused on people?

Followers focus on what they can achieve individually.

Leaders are team players because they know greatness is a collective feat. They are able to work in teams. Followers see the talent and accomplishment of others as a threat. Leaders see the same talent and accomplishment as an asset. Leaders are good team players. I share the example of my husband's boss many ago. He made sure he grew from the position of an internal auditor to take over from him as finance director and even introduced him to Rotary!

### 4. Are you willing to learn?

Leaders know that they don't know everything and don't have all the solutions. They are willing to admit that they don't know something and are willing to learn.

Followers on the other hand are too busy trying to prove that they are competent to learn anything from anyone else. They will not admit that they don't know.

### 5. Are you open to change?

Followers are content to stick with the safety of the status quo. They see change as frightening and troublesome.

Leaders see opportunity in change and want to see constant improvements.

Let me share a personal example of a manager in our Dairy who has served us for nearly 20 years. Initially he was the most resistant person I had ever come across! Over time through our management mentorship, he has grown to be most innovative. Five years ago we gave him an internal innovation award. He has been instrumental in making our company part of the Top 100 Mid-size companies for the last three years running. This year, thanks largely to his leadership, our company was recognition among the top 10 on innovation!

#### 6. Are you Decisive?

Followers often hesitate to act out of fear of doing the wrong thing.

Leaders on the other hand would rather make decisions and be wrong than suffer from the paralysis of indecision.

#### 7. Are you passionate?

Followers are trapped in the daily grind. They go to work to complete their tasks.

Leaders love what they do and see their work as an important part of who they are. A good example here is my husband who once worked as CEO of a tea company and his business card was written “Passionate about tea”! He is a

mentor to many and is passionate about anything he takes on.

#### 8. Leaders practice unselfish thinking

Few things in life bring greater personal rewards than helping others. When you get outside of yourself and make a contribution to others, you really begin to live! Unselfish thinking creates a spirit of generosity in us and we begin the realization that everything is not about us. We must stop thinking about our wants and focus on the needs of others if we are to be great mentors. Let me share briefly the story of our iconic success at Palmhouse Foundation. The Foundation began rather informally in 2002 where we wanted to help some of our very poor neighbors around Palmhouse Dairies. Due to our conspicuous standing in the rural setting many people would come for help and we would make many nominal donations. We realized that most students we helped never finished school and we therefore decided that out of the profitability of Palmhouse Dairies we would set apart a small amount and select 3 needy students whom we would guarantee the four year secondary school fees. Due to the great need, we took 6 in 2002! The following year we spoke to two other friends who joined us and helped us raise some money to take 10 students to school in 2003. This time we went as far as Mombasa, Rift valley and greater central province. We realized how great this need was and decided to register a trust and raise money to tackle the national

problem. We invited more friends and we became 10 trustees. In 2004 we took our 1<sup>st</sup> national class of 34 students selected equally from all regions of Kenya. We have continued this procedure to this day! We have selected as many as 85 students in a year and we currently have 300 in school between Form 1 and Form 4 while nearly 500 have finished and are in universities or working. Some have become donors to the Foundation. Our funds are 100% sourced from Kenyans. We formally mentor our students 3 times a year while we mentor our Alumni formally at least once a year. We have seen great success in some of the beneficiaries with some already garnering for national and international leadership! Two weeks ago two of our beneficiaries married each other in a beautiful wedding ceremony!

- **What is mentoring?**

Mentoring is defined as the relationship between one or more people where a senior party provides guidance, knowledge and support to the junior party in order to assist them grow and develop to achieve key goals in their lives.

There are different types of mentoring:

1. Traditional –one on one
2. Group mentoring
3. Peer mentoring
4. Reverse mentoring

- **Who is a mentor?**

1. Is it those with lots of money?
2. Is it the famous?
3. Is it the highly visible individuals?
4. Is it CEOs?

Everyone has leadership abilities and can be a mentor. It is how we use our leadership ability that decides if we are mentors and role models.

To be a mentor you must be a role model

True role models are those who possess the qualities that we would like to have and those who have affected us in a way that makes us want to be better people in our key roles.

True role models are recognized by the qualities they possess that we want to emulate in achieving our own personal growth, success and progress.

I asked young people what they look out for in mentors and this is what they said:

1. Passion and ability to Inspire

True role models show great passion and commitment for their work. Their passion is contagious and rubs off easily on others.

2. Clear set of values

True role models live their values in a world that is full of phonies, corruption and compromise. Young people admire

people who act in ways that support their beliefs despite the obvious pressures in the world to do otherwise. It helps them understand how their own values form part of who they are and who they will become.

True role models stand for a set of beliefs. They understand clearly that “if you don’t stand for anything you will fall for everything.” Let me share a short story about my experience with corruption and bribery that is often talked about in our society. I once choose to pay a fine of 8,000/= for double parking in a situation where the authority on this was ready to let it pass if I paid 1,000/=. It was painful and I made sure I would never do it again! This is a family policy and our business policy. Even our milk trucks have never paid a bribe to policeman in the 22 years we have been in this business. Not that we have not broken the law at any point but when we do we suffer the consequences. We have sometimes been wrongly charged but that has over the years become a very rare thing with most police choosing not to waste their time flagging down our vehicles!

### 3. Commitment to community

True role models are other-focused as opposed to self-focused. They are active in their communities. They give their time, gifts, talents and blessings to others. They reach out to their neighbors, take their civic duties seriously, participate in democratic elections and are active members of community organizations, church etc. These are the neighbors who pay



their community dues in our gated communities while poor role models refuse to pay and dump garbage everywhere! I am sure you know them!

#### 4. Selfless and acceptance of others

Young people admire people for their selflessness and acceptance of others, even those different from them. True role models embrace diversity and promote social harmony. They protect, defend and support and act out of the quality of the Good Samaritan. They act out on people's needs without seeing social barriers. They serve with pride. Their life is not about me myself and I. I can again the example of our company in Githunguri where we have employed Kenyans from all over Kenya! Most of our valuable and long serving employees are from other Kenyan communities. At this point in the history of our country this is a matter that requires great attention to remove the ethnic barriers.

#### 5. Ability to overcome obstacles

Young people admire people who show them that success is possible despite obstacles and setbacks in life.

They admire people who have gone through pain, suffering and failure rise from the dust. Young people develop the skill and abilities of initiative in their own lives when they learn to overcome obstacles. I will share one last example from our company that began processing 100 litres of milk per day and today deals with 10,000 litres a day. We went through great

obstacles but came out stronger. We have mentored and inspired many locally and internationally. We have an open policy to allow others to visit, see, copy, paste and/or improve what we do!

### **Let me now conclude;**

Young people develop as a result of the many experiences and relationships they go through in life.

Role models play an important role in inspiring them to learn to overcome obstacles and understand that positive values can be lived each day.

Whether you are a parent, older sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, teacher, boss, pastor or highly visible individual who just happens to be in a young person's life, you have the ability to mentor and inspire. It depends on you and the choices you make daily.

Young people are letters we send to a time that we might never see. What kind of letter are you sending to the future?