

My Name is Paul L Watson, Jr, President of Watson and Associates International. My consulting organization focuses on community development, youth development, and organizational development. I work both nationally and internationally. I have completed international projects in Brazil, the Netherlands, Jamaica, Central Asia, and South Africa. I would like to tell you a story about one of my South Africa assignments. In 1999, I was a contributing author to a book on Civil Society. My contribution was on the role of youth in building civil society. I also published articles relating to a 3-year study I was involved with that was funded by the Dewitt/Wallace Readers Digest Foundation. The study was on best practices within the field of youth development. The study findings led to the Community Youth Development approach, and involved getting young people involved as change agents within their communities. As a result, I was asked to make a presentation on this approach at a civil society conference in Cairo, Egypt. After my presentation, I was asked to make a keynote presentation at a Habitat for Humanity conference in the Netherlands. At the end of the conference I was asked if I would be willing to demonstrate a Community Youth development approach to community problems at one of the Netherlands sister cities in South Africa. I agreed.

My assignment was to travel to East London, South Africa and work with youth and police in three townships in East London. The issue was that the townships were experiencing very high crime rates. Since this was only a few years after the apartheid system had been dismantled, there was very little trust between the community and the police. Under the apartheid system, the police were viewed by the community as the major purveyors of the system. But it was also clear that if the crime rate was going to be reduced, the community members and the police had to work together. Although apartheid had ended, its legacy was still daunting. The political changes in South Africa were significant, however, there was still so much that needed to be done. The infrastructure issues were acute. There were millions of citizens without electricity, drinking water, and decent housing or paved roads. This was the case in the townships that I was working in. The level of poverty was perilous. There were no jobs for a major portion of the population. There was little money for social services, leaving thousands of people without health care or adequate education. In all three townships I met people whose very existence was questionable from day to day. Although the South African Police Service had made significant changes since the apartheid days, the distrust the community felt in the past was still present then.

But that was just one side of the picture. There was another side and that was the spirit of the people. As I traveled among the people of East London, I could feel their sense of determination that they would realize their hopes and dreams in spite of the challenges that lay ahead. The warmth and hospitality of everyone I met was truly memorable. When we unexpectedly dropped in to visit with people in their homes, however little they had, they offered to share with me. I found that people were willing to speak openly about any issue confronting them

or their society, including issues of race and inclusion. I found this to be refreshing.

My approach to all my international work is to honor and respect whatever good work is being done locally and build upon that. I did not want to project the image as the American who knows everything and will tell the local people what to do. So I began my work by having the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of East London give me a tour of the three townships that I would be working in. The townships were Duncan Village, Buffalo Flats, and Mdantsane. I then wanted to talk to local residents without the presence of officials. I also read as much background information about the communities as I could.

After getting as much background as possible, I decided to facilitate a full day workshop at each of the three communities. I used a community Youth Development strategy, that is, to focus the young people as the catalysts to strengthen cooperation between police and community members in order to reduce crime in the target communities. I contacted key community stakeholders to help recruit youth and police to attend each of the one-day workshops.

The goal of the workshop in each township was to create a team spirit between the police and community and secondly to develop together a shared vision of what partnering to increase safety in their communities might look like and what it could produce. In addition to the tangible outcomes of a shared vision that the participants were committed to work toward, there was also the intangible outcome of a renewed hope for the future. This renewed hope was due to the realization that, as one police officer stated, "As a result of this workshop I do believe that it is possible for the police and the community to work together."

We had over 100 people attend each of the workshops. The workshop succeeded in laying a foundation on which the local people could build to address their concerns. And yes, the youth proved to be the catalyst for moving forward in working cooperatively. I asked the question to the group, "What will help us work in partnership with the police to reduce crime in our community?" They responded with a consensus by saying - transparent policing, corruption ceases to exist, increased community service, justice for all, improving our communication skills, and having a quick response. At the conclusion of the workshop some of the participants made the following comments: "We can't accomplish much alone, we must work together." "I never thought I could share my deep feelings with other people before." "I was impressed with the openness of the youth." "Everyone can get together and share problems and ideas." "The person you think can solve your problem has already gone through that problem." "To see young people engaged in shaping the future of our country is what I liked about today." "The facilitation was wonderful. It allowed what is inside of me to come out." "If we work together we can make it." "It is possible for the police and the community to work together." "It was something of our own to contribute to the community." "The facilitation was good." "It has been a privilege

to be a youth and participate." "Confidence and moral support was given by the facilitators." "The only limit was the time constraints." "Thank you so much for coming here and showing us all these new things."

We were able to train some local youth in these facilitation methods so that they can continue to bring people together to work on addressing their concerns.

What I brought to this experience is the belief that people have the capacity to solve their own problems. They simply need some tools, belief in themselves and resources. Each participant from those communities contributed to defining the problem and identifying the solutions. My job was to facilitate a process that allowed that to happen.

My most valuable contribution is a belief that social change can happen. I have been able to help my students and community members in the USA and abroad believe this too, and share some tools with them that may be helpful. I have a lot of experience working for community change and social justice, and working with youth.

Others would say that I bring a willingness to listen, motivational support, the ability to see the big picture, and confidence in our abilities.

In this case it was identifying a process that would mitigate conflict, and would allow people to think and work together to create a needed product.

We can identify and/or create a set of human technologies that will facilitate unleashing the full potential of the stakeholders.

The significant emphasis has to be on assisting people to create and develop the resource sharing themselves. Resources can come from outside the community but the efforts must be led by the people within. So resource people must learn how to work with folks rather than working for folks.