

Getting South Africa Talking

A thought piece derived from the dialogue of 30 September 2016.

We often hold discussions in the comfort of our silos. We know the script and we know the actors. We reaffirm our prejudices and proclaim our stereotypes! We chew the fat around our deeply held views of how the world should be according to ME (Inc.)! We reaffirm and feed our own beliefs. As one participant put it, ***“I see the world with a ME in it. We should draw the circle bigger. It’s not just ME, but friends, family, business, households, communities AND ME”.***

I guess what I am doing is practicing my own script and declaring my own stereotypes!

The bottom line is we all hold perspectives, especially on those things that are invading us through the media and in our usual social groups. As someone put it, ***“Isn’t there a chance, and need, to redraw the boundaries of MY world?”***

The purpose of “Get South Africa Talking” is just that – to create space for people irrespective of their status and convictions to engage with others on the things that concern us all – even though we might see them very differently. As someone put it, ***“these are the authentic voices at the visceral level of life “.***

The first Let’s Get South Africa Talking was intended to lay a foundation – to make the claim that we do all have different perspectives and that our perspectives count. They count not only because they are expressions of ourselves which therefore are worthy of respect, they, our perspectives, or mental models as Peter Senge puts it, are the fundamental building blocks of society. It was never our intention in one short session to set the world aright,

but merely to create a space for different voices to be heard by different ears! We were cutting across boundaries, challenging default responses in an attempt to shift consciousness – to move from saying “you are wrong and I am right” to respectfully asking why you think the world is as you see it.

Our intention is that participation will lead to us all seeking to at least enquire into different perspectives and at best challenging our own inner conversations. After all, never forget our choices are reflections of our inner voice – we vote with that voice. And, as one of you put it, ***“Ultimately, it is the commitment by ME that matters “.***

I can show this commitment in many ways, I can march, hold a placard and there is nothing wrong with that. But I also need to vision, to articulate, to advocate, to listen, to build in the spaces our sense of injustice opens up. In conclusion, one of you put it as, ***“We need to change our primary structures of values. Everybody seems to be driven by an obsession with instant gratification in all spheres of society and at all levels of life.”***