



The fiftieth episode

Summary keywords

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Speakers

Jake Lloyd, Cormac Russell, Fwangmun Oscar Danladi, Ruth Verhey, Daniel Turay, Erin Lloyd Rotich, Shaydany Urbani, Lord Nigel Crisp, Chalwe Nyirenda, Alastair McIntosh, Bobby Zachariah

Episode 14: The fiftieth episode

Jake Lloyd 0:19

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Six years, 61 interviewees from 23 countries and now 50 episodes all discussing one thing.

Multiple voices 0:34

Community. Community. Communities. Community. Community. Community. Community. Community. Community.

Jake Lloyd 0:15

I'm Jake Lloyd. This is the *How to build community* show. And those voices are just some of the people who've been guests on this show since we began in 2017. They include psychologists, entrepreneurs, youth workers, medics, politicians, activists, academics, social workers, recovering , church leaders, barbers and more. They've spoken to me from Canada to the Democratic Republic of Congo, from India to Iraq, from Pakistan to Palestine, from Nepal to Nigeria and from the UK to the USA.

Each interviewee has shared their stories, wisdom, insights and helped to illuminate something crucial about how to build and sustain a happy and healthy community. And it's no exaggeration to say that what they've shared with me has changed how I see the world and my place within it. And so over the course of this, our 50th episode, I want to share with you just a few of the things I've learned from the last 49 episodes. Some of the questions we'll explore include: What if the best way to impact a community is simply to listen to its members. How and why should you love your enemy? How can you fight fake news? Learn from failure? Create a culture of problem solving? Set up a community project? Motivate others or resolve conflicts?

I'm going to begin by sharing some observations from Cormac Russell. Cormac is from the Republic of Ireland. He's an expert in something called asset-based community development. And during his career, he's been invited into hundreds of communities all around the world to help them identify their strengths and use them to solve challenges. And in 2019, he told me that in every community he has visited, he always notices three things.

Cormac Russell 2:52

The first is that every single person in a community has gifts. They have something to contribute to the well-being of the community. Whether they know that or not is kind of that's the conversation to be had. But every single person, even people who've been unfortunately labelled as something vital and isolating to contribute to their community. The second thing, that's a bond observer community, even if it isn't actualized or animated, is hospitality. And over and over and over again, I've never been in a community where I haven't received hospitality. And the third is associations, even in Canning and the surrounding area in the refugee. Remember, they some of the most horrible circumstances for people that are already gone through so much. But literally, I guess people did the best they could do. But it was incredible to see how associational life and enterprise emerged even in that environment. And what I mean by associate in the same way as you have a flock of birds, you have an association of citizens, groupings of people who come together and figure out how they can do together, what they can't do alone. So I often kind of joke as a way of thinking about this is you could be a beautiful singer with no matter how good you are, no matter how beautiful a voice you have, you will never be a choir on your own.

Jake Lloyd 4:19

And this first idea that everyone has something to offer certainly reflects my experience on this show. For example, let's think about young and old people. In 2018, I spoke with one of the creators of something called the Friendship Bench. Now, this is a project in which elderly women in a community are trained to be lay mental health workers. They sit on a bench and provide a listening ear to people in a community who are struggling with personal issues. It began in Zimbabwe, but its success was quickly spotted and replicated all over the world. One of its creators is the psychologist Ruth Verhey, and she told me why older women are so well placed to do this job.

Ruth Verhey 5:10

These women come with a high authority in a way that very respected community members as such. So

what they say counts. And these women stay in the community and it seems almost like they take it on a personal note to make sure that their clients are okay. So whenever we talk to them, they go way beyond the call in a way. They would go do home visits, which might be sometimes part of their job, but sometimes it might also be just checking in on clients that they're worried about. And these women with their meager salary are going out there and really giving their all. And we thought at first that our lay health workers could be extremely stressed out and have what we call a vicarious trauma, you know, like secondary trauma, just of having to deal with what their clients go through. Plus, also going through all the same stuff that their clients go through because they live in the same community and exposed to the same stressors. And we actually found that the lay health workers are extremely resilient, how we say. So they have very low rates of common mental disorders and PTSD.

