



Initiatives of Change



As we reel in the shock and heartache of the killing of innocent people in Paris, Bujumbura, Beirut and other places, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you blessings of peace and love at this time and may the new year bring with it fresh opportunities for each one of us to live to make a difference wherever we are.



"As a Parisian, we knew that our security and intelligence services were anxious of possible attacks, because of French involvement in Syria and Sahel. Until something happened, we could not have thought it would be so tragic that it would affect people around the world.

feelings of injustice that inhabits many of our young people, the need to feel respected in their dignity, the need to feel heard in their frustrations, the need to be morally structured in their minds, the need to have a satisfactory aim for their life, the need to have a job and to feel useful to the society. We must meet all these needs and learn how to create a society where we have an intensive care for one another in a mutual respect and esteem."

Frédéric Chavanne, France

We wonder what will be the consequences on our society that have been traumatized by these events. I hope it will force us to more unity and a deeper concern for what needs to change in our society and world wide. The wave of migrants coming to Europe and these terrible attacks bring us in a new reality of one world that needs our care. Those who commit such violence must be condemned with big firmness.

The ideology of violence and breaking away needs to be fought against. We must nevertheless think of the roots that generate such violence. In Trappes, a city on south west of Paris Suburb, we are told that 150 young people have gone to Syria joining Daesh.

There are needs we must find an answer to. The

A Muslim mother wrote: 'These attackers, they seem to forget we also are French and we stand with all our fellow French citizens against the same front, as well as in our Arabic countries. As a Muslim myself, my suffering is doubled and some time it is silent...Doubled because as a French person I suffer, and because these attackers act in the name of my religion.'



"I am thinking of the Lebanese people who carry with courage and dignity the tensions and attempts on their soil since many years; of the Russian

people who are still mourning the 224 people killed in the plane crash and also of those populations in Africa suffering from Boko Haram. And now the Tunisians.

I find it hard to write what goes on in my heart. Such a situation requires firmness as well as an honest look at our society. Where have we gone wrong if so many young French have to go to Syria to find a purpose in life and a decent or meaningful place? There will be a before and an after 13 November 2015.

Charles Danguy lives in Lorraine in the area known as the three borders area (France, Luxembourg and Germany). Since the mid 1960s, as an observer for the movement Initiatives of Change, he has regularly attended the European Parliament sessions, mostly in Strasbourg, in order to create honest and private dialogues between the electors and the elected for better mutual understanding.

Breaking out of the cocoon

It's a truism that a picture can be worth a thousand words. A family photo taken in 1964, when Wilhelm Verwoerd was a few months old, shows him cradled in his paternal grandfather's arms, surrounded by his older siblings and other relatives. Hendrik Verwoerd - known as the "architect of apartheid" - was assassinated while serving as South African prime minister in 1966.



Wilhelm began a talk on the tools of empathy and peace-building to a Richmond, Virginia, audience in the USA in September by pointing to the symbolism of the picture: "I was suckled on the milk of apartheid."

Wilhelm told how his grandfather, born in the Netherlands, decided to move with his family to South Africa in 1903 because of his sympathy towards the Afrikaner nation after the Second Boer War. (More than 4000 women and 22,000 children died in concentration camps, where they were herded together in appalling conditions by the British forces.) "My grandfather was a hero in my community. I grew up in this cocoon."

Wilhelm went to study in the Netherlands, where he found himself among a racially mixed group for the first time. "I had to be removed from the white cocoon of blindness." To his surprise, the black members of the group said, "We don't want you to disrespect your grandfather. The question is: what will you do now?" His time in the Netherlands and



later at Oxford set him on a course that ultimately led to his decision to renounce

apartheid and to join the ANC where he became an active leader. He was chosen by Nelson Mandela to serve on the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In recent years he has used his experience of breaking the grip of the past in such places as Northern Ireland and the Middle East.

Charles Stillwell, the headmaster of the school, wrote in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* about the ongoing work of healing racial history in Richmond and his reasons for inviting Wilhelm Verwoerd to speak: "A diverse group of community leaders continues to wrestle with embracing our history and current realities in an honest, direct manner. We should be grateful for the work of the many change agents. Verwoerd's lessons about building understanding and trust that helped bring such positive change in South Africa will offer new insight as we continue to work together to build a strong and inclusive Richmond."

Several hundred people attended the event which was hosted by St. Christopher's School, a leading private boys' school, with support from Hope in the Cities/Initiatives of Change and the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. The following day Wilhelm spoke to an assembly of students as well as to classes.

Report by Rob Corcoran, National Director Initiatives of Change, USA

Change in Progress



CHANGE IN PROGRESS

The third *Change in Progress* (CiP) camp was an energetic and lively event. The first five days of intensive training began on December 4th at a camp site at Golden Gate National Park in the eastern Free State province.

