

Making magic with a love movement

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Cheesekids started with eight people. Today over 20,000 people volunteer with them. One of the biggest activations that takes place on Mandela Day is through Cheesekids.



It's easy to see why when one of the founding members of the volunteer youth organisation, Shaka Sisulu comes on stage, calling "let's start a love movement" (and he is compelling) you want to leap out of your seat, get on a bus and go build a house, paint a school or grow vegetables.

Sisulu was addressing the delegates at the second and last day of Trialogue's *Making CSI Matter* conference that was held recently at The Wanderers in Gauteng. The conference brings together Corporate Social Investment (CSI) practitioners from across the broad CSI sphere who want to learn more about it and development practice. Sisulu's Cheesekids story is one of the case studies presented at the conference.

A case study

Sisulu found his passion for social development by accident in 2007 when he joined some friends to help build a house in Tembisa. "We built a house with Habitat for Humanity and the beneficiaries were there are participating. For me it was the most incredible experience seeing their appreciation."

He recalls that what also made a lasting impression was seeing the impact of the volunteers work that day. "When you donate something you do not get to see that. It was an amazing aspect for me and I was hooked. I wanted to do more."

And he did exactly that. He began posting the 'events' on Facebook and found everyone liked it and wanted to get involved. So he formed a Facebook group. He says he would put up the information and friends would arrived and bring their friends. "I then began to notice that friends would bring new friends. The next time round the new friends would bring their friends and so there were always new people while the rest also returned. People were sticking with it and it began to grow."

As they grew so did their needs. For example, they needed hard hats for building. One thing led to another and soon they held their first fundraiser: a dance off."

He believes we all want to contribute to society in some way, but do not always know how. "We are so busy, and we do not know how to call, who to call, where to go... how to be great, and how to help someone else be great."

It is about activating the inactive in terms of "time, resources, skills, mobilisation, and advocacy". In his experience, once you are involved the more you contribute. "For example, an accountant gives up a Saturday morning to paint houses. Eventually he/she decides they are not maximising their contribution so they say let me do your books for you. Before long they are encouraging their network of accountants to assist. This is termed mobilising."

Love shown through making a contribution

He says people make a contribution and it is through this that love is shown. It is what he calls the love movement. "What do love movements do? We give and spread love and the sum of our love is greater than its parts. We expect something big to happen, and we are an army."

Other love movements exist in the world. City Year in the United States (US) is a love movement that started in the 1980s and is when young people give a year of their time to community service. "The US has a strong culture of community service. In any given week 50 000 people are giving service in unison and it is the kind of thing we want to see happen in South Africa," he says. City Year is also active in South Africa.

How do you create a love movement? "There has to be a higher purpose or a grand idea that you then open up to everyone - you cannot control it. You need a rite, for example: claim a day. Being consistent, in frequency and tone in your activities and message, is imperative. Get a play book or a manual explaining the process - not the key recipe - that remains a secret so that the movement carries some mystic. But... keep it simple. Get evangelists, because it is all about followers and find the faces and ambassadors. You can even make a soundtrack. What is the sound of your success? Then eat humble pie. Remember you are not the main attraction. It is not about you," he enthuses. "And lastly make magic."

Today Sisulu spends less time on Cheesekids and more time on advocacy and he is working hard to change the system. He is currently pioneering a media technology start-up that will roll out across the continent. His book, *Becoming* was published in 2012. He also serves on the board of LoveLife.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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