Jake Lloyd 6:22

So from old to young and in 2021, we spoke with Fwangmun Oscar Danladi, who leads a movement of young people in Nigeria who have found a way to turn the country's huge problem of electronic waste into a thriving and sustainable business. I'm not going to explain how exactly you'll have to go and listen to the episodes to find out. But they convert this waste into items they can sell. And it's very clever. And when I spoke to Fangman, we ended the interview with him, issuing a rallying cry for all communities to recognize that young people have a huge amount to offer any community that wants to solve a complex challenge. We all just need to recognize this lesson to young people and learn to follow their lead.

Fwangmun Oscar Danladi 7:14

I believe that young people are just the resource that any community would have. And let's not hold our hands and keep waiting. We can make a difference. And it begins now. And that's just what I would say begins now, begins with passion, with creativity, and with the desire to just change. It begins now. And if you're a young person, it's a huge opportunity to make a difference. Then that's just believe in yourself and believe in God, what God desires to use you to do.

Jake Lloyd 7:48

So that was Fwangmun from Nigeria. Before that, you had Ruth in Zimbabwe and these are both people who've sparked change. They've spotted an opportunity. They've got local people on board and they've helped an idea to grow. But there's no point in pretending that creating change like this is easy. It's hard. People can fear it. People are wary of it. People resist it. And when we made an episode on *How to create a culture of problem solving*, one of our guests called Erin Lloyd Rotich. She put her finger on why this change is hard and what qualities it takes in a person to help create change in a community.

Erin Lloyd Rotich 8:34

How we usually define culture, right, is this is how we do things, right? That's the simple way. When you hear people say, this is how we do things, they're talking about culture. The culture of how things are done.

So when anyone comes and says, let's do things a new way, it's scary, right? It goes against how people want to act. And that's where you get that resistance. So it takes persistent, courageous people to push those boundaries and then create a sort of safe space to then dream and say, oh, actually, there's a different way possible.

Jake Lloyd 9:12

And I've met a lot of these persistent, courageous people on this show. Some have been very accomplished and experienced leaders. For example, in 2020, we met Daniel Turay. He's a retired government worker from Sierra Leone who amazingly recruited two and 50 local volunteers where he lives in order to build over a hundred miles of roads and to connect the villages that have never been connected by road before. I described this episode as a masterclass in motivating others. And at one point in our chat, I asked Daniel what advice he had for others who want to run any kind of project in their community.

Daniel Turay 9:58

This is simple, Jake. I have is saying don't walk for people. Walk with people working for people. It's not sustainable. Work with the people. It makes participation. It enhances sustainability as well. So that is one number to also try to do a simple study. It is not something like you have to ask for money to go out and do it. So it. I always tell people that money is not a determinant, but rather a facilitator. That's what I keep telling people, because each time people say, Oh, I want to do this, there is no money. You will never get started. We are doing the road from nobody's funds. So my advice is try and go and study the dynamics in the community.

Jake Lloyd 10:54

And I love that line of his money is not a determinant, but a facilitator. In other words, he believes a lack of money should never stop you from starting something good. And that line about working with people rather than for them was echoed in another episode when I spoke with a man who led 1.3 million people. Lord Nigel Crisp began his working life as a community worker, but he went on to run one of the largest employers in the world, the UK's National Health Service. And I couldn't resist asking him, what did he learn about leadership in such an influential role?

Lord Nigel Crisp 11:36

Well, it's about relationships. I mean, I was chief executive, but I also had a chief medical director and I also had a chief nursing officer. That was a very strong partnership. And the chief medical officer could bring the doctors to the table, if you like, and the nurse could bring the nurses to the table. And then we had to create some kind of relationship with the politicians. And there were four years when I was Chief Executive when things went really well, and we were all pointing in the same direction. We all came with a different perspective. And during those four years, we made enormous progress in doing that. So I think there is a basic idea about leadership that is about shared leadership and about relationships. There's also something here, of course, about a leader being able to see the next step. You've got to be, as a leader, explaining to

your people what's going on and how this will pan out. And yes, we are trying to this is our vision for the future. And yes, there will be hard times in between times. But actually, if we get through this, we can keep moving to the future. So explaining what's happening, the big, big communication role. And I think if I think of community leaders, both those things apply very heavily then they have you of sharing your leadership. You're not a dictator. It's about relationships. And secondly, making sure people know what's going on. You know, you may be doing wonderful stuff, but if people don't know about it, don't understand your motivations, they may get suspicious. They may think you're doing things for your own purposes and for your own game, but doing something for a community.

