

## COMMUNITY ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT

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### SASO PERMANENT ORGANISER

Too frequently our approach to the social, economic, political and educational maladies that are plaguing the Black community have become deductive and proscriptive believing that provided we have the right principles and philosophy we will do the right things to cure these corrosive maladies. When we submit ourselves to the vigorous reality of the situation and from there begin to act out our responses then the consequences of the experimental method begin to illuminate our thinking attitudes and meanings. It is necessary to assert that basic to being human is the ability to transcend our situation as well as identify completely with it and this element can also illuminate our whole philosophy.

A basic method for enabling community concern or development to happen is by being able on the one hand to change the situation in order to help a person become aware of the inadequacy of his present responses; alternatively to enable him to act or respond differently so as to become aware of the possibility for change within his situation.

Community action and development are inherently liberating concepts. The aim of the Black man in South Africa is to create a just and healthy community in which he would be able to realize and actualize his potentialities.

Thus an ideal community should furnish to its human environment:

- (i) Security of life etc;
- (ii) Economic well-being through an efficient system of productivity;
- (iii) Physical well-being, health and sanitation;
- (iv) Constructive use of leisure time or recreation;
- (v) Ethical standards or system of morality supported by the organized community;
- (vi) Intellectual diffusion;
- (vii) Free avenues of expression or means by which all the elements of the community might freely express themselves.

A community as a socially homogeneous entity characterized by group interaction stresses consensus, identification, a common way of life, shared interests and values, and joint effort. It should be viewed as a self-contained, self-sufficient, self-propelling and viable unit possessing distinguishing social, political, economic and educational characteristics which set it off from other communities. Whenever men live together they develop in some kind and degree distinctive common characteristics. These are the signs and consequences of an effective common interaction.

Thus the way of living of the Black men in South Africa has acquired a distinctive image and posture. It stands on trial today. No longer can it remain taken for granted. No longer can it be considered secure, solid, firm. Instead, it is struggling for survival.

This is the age in which we have mastered the principles of mathematics, physical sciences etc. We have absorbed these principles.

But in the process we have made a costly mistake. We have neglected social dynamics and community awareness; We have destroyed our oneness by apathy. There was a time in the Black community when cooperation and community pride were characteristic of life.

They were a part of life. It was a simple, unadulterated life-intimately human, warm and personal.

When there was a problem to be solved the people knew that unless they got busy and solved it for themselves, it would not be solved.

Instinctively they knew that if the job was to be done, they must do it together. Families and groups of families pulled and worked together to provide what they needed. And whatever they needed they created together. The principles of work, thrift, responsibility, initiative, were the natural spiritual products of a rich community life. There was a natural frame work for the exchange of ideas and human spirit, a fertile environment for human interaction. It was a natural breeding ground for such qualities as leadership, civic integrity and statesmanship.

But as apartheid intensified the Black community began to decline and lose its moral and spiritual fibre. Vital community life is creative. It is integrated and conscious. It is an organic whole. It makes people feel responsible for one another. There is a sense of belonging in an atmosphere of neighbour lines and mutuality and a spirit of unity and community solidarity. But we have somehow acquired the habit of letting someone else shape our lives for us.

### COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Community organization is the process of dealing with individuals or groups who are or may become concerned with social welfare services for the purpose of influencing the volume of such services, improving their quality or distribution, the attainment of such objectives.

It is the art and process of discovering social and community needs and of creating, coordinating and systematizing instrumentalities through which group resources and talents may be tapped and galvanised towards the realization and actualization of group ideals, and the development of the potentialities of group members.

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN ACTION

Community organization always serves as a highway; it is never a destination. It is a means through which

the educating of the community is channelled. Education is designed to improve the ability of the people to identify their community needs and to improve techniques for group action.

It also helps to improve the ways in which personal needs are met through community activities. Education emphasizes learning process and gives most attention to individuals and to informal groups.

Education wants its learnings to contribute to community action and it deals with groups.

### TEN STEPS IN COMMUNITY ACTION

These are mere theoretical frameworks within which community action can be evolved. The division of these steps, here attempted, is quite arbitrary, and should not be considered in a strictly scientific manner.

#### STEP ONE

Consciousness of Needs: Some person, either within or without the community, expresses the need which is later represented by the definite project.

#### STEP TWO

Spreading the Consciousness of the Need: A leader, within or without some institution or group within the community convinces his/her group or a portion thereof of the reality of the need.

#### STEP THREE

Projection of the Consciousness of the Need: The group interested attempts to project the consciousness of the need upon the leadership of the community; the consciousness of the need becomes more general.

#### STEP FOUR

Emotional impulse to meet the need quickly. Some influential assistance is enlisted in the attempt to arrive at a quick means of meeting the need.

#### STEP FIVE

Presentation of other solutions: other means of meeting the need are presented.

#### STEP SIX

Conflict solutions arise: Various groups lend their support to one or the other of the various solutions presented.

STEP SEVEN

Investigation: It appears to be increasingly customary to pause at this point and to investigate the project with expert advice.

STEP EIGHT

Open discussion of the issue: A public conference is held at which the project is presented and the groups with most influence attempt to secure adoption of their plans or project.

