

WHAT IS WORKED IN A WORK CAMP?

The main work that is carried out in a work camp is the work with oneself from the reality that one faces and in front of which one is put in play.

Next summer some of us will participate in a work camp in Makhado (Louis Trichardt, South Africa), where it is located our counterpart (Our Lady of Peace Parish – Catholic Church) within the “MaS” project (Madombizha School – Workshop - School and dining room for psychical handicapped children in Madombizha). Whether someone participates or not directly in the work camp or has ever had other similar experiences, it is always good to ask about the sense of my participation: ¿which are my motivations to participate?, ¿what will my task consist on there?, ¿what do I expect with this experience?

From our western point of view we have a vision that often differs from the reality that we will find there. Taking into account the diversity and plurality of the group that will go and the support of a great deal of people that supports us and the “MaS” project this experience will turn out well for sure if we go well prepared and we are humble and opened to the realities that we find there and also opened with the people we live together with. It is not worthless, nevertheless, to do emphasis in some basic idea through this small text of Agustín Rodríguez Teso:

“The god power has many ways to be presented. Is there anything else that fulfils more the ego that the power ‘to help’ the other? ‘To be able’ to help supposes to be stronger, and we shall not forget that we live in a world where those who have more force can impose their system of life to the other. (...) ‘To be able’ to forgive supposes to have the reason. (...) The god power goes straining little to little in the consciences without us realizing of it, because it is a divinity that does

editorial

not want to be declared as such. The god ‘to be able’ establishes a religion of the silence of God. Nobody will ever say that considers it its God, but his way of understanding and living the reality interacting with her (ethics) will show us that thus is.”

Evidently, it exists the great danger to go to a cooperation work camp worshipping this god “to be able” that we all have inside. It is possible that without being aware of it, we are going to do something of “tourism of cooperation” and that we remain to a very superficial level of the reality and the people that we will find. It is possible that we identify us with the other but only in an ephemeral and not continuous way, in an epidermal, but not deep way; that without wanting we support a more welfare help –and in last dependent term- that we do not promote some structural changes, even when they delay years in being given. If the “to be able” to help is so dangerous, what it is therefore worked in a work camp?

The main work that is carried out in a work camp is the work with oneself from the reality that one faces and in front of which one is put in play. And this goes for being well prepared at all levels –since the most material level to the more spiritual one- knowing that probably not all will turned out as one would want it to and that in more than one occasion one will be able to ask: “what do I do here?”. Only giving us without reserves and without expecting anything (anything!, not even the “to be able” to have helped!) we will be able to advance without knowing very well how.

If only when we return we can live something similar to what that volunteer lived when she returned from its experience in the dying place of Calcutta, in India: “And suddenly, almost without realizing, you find yourself again submerged in that your ‘normal’ life, but perhaps what is now not normal is yourself”.

The Council

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA (1/2)

Once slavery was abolished in 1834, the differences in work conditions between blacks and whites, which favored the latter, kept things in the same place.

Eduardo Galeano once wrote: "History is a prophet who looks back: through what it was and against what it has been, announces what it will be." History will help us reach closer to the Republic of South Africa, allowing us to love and respect its people, while providing with a better perspective of its future.

We have all been heard of names of people and terms related to South Africa, such as Nelson Mandela, "apartheid", the "Boers", Oscar-winner actress Charlize Theron etc. Still many countries come to our minds, countries with desires of expansionism that settled there during the colonial years such as Portugal, The Netherlands, France or Britain. Nevertheless, South Africa is much more than that.

During the prehistoric ages South Africa was occupied by nomadic groups that survived on hunting and collecting fruits. However, these nomadic tribes were gradually displaced by farmer settlements as culture and production technologies evolved.

On the XV century, the great European powers arrived to the lands of the south African continent in the pursuit of new commercial routes. Portuguese, Dutch, British and French were all aware of the strategic importance of the location. South Africa soon became common stop for commercial expeditions in their way to the Indies.

In 1652 the Dutch tried to establish a permanent settlement for the East India Company, but the local tribes opposed that attempt through battles that chased them away up to the north.

thoughts

At the end of the XVIII century Britain took advantage of the Dutch crisis and engaged in the conquest of another succulent portion of lands. By that time South Africa became a country victim of profound social inequities: on one hand, the local tribes which were subjected to slavery, on the other, the Dutch colonies in rural areas and the British, which settled mostly in the cities and contributed to widen the gap between the rural and urban worlds. Once slavery was abolished in 1834, the differences in work conditions between blacks and whites, which favored the latter, kept things in the same place.

As a result of these social differences, a long period of conflict emerged in the XIX century, not only as a consequence of the white presence but also because of the fights between the tribes. Among the chaos, the Dutch settlers, known as "Boers", migrated to the north hoping to escape British rule in what has been called "the Great Trek". The new Dutch settlements in the north weren't established easily. The Zulu tribes opposed great resistance to this incursion, although they were defeated due to the technological superiority and firepower of the European weaponry.

The Boer settlements eventually derived in numerous republics that were gradually absorbed by the British through a great deal of treaties, diplomacy and violence in the midst XIX century. However, when everything seemed to indicate that the British flag would end up dominating from Cairo to Cape Town, diamonds were found in Kimberley, which resulted in the reemergence of the Dutch resistance.

