

**The Africanisation of Missiology:
The Work of InnerChange South Africa to
Raise Up Local Missionaries and
Decolonise Black African Minds (Part II)**

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Abstract

InnerCHANGE is an order among the poor. We work and live with people facing poverty. The vast majority of us grew up outside our current contexts of life and ministry. Raising local leaders as agents of missions is one of our core bottom lines alongside making disciples of Jesus. Our South Africa team is being intentional about raising local leaders because we believe that it is a very sustainable way to create a multiplying gospel movement we desire to see in Soshanguve and beyond. We believe that the reason why the gospel was successful from the Jesus's era to now, is because Jesus intentionally invested his time and effort in raising local missionaries who spread the gospel all over the world. InnerCHANGE South Africa has experienced a growing number of community members who have joined forces with it in order to be transformation agents infused by biblical principles. This paper will share some of the stories I am privileged to be a part of and what I am learning about sustaining our vision in intentionally raising community members as missions' agents.

(Outline from Part I)

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Just as God used others to make me into his servant, I see our role as an InnerCHANGE team as that of raising “fishers of men and women” who will learn how to do incarnational ministry. To efficiently and effectively reach our neighbourhood and recruit neighbours as co-labourers, three principles have guided us: relevancy, visibility and marketability.

Relevancy: We decided to be neighbour-centred in our assessment of ministry effectiveness. As a team, we went out door-to-door to ask how people saw InnerCHANGE serving the community and what we could do better. From this door-to-door campaign, we learned that we needed to be more visible in the neighbourhood.

Visibility: We had to do a better job at being known and seen in the community so that more community members could benefit from our programmes and more volunteers could come forward to lend us a helping hand. We thus made t-shirts, calendars and flyers about our ministry activities. Being visible would make it easy for the neighbourhood to know what we do, and our ministry activities would more easily be marketable.

Marketability: People will easily join in something they see, know about and understand.

The implementation of these principles drew many neighbours to volunteer and partner with us. We then felt the need to start an apprenticeship so that those who work with us could share our heart behind the why and how of the way we do ministry.

In our first apprenticeship in 2016, we guided 18 young adults, aged 19 to 25. They all were our team volunteers in areas such as sports and tutoring ministries. Our hope was to help them develop personally, spiritually and missionally. We equipped them using our InnerCHANGE formation tools so that wherever they were going to, they were going to be looking for opportunities to partner with God in serving their community. We covered subjects such as identity, dealing with conflict, connecting with God, spiritual gifts, practically preparing for the future, and how the apprentices can serve through their passions. We taught them these principles through group discussions and one-to-one mentoring times. Since 2016, we have had an apprenticeship for neighbours every year. It has been exciting to journey with these groups and to see how God is developing these young leaders to bring transformation to our local neighbourhoods. These young leaders volunteer with us on a weekly basis. We gather for formal training every other week for a period of four months.

Our apprenticeships are geared more towards action (at least 24 hours a month) than theory (four hours) and reflection (four hours of mentoring). The reason for focusing on action more than theory is because I have been learning that the gospel is made real to people by its effects, by the actions of the people who profess it. The love of God demonstrates its nature to us through the actions of its followers in society. The first Christians learned of the love of God by seeing Jesus in action in their lives (Perkins 2014:85).

As a team, we believe in indigenous leadership development so that our neighbours could fully own our neighbourhood in the name of Jesus. This is one of my understandings of incarnational ministry: to journey with neighbours so that they can go deep into the heart of their neighbourhood. Servant-leaders must learn to grapple with their neighbours’ needs and assets and thus help them gear their minds toward solutions by using biblical principles. To believe in indigenous leadership development, I reckon, is to believe in the inherent dignity of the people who need developing. It is a decolonising attempt to seek for solutions from within and from the right sources, namely the people who are the most affected by a particular issue. If someone does not believe that indigenous people can eventually lead

themselves, that person evidently believes that those indigenous people are somehow inferior. Our humble and sincere belief as InnerCHANGE is that our neighbours have the strongest potential to rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations of our community, as well as to be the most efficient repairers of broken walls and restorers of streets with dwellings of our neighbourhoods (Isaiah 58:12).

