



# GR@ILVINE

## GRAIL PROGRAMMES NEWSLETTER

Kleinmond, South Africa, August 2018



"Tosin turns trash to treasure", Wall art, Nigeria.

### **The more we support, the more we receive**

By Ruth Olutosin Adebawale, Nigeria

I came to TFT with just an idea in my head. It was a rough idea of what I wanted to do in my community. Prior to that time, I wrote about women's issues in Nigeria. Writing refused to satisfy my quest for creating change. I wanted to do more because there are so many challenges shortening women's lives in my country. I believed that I could solve some of these problems. TFT became an eye-opener for my life.

We all have our ambitions, but getting to TFT, I changed who I wanted to be like. I fell in love with Ma Ntombi, I wanted to be like her in the ways she loves, tackles issues and creates sudden change. At the end of the programme, I was armed with enough tools to be who I wanted to become. Paulo Freire was not new to me in 2010 at TFT. I had read about him in university. Then, Paulo Freire was just like a folktale to me, he was a story I needed to read to pass my elective courses in the Adult Education department. He didn't sound like someone who was born, walked or lived on earth. He was "then", a theory that I needed for marks to strengthen my Cumulative Grade Points during my undergraduate days.

At TFT, I realised that I needed Paulo Freire not to strengthen my grades, but to strengthen my work, my walk and purpose on earth. His ideas came to life in TFT and became my ideals. I fell in love with Paulo and what he stood for on earth. I made up my mind to be like Paulo Freire, in problem solving.

At the end of my training in Kleinmond, I did not come home with the ideas and ideals of Paulo Freire alone, but my brain had been reset to process Transformation during my waking hours. Not only did I return to Nigeria with TFT certification, we had an Ecology class that

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changed my perception about our environment and Ma Ntombi also showed us a "cooking bag" (an electricity-free heat retention bag that is used for cooking) made by a South African woman. She also gifted me with one of the bags and I took permission from her to replicate the idea in Nigeria. I also sent a letter to the inventor, but there was no response.

During the programme in Kleinmond, I began to contact activists in Nigeria who are working on environmental issues via social media, about my new found ideas for the environment. They were welcoming and ready to work with me. On getting to Nigeria, I founded our Organisation and named it Transformation Centre, but the government of Nigeria rejected the name, saying that nobody can have a centre called Transformation, so we changed it to "Star of Hope Transformation Centre" and it was officially accepted and registered. So, I decided to start with the cooking bag, but said that mine will be with a difference - I wanted to use recycled materials only. This would help the environment and the secret analogy would be to reset abused women's minds with my slogan "nobody is trash, nothing is trash". So, I began to go from street to street to pick styrofoam from dust bins, electronic shops and market places, which we shredded like small okro. We stuffed the bags with the shredded styrofoam to make our own cooking bags in Ibaso. People began to call me 'Tosin Trash'. I did not like the idea of being called trash so I systematically changed it to 'Tosin Treasure', by correcting people. Later, I come to the realization that I shouldn't be ashamed of trash, because I was actually treated like trash before I woke up from my slumber (I am a survivor of domestic abuse, a woman who was treated like trash before my transformation).

Later, I created a Facebook page named "Tosin turns trash

to treasure 5T', and I began to train women on how to make the cooking bags in Ibasia riverside of Nigeria.

Our Transformation Centre was small, but we were moving from community to community using our training as an analogy to empower abused women about changing their mindsets. We organised training in various communities in Nigeria. We built our Centre on the ideals that I learned in TFT, we follow the problem-solving approach, leadership, and political economy ideas. Every woman is an expert and we employ only women from our circle and community. This means that the women that I trained initially are now our members of staff and trainers.

The more I work with trash to create the cooking bags, the more other ideas about using remnants from the fabrics of cooking bag come to me. Every day, we come up with beautiful ideas for using trash. I have already made up my mind that I will not depend on anyone for funding, but proceeds from what we create would become a major source of income to build a sustainable organisation. Therefore, we made it a point of duty to produce only quality and international standard products. We named our products "treasures". So far, just from thinking about using the remnant of fabrics from sewing our cooking bag, I have come up with more than ten different products from fabric leftovers in our Centre; we use these remnants to sew lady's clutch purses, bags, backpacks, bedsheets, duvets, lunch bags, sandals, pencil purses, foot mats, wall decorations, cushions pillows, etc. Our sisters who are also very creative came up with paper crafts and lots of beautiful ideas. The more we create, the more we generate new ideas and continue to expand our works in other communities within our reach.

