



## **Conversations for Change -** **A New Approach to Building Bridges in Communities** An introduction to working in partnership with Tutu Foundation UK

**The Tutu Foundation UK** was launched in 2007 to continue the reconciliation work of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Mrs Leah Tutu. Our mission is to transform lives and communities across England by building respect, understanding and connections between people of different backgrounds and generations.

**The Conversations for Change (C4C) Programme** works with local partners to bring together community members to develop skills to overcome personal and community conflict and to develop achievable initiatives that build bridges and make peaceful progress in the community.

C4C's **first step** is always to work with established local organisations to firstly identify areas most in need of support as we recognise the importance of local knowledge and the need to avoid duplication of existing work.

The **second step** is to work together to engage community members to take part in a three day programme exploring anger, conflict and respect for difference. The participants will comprise people across the age, faith and ethnic spectrum and typically consist of local community activists, frontline community workers, people from grassroots groups and young people, often supported by mentors or workers. They will be bonded by a desire to build bridges and make positive change in their communities. The three sessions are led by experienced Tutu Foundation facilitators and are dynamic, fun and interactive, using innovative facilitation techniques including games, role play and story-telling.

The **final step** is for the participants, facilitators and local partners to come together for a short session to share ideas, information and skills to develop sustainable bridge-building activities that will benefit the wider community. These sessions give local partners and residents the opportunity to come together and work in a positive environment in a spirit of co-operation and trust to plan future collaborations.

The atmosphere that develops from the beginning of the programme builds directly from techniques used in the reconciliation work of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in South Africa and Northern Ireland, particularly the Southern African philosophy of *ubuntu*. Ubuntu emphasises our common humanity and promotes values of respect, diversity and interdependence. It appeals to people of all backgrounds and those of all faiths or none. As such, it is an excellent community development tool, promoting good citizenship, reconciliation and understanding in today's multi-cultural, multi-faith British society.

**Case Study: Ubuntu Peace Day, Hackney, London** Following the C4C workshop phase, four teenage participants from different faith communities, supported by local partners, decided to use their new skills and understanding of reconciliation and conflict-resolution to organise a Hackney Peace Day. With food and refreshments, all-age activities, entertainment on the theme of peace and stalls from local organisations – most provided by the community and all provided for free – the Hackney Peace Day was a huge success, with over 700 people attending. The highlight was a community meal featuring a diversity of local traditions and cultures. “One of our key aims was to mix older and younger,” Aysha (14) recalled, “and this is something that happened on the day. We also had rival gangs that came, but nothing went wrong.” Zanele, (18) added, “I’ve always wanted to do something where I can make a lasting mark on society and the community. Even if it’s just the slightest change, that’s good enough for me.” The girls have since been nominated for the London Peace Alliance Peace Awards, hosted by Mayor Boris Johnson, and are already planning their next event in April 2011. *Picture from left to right: Zanele (18), Aysha (14) and Zenani (18).*



**Hear from more of the programme's participants here:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgI5eDsa3Hs&feature=youtu.be>

**Programme Management** Conversations for Change is managed by Daniel Sollé, who has extensive experience in community development and cohesion in the UK and overseas, having previously managed national and local projects working with young people, refugees, faith groups and victims of crime, and on a number of national mental health projects. He is supported by Lesley Bilinda, who has worked closely with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, notably on the BBC series *Facing the Truth* in which the Archbishop led a process of bringing former combatants together with the relatives of their victims in Northern Ireland.

**If you would like to invite us to your community or would like to explore ways of working together to support work in your area, please contact:**

**Daniel Sollé, Programme Manager - Conversations for Change**  
**Tutu Foundation UK**  
**020-7654-3822**  
**dsolle@tutufoundationuk.org**