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GRAIL PROGRAMMES NEWSLETTER

Kleinmond, South Africa, October 2017



Symbols from workshop with Kleinmond committee members, held on the 23rd September at The Grail Centre.

A “wake-up call” for Kleinmond

By Yvonne Sliep and Annemarie Hendrikz

Our small, sleepy coastal town, nestled between the sea and the mountain in a World Heritage Site, reached national headlines in September 2017, for all the wrong reasons. The following piece is one summarized impression of the context and events that unfolded over the past month. There are probably as many versions as there are people living in Kleinmond. Our town is a microcosm of the great inequalities in South Africa, where different forms of structural violence persist and poverty is at its highest levels ever, according to the recent StatsSA report, including 25% of the population experiencing extreme food poverty. In Kleinmond, a large section of the local population lives in informal settlement shacks while many luxurious houses along the coast and the golf course remain empty, apart from holiday use.

We often hear that despite endless questions and official complaints, the voices on the margins of our society do not get heard. Adequate mechanisms for complaints and negotiations have not been set up, resulting in high levels of frustration regarding “empty promises”. Such situations must be changed. We have had a “wake-up call” from the recent events in our town and much can be learned to help us with a way forward.

Monday 28 August

The first organised protest march was fueled by a few hundred angry citizens, to draw attention to a tender for cleaning services (valued at 3 million Rand over three years). This tender was allocated to a Hermanus service provider instead of one from Kleinmond. Tyres were burned in

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the main road and rubbish scattered in the streets. As the situation escalated, some shop windows were broken and shops looted. The Kleinmond municipal office closed its doors, as did shops in the central business district.

Kleinmond sat up and took notice. Violence cannot be condoned, but neither can protesting voices be ignored.

Tuesday 5 September

After a marathon meeting, the municipality banned a further protest, but did send representatives to address community leaders, who asked attention for the following:

- Discussion about the tender, which should have been awarded to local people
- More land and a housing project to address the housing shortage
- Installation of floodlights in dangerous areas and closing a ditch that poses danger
- More land for a graveyard in Kleinmond
- Not charging fees at the boom leading to the harbour and revisiting fishing quotas
- A high school in Kleinmond

Community leaders warned the municipality that a further protest regarding these issues was planned for Monday 11 September. Although not unreasonable, the list of complaints was not taken seriously. The Ward councillor issued a blanket statement that these matters had already been considered in the overall development plan. Not one of the demands were met, or negotiated during the meeting between the community committee and the municipality.

Monday 11 September

Even before the protests started, the riot police were called in as a preventative measure. Road blocks were set up. People were prevented from going to work, some say by community members, others say by the police. Children were taken from school and businesses closed their doors again. No factual information was provided.

Over the next three days Kleinmond was covered in smoke: smoke from teargas; smoke from burning tyres and a burning municipal vehicle; smoke from fynbos burnt to make space for illegal structures in different areas. Fires threatened to get out of hand and military helicopters swept over town to put them out. For many who had experienced the struggle against apartheid, memories kicked in: the sound of shooting; helicopters hovering overhead; the smell of teargas and smoke. Social media messages circulated widely, often with incorrect information. General fear and suspicion increased. The “born free generation” shared their shock at experiencing this in their life time, in this place. Eventually, a process of mediation was set up. The Human Rights Commission and several senior ministerial officials became involved. The aggrieved community was asked to be patient and promised that the issues would receive serious attention.

Currently:

There is a sense of suspension – holding of breath. Despite enquiries, no further detail or date on future planning is provided. What will the next chapter hold?

Clearly, living in the burning side of town was a horrendous experience for many. Reports were shared in several different forums of riot police throwing teargas, not only to disperse crowds, but also into houses; of people trapped in small spaces and treated with great disrespect; of rubber bullets fired at close range and into faces, including at children who now have nightmares and can't sleep. Windows have been broken and roofs are leaking due to multiple rubber bullet holes. People have respiratory difficulties from having inhaled teargas.

In the meantime, some Grail members facilitated debriefing sessions with The Grail Centre, Training for Transformation and Mthimkhulu staff that live in the areas most affected by police violence. Training for Transformation programme also had a day-long workshop with some of the committee members representing the aggrieved community.

Lessons for the community at large include:

Find effective and creative ways to listen to all the voices within our community, especially those on the margins of our society. Create a culture of dialogue between all stakeholders in community. For organizations that work in community, engagement needs to be consistent – we should not rely on one-off events or wait for crises before responding. Pay attention to the seemingly small and insignificant incidences (and people's concerns and

emotions) that might precede crises and act as triggers for violent community protests. Reflect on how we can engage with and support to carry out their mandate effectively.

