



Testimonials from people who attended the Community Building workshops during February 2011

The two day gathering far exceeded my expectations...It was quite refreshing to meet so many people, and small conversations, although meaningful.

A very big Thank You for all your devoted efforts; your courage/perseverance for the 'cause'; and ease of your facilitation for such a powerful experience.

Leonard Bade, Social Entrepreneur & MSOD Alum (US)

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that many people die with their music still in them. This workshop provided us with the opportunity to discover that each of us has unique music within us and when we share our 'inner harmonies', we create a remarkable and energising "Symphonia" - a new song for creative and inspired living. The workshop creates a special place for South Africans to come together – to reflect earnestly on the challenges we face, but to discover that within us lie all the gifts and resources required to create a country and a world we will be proud to leave to our children. The 6 Conversations in Community Building is 'hope in action' – real stuff for real people who make a difference

Chris Ahrends, Social Entrepreneur

The two days of community building at idyllic Schoenstadt in Cape Town was an experience and celebration of the power of possibility. A magical, safe space was created where ordinary citizens - young and not so young and from multicultural backgrounds - were invited to open their hearts, minds and souls to one other, and in so doing became the catalyst for extraordinary happenings. I have incredible hope for our future as South Africans and people of the Earth.

Roger Arendse, Coach, Facilitator & Educator

The thought that you have placed within our hearts of being a consumer or rather making a conscious decision on rather being a citizen speaks for itself.

It will be a total waste if someone misses the opportunity of being exposed to the effective methodology used within your workshop. "Changing the world one room at a time" is a true reflection of what this workshop achieves at the end of these two days! This is so needed in our country.

If each participant could find it in their heart to talk about their experience to the loved ones surrounding them, it will already have an enormous effect in enhancing the positive change in our country - and wouldn't we all love to see this materialise.

After all - during these two days one realises that total strangers become real friends to you - people with the same wishes, dreams and aspirations for our children, for one another, for ourselves and for our country. The kind of experiences during the workshop makes it "real" for us and one understand from scratch why we live and would die for South Africa – it is OUR land and we love it so much!

René Wright, Sanlam

The Community Building workshop I attended last week was a really amazing event. About 90 people entered a room as strangers and within the first day they had already become friends, united by the same objective - to make South Africa the great country that we all know it can be. The air was filled with possibilities for the future that were inspiring - a safe country for all, a place where the children can be free to develop their full potential, a place where all children will be loved.

There were many people who would never have crossed each other's paths outside that space and it was incredible how they came together sharing openly and honestly with each other. There was the opportunity to identify our shared humanity and desires for the future and also to celebrate our own uniqueness, with each person being able to identify their own gifts.

All of this is a place of music, song and poetry - it spoke to the heart of all the individuals and really refreshed our spirits. I know from the people that I shared time with in those two days that we all felt energised and excited about the future and ready to take on the work of citizens for our country.

Veronica Wantenaar, Learning Process Facilitator

The Strengthening the fabric of community workshop should be attended because of the following:

- 1. The mode of facilitation is one that will change how we interact and how we share as partners. The power of the small group has got to be seen, participated in and then one will be made aware of the impact.*
- 2. The way that music, poetry, drama and story telling make the room come alive is something you will have to experience yourself. Participants will just be released from their silent corners and it is the start of the mind shift in people.*
- 3. Meeting across the culture divides that was ,and still is, set up will bring you face to face with your beliefs, the myths of our society and your own prejudice. The conversation that you will have will definitely alter the way you perceive others to be.*
- 4. Being faced with your role in the greater South Africa in the conversation, "Consumer or Citizen", will give a new look about you and your community. This will change the conversation as well as the action that you will take in your community as well as in your family.(Family is community-Attend the workshop and you will see why)*
- 5. You will also realise that you as a individual need to, and will, look at yourself. This is when you will realise if you have moved on or if you are chained to the negative and heartbreak stories of your life.*

This is some of the reasons why I believe that the citizens in South Africa need to be at this workshop. I also think that this should be done more.

"MasterCard may be able to buy many things but you workshop is and always will be a priceless experience"

Stephen Mentor, Community Action towards A Safer Environment (CASE)

I was absolutely blown away by the many people doing such good work in the community. I really felt so proud to be a South African. It is so sad that the media's focus is on all the doom and gloom.

There is so much good to report and would it not be great if they can find a balance in the reporting they do.

I have made a few promises to myself to take what I've learnt into the various "rooms" I find myself in and also to give back more than I have been. I realised how wealthy I am with all my blessings which I sometimes take for granted.

