

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

The Asset-Based Community approach, evident at PPDC, intrigued me so much that I began envisioning variations of the applied philosophy in my hometown. By promoting self-worth and empowerment in very practical ways, I could see how this approach would combat the psychological colonization that still speaks volumes in Black communities.

...

I soon realized that, though my ideas are valid, a true Asset-Based Community approach requires more than one prefixed notion of what “the community needs.” The work requires roundtable thought and discussion from everyone involved in or affected by the community.

I can't speak for everyone.

Nothing fruitful can be accomplished for the community if the individuals aren't heard. And when the individuals of a community begin listening to one another, generational change begins.

HOW CAN I BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE IN MY OWN COMMUNITY?

A PROPOSAL BY JOHNNETTE
JOHNSON, INFORMED BY EXPERIENCES
WITH THE PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT
CENTER AND RICHMOND PROMISE
NEIGHBORHOOD



A little about me....

"Start local, think global" is my motto. Informed by my first major American Studies and my experiences as a Black woman, I combat social injustice through community advocacy and civic engagement. With my other study of the French/Francophone language and culture, I have adopted a transcontinental perspective on human rights. I'm looking forward to expanding my understanding of community empowerment as I continue my studies and internships abroad in West Africa.

Please contact me with questions/ suggestions:

johnnette.johnson@richmond.edu

WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

Communities are typically defined by a geographic area; however, they can also be based on shared interests or characteristics such as religion, race, age, or occupation. In understanding that community means bounded by a common characteristic, it's important not to lose sight of the people. The individuals of a single community have varying assets and ideas that can create a thriving space.

The city of Marksville, Louisiana is my home base –my first community. Though filled with bright and talented individuals, my community suffers from a lack of confidence and connection.

Resulting from years of systematic oppression in varying forms, the Black community disproportionately bears this weight.



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A community assessment identifies the strengths and resources available in the community to meet the needs of children, youth, and families.

For Marksville, the assessment would require the participation of the city council, primary care physicians, educators, employers, and residents – many, many residents. The assessment would capture how the capabilities of the community -- including its citizens, agencies, and organizations – could better serve the population.

Furthermore, the assessment identifies key themes of the community's evolution that need the most attention.



MORE RELATIONAL THAN CLINICAL

While serving my community is a top priority, it's essential that I keep a healthy mindset concerning community outreach. The key word is relational. The Asset-Based Community (ABC) approach – through the affirmation, hence the empowerment, of community members – encourages residents, both children and their parents, to recognize themselves as leaders.

PPDC Executive Director Damon Jiggetts sums it up perfectly: “No one here [at PPDC] is trying to ‘fix’ anyone. We don’t focus on deficits.”

The process begins with the community assessment: the documentation of both the community's budding and fully-grown initiatives. Then, the ABC approach follows suit by connecting people and their fruitful ideas with meaningful action.