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“There used to be a line that existed in my life that determined which communities I engaged with and where I went. There was a very large but invisible barrier that prevented me from entering even the outskirts of the ‘no-go’ area around Alexandra town ship. Ingrained belief systems and lack of understanding caused me to be extremely fearful of crossing this line. Reflecting on my experience with Mike and the Partners for Possibility (PFP) program, I am more comfortable, gratified and integrated into the broader South African community, which now includes the community of Iphutheng in Alexandra town ship.

A year after beginning the program, I recall reading some comments posted on social media about the Jozi Run through the streets of Alex in October 2012. Runners were complaining about how filthy the streets were with an infestation of rats and stench of sewerage and verbalized how unsafe they felt during the race. And then it dawned on me – my community had expanded!

As I ran Jozi, I looked for familiar faces and places in Alex that I had come to know and understand through the PFP program. I felt proud to be a familiar member of the Alex community – a community that now represents a place of friendship and learning, rather than a forbidden territory of fear. Alongside Mike at Iphutheng, I have found a space to give back, as I actively contribute to a better South Africa for the future of the children of Iphutheng and as a result, a promising South Africa for my own two girls Hannah and Sasha. They too have come to regard the community of Iphutheng with warmth and acceptance.”

These are the sentiments of Chantal Du Chenne, a Vodacom Group executive who partnered with Mike Thobejane, Principal of Iphutheng Primary School in Alexandra, Johannesburg in the Partners for Possibility one year program starting September 2011.

With a strong background in innovation and health management, Chantal enrolled in the PFP Programme with an openness to step out of her comfort zone and experience a surprisingly unique and powerful platform for leadership development. This platform challenged and shifted her 'traditional' assumptions and prejudices about South African communities and the education system. This shift enabled her and Mike to position Iphutheng primary school as a proud beacon at the centre of its community – a community that has now expanded well beyond the boundaries of Alex. "Only schools, both public and private, that function within a broader community framework can be effective in educating our children to create a bright South African future."

For Mike, his journey with Chantal and the PFP program has proven to be just as impactful. "My leadership acumen has improved significantly. I feel empowered and the positive energy can be felt throughout the school," he said. "Even my District Manager noticed the change," he added. "At a meeting my DM asked me how I managed to stay calm during stressful times and I answered him by saying, 'I have a thinking partner who assists me'. He was impressed and intrigued by the power of the PFP program" Mike said.

Despite their partnership 'officially' ending in September 2012, Mike and Chantal continue their Partnership for Possibility by meeting regularly to exchange and share thoughts and ideas from their own lives and experiences that can be applied in a broader context. This pair has become a Partnership for Possibility for Life.

"Coming into the PFP program, I underestimated the significant and personal life lessons that being partnered with Mike and involved in the iPhutheng community were about to bring. It has been by far the most ground-breaking leadership development programme I have been a part of. The experience challenged many aspects of my thinking and gave me the opportunity to understand first hand. Out the window went many of my convenient assumptions.



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I am now what I consider to be a more fully-fledged South African. Having worked in the community of Alexandra, I more thoroughly appreciate the complexities of the education crisis and what is required of every South African to be part of the solution. The future of this country is in the hands of every South African. A Couch potato rebel movement is required!! Do anything, but do something!! There is much to be done.

We need to be courageous and overcome the barriers that divide our communities. The PFP program is a powerful conduit, a bridge for uniting divided communities of South Africans. When we begin to acknowledge that we are more connected in our humanness than we are separated by our differences, we realise the power of recognising every South African as an integral part of the richness of our unique South African community experience."



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