

RULA LENSKA'S OPENING ADDRESS AT DSWT HARAMBEE 2012

DAME DAPHNE... ANGELA... JILL... LADIES AND GENTS... ALL HONOURED GUESTS... JAMBO... IT IS TRULY AN HONOUR AND A GREAT PERSONAL JOY TO BE HOSTING TONIGHT'S HARAMBEE WHICH BY THE WAY MEANS LETS ALL PULL TOGETHER....

QUOTE HENRY BESTON... A NATURALIST IN THE 1920'S

FOR THE ANIMAL SHOULD NOT BE MEASURED BY MAN... IN A WORLD OLDER AND MORE COMPLETE THAN OURS, THEY MOVE FINISHED AND COMPLETE... GIFTED WITH THE EXTENSION OF THE SENSES WE HAVE LOST OR NEVER ATTAINED.. LIVING BY VOICES WE SHALL NEVER HEAR...THEY ARE NOT BRETHREN... THEY ARE NOT UNDERLINGS.... THEY ARE OTHER NATIONS... CAUGHT WITH OURSELVES IN THE NET OF LIFE AND TIME... FELLOW PRISONERS OF THE SPLENDOUR AND TRAVAIL OF THIS PRECIOUS EARTH...

I FIRST MET DAPHNE OVER 25 YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS ASKED TO VOICE ONE OF THE FIRST FILMS MADE ABOUT HER CALLED THE ORPHANS OF TSAVO... THE CHARITY AND DAPHNE HERSELF HAVE OVER THE YEARS BECOME VERY CLOSE TO MY HEART.....

.. ALWAYS HAVING BEEN IN AWE OF THE GREATEST LAND MAMMAL ON EARTH.... THE MAGNIFICENT ELEPHANT.. I HAVE BEEN ABLE THROUGH THE CHARITY AND DAPHNE HERSELF TO LEARN SO MUCH ABOUT THEM... TO GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THEM BOTH IN THE NAIROBI NURSERY AND IN THE TSAVO STOCKADES.. TO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF SPENDING TIME WITH DAPHNE AND THE WONDERFULLY DEDICATED KEEPERS AS THEY GIVE THESE EXTRAORDINARY ANIMALS ANOTHER CHANCE OF A FREE LIFE...

I HAVE LEARNED HOW INCREDIBLY CLOSE THESE GENTLE GIANTS ARE TO US HUMANS IN EMOTIONAL MAKE UP... I HAVE SEEN THEM SUFFERING AND TRAUMATISED WHEN THEY ARE FIRST DELIVERED TO DAPHNE'S LOVING CARE... I HAVE SEEN THEM LOOKED AFTER AND NURTURED BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY... GENUINELY LOVED COMFORTED AND HELPED TO OVERCOME THE TRAGEDIES WHICH THEY HAVE SUFFERED...

I HAVE SEEN THEM SLOWLY LEARN TO INTERACT AND TRUST THE KEEPERS, WHO FOR A LONG TIME TAKE THE PLACE OF THEIR NATURAL FAMILIES....TO LEARN TO PLAY AND BE CAREFREE...FIND THEIR OWN PLACE WITHIN THE HIERARCHY OF THEIR GROUPS AND SLOWLY SLOWLY.. OR POLE POLE IN SWAHILI...REGAIN THEIR ELEPHANTNESS AND RE INTEGRATE WITH THEIR WILD COUNTERPARTS....WHEN THEY FEEL THEY ARE READY...

ALL OF THIS IS A LIFE LONG COMMITMENT.... TO TEACH A TRAUMATISED BABY ELEPHANT WHO HAS EITHER SEEN HIS NATURAL FAMILY MASSACRED OR INJURED... OR WHO HAS BECOME SEPERATED FROM HIS OR HER FAMILY THROUGH SOME ACCIDENT USUALLY CAUSED BY MAN..... FOR THE LITTLE ONES TO REALLY KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOW SAFE... AND LOVED... AND CARED FOR TAKES A LONG LONG TIME... AND IT IS TRULY ASTOUNDING TO SEE THIS DEDICATION IN EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE PATIENT AND LOVING KEEPERS WHO BECOME THE ELEPHANTS SURROGATE FAMILY...

