

To successfully do social justice with the poor you need a distinctive way of using power that enables the poor without imposing yourself on them. Greg Mortenson seems to have accomplished this delicate balance through utilizing the experiences he had growing up and through his life right up to his failed attempt to summit K2. Mortenson's power in this area came out of these experiences, and gave him both the determination and character to accomplish what he did in Pakistan. What follows explains what of his past helped him in Pakistan, and how the power it gave him is evident in his work in Pakistan.

Mortenson is an American citizen, born in the United States. However, shortly after birth his parents took up a missionary position in what later became Tanzania, so Mortenson's childhood was primarily abroad. Among his parents' tasks in Tanzania were establishing the first teaching hospital and the Moshi International School. As such, from before he knew what was going on, he was at the heart of a family committed to doing work similar to what Mortenson eventually did in Pakistan. The other major pull from his childhood home was growing up in and amongst Tanzanian culture. In many ways Mortenson thought of himself as Tanzanian. You can easily consider the Tanzanians he grew up with as equally lacking in resources as the villagers of Korphe but in a bit more hospitable of locations.

The second major chapter in Mortenson's past that plays a significant role in his character and determination for his work in Pakistan is his relationship with his youngest sister, Christa. Christa lagged behind her older siblings and after a bad reaction to a vaccination led to her brain dysfunction that caused epileptic seizures. Mortenson became a protective presence over her for what remained of her life before she died of a seizure one night when Mortenson was climbing a mountain. It isn't a stretch to compare Christa to Jahan and the other disadvantaged children of

Korphe. Christa found ways to overcome how much slower she was at things and all of Korphe's children were studying even without teacher and school.

How both of these significant chapters in Mortenson's past, as well as almost all the rest of his past, feed his balancing act for effective social justice work in Pakistan is quite complicated. So first let me explain the simplest of connections. One of the key advantages Mortenson had over his fellow Americans was his Tanzanian childhood. It is this experience that prepared Mortenson for the basics of village life in a place like Korphe. Though he was young and relatively uninvolved with his parent's social justice tasks, he was exposed to that line of work early enough to draw him into it. Then, lastly, his loving relationship with Christa gave him another kind of experience to carry forward to anyone who is disadvantaged. These are all core components of the energy behind Mortenson's powerful initiative to perform his social justice work in Pakistan.

The entire Korphe school project came before the Central Asia Institute (CAI) was solidly formed, and hence before any formal framework existed for Mortenson's social justice. Mortenson has an extraordinary amount of courage and is an effective leader. Across all his of past experiences there is also the practice of patient consultation and power sharing that he began with his Pakistani peers. Later on the CAI formed the formal organization for his work, and so enforced a framework that balanced the power and level of imposing for itself. Nonetheless people said that the CAI wouldn't survive without Mortenson, so with that thought Mortenson maintained this delicate balance the entire time.

The path Mortenson's life took to get him to Korphe and initiate what became the CAI is in itself the largest weight contributing to this delicate balancing of social justice. I've already mentioned his childhood, but I hadn't yet noted how in a very literal sense you could give Christa

credit for pushing her brother to Korphe, because Mortenson's K2 attempt was mainly to honor Christa. In a sense Mortenson would never have stumbled upon Korphe and with it his life's work without the need to honor a sister who died in the midst of a personal struggle.

What becomes especially impressive is that from both the US and Pakistan Mortenson was willing and able to continue his work after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. He fell into the role of leading one war against terrorism that had community-enhancing as its strategy and positive peace as its goal, whereas his own country's government was leading a war against terrorism based on deception, with killing as its strategy and negative peace (or absence of war) as its goal. In many ways Mortenson's responsibilities grew exponentially as he pushed forward with the CAI in what he was being told was the most dangerous soil for Americans. Yet with a decade of feeling at home in Pakistan he was able to do his humanitarian social justice work relatively unhindered, and even helped by the opposition to the war that was going on.

Mortenson's unique childhood was the most important aspect of his past that fed into his work in Pakistan. The power he was able to balance using the experiences of his childhood and the willingness to help others is all that held together his initial decision and letter writing regarding the school for Korphe. All throughout his work he never lost hope, and if anything gained more hope as his group of Pakistani staff grew. Mortenson has done something that truly does earn him the various titles people gave him: Another soldier on the frontlines, saint for Pakistanis, and just generally a hero. Many of us don't have the means to do anything like what Mortenson did, so his endeavor is all that much more important for us. He has set a high standard for social justice work, and we ought to learn from it so we can balance this often-treacherous area of work.