

# Teaching for **SOLIDARITY**

## Vision and Values - A community cohesion project Session Three - Community cohesion

### Aims:

- To consider the concept of 'ubuntu'
- To explore some of the barriers to cohesion
- To examine case studies of attempts to develop cohesion

### Outcomes:

- Students will be able to define the concept 'ubuntu'
- Students will know about at least one example of an individual or a community overcoming barriers to cohesion

### Resources:

Access to www  
Copies of Wigan case study

### Introduction – read or hand out definition of Ubuntu

**Ubuntu – a Bantu concept** *A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)*

It's a way of life and a key to an open society and includes concepts of community, respect, trust and sharing. Show 90 second clip of Nelson Mandela talking about Ubuntu: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu\\_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(philosophy))

### Activity 1: Discussion Barriers to community cohesion

Many communities exist in harmony and with cohesion but why is it so difficult, in some communities, to achieve the sort of mutual respect, trust and sharing Nelson Mandela is talking about? How to increase solidarity? How to create a sense of one race, the human race? Tony Benn: 'The more you can identify your own history with the history of other people the more you feel you are part of the only race that matters which is the human race.' We need to search for threads to weave our society together – arts, film, sport etc. Do we need more common bonds, trust and joint endeavour and to think and act more as 'we' not 'me'? Discuss the role of economics, poverty, greed, education, media, faith and our emotions – fear, pressure, survival, desire, competition, home – parents & friends.

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## Activity 2: Overcoming barriers

Case studies e.g.

a. Show: **Stew Meets His Neighbours** [www.truetube.co.uk](http://www.truetube.co.uk) (Go to: Race and Culture/Peace in the Community). 5 minute clip of young man who visits his neighbours, just to meet them and make a connection.

Ask students:

b. **Sophie Lancaster's mother Sylvia** was so disturbed by the lack of remorse shown by the boys who killed her daughter [see Session Two on 'difference'] that she wanted to abandon her job as a youth worker. Instead she is trying to eradicate the youth violence and binge-drinking that led to her daughter's death. 'I consulted with family and friends and we created Sophie's Memorial Fund. Alongside the fund we have launched a campaign for Sophie; it will be known as S.O.P.H.I.E : Stamp Out Prejudice Hatred + Intolerance Everywhere

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### c. Wigan - young people welcome asylum seekers

For over a hundred years, certain newspapers have been obsessed with 'asylum seekers' and depicting them in a way which stirs up fear and hatred. Although the UK has a long tradition of granting asylum to those fleeing persecution, they often experience hostility and suspicion. So what does it mean to seek asylum or refuge? Who are the people behind the labels? One project was devoted to helping young people understand and then show solidarity with asylum seekers.

In 1999 people from Kosovo fled to England for safety from persecution by the Serbian government. When groups of Kosovan refugees arrived in Wigan, North West England, local youth workers took positive steps to integrate and welcome the young people to their new community. Youth worker Ruth Poole, "Our main objective was to try and prevent problems that might have been caused by any ignorance about refugees...The national media often portrays a very negative image of asylum seekers, there are lots of myths surrounding them. Facts and figures about things like how many of them are in this country, or how much money they receive, are often exaggerated or taken out of context. We wanted to make sure that young people understood what the situation really was."

Senior Youth Officer Steph Green added that it was particularly important to develop work around race issues in an area like Wigan, which had the smallest percentage of ethnic minorities in Greater Manchester. "We worked to help the young people empathise with the refugees and understand their backgrounds. We held discussions and tried to answer their questions."

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"We talked to the refugees to find out what their interests were and organised a programme of activities for young people on the estate and asylum seekers together, like mountain biking, a games night and walking. As youth workers we have encouraged the young people not to segregate themselves but to talk to the asylum seekers and offer help if needed. Language need not be a barrier.

Wigan Council, in collaboration with local newspaper the Bolton Evening News, ran a young people's newspaper, *Youth News*, edited by a group of young reporters who also contributed articles and helped design the paper. They were keen to interview asylum seekers. Mark Farrar, Youth Development Officer at Wigan Council, "We felt it would be a good way to let young people across Wigan know more about [asylum seekers]... The reporters were mainly curious about the refugees' interests - whether they liked football, what sort of music they were into, and what they thought of Wigan, rather than anything that might have been too painful to answer. However, many of the asylums seekers volunteered information about some of the horrific events they had witnessed.

Young reporter Naomi Yates, 14, gave her view of what it was like to meet the refugees, "You may picture these men as images you see on the television but I can assure you they look like and, more importantly, **are** regular men who have been through a great deal. They were just normal men, mechanics, students, truck drivers and footballers, who had had their lives torn away from them...Besnick told me: 'Most of us are without our families and it is difficult to contact them. Some of us aren't even sure where our families are. We're bored because we're not allowed to work until we've been here for at least six months. We spend too much time thinking about the things we've seen and things that have happened to us... We will remember the warm welcome we received and if we ever go home we'd like to take back freedom as you have here.'

After the project, young people said, "It annoyed me that there were people on this estate who caused problems for the asylum seekers...I will always say hello to them and be friendly when I see them on the street....We would want other countries to help us if we were at war."

## **Questions**

- What would you say was key to the success of this story?
- How would you describe the impact of the project?
- What issue might you address in your community? Is there one main theme for action and why? What bothers you?