



Norma Adhiambo

Paola Gianturco, center, works in a Kenyan cornfield with members of GWAKO (Groups of Women in Water and Agriculture, Kochieng). Gianturco, an Urbana native, has released four photojournalistic books.

'WOMEN WHO LIGHT THE DARK'

A NEW DIRECTION

Urbana native's
love of travel,
photography leads
to second career

By **MELISSA MERLI**
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URBANA — After working for 35 years in marketing and public relations, Urbana native Paola Gianturco took a right-angle turn and embarked upon a new life and second career.

"I decided to take a sabbatical, or time out from my working life and do only what I loved most and what I wanted to learn next," she said. "And what I loved most was photography and traveling and what I wanted to learn next was women entrepreneurs in the developing world."



Paola Gianturco

This Kenyan woman, seen singing while harvesting crops, is among the women featured in Gianturco's new book, 'Women Who Light the Dark.'

The result was four photojournalistic books, with "Women Who Light the Dark" being the most recent. Released earlier this month by powerHouse Books in New York, the book focuses on 129 women in 15 countries on five continents who are helping other women with intractable problems such as sex trafficking, violence, domestic violence, poverty and HIV, Gianturco said.

A contemporary of Roger Ebert's, Gianturco arranged for her book tour to coincide with her 50th high school reunion. As part of the event, she will give a slide presentation to her former classmates Friday evening at the Urbana Civic Center. She will then sign copies of her book.

While in high school, Gianturco was a co-editor of her school newspaper, *The Echo*, and along with the editors of other student newspapers in Campaign-Urbana, took turns writing a column for *The News-Gazette*. "Interestingly that early journalistic experience propelled me in this direction after all these years," she said.

For Gianturco, who lives in Mill Valley, Calif., the direction toward women came naturally — as she had long been involved in women's rights and was a principal in the first woman-owned advertising agency in the country.

Fortuitously, the year she switched from business to books was 1995, the year of the United Nations' Fourth

Books by Paola Gianturco

— "In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World," co written with Toby Tuttle, a bestseller (hardback, 2000, Monacelli Press; paperback, 2004, powerHouse Books).

— "Celebrating Women" (powerHouse Books, 2004) became the subject of the first exhibit curated by the International Museum of Women in San Francisco. The book looks at festivals in 15 countries that celebrate women.

— The bilingual "¡Viva Colores! A Salute to the Indomitable People of Guatemala" (powerHouse Books, 2006), was co-authored by Gianturco's husband, David Hill, a writer.

— "Women Who Light the Dark" (2007, powerHouse Books), focuses on

World Conference on Women in Beijing.

"I read about women who in developing worlds were sending their children to school on the money they earned even when they were living on \$1 a day," Gianturco remembered. "I thought, 'My God, they are heroic.' I wanted to meet them and document their life. I then set forward with the idea of doing a book when I had no idea of how to do a book."



GIANTURCO

129 women in 15 countries on five continents who are helping other women with problems such as sex trafficking, violence, domestic violence, poverty and HIV.

The books are philanthropic projects for which Gianturco donates her royalties to nonprofit organizations that relate to the content in the book. For "Women Who Light the Dark," Gianturco will give 100 percent of her royalties to the Global Fund for Women, which gives grants to women's groups worldwide.

MELISSA MERLI

Her first, co-written with Toby Tuttle, went on to become a best-seller: "In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World." While working on "Women Who Light the Dark," Gianturco discovered that many women worldwide, including in the U.S., are using their imagination, or the arts, to tackle problems.

"It's amazing to see young girls

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AUTHOR

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from 6 to 16 in Zimbabwe fighting child rape by writing and performing poetry in front of their communities," Gianturco said. "The community members were so outraged that they mobilized right away."

The outbreak of child rape in South Africa, she said, is due to traditional healers advising men with HIV that they will be cured if they rape virgins. Because of that edict, an estimated 20,000 girls have been raped in Zimbabwe, she said.

Gianturco's next project will be to work with the Field Museum in Chicago on an exhibition based on her book, "Celebrating Women," about festivals in 15 countries that pay tribute to women.

That exhibition will open in March 2008 and run for seven months.

Her work has been exhibited in other venues as well, among them the United Nations, the U.S. Senate, the Smithsonian

Folklife Festival and the International Museum of Women. More than 40 of her photographs are in the permanent collection of The Museum of African Diaspora in San Francisco.

Her photographs have appeared in magazines such as *Marie Claire*, *Essence*, *Harpers Bazaar-Australia*, *Spirituality and Health* and many of the major daily newspapers in the United States. Gianturco has been a guest on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," CNN, NPR and *Voice of America*.

Her 50th high school reunion will mark the first time that Gianturco has visited Urbana since 1999, when her mother, the Urbana-born *Daily Gianturco*, died.

Paola's father, Dr. Cesare Gianturco, died in 1995. A radiologist, he was one of the co-founders of Carle Clinic in Urbana and was instrumental in developing the field of interventional radiology.

"My father was born in Italy, and this is really a wonderful year for my family — Italy is celebrating the 150th anniversary of my grandfather's birth and the 100th anniversary of his death," Gianturco said.

The finale events in honor of Emanuele Gianturco will take place in mid-November in his birthplace, Avigliano, in southern Italy; Gianturco plans to attend even though she never met her grandfather, who was a member of Parliament and wrote some of the laws that are still in place in Italy.

He also was a minister of education and of transportation; many railway stations in Italy are named after him. She called him a remarkable man: Emanuele Gianturco also wrote symphonies, and a CD of his music is to be released this year.

"We are publishing my grandmother's diary from the 1890s in Italy," Gianturco said. "It's about their life, and what it was like after Italy was unified."

In addition to photojournalism and writing, Paola Gianturco has served on the boards of International Nature & Cultural Adventures, the Association for Women's Rights in Development, and the Crafts Center, which works with women artisans in 79 countries. She has co-taught executive institutes on women and leadership at Stanford University, from which she graduated in 1961.