

Unaware of Who is Watching

Teboho Mahuma

Executive Director, City Year South Africa

I was shopping after a particularly tiring day at City Year once, and as I was walking through the aisles in a supermarket, another person found reason to pick a fight with me. But I was tired and in no mood for a fight.

So, instead of entertaining the fight, I just walked on, and as I approached the end of an aisle a woman was telling her young girl companion of about 12, that she thought the other person had been rude, and saying how if it were her she would have sorted them out. I got to that spot on time to hear the young girl

say "She won't fight because she is City Year and City Year people don't fight." It was a moment that will stay in my heart forever.

Curious, I asked her "Who are you and where did you get that from?" She told me that she went to one of the schools where a City Year team served, and they had been shown how to work out disagreements without resorting to aggression. I have seldom been that touched, and it is one of my proudest moments as a member of the City Year community. Sometimes we forget the kind of influence we have and are unaware of who is watching.

This incident serves as a reminder that the encounters we have with people, both in City Year uniform but also as individuals leaves a lasting impression. I want to believe that if this girl had any doubt about what Service Leaders had taught her, that day, that encounter would make a significant difference in how she experienced City Year afterwards.

I would like to extend my thanks to the young people of City Year South Africa 2008 who are committed to their year of service. Your commitment to service is a commitment to help build our nation, and for that I thank you on behalf of all who love South Africa.



BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS...

FIND YOURSELF...

"BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD"...

A 'City Year' might just be *your child's best opportunity yet...*

WE HAVE STARTED RECRUITING FOR 2009

City Year South Africa

EVENTS

16 May - Service Day

CITYYEAR SOUTH AFRICA FOUNDING LEAD SPONSORS



"The journey of City Year was not my child's alone – it become mine too. I have watched her become more aware of everyone around her – their dignity and feelings – more empathetic and giving. It has been an experience that has made her a more fulfilled, whole and mature human being."

Charlene Dayan
parent of Service Leader
Tali Dayan,
Founding Year



Prepared to Serve

The red jacket is back out on the street for 2008, following the swearing in ceremony that took place on the 4th of April at the Metro Centre in Braamfontein.

City Year South Africa celebrated the start of the new Service year with 168 Service Leaders and 14 Senior Service Leaders and City Year staff pledging to serve their communities with Spirit, Discipline, Purpose and Pride and to leave a positive impact in their communities this year.

Executive Director, Teboho Mahuma, challenged the Service Leaders of 2008 saying, "you are today being asked to accept the final piece of your uniform, the ultimate symbol of your City Year commitment, the jacket, with your name neatly embroidered on it,... not for any other reason but as a symbol of your commitment to serve."

Guest Speaker, Cheryl Carolus, called on the young people to utilise this opportunity to gain as many skills as they can since "South Africa needs different skills today than those needed in the past." The people you are serving with today, "will be the networks you access in future," she added.

City Year South Africa would like to extend our thanks to the team of individuals at the Metro Centre, our guest speaker, Cheryl Carolus, our guests and the many others who made this event possible.

Our 2008 Service Leaders

Our current 168 very talented & diverse Service Leaders and 14 Senior Service Leaders, have already embarked on their year of transformational service.

Besides City Year's commitment to having a diversity of youth from all backgrounds, we took a closer look at the 2008 corps to see where our Service Leaders are coming from.

Just over half of the 2008 Corps are women (55%) and 85% of Service Leaders come from Gauteng, and 5% from KwaZulu Natal, and the rest from the other provinces. 82% of the 2008 Service

Leaders are Black and 18% are a mix of coloured, Indian and white youth.

In the 2008 group of Service Leaders, 34% are from households that earn less than R1200, 15% stay in informal settlements. 14% of Service Leaders are financially responsible for a dependant and 7% have children.

68% have come to City Year after their matric and 1% have completed a university degree, the other 31% fall into different levels of post matric education holding certificates or partially completed programmes.



Service Leaders pledge their commitment to their year of Service and receive their final City Year uniform piece, the City Year Red Jacket. photos: Huw

Focusing on Youth Matters

Wilma Luimes-Sindane
Communications Manager

The relative stability or instability of a country is linked to the social thinking of a nation. It is a question that is often asked, but seldom examined until a country flairs up in violence. The recent elections in Kenya are a good illustration of how, regardless of the past relative stability of a country, when a portion of people within a nation view their circumstances with a "nothing to lose" mentality, violence inevitably erupts.

Incidentally and ironically, it was a question I posed to a Kenyan minister in 2005 at the World Economic Forum, who was visibly unappreciative of my query in his response. Today, in anticipation of long awaited 'election results', all eyes are focused on Zimbabwe with similar expectations, its stability in question.

We often equate social violence to philosophical roots and site the identity of protestors as the uniting force. But again and again a closer examination of history reveals that it's a group mentality of "nothing to lose" that ultimately tips the scales in favour of chaos and creates a force that changes history, not always for the better.

Our social constructs and language in South Africa have changed. The relative

importance of different 'categorisation' of people is changing and so the boundaries that governed social thinking in the past, no longer necessarily hold true for the future.

South Africa currently celebrates Youth Day which commemorates the youth who passed away in the Soweto uprisings of 1976. The uniting force? History books will tell you that 'black youth united to protest against the forced usage of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction'. I remain unconvinced. The identity constructs of 'black' and 'youth' alone were not enough to tip the scales, there were more dynamics at play.