IT IS MOVING AND TOUCHING TO SEE THE LITTLE ONES INTERACTING WITH THEIR KEEPERS IN THE NURSERY AND LATER WHEN THEY GRADUATE TO THE JUNIOR FACILITIES... AND BECOMING MORE MATURE AND CONFIDENT... AND... HOW IT IS THE ELEPHANTS THEMSELVES WHO DECIDE WHEN IT IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR THEM TO START MAKING CONTACT WITH THEIR WILD RELATIVES....

I FEEL SO VERY PRIVILEGED TO HAVE WITNESSED THIS AT CLOSE QUARTERS STANDING OR SITTING IN AMONGST THEM AS THEY GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY ROUTINES....ALWAYS FASCINATING.. OFTEN HEARTRENDING WITH THE TINY ONES WHOSE TRAUMA AND SUFFERING IS SO VERY VISIBLE...

I AM THE PROUD FOSTER PARENT OF 3 ELEPHANTS AT THIS MOMENT... ONE ALREADY PROPERLY BACK IN THE WILD AND LEADING A WILD ELEPHANT LIFE, THOUGH STILL OCCASIONALLY POPPING BACK TO SEE THE STOCKADES AND THE KEEPERS...AS THEY ALL SEEM TO DO.... YOU SEE IT IS TRUE .. AN ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS...

.ALL THE WORLDS WILDLIFE IS UNDER THREAT... BUT TOP OF THE LIST IS THE ELEPHANT... THE MAGNIFICENT ARCHITECT OF NATURE... INTELLIGENT... DEDICATED MOTHERS... SOCIAL.. EMOTIONALLY ON A PAR WITH HUMANS.... I DONT WANT TO IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT THEM...

FOR IN THE WORDS.. SUPPOSEDLY OF CHIEF SEATTLE....

IF ALL THE BEASTS WERE GONE MY CHILD... MAN WOULD DIE FROM A GREAT LONELINESS OF SPIRIT...FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS TO THE BEASTS SOON HAPPENS TO US.. IF PEOPLE SPIT ON UPON THE EARTH THEY SPIT UPON THEMSELVES.. THE WORLD DOES NOT BELONG TO THE PEOPLE...PEOPLE BELONG TO THE EARTH

FOR ALL THINGS ARE CONNECTED. LIKE THE BLOOD THAT UNITES ONE FAMILY... MAN DID NOT WEAVE THE WEB OF LIFE... HE IS MERELY A STRAND IN IT.. AND WHATEVER HE DOES TO THAT STRAND.... HE DOES TO HIMSELF.... ALL THINGS ARE CONNECTED...

DEAREST DAPHNE AND YOUR WONDERFUL FAMILY AND TEAM OF CARING KEEPERS... YOU HAVE DONE AND ARE DOING WONDERS... I AM IN AWE OF YOU AS I AM SURE EVERYONE HERE TONIGHT IS...

PLEASE DEAR SUPPORTERS AND GUESTS... SPREAD THE WORD... FOSTERING AN ELEPHANT IS A WONDERFUL PRESENT FOR ANY PERSON YOUNG OR OLD... YOU WILL GET REAL FEEDBACK AND FEEL AS IF YOU ARE GIVING SOMETHING BACK TO THIS CRAZY WORLD.

DIG DEEP IN YOUR POCKETS SO WE CAN RAISE ENORMOUS ELEPHANTINE SUMS OF MONEY FOR THIS ALL IMPORTANT WORK TO CONTINUE...

WE HAVE SOME FANTASTIC TREATS IN STORE FOR YOU TONIGHT... SO EAT .. DRINK... BID... SPEND AND BE VERY MERRY...

I HOPE THIS EVENING WILL BE ONE YOU WILL ALL ALWAYS REMEMBER.... AND THROUGH YOU... ONE... THE ELEPHANTS... WILL NEVER FORGET....