The current situation that faces South Africa, and Africa in general, calls for a revolution in our attempts at solutions. These problems cannot be solved without strong commitment and risky actions on the part of ordinary Christians or neighbours with heroic faith to believe, as the little shepherd boy David did, that our God is greater than any Goliath who attempts to mock his name (1 Samuel 17). This is a great insight that inspires us in our development of neighbours as incarnational ministers. Perkins (2014:142) says it well, that God has always depended on his people to step onto the battlefield, to assume responsibility, to take the lead, and to make his love visible. We, black Africans, have been fighting for justice so long so that what has been done to us versus what we have done to ourselves gets blurred. I am convinced it is time for a revolution in our thinking. I believe the time has come for us to refocus our energies on things we can change for ourselves, starting from our families and neighbourhoods, and even venture beyond the boundaries of our cultures. Yes, there are still barriers that need to come down and attitudes that need to change. But we have won enough opportunity to begin shaping the future for our children and our communities. We must take leadership and make it our responsibility to reach out to the needy, because some of the neediest people living on our beloved continent are our own people.

As we develop and mentor young emerging leaders in our contexts of life and ministry, we infuse in them three of our core principles as an order among the poor: theology of place, holy spirited community membership and multiplication.

a) Theology of Place

Speaking to a Congolese audience, Ntumba (quoted by Mwambazambi and Banza 2014:7) said, “A theology of place should be well articulated and preached to all Congolese people so that as citizens, we could all learn to be in charge of our country starting from our contexts of life and influence.” A colonised mind lets other people be in charge of its destiny because it is overwhelmed by an inferiority complex that incapacitates it to be a society builder. Ntumba’s quote has been inspiring me because it challenges me as a Congolese to be an agent of the society I would love to see fleshed out around me. I am using this inspiration to encourage our apprentices to be community builders. For many years, Africa has been experiencing much brain drain out of the continent. In South Africa, since 1994 townships are also experiencing much brain drain with beneficiaries being formerly white only areas. We are encouraging our apprentices to get an education and use the skills to transform their community.

I believe that if InnerCHANGE is going to make a lasting and sustainable impact in a context such as Soshanguve, we must help people like our apprentices to get a love for God, a love for themselves, and a love for their community. We must help them to get skills and education with a purpose. Then we must encourage them to bring those skills back to the community or to stay in the community while getting an education. We must sometimes encourage people to stay in Soshanguve with the purpose of collaborating with God to transform the image of their neighbourhood. We are intentionally up skilling our apprentices in sending some of them to university or vocational schools (Perkins 1993:120-121). All we require from them is to sign a contract to use their skills to serve their community while studying or after they graduate for a minimum of two years. InnerCHANGE sees this as an

investment into the physical and spiritual upliftment of poor communities such as Soshanguve.

b) Global Citizenship (Holy Spirited Community)

In InnerCHANGE we serve on multi-cultural and multi-racial teams working towards the common goal of making disciples of Jesus among the poor. In Acts 2:1-12, the Bible shows unity in diversity:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

In this pivotal passage, one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit was the evidence of multilingualism among the apostles. South Africa is a multilingual and multicultural country, and even a community such as Soshanguve is both multilingual and multicultural. Yet, fear of the “other” from a different culture or speaking a different language is a burning problem in Soshanguve and other places in Africa. Xenophobia is rampant in poor communities such as Soshanguve, with many indigenous people feeling that the cause of their misery is the foreign nationals who are living and running businesses in their neighbourhoods. We sometimes also hear from the pulpit pastors labelling foreign national traders (many of them Muslim) as anti-Christ and a cause of curse in our community.

Xenophobia is not the only problem. Tribal conflicts are also a problem sometimes. Donovan (2005:37-38), an American missionary who worked in Tanzania, shares this relevant and pertinent story about the Masai people he worked with. One time after Donovan had finished a year of instructions in one of his villages, a lady resident of the village said to him, “I think I understand what your message (the gospel) is saying to us. You are telling us that we must love the people of Kisangiro. Why must we do that?” Kisangiro happened to be the next village, 5 kilometers away. The people of Kisangiro were of the same tribe as the lady’s village, but of a different clan. Being people who existed beyond the boundaries of the clan, the people of Kisangiro qualified for her as “those dark, evil people out there.” This young lady’s difficulty lay in extending the obligation of love not to Donovan and his white-faced tribe, or to the brown-faced Indian traders, or to people of hostile alien tribes surrounding her own. Her difficulty lays within her own tribe, towards people of another clan who lived three miles down the road. Loving those people was the giant step for her. That was the chasm impossible to cross. That was the testing point of Christianity. Can we imagine speaking to this lady about nation building, or about joining in a common endeavour to establish a school or medical centre for the villages? If someone does not help that village lady, and millions like her, through that first step, across that impassable chasm, and if she and they do not come to believe in God above all the tribes and clans, as well as in a sacred

world of unlimited possibilities and expectant hope, there will be no nation building and no human development in Africa.