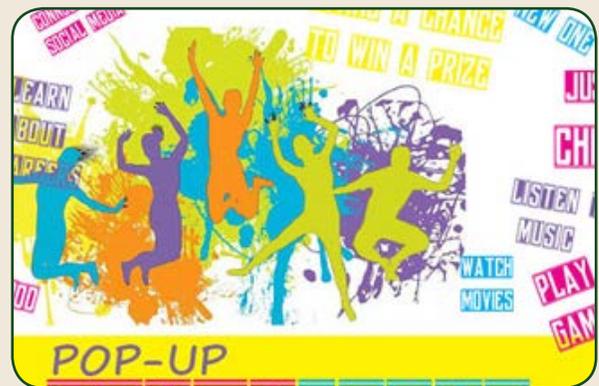
Each and every one of us has a role to play. We already have some plans for a better way forward. Let us “think global and act local”.

Pop-up Youth Zone

By Heleen Sliep

On 9 September, the Pop-up Youth Zone was launched. After a survey amongst the youth it became clear that they would prefer to access health and other services in a youth friendly space. Mthimkhulu is seen as such a space and the Pop-up Youth Zone will be a monthly event for youth aged between 12 and 19 years. Health services such as screenings, physiotherapy, counselling and psychological support are offered.

General information on career choices, accessing bursaries, and employment opportunities are shared while games, snacks and free WiFi are available. It is important to listen to the voice of the youth and therefore the programme will be reviewed regularly so that we offer young people the kind of services and information that they require.



Pop-up Youth Zone, monthly, at Mthimkhulu.

Heritage day celebrations

By Heleen Sliep

On Monday 25 September the Kleinmond Kingdom Vibration choir held a traditional music festival in the amphitheatre at Mthimkhulu. The choir sang beautiful traditional songs, while some of the members performed hip hop and rap, and others did gumboot dancing, to the delight of the audience.

The parents celebrated the children's performance, with the Xhosa mothers doing a traditional song and dance and the Sotho mothers following suit. The youth cooked traditional food which was sold in aid of the KKV choir as a fundraiser.

It was truly a day to remember!

Seeking to break barriers

By Prisca Nyasha Dhlandhlara

I am Prisca Nyasha Dhlandhlara, a 30 year old Zimbabwean woman. I am currently working in a remote area of Zimbabwe, and the major focus of my work is Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health. I work with approximately 4 500 young people, both in and out of school, between the ages of 10-24



My work also involves working with traditional leaders, school authorities, elected leaders and the adolescents themselves. The topic of adolescent sexual and reproductive health is generally frowned upon, especially considering the age of the beneficiaries as well as traditionally upheld community norms and values.

My experience with TFT has helped make challenges that used to seem insurmountable become almost a 'walk in the park'. For instance, it was extremely difficult to talk to community leaders, parents and guardians about issues concerning the realities of teenage pregnancies, child marriages, STIs and HIV. The barriers that were put up were made of steel and it almost seemed impossible to cross or break them. Equipped with skills and tools from TFT I have worked tirelessly with the community, I have held hands with parents and guardians and have made strides in promoting behavior change with community members, rather than me identifying problems and coming up with solutions.

My experience with TFT has helped me not only professionally, but also in many aspects of my personal life. TFT helped me to question all aspects of my life and most importantly taught me to when to walk away from situations that hurt and oppressed me. I spoke up and spoke out, I broke the silence and I took action in pursuing my own happiness. I have the strong conviction now more than ever that keeping quiet and suffering inside takes away from the individual much more than it does from the perpetrator.

I have come to appreciate that perhaps the butterfly is proof that you can go through a great deal of darkness yet become something beautiful. Thanks to TFT, I am no longer afraid to confront my past and make positive strides in moving on from it and not letting my past define me. Having always been a 'borderline radical', TFT has also taught me the importance of reflection and seeking to break barriers and go against the grain.

'Endless horizons - Freire in our time' workshop

Apply now to the 5 day Training for Transformation workshop at The Grail Centre! Send an email to tft@grailprogrammes.org.za.

Dates: 30 October - 03 November 2017

Theme: Relevance of Freire in our time

- Methods and tools based on Freire's insights
- Creative ways of sparking emotions on social/ economic and political challenges
- Channelling and processing energy into action with people, for people
- Steps of digging deeper into root causes (social and structural analysis)

20% midweek discount at The Grail Centre

By William Scrooby

It is springtime. It is time to get out of our cocoons and enjoy the blooming wonders of nature. During this unique season, The Grail Centre offers you a 20% midweek discount (Monday – Thursday) in October and November. Don't miss on this great seasonal offer.

Bookings: 028 271 3410 or grailadm@mweb.co.za.

ABOUT US

THE GRAIL CENTRE TRUST

The Grail Centre Trust is based in Kleinmond, Western Cape. This Not-for-Profit Organisation delivers two programmes, namely Training for Transformation and Mthimkhulu Community Development Programme. In addition, the Grail Centre Conference and Retreat Centre can accommodate groups up to 50 people. Our work is not possible without the support from funders and donors. You too could help us today to expand it. If you so wish, contact Eunice at eunice@grailprogrammes.org.za.



'Impala Lily', by William Scrooby.



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