Mercia Rinquist, Eerste Rivier Hospital

I don't know how to describe my experience in words.... It was 2 days of a 'perfect world'....a safe space where each person shared and meditated upon the fact that together we are ONE... one in joy, peace and love... that it is possible to live a beautiful life on this earth if we realise that we all have the same needs, overcame same challenges and by sharing our "wealth" (knowledge, skills, money, experiences, etc) we can help each other to live a life of abundance and unity. Celebrating the beauty in each other.... demonstrating it through music, poems, conversations... all that came naturally out of the heart.... brought us together and I believe that many were healed from past hurts during these 2 days.... instead of months of therapy.... as the hearts connected, healing took place..... and people left Friday, changed forever....

Special thanks also to Francois who is using his natural abilities of music and 'story telling'wow, it really touched my heart.... thanks for not hiding your gifts, but using it to communicate in a language that everybody understands and to inspire all... keep on doing it....

Thank you so much, Louise, for your boldness and choosing to make a difference in our country... in using music and heart-conversations to build communities of love and peace.

I do believe we are in the process of healing our country...which is all of us together....

May God bless you and team and your work....achieving the goal....the possibility of all south africans playing together in one big Symphonia!

Diana Toros, Western Cape Education Department

Thank you for the experience of the past two days. The prospect of moving forward with what I've learned yesterday and today fills me with hope.

The knowledge and experiences shared was intense at times yet necessary, and I do believe all of us being in that room over this period of time was not happenstance. Hearing fellow citizens of our country and our world speaking with one voice about the possibilities that are open to us all is a breath of fresh air. We are in this moment of positive change together!

Karin van Wyk, Africa Jam Youth Outreach

These community building sessions are part of the process of reclaiming our common humanity. It encourages me to inhabit a space of not knowing, yet trusting each other, because I know that not to take the risk is far more dangerous than taking the risk will ever be.

Thank you Louise, and Symphonia for South Africa – for encouraging me to be a part of this process of reclaiming a connection with people who I share this wonderful world with.

James Eckley, Symphonia for South Africa

I would recommend this workshop to fellow citizens because you will meet like-minded people who want to make a difference in the world. The space the workshop creates is safe, intimate, fun and most importantly it is a space of co-creating where ideas and input are valued. It reiterated my belief that we as citizens of South Africa and the world need to take our future into our own hands.

Madineyah Isaacs, Social Activist

I continue to be amazed at the potential life offers us...if we would just step out, available & willing!

The privilege of being a part of your workshop has permeated every area of my life. Little did I know that the workshop would be an appointment with destiny! Symphonia has left an indelible fingerprint on my soul. My eternal gratitude & sincere pledge to commitment.

Caron Agulhas, Social Entrepreneur

Thank you Louise for introducing me to "the art of possibility" - initially through Ben Zander during his 2008 visit.

My 'journey' with you and Symphonia for South Africa since has been an absolute privilege and spending time with you and the delegates this past week has reinforced my commitment to this more-than-relevant relationship which EVERY South African who wishes to be and make a difference in this country HAS to embrace! You're an absolute inspiration.

Lynn Baker, CCFM

I just want to thank you for 2 wonderful days that came so unexpectedly! When our team were approached by James, Veronica and Erica it felt like we were just to attend another workshop, but oh boy, how wrong I was!!

It was an amazing experience to be amongst such a diverse group of people and the amount of energy generated in the room really blew my mind. I can honestly say that I have experienced so much on a personal level and to hear everybody's voice, brought many things into perspective for me! I also had an amazing conversation with Nadia which was meant to be!!!

I want to congratulate you and your team for everything you have done to make this an experience of a lifetime! I am looking forward to attend the next workshop!

Susan Burgess, Metro North Education District

I am one of the school principals from the Uitsig area. I was the person who suggested that we end off with 'Imagine'.

I would like to thank you for granting us the opportunity to grow in a new South Africa. There were people there for me to tell my story. My story will one day be told of a little boy who grew up in a white neighbourhood in Johannesburg. His mother was coloured. His father Indian. Later he was reclassified and detained. He hated whites.

One day in Pretoria he met a verkrampste lady from Oudtshoorn on a school tour and after initially fighting became close friends. Today the Le Roux's and Nagan's braai together.

We need Symphoinia so that we can find our own perspectives in life. We need the balance that was offered at Symphonia.

I went back to my staff and told them that I am a positive leader. I am a catalyst for change at Eurecon Primary and for Connaught Estate as a whole. I am alive with possibility.

Jimmy Nagan, Principal

Please allow me this opportunity to express my very sincere thanks and gratitude for the opportunity granted to me to have actively participated in the two days training. It is really greatly appreciated.

I am quite sure that many of us felt that the two days were a bit too short but never the less it was time very well spent and a job well done.