I began to create Wall art in 2016, using remaining scraps of fabrics from our bag making and I registered the "Tosin turns trash to treasure" as "5Ts global". As a business venture, profits from sales of the art works helps to support the running of the Transformation programme. My quilter friends from lots of countries send their remnants or scraps of fabrics to us in Nigeria, we have received scraps from Australia, New Zealand, London, Canada, USA, etc. The beauty of it is that I have been able to inspire other women to do more with their remnants too.

My story is unbelievable. I continued learning, every opportunity to upgrade myself is beautifully embraced by me. Also, I promised myself to support other women in their quest for learning. So, many of our women were recommended to attend TFT and other training abroad, this idea helps a lot. The most amazing part of my life is that I became a problem solver in our community, because I have decided to solve a problem with the sale of each artwork, it works wonders and transform lives. In addition, we decided to work with blind female orphans too, each back pack sold guarantees a backpack filled with goodies for a blind female orphan.

The more we support others, the more we receive support.



'Bags of Treasure' made from trash donated to visually impaired girls.

So far we have been able to build two Transformation centres in two communities.

It is hard to wrap one's head around this because I do not send out any proposals for funding, but people have approached me wanting to key into my dreams by building our centres. This is why I mentioned that my story is unbelievable - without any partnership with any funding organisations we have been able to affect thousands of lives. So far, through trainings with more than two thousand women, we managed that women are speaking out about their abuse and using trash to make treasures in Nigeria towns, India and South Sudan. We have received several invites to conduct training in other States and countries, though our construction work has taken a lot of our precious time.

Our transformation efforts gave birth to uplifting women in distress, through proceeds from sales of Art works and support of a few my friends, in 2017. I started a programme wherein women who experienced sudden loss are supported in their business. We built a mobile shop which we store with goods for the women to start all over again. These shops are built with recycled metal or wood and presented to these women. This has generated not only applause, but a new life for these women who hitherto had collapsed on their knees by life's burden. The more we help other women, the more other women approach us to support our organisation. Supporting others in their quest for Transformation has opened a lot of doors of opportunities for my life and dreams too. This makes it easier for me to do more for women and their children.

Training for Transformation helped me to transform my life, my family and my community, that is why I decided to use it as a solid foundation for our organisation. I have no regrets.

### **Mthimkhulu's 'Free Bazaar'**

Mthimkhulu collaborated with the different church groups in Kleinmond to host a 'Free Bazaar' on 16 June 2018.

This was a first for Kleinmond and was a testament of hope, sharing, goodwill and cooperation. This is what happens when we all join hands and work together to strengthen our community.

The youth from the Narrative Foundation's Handevat Music project played the Marimbas in celebration of Youth Day and more than 500 community members enjoyed the free food and gifts.

On the day 1,000 pancakes, 500 boerewors rolls, 550 helpings of pap and wors, 300 packets of chips, 800 coffees and teas, 2000 pieces of cake and 300 children's faces were painted – all through the generosity of the various Church groups under the guidance of Dr Chris Malan.

### #TheTotalShutdown, Women's month

By Yvonne Sliep

Women's month kick started in South Africa on the 1st August 2018 with country wide marches over violence against women, children and gender non-conforming people. The organisers of #TheTotalShutdown arranged for marches in all major cities. For those who could not get to cities there was a request to form a silent human chain between 13h00 and 13h30 of women only and if possible to ring church-bells.

In Kleinmond we gathered outside Mthimkhulu gates on the main road and formed our human chain in solidarity at the same time as the rest of the country. In the background church-bells were ringing on and off the entire time. A moment of deep reflection. Every now and again a passing car would blow a hooter and show thumbs up. It was another wake up call for us to more actively involve youth and rekindle our prevention awareness campaigns. There is currently a support group running on organised evenings at Mthimkhulu for girls and young women who have experienced rape. Their mothers are also given support. It is a small group which may grow with time as the word spreads. A lot of work needs to be done urgently in this area. Only one in 500 perpetrators that get taken to court by women who have been raped actually receive a sentence. Every day in South Africa three women get killed by their intimate partners. We need to continue joining hands and put pressure on our leaders.



Human chain Outside Mthimkhulu gates. #TheTotal Shutdown, 1st August 2018.

### The Grail Centre

By Heleen Sliep

The United Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) Retreat church choir made use of the Winter special discount for groups and spent the weekend of 27 – 29 July at the Centre. On the Saturday morning they gave an impromptu performance on the veranda of one of the cottages and the harmonious sounds of "Ukuthula" melted into the tranquillity of the surround.



United Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) Retreat at the Grail Centre.

### ABOUT US

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 of up to 40 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](mailto:eunice@grailprogrammes.org.za).

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