Josep F. Vandellós Alamilla

SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCES: DECEMBER 2003

The experience of cohabiting with one another opened our eyes to a different way of life.

On December 6 of last year, a group of 9 people flew to South Africa. Seven of them were from "Clam per la Dignitat" in Barcelona (CxD) and the remaining two were members of "Claim for Dignity" in Germany (CfD). We prepared the trip with lots of excitement and the intention of taking advantage of our stay as much as possible in various levels. Our main objective was gathering all the necessary information for better defining the conditions and the characteristics of the "MaS" project (the building of a school/dining room for physically/mentally challenged children in Madombizha) taking in consideration the area, the people, the climate, the culture, the local customs and needs, etc.

Apart from our regular daily duties, an instance of great importance to us and one that ended up being the most enriching at a personal level (as predicted), was the sharing of experiences, hours of work, interactive conversations, etc. with the members of the community and the local area natives that received us there.

The experience of cohabiting with one another opened our eyes to a different way of life. Considering our limited stay, we got to know many parts of their culture and their traditions; basically bits and pieces of their "modus vivendi" so different from ours. Somehow we felt as if we were getting closer together while establishing a long lasting relationship in the spirit of friendship and cooperation between both parties.

At a more personal level, my ties with South Africa go back to the summer of 1999, when five young South Africans came to Barcelona. Their names were Mashudu, Sharon, Elinah, Alinah and Patrician and they came to be a part of the preparation and organization of a summer camp. Each one of them stayed with a different host family. I, along with the rest of my family, was fortunate enough to host Sharon at my house for 15 days. We had never experience a cultural exchange with anybody of a culture so different from ours before.

experiences

It did not take long for Sharon, who was initially a little bit shy and always very observant, to reveal her happy, energetic and charming personality to us. She was often laughing and asking lots of questions almost reaching the point of indiscretion, though fondly and without any spirit of offence. She would also often tell us about her way of life, her country, her people and culture, and her daily routine. We learned that she has a little girl named Noël, whom she adores. All her stories were fascinating and surprising to me because they portrayed a very different way of life from the one I am accustomed to.

That was an extremely intense month and our visitors had to adjust to a fast-paced daily rhythm quite different from what they were used to. However, we all enjoyed ourselves very much. Sharon got to feel like a member of the family at home. She would refer to my parents as "mom" and "dad" and she considered my siblings and me her brothers and sisters. Although her adjustment to our customs and my family's to hers wasn't always easy, we were very delighted and grateful for having her among us. When it was time to say goodbye we all got very sad because it hurt to think that, after everything we had lived, we would most likely not see each other again.

Four years had gone by and many kilometres had separated us but in December of last year I had the opportunity to travel to South Africa. On arriving to Louis Trichardt, Sharon, along with many other people, was waiting for us. As soon as we got out of the car and with tears in our eyes, we embraced one another as she repeatedly kept crying out: "my sister! my sister!"

Laura García-Faria Coll



communications

- Ceci and Aleix have got their first son: Martí; Pati and Oriol their first daughter: Blanca. A lot of congratulations to the new parents!
 - Since Fr. André Stephan was staying at his family home in Woerth (France), near the German border, CfD members Michael and Gjon and Maria and Edi from CxD visited him Saturday 6th March.
 - Friday 2nd April, within Lent's activities, a "Supper of the Hunger", aimed to support MaS project, took place in the buildings of Sant Vicenç of Sarrià Parish in Barcelona.
 - Wednesday 14th April, CfD members, Andreas and Annette Simon, attended a meeting of the work camp commission hold in Barcelona.
 - Friday 23rd April, CxD run a booth selling roses and CxD T-shirts, as a part of Saint George' Day (Sant Jordi) activities.
 - The new page web of CxD is yet a reality : [www. clamdignitat. org](http://www.clamdignitat.org). Cfd-Germany has also a new own page: [www. claimfordignity. org](http://www.claimfordignity.org).
 - The below new structure of the CXD Board was proposed in the ordinary meeting of the CXD Board itself hold in Barcelona Thursday 15th April:
 - Carles Hernández and Pedro Sols will manage the new commission of "Training and Sensibility".
 - Aleix Layola will assume the Vice-presidency of the association.
 - Antonio Esparza will take care of the Treasury.
 - Juan Sols will join the technical commission.
- The proposal will be executive if it is approved in the next General Assembly.
- For reasons of efficiency we have opened a new bank account: 3025-0004-33-1433212631

agenda

- Next Sunday 9th May an intensive gathering-retreat will take place in the spiritual house Josep Manyanet in Begues (Barcelona) in order to prepare the summer work camp. The ordinary meeting that was scheduled for the same day, is replaced by this gathering, which all CXD members are invited to share.
- On Saturday 22nd May, a CfD gathering will be hold in Guggenhausen (Germany). CXD members Laura Garcia-Faria, Irma Fañanás and Javi Laguno are going to attend the meeting.
- A work camp in Makhado (old Louis Trichardt) to push MaS project is scheduled between June 26th and end of August of this year. It is foreseen the participation of fifteen CxD young members in different shifts.

Published by *Clam per la Dignitat*
 Legal deposit: B-21.862-2004
 C/ Major 49
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 Tel. and fax: (+34) 932 172 112
 Number of registration: 27.209
 NIF: G-63.112.189
 C/c: 3025-0004-33-1433212631



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