Kingdom works do not exclude anyone because of their skin colour, language, culture or continent of origin. As InnerCHANGE, we try to capture the richness that comes with diversity as we form teams. I would like to pass down our model of embracing diversity, multilingualism and multiculturalism to our local co-labourers and neighbours. This is a very challenging work to do in the South African context, but I am willing to do it because it is kingdom like.

In doing this work of reconciliation, Terreblanche (2014:346) reminds me that to this day slavery remains embedded in the black African psyche, sometimes expressed as anti-European and anti-Arab attitudes and feelings, and sometimes in what Jung called the “ethnic memory.” Perhaps the most negative legacy of 450 years of Western trading and slave wars in Africa is that these wars destroyed the mutual trust between Africans. Members of the same tribe often ran the risk of being turned over to African slave traders by others who wanted to get rid of them. Consequently, Africa became an asocial and anti-social place where relationships between individuals became characterised by brutality and savagery. The internal conflicts and the endemic slave wars between the manifold ethnic tribes in black Africa were greatly augmented by the Scramble for Africa (1884-1885) and European colonisation from 1885 until 1960, which led to the artificial mapping and then decolonisation of Africa. As a result of this artificial mapping of Africa, the continent has at present 54 separate states. The populations of the different states do not belong to the same ethnic groups, but encompass a great variety of groupings that are often engaged in hostilities toward one another which often lead to the self-destruction of black Africa. No continent has been seriously ravaged by as many foreign-instigated wars and by as many internal wars as Africa has. Apart from the endemic wars that were instigated by Muslim and Christian slave traders over a period of almost 1000 years, the following kind of wars can be identified in Africa since the period of independence: colonial wars, proxy wars, guerrilla wars, coups d’etat, cross-border wars, private military wars, terrorism and religious wars (Terreblanche 2014:342-343).

Something that InnerCHANGE could model well in places like Soshanguve is a diverse team working well towards a common goal. As diverse as our contexts of ministry are, we would like to stir them towards working for common noble goals.

c) Multiplication

As an order among the poor, we see ourselves as a movement. We would love to see teams of incarnational ministers among people living in poverty all over the world. In order for that to happen, we have to multiply.

In Soshanguve, one of the ways we experiment and see multiplication is in encouraging our staff and apprenticeship graduates to envision a service project that will bless the community. We call these service projects good news initiatives. Individuals recruit teammates to help with the implementation of their good news initiatives. These initiatives will use discovery Bible studies for evangelism and multiplication.

A discovery Bible study uses the Socratic method of asking questions to help not-yet followers of Jesus to discover the truth of the gospel and obey it. After reading through a biblical passage, four questions are asked to the group:

1. What does the passage say?

2. What does it mean for you?
3. How can you obey it? Or how can you live this passage out?
4. With whom outside of this group can you share what you learned today?

During conversations, there is no teacher, preacher or expert. Everyone is on the same level, discovering the truth of the word of God as it applies to his or her personal life, and the facilitator just asks the above-mentioned questions (Kabongo 2015:121-122).

The fruits we have seen thus far in this effort have humbled us. We have more visible and committed capacity on the field, and we are multiplying.

6. Opportunities and Challenges of Africanising Missions

The freedom I have to contextualise our organisation's approach to ministry comes with opportunities and challenges. Effective mission needs to be appropriately contextualised. Bosch (1991:xv) sees mission as that dimension of our faith that refuses to accept reality as it is and aims at changing that reality, including how mission practice is carried out. Transforming is therefore an adjective modifying "mission" that depicts an essential feature of what Christian mission should be about. Decolonising missions means to me being constantly on the lookout for ways to relevantly contextualise our philosophy of ministry.

Our desire and attempt to Africanise incarnational ministry among the poor requires us to be transformational leaders. Mwambazambi and Banza (2014:2) define a transformational leader as someone who understands his or her "moral responsibility as that of contributing to the transformation and enhancement of individuals and communities or organisations for a higher communal good." They continue by stating that transformational leaders "transform followers by creating changes in their goals, values, beliefs and aspirations." Commenting on the behaviour, action, role and influence of transformational leaders, the authors emphasise that leaders are to be role models who are respected, emulated and trusted. One of the key things a leader does to earn credibility is the consideration of the needs of others over his/her personal needs. Leaders share risks with followers and are consistent rather than arbitrary; they can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct as well as vulnerability. They avoid using power for personal gain or to exclude others. They behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Team spirit is aroused, and enthusiasm and optimism are displayed in infectious ways. As we aspire to be true transformational leaders, we are learning to embrace the opportunities and challenges we encounter.

