

Agents of Change



“Agents of Change”

Treatment

Khazi Plant Productions

“There are three small children sitting on your doorstep –malnourished with tattered clothes hanging from their thin bodies. Their mother recently died of AIDS in the hospice behind your volunteer cottage.

What do you do?”

Sunyata Choyce

Synopsis

“*Agents of Change*” tells the inspiring story of one woman’s quest to influence change through sustainable volunteerism in an African community affected by poverty and AIDS. This documentary is, in a broad sense, a celebration of the power, confidence and ambition of those individuals who volunteer to keep their dreams and the dreams of others alive.

“...cardboard and tin township dwellings sprawling...Nearby, the rich mansions rise up”

Sunyata Choyce

Treatment

As the film opens up, the viewer is immediately drawn into the footage of the beautiful South African countryside; the green hills, the breathtaking landscape, the deep blue ocean. We are then taken to the community of Thembalathu which is a part of the town of George. It is a beautiful place with large mansions and manicured lawns. We think “this is paradise” until we notice a young emaciated African child strolling past the mansion on the way home to his tin one-bedroom shack nearby.

There is an immense discrepancy between rich and poor here where people live within minutes of one another, but only vaguely acknowledge each others existence. Locals say upper class society does not believe poverty or AIDS exist here. To demonstrate their ignorance, “*Agents of Change*” will explore the history of George and the surrounding townships of Klenkrantz, Thembalatu and the Hoekwill area settlement through conversations with the locals. They will express how the attitudes of people here, and their treatment of poverty and AIDS, link back post-Apartheid segregation and racism between the Blacks (Xhosi), Colors and Whites.



“Traditional Western and missionary ways of dealing with so many of the worlds issues are not working.”

Sunyata Choyce

We will meet Sunyata Choyce, a Nova Scotian who at 23 years old founded Project COLORS International (Children’s Overseas Learning Opportunities and Resource Strategies). The organization is youth-led, with a mandate of providing direct and practical assistance to children in need and inspiring hope in young people to initiate positive change in the world. Sunyata moved to Kleinkrantz six years ago . She says it’s a place where many people don’t understand the idea of volunteerism, acting skeptical about why anyone would want to help for without payment unless for religious motivations.



We will follow Sunyata to the communities of Thembalathu, Sunyatas home in Kleinkrantz and the Hokwill area settlement where she and her COLORS team assist existing projects. We will see first hand how her presence is a symbol of hope as the wide smiling children from the Creche (orphanage) run up to her and compete for her attention. She will explain to us how COLORS differs from other NGO’s and how it stands out as a non-registered charity.

Sunyata holds a unique view that not registering COLORS as a charity will benefit the programs the organization provides. This method of aid means administrative fees and wages do not exist and every penny donated to COLORS goes into sustaining existing projects and helping to fund new ones. We will show how this works for Project COLORS, demonstrating what money is typically lost through registered charities and compare it what money could be spent in the community.

Sunyata will show us the importance of supporting existing projects and the goals of the community through education, empowerment and networking. A grass-roots approach and building up so these people can be their own agents of change.

Then, we will meet these agents....

Elton grew up at the St. Mary's Children Home in George and always dreamed of becoming a paramedic as he was exposed to death and dying everyday during his childhood living next door to an AIDS hospice. For poor Elton, this dream was not possible due to the large expense of the training.. However, Sunyata and COLORS recognized Elton's dedication and persistence to achieving his life goal and Elton received a full sponsorship through the Sponsor a Life, Education Fund. We will be inspired by Elton's story as we ride along in his ambulance during a night shift.



Alice: A Xiosa preschool teacher who started out in her kitchen with 30 small children in her one room tin house. COLORS assisted her by building a small room on to the back of her house.

Sister Mini: A 70 year old nurse who helps HIV/AIDS and TB patients. She goes above and beyond to make sure her patients are treated fairly.

Renette: She rallies the community together so they can help one another. She's started sewing groups for the women in the hospice who are dying of AIDS so they can feel like they have a purpose in life. Renette has taken in a 10 year old girl whose parents have died and is currently her foster mom.

We will shoot a surprise award ceremony where we present these Agents of Change with an award (a framed certificate) and a small financial donation raised by friends, family and the community back in Nova Scotia. These volunteers have had very little recognition for the hard work they provide in their communities.

"What of someone tells you you're too idealistic? Say 'thank you'"

Sunyata Choyce

Through their unflinching spirit and powerful stories of survival and hope, "Agents of Change" celebrates the power and influence for positive change in all of us... And by looking into Sunyata's relentless optimism in the face of poverty, we can be inspired to do the same.

Technical Treatment

I would like to avoid the conventional interview style of talking heads and traditional narratives. Instead, *Agents of Change* will be a woven tapestry of sequences, stylized narrative framework and personal conversations that will be understood in the context of the day-to-day realities of Sunyata and the people in the community.

The visual style will incorporate photography, archive footage (Sunyata receiving the Young Humanitarian Award in 2007), home movies, and interview subjects. Traditional South African music will be used as the local musicians will be recorded performing straight to camera.