STEP NINE

Integration of compatible solutions: the various solutions presented with an effort to retain something out of reach in the practicable solutions.

STEP TEN

Compromise on basis of tentative progress: The means selected for meeting the need are not satisfactory to all groups, but are regarded as tentatively progressive.

Thus for an effective programme of making the Black Community conscious and aware of the problems that bedevilled it, we have to be actively involved in sensitizing it through a well-planned and efficiently executed educational programme and action training of Black leaders.

The reason for this is that our people have been compelled to live in conditions of abject poverty and oppression. They have learned to accept their lot with an attitude closely a kin to fatalism. More than 350 years of cultural and political stagnation has closed their eyes to the vision of a better and healthy future which they can carve out for themselves. They are a people without a leader in need of being awakened to a realization of their needs, power and fired with a desire for progress.

To provide an educational and social programme that would develop leadership and awaken the people to a realization of their ability and power to solve their problems independantly is the greatest need in our Black community. A tension between the existing and the ideal situation should be brought to awareness and consciousness of the people, out of such tension between social organic and cultural ideals are drawn the forces of social dynamics.

For the programme to be effective must begin with the interests of the people. It must meet those interests and use them as a springboard for developing further interests.

In my opinion certain lines of action should be taken as a possible way to solve the problem of community action and revival:

- a) Youth should be made acquainted with the nature and purpose of the planning as fully as practicable

- b) More widespread participation;
- c) Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of social factors.
- d) Attention should be given to the problems of health, education, agriculture, politics and general conditions of living.
- e) Coordination between schools and community.
- f) Leadership developing out of local community situations should be stimulated.
- g) We should define the objectives we wish to achieve.

Community action calls for a direct involvement and engagement in social problems and the development of skills to deal with them through the institutional or social roles that the student plays in his community.

This development requires acting, planning's acting and reviewing.

It is a process of feeding and learning how to effect change in one's community through supervised experiences of engagement and involvement in social problems and reflection upon that engagement.

#### PRIORITIES AND GOALS OF COMMUNITY ACTION

The main priority of community action by Black students is that of liberating his community from the shackles of abject slavery.

This liberation may be defined as having two focal points, power and consciousness.

Community action concerned with power is based on a concern for indigenous control and empowerment of the powerless. It attempts to make people aware of the various forms of power, especially the kinds of strategies that are available to themselves and coopting tactics of present institutions.

In its focus on the issue of power community action is seen to address itself to three interlocking means of handling power: through participation, control and encounter or confrontation.

In control the emphasis is on skills and arenas through which people can gain power to effect change.

In encounter or confrontation the emphasis is on the necessity of confrontation of the system from within.

In participation the emphasis is on ways in which people are made to involve themselves in the problems of their community.

Of equal importance with the concept of power according to the community action is that of consciousness in the process of involvement. Consciousness implies sensitivity to the human elements freed up by change and vision to create alternative models or programs to present

dehumanizing structures of the society.

In community action the development of this consciousness takes place through observation and analysis of, as well as involvement in the "gut" and "slum" concerns of the black community.

Community action must involve the whole community.

### RESEARCH WORK INTO THE BLACK COMMUNITY

#### Why Research Work Projects?

It is one of the basic aims of SASO to undertake research projects into the Black Community. The idea of undertaking research projects into the Black community tallies with the idea of involving Black students in community development and organization.

The aim of SASO's research projects entails:

- a) To discover identity, isolate and analyze the needs of the Black community;
- b) To identify, analyze and evaluate the key areas of action;
- c) To explore the relationship between the nature and essence of community action and students involvement;
- d) To compile a book(s) containing research results which will be used as a guide to the organization of community action projects and programmes;
- e) To communicate research results to all Black organizations involved in the amelioration of the lot of the Black man in South Africa in order to avoid useless duplication of projects;
- f) To identify and isolate SASO's priorities in terms of community action.

#### SASO'S MAIN AREAS OF RESEARCH

Although SASO believes in the totality of its priorities, it nevertheless realizes that education is the mainstay of any community both as a means to an end, and as an end in itself.

SASO believes that no substantial progress and development can be achieved without a concerted programme to educate the Black community.

SASO realizes that the Black community is still acutely suffering from frightening illiteracy, poor education and educational facilities and opportunities etc.

Its research projects are therefore mobilized into researching:

- (i) The adequacy relevance or otherwise of the present system of education to the needs of Black community as designed for the Black man by the White man;
- (ii) The area, scope and relevance of a literacy campaign and adult education in the Black community because SASO believes that while the need for sensitizing the Black youth continues to be emphasized there is a growing awareness that a community-wide campaign of adult education must be vigorously carried out to mobilize and galvanize all the human resources of the Black community and in particular, to reach unschooled adults, drop-outs and push-outs to involve them more actively, directly and productively in the drive for community action and development.
- (iii) The relationship between primary education and high school education, and between high school education and university education.

#### SASO'S METHODS OF RESEARCH

- (a) Interviews
- (b) Case-work study method
- (c) Questionnaires
- (d) Physical inspection and investigation of the area, or object of research.