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Breathing Fresh Life and Meaning to Mashujaa Day

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The month of October saw the national celebration of Mashujaa (Heroes') Day in Kenya.

Not long before, the world had lost great heroes and heroines in the name of Professor Wangari Maathai and Steve Jobs. Added to this was the loss of Dr Margaret Ogolla, now known and recognised nationally for educating us through her writings. Ironically, all the three succumbed to cancer ailments.

Nonetheless, there are positive lessons to learn from their demise. They have each touched our lives in different ways.

Their accomplishments have no doubt greatly influenced the world. So, their lives may have been extinguished, but the spirits should certainly outlive them. In that regard, we all need to strive to become heroes and heroines in their honour. But, can each one of us become a hero or heroine?

Yes indeed, it is possible for most if not all of us to become heroes and heroines. All we need is to understand and embrace the process of venturing into greatness. This process may be both easy and difficult. But whichever way we look at, it all depends on our mindsets.

Scott Peck an American Psychiatrist and author is a proponent of the existence of two roads. One is "the road less traveled and secondly the road more often traveled."

Ideally, the first road leads to greatness, whereas the second one leads to mediocrity. Obviously mediocrity relates to poorness of performance and therefore achievements. Imagine this happening during whole lifetimes.

This road to mediocrity is associated with short term view of life, lack of vision, shortcuts and other not so positive ways of pursuing life.

Sadly, 90 percent of the population in every situation of life follows the road most traveled. Conversely only 10 percent of the population follows the road less traveled, if we can go by some wise counsel from Jim Rhon, the late American author and motivational trainer.

This small minority is the one which brings change in families, organizations, nations and the world too. What then drives the 10 percent into these unique situations of leading others into bringing global change?

The answer is simply, the power of influence. Heroes and heroines have a few things in common. They are all very selfless people who are particularly driven by some four key attributes of human nature. Firstly, they are able to discover their talents. These are our gifts of life. Each one of us is born with one or two or even more.

They separate us from other members of the human race. They form the basis of our purposes in life. Ideally, we come to this world to fulfill these purposes and never to occupy space as such. However, one needs to discover those sometimes hidden gifts. Only then shall we be good at whatever we do in life as is evident in heroes and heroines.

Secondly, heroes and heroines are passionate in whatever they do. They love what they do especially for a living or occupation. They are enthusiastic from the beginning up to the end. Therefore, heroes and heroines do what they love doing for entire lifetimes.

Rarely do they retire from doing what they love. That is, as long as their bodies, heart, and spirit allows them to continue. This long term engagement and doing what they are good at leads them into becoming respectable authorities in their fields.

Thirdly, heroes and heroines are driven by their conscience. They are not bothered about what people think about what they choose to do. In other words, they are value driven. They only do what they feel is right in their own thinking. That which they feel is right is what they persistently pursue irrespective of negative perceptions of the society.

Fourthly, heroes and heroines identify societal needs, which they are easily able to attend to. The ability is based on their talents, passion and value systems. They identify gaps in the needs and wants of the society. Therefore, the efforts of these heroes and heroines continually add value and bring positive change in the different spheres of the society.

Heroes and heroines are predominantly driven by these four attributes of human nature. If you can draw four overlapping circles, you will easily come up with an area of intersection. Some prominent authors refer to this area as the 'voice' of each one of us. This writer describes it as "the sphere of influence," of each human being.

Ironically, it is only heroes and heroines who discover and pursue their voice or sphere of influence. They effortlessly pursue the same into greatness. As noted, they are not distracted by negative societal attitudes. Sometimes, they treat them as small inconveniences. In the end, they influence other members of families, organizations, nations and the world to find their sphere of influence as well.

This far, we all need to work towards becoming heroes and heroines. It is only then that we shall breathe fresh life and new meaning to Mashujaa (freedom) day. That may not be impossible. Indeed, one can start finding personal voice at any time in life, no matter the situation. In fact, this world needs all of us to become heroes and heroines in one way or the other. "Not every one of us can do great things; but each of us can do little things with love," Mother Theresa.

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