



*Anthony: his 22
years held so
much promise.*

An enormous mustard-colored elephant appeared in the office doorway, a human beneath its bulk. I knew instinctively I had been had!

"I didn't mean this big Anthony," I said rather stridently. *"Just something small, like all the others."*

"Sorry," he said, without sounding that way. *"You didn't say ... I didn't realise."*

"How much is it?" I broached, wary of the answer.

"Twenty thousand," he replied, unblinking, an almost discernible smile.

Not a paltry sum: about \$200! What could I say? We hadn't negotiated: an open-ended deal. Anthony 1, Duncan 0!

"So where's the ant?" I asked, thinking I might catch him on a technicality. *"Right here,"* he said, fishing a red-black, ant-like object from his pocket. *"What do you think? OK?"*

Anthony came from the slums of Nairobi, initially motivated by involvement with a school group which focused on 'Sustainable Change'. There was indeed a massive incentive to change things, right there on his doorstep: *Dandora Dump* ... a suburban rubbish dump of Himalayan proportions, which smelled and smoked all day, all night!



Anthony Gitau 1992-2014

To help support himself and family he made miniature African animals from wire and re-cycled beading. He was skilled at this, so one day I asked if he could make an elephant and an ant, to support a *David & Goliath* tale I sometimes told at meetings.

"Yeah, sure," he said. "I'll bring it next week."

My work focused on education for young people in Kenya, but it had a rebound effect of re-educating me, to the character and fortitude of Kenyan youth. This young lad with short dreadlocks and no-nonsense attitude stood out from an impressive crowd! It was not just his rise from the slums; remarkable enough, but more than that: he focused on changing the status quo, boasting a charisma to motivate others towards the same. Anthony graduated from running the school group, to heading up the youth team based at our workplace and becoming intimately involved in large events for schools, as the warm-up act, an integral part of rousing a sea of schoolkids.

A few weeks after the elephant-in-the-doorway incident, I gate-crashed a youth group meeting. Anthony was in the chair and welcomed me warmly:

"This is our father; he has done so much for us."

It sounded too Godly for me, but those few words, delivered with total sincerity, remain etched on my memory ... forever.

Some weeks after, he turned up, wanting to present ideas to the office staff. So, for the lunchtime break we assembled around a whiteboard. After a few minutes I twigged that

something was wrong. He was spouting incoherent rubbish: so unlike Anthony. I ended the session as calmly as possible, and later he left. That was the last time I saw him.

My colleagues and I were shocked when news came of his death. Some sort of brain hemorrhage we were told. Even now, after almost a decade, I think back to those final encounters – and the close relationship we developed

This inspiring young man is fondly remembered for completing a long walk across Kenya to save the elephant, for his stated aim to plant a million trees, and for that *Greta-type* leadership of his peers. Anthony Gitau: an outstanding example of Kenyan youth.!

Duncan Gregory

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