The participants were 14 young people between the ages of 18-25 years - six from Zimbabwe and eight from South Africa. The aim was to equip the youth to lead a moral- and visionary-based lifestyle. They started their journey of self-



discovery beginning with change within themselves and seeing how to apply it in their community and the world. The training was guided by a team of two facilitators, three guest speakers and four mentors. Participants built a circle of trust, learning, support and deep bonds of friendship.

There was a common feeling of excitement, appreciation and care amongst the Zimbabwean and South African participants as they taught each other indigenous games and informed one another about their culture and food.

Zimbabwean, Tafadzwa Heath Sedeya (*right*), shared as we walked around a Basotho village, where we had an excursion to learn the history of the Basotho people, "I never thought that the Basotho people and 'us', the Shona have so much in common. I am grateful for having attended this camp because it reinforced in me the importance of applying the four absolute moral standards in all situations of my life. Another Zimbabwean, Tanaka Mhunduru (*left*) said, "This camp was an eye opener. I have been spiritually renewed."



Story telling was part of the camp programme. CiP camp mentor, Moleboheng Molefe, said, "Story sharing is part of a healing process. You



release, you share something verbally. Lack of forgiveness holds one back. When you forgive someone you move from being a victim to being a victor. A leader is someone who is willing to take risks."

"I kept a lot of things to myself because I thought people do not care," said South African, Mmone Molefe.

"However, since I became part of CiP, I started communicating with other people as a leader and now I can share my story..... Now I know the purpose of life and can help other people to make this world a better place starting with my community."



'The art of leadership' session opened another avenue on the journey of self-discovery when exploring the values of a leader. "Leadership is action and not a position. I am a leader and not a follower of my life," shared the presenter Moeketsi Komane, a provincial coordinator at Botshabelo Love life centre, and founder of Inguqu Communications.

Another speaker was Jimmy Mooko. He started his journey as an entrepreneur in 1983, selling vegetables to his community. His philosophy of entrepreneurship is simple. "Answer the need of the needy, be passionate and be driven by lessons learned from past experiences." Mr Mooko is today a renowned businessman and role model in Botshabelo and member of the Bloemfontein Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Part two of the programme took place in the form of outreach from December 9th - 15th in the town of Botshabelo, 40 kms east of Bloemfontein. The aim of this was to put into practice the skills developed at the camp, working alongside the community and some Non Governmental Organisations.

We kicked off the outreach programme by having a conversation with the elders from two old age organisations named Lesedi la ditjhaba and Relesedi Community Centre. We engaged in topics such as gangsterism, teenage pregnancy and the importance of education.

We had time for reflection on issues we ourselves encounter in our communities such as anger, pride and fear. Participants learned the skills to lead a reflection time and share turning points in their own lives.

We had the opportunity to help in a very practical way, cleaning carpets, shaping the gardens and raking the yard at Rebohlokoa Day Care Centre that cares for 58 children between the ages of 1–5 years.



We met at the Botshabelo Love Life Centre with 22 young people residing in Botshabelo and ran workshops on self awareness, reflection, decision making and conflict resolution.

One of the organisers and facilitators, Cleopadia Mohlaodi, felt that the coalition between the Zimbabwean and South African participants had heightened an awareness of the need to respect the qualities and humanity in each of us, and not be identified by our country. She felt that the safe space created together at the camp enabled a dialogue which led to an understanding of the causes of xenophobic attacks. She really appreciated working together with the youth from South Africa and Zimbabwe and hopes this can be an ongoing relationship.



The final day in Botshabelo was a graduation and farewell ceremony for the participants, attended by some of the parents. Guest of honour and speaker was South African, Dr Lillian Cingo.

Dr Cingo is a specialist in Neuro Surgical nursing. She also has a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology and she is one of the *21 Icons* in South



Africa, awarded to her for her part initiating and managing the Phelophepha Health train, offering basic health services to the poorest villages of South Africa.

Dr Lillian Cingo presenting a certificate to graduate, Victor Nyanete, from Zimbabwe

During her address Dr Cingo shared how, after meeting Initiatives of Change, and the challenge to live by moral standards (of honesty, love, unselfishness and purity) it had guided her life and the choices she made. Her challenge to all present was to be mentally, physically and emotionally healthy in order to proceed as the future leaders. Change has consequences, she said, just as in life there will be consequences for everything, but always remember to have Ubuntu, because no man is an island. We need each other. "As you graduate today," she concluded, "go out there and shine, let nothing stop you."

Excerpts from report by Cleopadia Mohlaodi and Victor Nyanete