



Strategy #4 – Change through Cross-Community Work Listening Guide

Cross-community work is a way of encouraging different groups within a society to engage constructively with each other through communication and dialogue. The purpose is to increase understanding from multiple perspectives, find common goals and solutions to shared problems, challenge assumptions and promote diversity rather than division. These are the voices of people who sought to promote change through cross-community work. Please review the quotations and answer the questions below.

	Jane Ryan, South Africa	Sean Osborne, Northern Ireland	Virginia Volker, United States	Kevin James, United States
What action was taken?				
What challenges were confronted?				
What communities did they work with?				
What was the impact?				

For further discussion:

How did these activists improve understanding in their communities?

What skills would you need to have or develop to build bridges among diverse communities?

Provide an example of cross cultural work that exists within your community.

Change through Cross-Community Work Quotations

Jane Ryan, South Africa

In life I think you have to have a belief that every individual matters, so it doesn't matter who you are, your voice is important. And it is so easy to say, "What can I do? I'm only one person." But if each individual person does the right thing, eventually the individuals become the majority, and the majority can then change what happens in the world and in that society. So talking to people that you meet will influence their way of thinking. It also helps bring change, and sharing your ideas and being open to theirs, and that's, I think, what I feel about that.

Sean Osborne, Northern Ireland

On occasion you get very, very young kids who were throwing stones over this wall and I remember one case in particular where we got these kids, there were three of them and they were firing stones over this wall and were firing them over the wall and the phones rang and we said, "Look here, there's stone throwing going on at Clonard Street" blah, blah, blah. We went round and got these kids; they were about seven, eight years of age and we had said, "Why are you's throwing stones across tempest?" "Because there's Prods [Protestants] on the other side." So we went and seen their ma's and saying, "Look can we take them round the other side of the wall?" And we took them round and round the other side wall was just nothing but waste ground and this road ran from one to and these kids were laughing throwing stones over and they're laughing. They had never seen on the other side of this wall and they had — seven, eight, nine years of age — had grownup and never seen the other side of the wall.

Background: Clonard Street is on one side of the "Peace Wall" separating Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Virginia Volker, United States

Well, it's this, like, black and white go together in the same room and sit and talk small talk and drink a cup of coffee and you don't get struck by lightning. That's a big deal. Now, that sounds silly in this day and age, but that's about where things were then, that you – you didn't want to, just couldn't break those rules of segregation. And so, we – that built our courage, I think. That, yes, you know, we could – we could start doing something.

Kevin James, United States

Towards the end of '97, I had wanted to form a group of Muslims in the Fire Department because I felt that there's this image that the media gives of Muslims as being just wild-eyes terrorists, turbans, beards. I felt that the Fire Department is so American flag, mom's apple pie, that here we can help dispel this image. There were other concerns that needed to be addressed in the way the Fire Department interfaced with the Muslim community. So, myself and other firefighters, and later EMTs [Emergency Medical Technicians], started working together to address these different issues, and we became incorporated, and we became this line organization, the Islamic Society of Fire Department Personnel...One of the

issues we addressed was that there were a number of incidents where the Fire Department was going to mosques on Friday and trying to conduct building inspections. Presumably, they didn't realize that Friday is the Sabbath for Muslims. So this is something that we addressed. We brought it to the attention of the Fire Department. We even got the union — the UFOA — to put out a bulletin saying that unless it's an emergency, you shouldn't inspect mosques on Friday, just like you wouldn't inspect a church on Sunday or a synagogue on Saturday.