6.1 Opportunities

In encouraging our neighbours to be agents of mission in their neighbourhoods, we are taking part in a revolution. People living in poverty are usually seen as recipients of mission only. In order to make a healthy shift from recipient to agent of missions, we are called to take real action. Malulele (2008:66) advises us to be a living part of our community and of her thought; we must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress and the happiness of our communities. There is no place outside that posture for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself/herself concerned with, and completely at one with, the people in the battle of the betterment of their living conditions.

Through our work we have the opportunity to call our neighbours back to solidarity with their communities. We have the additional opportunity of calling our neighbours as black

people who are still living with the scars of stolen dignity to a discovery of their own humanity, giftedness and agency (de Beer 2008b:174). It is quite common to run into neighbours who have a victim mentality, and history repeats itself in many of their families when it comes to domestic violence, teenage pregnancy and school dropout.

We posture ourselves as prophets who speak against the dominant narrative saying that poor people can't help themselves. Brueggemann's (2001:3) work is of great help here. He sees the task of prophetic ministry as that of nurturing, nourishing, and evoking a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us. He suggests that prophetic ministry has to do primarily not with addressing specific public crises, but instead with addressing, in season and out of season, the dominant, enduring, and resilient crisis of having our alternative vocation co-opted and domesticated.

Brueggemann (2001:65) continues his argument by saying that the task of prophetic ministry is also to bring to public expression those hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there. Colonisation and apartheid denied and suppressed many things in black people. One of our prophetic ministry tasks is to revive hopes that were never allowed to be brought to the fore in order for black Africans to be agents of their own destiny. This need for hope is why community development is core to our incarnational ministry model. Ramphela (quoted by de Beer 2008a:186), a black consciousness activist, once stated that community development is a strategy for liberation in South Africa. It builds greater self-reliance among black communities, cultivates an economics of affection, and builds on the assets of traditional structures that support networks among groups connected by blood, kinship, community and other affinities such as religion. Ramphela stresses the importance of building capacity among black South Africans to initiate, control, evaluate and interpret development efforts relevant to their own needs.

De Beer (2008a:187) cautions by stressing that self-reliance should not be seen as isolation or equated with absolute independence. "It still requires engagement with other sources of information and resources outside one's own community, both for cross-fertilisation and to nurture collective consciousness and collective solidarities that go beyond the local neighbourhood." Self-reliance should rather be seen as the positive and actual outcome of effective development and transformation.

Fostering a healthy self-reliance among the formerly colonised such as the people of Soshanguve could birth an alternative prophetic community. Brueggemann (2001:59-60) argues that the alternative prophetic community is concerned with both "criticizing and energizing. On the one hand, such a community is to show that the dominant consciousness, like the monopoly of power by the minority in South Africa, will indeed end and that it has no final claim upon the majority. On the other hand, it is the task of the alternative prophetic community to present an alternative consciousness that can energize the community to fresh forms of faithfulness and vitality such as agency in issues facing the community. The internalisation of the current dominant consciousness leads people to despair about the power to move toward new life. It is the task of prophetic imagination and ministry to bring people to engage the promise of newness that is at work in our history with God.

In my mind, I see a connection between an alternative prophetic community and the Incarnation of Jesus. The latter was essentially a spatial strategy of Jesus transferring himself into the brokenness of our world and eventually dying in that space where robbers and lepers become outcasts of society. A Christian spatial praxis should deliberately seek to become present in our church buildings and neighbourhoods. It should include participation in public

meetings, in the struggles of daily living of the poor, and in understanding the processes that shape the local urban fabric we are called to serve and be part of (de Beer 2008a:191).

As InnerCHANGE staff, we see the margin, such as townships and slums, as the inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the categories of coloniser and colonised. Marginality is the space of resistance where we learn to build kingdom-like structures from the bottom up and the inside out (de Beer 2008a:192). We also learn to live in solidarity with our neighbours because we believe that we can only transform our community if we work together. Kritzinger (2008:100) challenges people doing incarnational ministry, such as us, that if we do not do whatever we can to prevent crimes or wrongdoing done in our neighbourhoods, we are accomplices in them. We should live in a kind of solidarity through which each shares responsibility for every injustice and every wrong committed in the world.