In building a brighter future for all South Africans, I hope there will be a concentrated effort to make sure no members of our society have reason to unite around the social mentality of "nothing to lose".

In order to sustain stability we need to create a nation where 'opportunity' is within reach of all South Africans, regardless of where they come from. We cannot afford to be content with minority elites of any colour and site that as progress if the average South African needs to be content having no access to the relative wealth of the nation and no opportunity to alter their current circum-

stances. We cannot afford to be satisfied with a national developmental discourse that is directly dependant upon the majority of our citizens remaining unskilled and working as blue collar workers.

History teaches us that youth repeatedly are the first to recognise that they have "nothing to lose." It is a generation that I hope corporate South Africa, Government and society alike regard as the greatest opportunity to make an investment, an investment in the bottom line of our country, but also an investment that will contribute a great deal to ensuring the stability of our future.

It's a generation that is being born from the lower socio-economic class as professional women have fewer children on average (3.4 as compared to 1.9. Demographic and Health Survey, 1998). A generation that already comprises of 17.6 million, 50.2 % of whom are currently unemployed.

How many prison inmates already shrug their shoulders and say, "I had nothing to lose." What is missing is an awareness that the same mentality is a common denominator among a growing population of our country. It's a generation that is looking for roots, a place to belong and a reason to protect their future. I hope we all ensure there is one.

CITY YEAR WELCOMES JUDI MERCKEL - OPERATIONS DIRECTOR



Judi Merckel has worked extensively in the non-governmental sector for the past 20 years with organizations whose primary focuses were either educational, ecumenical or cultural.

The past 12 years Judi spent in policy development, working alongside National and Provincial legislatures and government departments, specifically in the area of women's health and rights. She has also

been involved in leadership and community development with two national youth programmes.

Judi brings to City Year a variety of skills such as Project Management, Fundraising, Curriculum development and Facilitation / Training Skills amongst them. Judi has had training in human resource & financial management as well as extensive experience in advocacy.

Returning Home to Dowling Primary

Daylene Van Buuren
Programme Coordinator

My team and I walked through the gates of Dowling Primary last year, unsure of what the future held, warmly welcomed by a 'guard of honour' composed of learners... it was a moment that said 'we were home'.

In my year of serving as the City Year Programme Coordinator at Dowling Primary School, I remember watching with indescribable pride while my team was desperately working to complete their 'legacy project', each Service Leader, a paint brush in hand, sitting on the ground carefully making sure our flag was accurate. Above their heads, clouds filled the sky warning that rain was on it's way. Hesitantly, we decided

this was our last day of service and so our last opportunity to make our mark. We proceeded, more determined not to be stopped by a few raindrops. Barely a few minutes later when we still had half the flag to complete, showers stormed down until we could no longer see what we were busy with. We grabbed what we could and ran for shelter. We took a silent moment of disbelief looking at our project that was being washed away. But although the flag washed away, our legacy remained. We HAD made our mark and nothing could take the memories, hard work, tough times and all the lives we had touched. I could not have asked for a more significant way to end our year of service.

This past week, I entered through the

gates of Dowling Primary School with eleven new service leaders and we were greeted with a heroes welcome, in song and dance. After barely three weeks of service training we are sitting around a table planning for our year of service in Dowling. Our challenge is to exceed every expectation already formed from last year's team. It is now up to us, to serve this community proudly and represent City Year well as we wear our red jackets.

For me, my jacket holds a lot of memories; lives touched, lessons learned, hugs from thankful parents. And so at the beginning of this year, my jacket signifies memories to come, challenges to experience and lives that will be changed. And so for 2008, we are once again 'home'.

Alumni - from City Year to Natural Born Leaders

Natural Born Leaders, established in 2007 by a group of 2006 City Year alumni, is currently running camps and workshops that focus on developing positive self-esteem among learners. One of the key things I learned during my 'City Year,' said Siphon Ngobeni is that "when you give your all, it is then you receive."

In the process of establishing their organizational foundation, the Natural Born Leaders have focused on and are building their programme around the concept of positive self-esteem saying that without 'positive self-esteem,' there is very little that can be accomplished" said Dineo Mahao and with a gleam of humour in her eye adds that, "it should be added to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as part of the basic necessities such as food and shelter."

The programme focus encompasses five key areas and includes, health and safety, self-awareness, self-management, interpersonal relationships and team building

as well as democratic citizenship.

When asked about their vision to grow, Maud Sebola added, "I think what is key for our growth is for us to become proficient and qualified in the relative portfolios that we currently hold in the organisation." Currently accessing the skills and advice of other organizations and expertise employed within the field, the organisation has been running parallel processes of registration as a not-for-profit as well as a social development organisation while linking up with other organizations and supplementing their curriculum.

A large part of what Natural Born Leaders hopes to achieve is to utilise popular culture to promote positive self-esteem. "We hope these sorts of projects will build awareness and supplement and define the curriculum that we develop as our own, but also make it accessible to more young people out there," said Siphon Ngobeni one of the artists on the

team.

City Year will always hold a place in our hearts. It is the kind of organisation that "utilises the energy, ideas and culture and values of youth to make its impact" concluded Dineo Mahao, "and it has served us as a foundation".

For more information on Natural Born Leaders contact Dineo on 076 144 8140 or email them at: naturalbornleaders@yahoo.com



Natural Born Leaders help facilitate the Peer Educators Training Programme Camp in November 2007