



Voices of Youths: Let Us Live as One

Project Goals

- ◆ Integrate youths from different black and colored communities, encourage them to learn about their own background as well as about others, and address prejudices to help support democracy in South Africa's transformation process
- ◆ Equip young learners in disadvantaged communities with basic life skills so that they can become productive members of the society

Personal Goals

- ◆ Contribute to community and youth work in South Africa
- ◆ Make friends and exchange experiences and values
- ◆ Learn more about grassroots coexistence and social development



Young people bonding across racial groups during the Winter Program in Nyanga

Activities

- ◆ Assisted in the implementation of the Winter Program 2002 in Nyanga
- ◆ Compiled the research stories and visual drawings done by young learners on their backgrounds and township communities
- ◆ Contributed to the process of planning, organizing, evaluating, and marketing of the Youth Forum
- ◆ Helped prepare funding proposals for the Lifeskills Project and the Disabled Children Sector

Key Dilemmas

- ◆ How does such a race-conscious society strive to overcome the remnants of apartheid when many social issues such as poverty, unemployment, AIDS, and crime stand in the way and continue to segregate different races?
- ◆ The buzz word "transformation" is happening at every level from top government administrations to grassroots NGO's, but how can the lack of efficiency and structure in organizations and resource allocation be kept from hindering the process?
- ◆ What future is there for many youths in disadvantaged communities? How does one encourage them to value education when they witness excessive unemployment and undergo peer pressure every day in their communities?



Important Learnings

- ◆ Many young people in the townships attend school, have much hope, and have very optimistic views of the future. Efforts made through education have essential effects on building the new South African society.
- ◆ Issues arise not only from the underlying segregation between blacks and whites but also between blacks and coloreds and between black communities themselves.
- ◆ The long road to true democracy and social equality requires an integrated effort from all different layers of the society. Progress in this direction, however slow, should be recognized accordingly.



Right– A moment of gathering: Communal life and the arts help keep many children off the street.

Below– Paintings outside of Oscar Mpetha High School, Nyanga



Staying Alive, a book on how to avoid and fight AIDS and other STDs, was distributed freely to youths in black townships.



Above– Mala (left), the Disabled Children Sector coordinator to whom I owe lots of love and respect, and Thandi (center), a great person who taught me a lot about the Lifeskills Project and about township life

A facilitator showed me around Nyanga. As we drove by shops, squatter camps, playgrounds, and roads, he told me about what happened during apartheid. Police fired at people in funerals and created internal conflicts among blacks. I visited many of his friends' homes. Some were shacks and others were houses that they built on their own. I'd been told that it would never occur to a white person, unfamiliar with the area, to walk into the townships alone. Some people I met were surprised to see me and asked if I was afraid. The township was crowded; wherever there was open space, shacks were being built by people relocating from Eastern Cape with hopes of finding employment. Many black families who used to live inside Cape Town were forcefully resettled in the squatter camps and have never been compensated by means of property. It is nearly impossible for them to buy land elsewhere. It is expensive and often bought by rich foreigners. When I peered inside the shacks, I saw some items such as refrigerators, televisions, and VCRs. Despite these few "luxuries", people still live in terrible conditions. There is only one small water tap for the entire squatter camp, many township areas do not have electricity, and only some camps have government-built toilets.