I very sincerely hope that all participants would take my plea very seriously and would not allow the lessons we all learnt to collect DUST on our shelves. It is a great pity that not more community representatives were able to have participated in this venture.

A few observations that stood out for me:

- 1. The SPACE created to allow participants to express themselves.*
- 2. The active participation by all participants present.*
- 3. The open door expressed by the facilitating team.*
- 4. The presentations shared were very informative and learner-centered.*
- 5. The sharing of experiences and expertise more especially in the small groups.*
- 6. The user-friendly environment that prevailed throughout the duration of the two day training.*

Once again thank you for the opportunity to have participated in the two day training. It is really and truly greatly appreciated.

Polly Jacobs, Health Activist

This was not a workshop in the conventional sense of the word; it was a life-changing, thought-provoking and challenging experience - an inherently African experience. Here, all the voices in the room were heard; art and music and energy mattered; intimacy occurred naturally; honesty prevailed; diversity was celebrated and judgement was put aside. This was an experience of how businesses, communities, social services, homes, even governments could be run: humanely! This was a call to make a contribution, one conversation at a time. And so possibility is born.

For me, personally, this was a wake up call; a reminder of what really matters; a deep recognition of how far we have come as a country and how far we have to go. At the end of the day the choice is ours. The way forward is to make that choice together. The way to make that choice together is through conversation, ownership, allowing dissent, seeing our gifts and collaboration. And collaboration happens when we move from being a consumer to being a citizen! I now own my possibility and wear it, like a cloak, every time I come into the room. And, sorry I can't wait for Superman to pave the way! Louise van Rhyn is a world-class facilitator!

Wendy Ward, Coach

It was a real privilege to be part of the 2 day Community Building workshop in Cape Town. Louise's superb facilitation with the wonderful blend of music and song created a safe space for us to create a world of possibility to live into.

I was struck by the openness and generosity of spirit of everyone present and was deeply humbled by the vital and visionary work that is already happening in our communities.

A heartfelt thank you to Louise and her team for a truly transformational experience, in just 2 days I have been inspired and equipped with practical skills to collectively build the school and community in which we live.

Jo Tudhope, Deputy Principal, Water's Edge Pre-Primary School

To me what is more powerful than anything is that people, from various positions in society, are engaging with a process of dreaming. Creative thought is alive and therefore hope is alive.

Jared Kruger, Chaeli Campaign

Thank you very much Louise for sharing your knowledge with me and I used the session on possibility statement today with my clients today. I'm the possibility that change is a possibility.

Albert Matthews, First Community Resource Centre

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this workshop. On a personal note, I was particularly impressed with the way you facilitated the whole process and created space for very sensitive issues to be aired in a constructive way, well done.

What struck me was the vast amount of work being done by different people and organizations (many of whom I was not even aware of).

My personal value from the session is the realization that it is not important to always have all the 'right' networks etc in place but rather to carry on implementing projects that contribute to the critical mass of efforts towards creating a better world/community for all.

"We can all make a positive contribution to healthy, sustainable live styles."

Trevor Farr, CapeNature

My two days away from school, in the presence of partners for possibility, were well spent and are being put to great use.

My first meeting on Monday morning (my first work day after our session) was with a group of parents. They are from different schools in the area and some do not have children at school level. I used the opportunity and rearranged the staff room to allow us to sit with their knees less than 9 inches apart (whatever that means).

These parents were working at my school on a Help2Read programme of which I had no knowledge, since I have been working at another school for the last two years. I created the space and opportunity for them to tell their story. They talked about how they are benefitting from this programme, what it does to them as individuals but with so much enthusiasm which can only influence listeners positively.

They did most of the talking and were in charge of their own story. They left the meeting an hour later with a commitment for this whole year. They pledged to come in on Mondays to Fridays and help learners who have barriers to learning, without any payment.

I could use my new glasses (Symphonia-glasses) to look at things differently but the major idea is that I did not do all the talking, in fact I hardly spoke. I only posed questions and the solutions were found in the community of parents in the room. It might seem like something small but in my environment it is a BIG thing.

I was only able to implement this new approach with the help of our sessions over the two days. In my opinion all leaders of change from all spheres of life will benefit from attending these sessions. To be able to change the conversation and listen actively to the solutions does good for the heart and self. The power of small group-talks as an instrument to bring about change is still mind blowing to me.

School principals, church leaders (priests included), teachers, ward representatives and everyone working with people must attend these sessions.

Mark Williams, Principal

I am the possibility of citizenship!

And that is reason enough for anyone to be part of this workshop. People who would no longer want to be stagnated and start believing in possibility. It is within our hands!

Thank you for the remarkable 2 days and for the nourishment of wisdom and a new sense of empowerment.

Luigi Heynes, Citizen
