

Remarks by Monique Coleman

To quote Marianne Williamson; “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?”

In 2010, its hard to believe that many parts of the world live on just a few dollars a day. That in America, the land of opportunity, the high school dropout rates are at an all time high, or that in certain countries girls are being forced to become women far before they're ready.

From global warming to human trafficking, earthquakes to corporate disaster there is no shortage of world issues for us to be aware of. As future leaders, it's imperative that we open our eyes to our brothers and sisters all over the world and help solve problems down the street as well across the sea. If its happening to anyone, its happening to everyone.

The question on everyone's mind is, with all that is happening in the world, where can we look for change?

How about William Kamkwamba from Malawi who at 14 years old taught himself to build windmills out of junkyard items. He was kicked out of school because he couldn't afford the \$80 in school fees. When he ran across a photograph of a windmill in the library, he said to himself “If they can make electricity out of wind, I can try too.” He didn't try, he succeeded and went on to teach others how to do the same.

Or what about 22 yr old. Caitlin Cohen. She's involved with the Mali Health Organizing Project. Through her efforts and speaking to the Mali government she's helped 60,000 people get the education and medical attention they deserve.

What about Kathryn Cunningham. This Pennsylvania girl actually volunteered at a hospital in Gambia and helped perform an emergency medical procedure by candlelight. She became active in helping the people in Gambia after seeing a newborn die due to the lack of electricity. Her company, Power Up Gambia, provides solar panels to Gambia.

And, this years recipient of the 2010 Do Something Awards Jessica Posner. At 23 years old, Jessica co-founded Shining Hope for Communities to combat gender inequity and poverty in Kibera. Through the Kibera School for Girls, the first free school in Kibera, and the Shining Community Center, Jessica has helped over 5,700 residents gain education and employment.

Or last, but certainly not least, two Somolian sisters Sweetrush who have started the non-profit organization Somolia Lives Again to raise money for the largest refugee camps in Dadaab.

For every issue, there is at least one young person with an idea or solution. Unfortunately,

the media tends to focus on the “bad” that is happening with today’s youth rather than the amazing ways we’re making the world a better place.

I believe that what we turn our attention to grows. So, if we continuously focus on society’s problems rather than illuminate the positive, we will simply create more issues.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, Our deepest fear is that our voices won’t be heard. Our deepest fear is that we will continue to be misguided and misunderstood. Our deepest fear is that the issues that matter will get clouded by the latest updates on celebrity addictions and bad behavior. Our deepest fear is not that we are incapable of changing the world, but that we won’t ever get a chance to.

Look around. This is International Youth Day! I’d say we are well on our way to changing the world. So, stand up and be heard. This is the time. We are the people.

Thank you.