6.2 Challenges

The biggest challenge we are encountering is financial sustainability of our local missionaries. As mentioned earlier, for many years the majority of our staff came from the West. Nowadays, the majority of our support comes from South Africa. However, our funders are only comfortable supporting our ministry activities, not our salaries. For the latter, we are still dependant on the generosity of friends and churches from the West. When my wife and I started InnerCHANGE South Africa in 2008, all our financial support came from the West. I thank God for His financial provision both nationally and internationally. Nowadays, I also celebrate God's provision for our family and team through the support from our neighbours. I am also learning to broaden my understanding of support, and not limit it to financial only.

For example, one of our neighbours took care of our last born for the first three years of his life for free. Another neighbour availed her house and garage for InnerCHANGE to run a tutoring ministry and kids' club for five years for free; she did not even want money we offered to cover the cost of utilities. These neighbours have helped me fully understand what Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

When we take the youth and children to camps (we do this a couple of times in a year), we ask for financial and material contributions from parents and guardians, and they give. Some of the neighbours whose children are not even part of our ministries are starting to give for specific projects, when we ask. Through this exercise of faith, I am increasingly realising that, by involving our friends and neighbours to support our ministry, we are introducing them to an involvement in God's family that they might have otherwise missed (Wilson 2011:5).

This is a paradigm shift for me, because I have a hard time asking for money from my neighbours who are poor. I am now seeing support-raising in a whole new light. It is no longer about just getting the money our team needs to run our ministry. Support-raising is about God's children working together, each dependent on the other, to see God's plan fulfilled in the lives not only of the givers and receivers, but in the lives of those who may still be outside the family (Wilson 2011:5).

Although the level of generosity of our neighbours who are poor has humbled us, what we receive isn't enough to cover our ministry expenses. We are learning to be creative so that we can be sustainable. We have entered into a contract with a fundraiser who will be doing grant applications on behalf of InnerCHANGE South Africa. We are also partnering with local churches who are interested in reaching out to their neighbourhood. We train and coach their staff about starting good news initiatives and making disciples that multiply. In these

partnerships, we are still able to grow our movement without having to stress about the salaries of staff. Local churches take care of that business.

7. Conclusion

In many black African poor communities such as Soshanguve, the colonial narrative is still very dominant and it is keeping many of our neighbours from being agents of their own well-being. Christianity still seems to be a foreign import that stresses life after death but has very little to do with being good news to the world today. Maluleke (2008:70) feels that our Christian religion still runs a real risk of becoming the opium of both the rich and the poor if it does not revitalise and equip people to be the change they would like to see around them.

Decolonising our theology will mean using the Bible and faith in a relevant way as black Africans. If we do nothing about being relevant to our contexts of life and ministry, we should give up any hope of God doing it on our behalf. We should not expect God to come and intervene on our behalf as we sit passively before issues our communities face (Maluleke 2008:63).

Maluleke (2008:63) stresses that black people have to decolonise their minds and take the initiative to be good news to their neighbours if the church is to retain relevance for fellow blacks, especially young blacks. He continues by arguing that God does not do theology, but human beings do, and that the time has come for our own theologians to take up the cudgels of the fight by restoring a meaning and direction in black people's understanding of God. Decolonised minds will lead to true empowerment. The latter occurs when individuals and communities are able to take control over their lives and effectively participate in processes which lead to outcomes that affect them. Faith-based communities and local churches should model self-reliance both internally and externally, the latter by involvement in the communities we work with (de Beer 2008a:187). Sustainable development requires participation by ordinary people, such that they are the owners of the project with responsibility over the long term. This will ensure that the projects are scaled up not by bringing in more foreign national missions' workers, but by enabling neighbourhoods to take over programmes and carry them forward as their own (McManus 2016:136).

As InnerCHANGE, we would like to humbly influence, shape and transform ways of thinking and ways of life so that the gospel could be seen as the good news lived out and not as a coloniser tool to oppress black Africans. Living as "the colonised" is still very present in many of us black Africans. But we have the potential to replace the colonised in us by the decolonised that will actively build African societies into all they aspire to become (McKaiser 2013:34).

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(Notes: References listed here include those cited in Part I. Also, all websites were accessed 10 September 2018.)

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