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ISSUE 21



“TM changed everything. It brought in the light. The conflicting thoughts that had plagued me all my life were gone. It calmed my mind and gave me peace.”
—Gladys Kimtai

MY STORY

In this column meditators share their stories of how they started the Transcendental Meditation technique and what kinds of positive changes have occurred in their lives.

Running for the Light

BY GLADYS KIMTAI

I was born in Kapkoi, a small village in Kenya, to a Roman Catholic family. My parents died when I was two, so my grandparents raised my sister and brothers and me. My grandparents both passed away by the time I was twelve. At that point my three brothers, who were not much older than me, had to quit school and take over the farm, raising livestock and growing beans and corn.



When we had food, we ate. Otherwise, we didn't. We slept on cowhides by the open fire in the kitchen, underneath quilts my grandmother made out of old clothes. We had no soap, washed in the river, and drank from that same river.

I don't know how it happened, but after my parents died, a prosperous doctor and his family from our village offered to provide an education to the youngest child. That was me. So when I was only three years old, they enrolled me in a boarding school near their home in Eldoret, which was a three-hour drive in a *matatu*, a kind of public bus, from my home.

I can't describe how unusual it was in my village for a girl to receive an education. Usually if a family had resources, they would send their boys to school. If there was money left over,



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TM NEWS

**I Woke Up And Realized
Everything I Thought I Knew
Was Wrong**

"I'd sobbed and wailed myself to

Most international students struggle with homesickness and adjusting to a new culture. My struggle was not about the culture. It was something inside me, my conflicted feelings over the good things that kept happening to me.

As a teenager, I boarded at a Catholic secondary school nearer to my village. Most of the students spoke Kalenjin, so I was able to relearn my language. I no longer wanted the doctor's family to support me, yet I knew that my mind was quick and that my education was the one thing I had control over. So when my friend heard that a Kenyan student had earned a running scholarship to an America college, I thought, "This is for me."

I'd never done any running before, so my friend literally held my hand and ran with me for a week so that I could learn how. We recruited other friends to run together and write letters to colleges asking for scholarships. It was such a random thing. A few colleges wrote back asking us questions like, "What is your SAT score?" So then we took the SATs, and fortunately we all scored high.

The colleges wanted to know what kind of running we did and how fast we ran. We didn't know the answers to these questions, but we knew that we'd have to do some serious training. We couldn't train in our villages, because people would think we were trying to compete with the professional athletes that Eldoret is famous for and would discourage us, especially the girls.



Like so many other important events in my life, TM came to me as a gift.

they would send the girls. But that almost never happened.

Although I am very grateful for my education, it was also very difficult. In the city I had three meals a day, hot, running water and nice clothes, yet I felt deeply confused about why I was being given all these gifts while my family struggled so. I didn't feel like I belonged there.

I didn't feel like I belonged at home, either. I spent most of my school holidays with the doctor's family in Eldoret. At school I spoke Swahili and English, so when I did get to return to my village, I found I was losing my ability to understand and speak Kalenjin, my tribal language. It became difficult to talk to my grandparents when they were still alive, and because none of my siblings understood what I was going through, I found it difficult to confide in them.

So we moved to a training camp in an old, abandoned building about an hour from my village and lived there for ten months. We slept on the floor, half the building for the girls and half for the boys. We brought cooking pots, grains, and vegetables from home.

At one point I had three offers—and two were full academic scholarships. I wasn't able to accept those because the 2007-2008 election riots made it too dangerous to travel to the embassy in Nairobi to get my visa. But in the fall of 2008, I accepted a cross country and track scholarship at Harding University, a Christian school in Searcy, Arkansas. I majored in pre-med because I wanted to become a doctor and help the people in my village.

Most international students struggle with homesickness and adjusting to a new culture. My struggle was not about the culture. It was something inside me, my conflicted feelings over the good things that kept happening to me. Even though I was working on campus after class and during the summers so I could send money home to my brothers, I would cry at night

because I couldn't stop thinking, "No, no, no. This should be for my family, not me."

Like so many other important events in my life, TM came to me as a gift. In my senior year, a group of friends and I traveled to Little Rock to take qualifying tests to join the US Army, which was offering international students the opportunity to serve in return for citizenship and an income. By chance, we met a family from Fairfield, Iowa, who told us about the benefits of TM.

I called the Little Rock TM Center right away, but I didn't have the money to start. After graduation, I worked as an aide in a hospital in Searcy, but by now I knew that I could not become a doctor because the suffering of the patients made me feel too emotional. At the same time the opportunity to serve in the US Army fell through.

Then in spring of 2013, when I thought I would have to return to Kenya without any real skills to offer the

sleep, night after night, desperately praying for a solution... [MORE ▶](#)

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people there, the Little Rock TM Center called and said, "A donor has paid for you to learn the Transcendental Meditation technique." The donor turned out to be the family I had met in Little Rock!



I also hope that I can be a role model for women and girls, because in my village everyone knows that I have gone to college, and they want to see what I can do. I'd like to help girls from Kenya become educated and find a way to support themselves.

TM changed everything. It brought in the light. The conflicting thoughts that had plagued me all my life were gone. It calmed my mind and gave me peace.

The first thing that lifted was the burden of guilt I'd carried so long. I realized that my brothers had supported me out of love, and that they weren't expecting me to repay them with money, especially while I was still a student. I realized that there were many other ways that I could help them.

I also stopped feeling guilty for all the unasked-for gifts in my life. Now I understand that it was "support of nature" and that I should enjoy the amazing opportunities that came my way, since life is meant to be easy, not a struggle.

At the TM Center, I found out about Maharishi University of Management, where I'm currently enrolled as an MA student. Now I have a strong desire to take the TM Teacher Training Course so I can bring this experience of inner peace to my family—to my three brothers and sister, to my three stepbrothers, and to the doctor's family who helped me get an education.

I also hope that I can be a role model for women and girls, because in my village everyone knows that I have gone to college, and they want to see what I can do. I'd like to help girls from Kenya become educated and find a way to support themselves.

I think learning TM will help them to achieve what they want in life. That's something I can give, something valuable that I can

bring back to my family and my village.

Share Your Story

We invite you to send in a short video or article sharing your story of personal growth through the TM program or your experience of applying the TM program in your field of interest, e.g., education, military, business, health, rehabilitation, etc. Please send all submissions to Enlightenment@tm.org. For more information, please visit the [Submissions page](#).

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...

written by a guest

this has made me shade tears...being your best friend I am inspired and keep on keeping on I know the strong person in will always shine.

...

written by a guest

am glad to have known you for all those years. u are a true inspiration. love you lakwenyo... i wish oyu all the best.... yo story got me all emotional :)... i wish i also had a chanc to attend TM

...

written by a guest

Wow!!Never give up and am glad TM has helped you.

...

written by a guest

Wow! Support of nature works great! You're Blessed Gladys & so are your siblings to have you!

...

written by a guest

so moving and inspiring a story! Thank Gladys and the writer!

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