What is your most valued possession?

A favorite book? Your child’s first tooth? A beloved piece of jewelry?

We asked this question to some girls in Kibera and got some surprising answers... because their answers were not actually things.

“My most important possession is school.”

“My arts. Through theatre, I communicate and educate many people in my society.”

“My most important possession is my future and I hold it in my hands.”

“My life. Because my life is so precious.”

(excerpts from Lightbox: Expressions of Hope from Young Women in the Kibera Slum of Nairobi)

When living with so little, the value of education, creativity, health, and promise of a brighter future far outshines the value of any possession that one could own.

In Kibera, CFK’s Daughters United Program is helping thousands of girls realize the dreams they have for their lives. The program is thriving and has big plans for the year ahead. Enrollment is higher than ever, and girls in the program reach out every day to their neighbors, friends, and family members to join. We’re thrilled to be building a permanent facility dedicated to girls in Kibera. Together, we can give girls a space to call their own, and with it, a chance to make a better future for themselves.

As you gather with those you love this holiday season to exchange gifts and make memories, please consider donating to CFK’s Daughters United Program.

Your gift can change a girl’s life.
JACKY WINS BEST FEMALE STUDENT AT NAIROBITS

Remember Jacky from last year’s Annual Report? She has some exciting news. For the past year and 8 months, Jacky has been attending Nairobits, a youth-based organization that uses multimedia to improve the lives of people living in informal settlements like Kibera. Nairobits has lots of programming, but what really interested Jacky was their curriculum on graphic and web design.

Recently, Nairobits held a competition where fellow students voted for who they thought was fitting for the titles of “Best Male Student” and “Best Female Student.” Jacky’s peers voted her one of the top two. Both of the finalists were then quizzed in front of a panel of staff. After her performance on the panel, Jacky was chosen the winner!

Now that she has completed her coursework at Nairobits, she is the proud holder of a Diploma in graphic and web design. She’s applied for internships with a number of organizations and companies—including Nation Media, which publishes Kenya’s Daily Nation newspaper—and is hoping to be called back soon. Her long term goal is to work for a prestigious graphic and web design firm in Kenya, but would also be very happy doing freelance work. She realizes that she still has a ways to go. “I still need experience,” she said. “When you learn more, you move higher. You have to take one step at a time.”

Congratulations, Jacky, on your diploma & accomplishments!

BELINDA AKINYI, A STRONG VOICE FOR EDUCATION

Girls in Kibera work hard. From a young age, girls are expected to do household chores like doing laundry, cleaning around the house, cooking, and washing dishes. They also take care of younger siblings and the rest of their family by going to get water, going to the store, and running other errands. With all of these responsibilities, there’s little time for anything else. Making plans for the future, whether that means going to school or saving money, is difficult. As a result, something long-term like education is easy to ignore without a strong voice advocating for it.

But Belinda found that voice. It came from CFK’s Daughters United program.

Belinda was born in Kibera, in a village called Gatwekera. She discovered Daughters United (Binti Pamoja in Swahili) when she was 12 through a close family friend who was a mentor in the program. The mission of Daughters United—to empower girls to create better futures for themselves and their community—intrigued her and motivated her to get involved.

Attending Daughters United meetings helped Belinda create her own future. When she joined, Belinda knew she wanted to go to high school—but she, like many other girls in Kibera, felt strong cultural pressure to stay with her family instead of going to school. Through weekly group meetings, Belinda’s zeal for learning only increased, eventually inspiring her to apply for a scholarship through CFK’s Education program. Once she was awarded the scholarship, she enrolled in a girls’ boarding school in Nyeri, a city about 2 hours north of Nairobi.

Support from her family and friends, plus her own academic drive, kept her disciplined and active in all four years of high school. She was appointed by her classmates to Prefect as a sophomore, and then to Head Girl (similar to Class President) halfway through her junior year. In addition to her responsibilities in the school’s student leadership, she ran track and played soccer. She also came back for Daughters United meetings during school holidays. Despite all these commitments, her grades never faltered. She earned an A- on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Exam, which is incredibly rare and impressive. (Think of it as getting a 1580 on the SAT.)

Belinda is currently enrolled in university, and she’s drawing on her past experience building community with other girls to decide what she wants to study.

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Kibera is a tough place to grow up, especially for girls.

Girls deserve to be safe and respected. They deserve to flourish.

Strong girls—like Jacky and Belinda—build strong communities. CFK’s Daughters United program seeks to give girls the tools to change their communities for the better. Your support will go towards providing girls with:

- high school scholarships
- reproductive health workshops
- arts classes and supplies
- computers for the new Daughters United center
- financial literacy classes

You can give girls in Kibera the opportunity to flourish.

Donate today: CFK.UNC.EDU/GIVE

Belinda, continued from page 3.

Originally, she wanted to major in a technical field, such as architecture or statistics. Now, she’s pursuing a degree in Human Resource Management (HRM), saying that she would feel personally fulfilled by communicating with others and working together to solve problems.

As a Safe Space mentor, Belinda is already getting valuable experience doing just that. She acknowledges that she learned several valuable life lessons through Daughters United, and now feels equipped to teach others those same lessons. She believes that building community is important and natural for girls, saying, “We have a mutual understanding and appreciation for one another because we have the same roots as Kiberans.” On average, 30 girls attend her weekly mentoring sessions, where she leads discussions about topics like the value of staying in school, the pressures of drug use, and early pregnancy. Her favorite part of mentoring is the freedom to talk to her peers about delicate subjects, especially things that hold them back from completing their education. “I want them to soar higher in spite of all the disadvantages they face,” she said. She hopes that one day she can spark in others the same zeal for education that she found through Daughters United.

“I want them to soar higher in spite of all the disadvantages they face.”