

The Daily Gleaner

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By Alycia Morehouse

An Earth Day message to love and conserve

"In the end,

We will conserve only what we love,

We will love only what we understand,

We will understand only what we are taught."

Baba Dioum

During a recent vacation, I came across this quote on a plaque at the Bronx Zoo in New York. It is attributed to Baba Dioum, a Senegalese environmentalist, who spoke the words in a 1968 address in New Delhi to the general assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Forty-three years later, his words are still as meaningful as ever.

Every year around this time, as Earth Day gets closer, I am reminded to be a little more thoughtful than normal and consider my conservation practices. The trip through the Bronx Zoo, coupled with a visit to the Museum of Natural History in Manhattan, provided an inspiring look at our planet's biodiversity and why conserving nature's resources is so critical.

My up close visit with a polar bear reminded that these amazing animals are at risk of extinction because of the earth's warming – something that humans have greatly contributed to. And seeing the lions, panthers, and many rainforest birds and reptiles allowed me to view their beauty and majesty, and think hard about how their habitat is in jeopardy through breaks in the food chain, forest harvest, and devastating storm events. A quick tour of the biodiversity exhibit opened my eyes to how fragile our ecosystems are, and that in gaining a better understanding and appreciation of them, will grow and foster that love for the planet that is so important in our quest to care for it and conserve it.

The Disneynature production company is behind a great series of films designed to educate people on the critical value of nature and its inhabitants. And, as they have done so wonderfully before with the movies: Earth, Oceans, and Crimson Wing, Disneynature is back again celebrating Earth Day with African Cats. Green Matters will be hosting a special screening on Wednesday, April 27th, at 2pm, at Empire Theatres in Regent Mall. This event will be a special celebration of Earth Day – April 22nd – which this year falls on Good Friday. Join us for a touching and powerful look into the lives of lions Mara and Fang, and cheetah Sita, and their home on the African savanna.

You can learn more about the movie, and find great educational resources for children at: <http://disney.go.com/disneynature/africancats>.

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Also, during the opening week of the film, Disneynature will contribute 20¢ per ticket to the African Wildlife Foundation for the Amboseli Corridor Project, with a minimum of \$100,000 pledged to this program.

While I have committed to living Earth Day every day, it often takes reminders such as Dioum's inspiring words, a sleeping polar bear, or a feature film, to bring it into perspective and really contemplate the reality that this planet is not just where we live, its resources are everything that sustains us.

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