Jake Lloyd 13:06

So good leadership and good communication are, of course, crucial, but so too is quiet persistence and dedication. And when we had a panel discussion in the episode *How to advocate for change*, I asked my three expert guests from Tearfund what qualities a person needs in order to successfully advocate for change in their community. My guests in this episode were Joanna Watson, Chalwe and Munyaradzi. But first, you're going to hear from Chalwe Nyirenda.

Chalwe Nyirenda 13:38

They need to be convinced about it. The need for advocacy. So, sometimes advocacy is risky and there are ways to mitigate those risks. But because it requires patience, you must be convinced of the long term gain that will be derived from doing the advocacy. That is a very important quality, in my view. I think there's something about being a collaborator and highly relational because advocacy, whether you're advocating with others on your own, it's all about relationship with those who are around you, who are affected by the issue you're advocating about. But little say relating well to those in power. You've got the power to change things, please, and to do that collaboratively rather than confrontation me. And I think there's something about persistence. And with that comes almost having a vision for change, like being passionate to see change. You know, a really powerful advocate often is somebody who just wants to see change. They are fed up with the injustice that they're facing. So the first word that came to my mind was long suffering, which I think it is. It is true. But for me, two keywords, commitment and conviction. I think it is important for members of any community that engage in advocacy to be fully committed to the cause.

Jake Lloyd 15:06

There were lots of lessons in this episode, but one of the overarching lessons was that to advocate for change, you have to be in it for the long term and prepare for ups and downs. Yes, there will be successes, but there will also be failures. And failure is a topic I explored in one episode with a lady called Ashley Good from Canada. She runs Fail Forward, which is a business that helps groups and organisations to develop a culture in which they learn from failure. And she explained to me why this is so important, by using a metaphor that I found very powerful.

Ashley Good 15:45

The Japanese art of repairing pottery with gold. It's called Sacred Ackroyd Golden Repair. And basically, why the metaphor holds so true, is because these works of art are gorgeous. You've got all these cracks and they're lined with gold. And the art form recognizes that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken. That those cracks, those failures, they're not something to be hidden or disguised. They're part of that object history that went into making it more beautiful for having been cracked. And I fundamentally believe that it is always, always possible in times of failure to repair. With gold, it's not guaranteed. It's really hard. But it is always possible to repair with gold and. And come out the other side wiser and stronger for having been broken.

Jake Lloyd 16:57

So failure, difficulties, challenges. They're not something to forget about or ignore. Rather, they can provide valuable lessons and help a community grow into something more resilient and more beautiful. And the coronavirus pandemic brought with it no shortages of difficulties and challenges. And on this show, during the height of the pandemic, we heard stories about these difficulties. In one episode, fake news expert Shaydany Urbani told us how to prepare yourself if you want to challenge someone who is spreading fake news.

Shaydany Urbani 17:36

One is to make sure that you have accurate information. And so that means a couple of things. That means, you know, on any given topic. Taking a minute to check yourself. So if you see a piece of information that elicits a strong emotional reaction. Stop and think about that and think about why you're having that reaction. Also, one of the best ways to verify information is just by simply going to the source where the information comes from. So if that is a statistic, what is the organisation or the government body that put out that statistic? The closer you can get to finding the original source, the more you're going to understand the context of that information and get closer to seeing the information as it was originally put out in the world and not in some other kind of misleading context. The other thing people can do to equip themselves, I think, is to come into conversations with the intent, to understand the other person, to understand what misinformation they're seeing and why they're sharing it. Often, what happens is that people approach these conversations in an adversarial way, right. And can be sort of dismissive of the person who is sharing misinformation. Usually people share misinformation, not maliciously. They're sharing it because they believe in it. They're sharing this information because there's something about it that they're concerned about. So if you can meet people at their level and understand what are the root concerns that is driving, sharing that misinformation, then you can probably have a more productive conversation.

Jake Lloyd 19:33

Also, in the early days of the pandemic, we spoke with a man called Graham Fawcett. He's a clinical psychologist who specializes in helping groups of people to thrive under stressful conditions. And he told us how the virus is not the only thing that's infectious.

Graham Fawcett 19:52

I don't want to get too technical on my podcast, but there's some really, really lovely chemicals that are flying around our brain. And one of them is called oxytocin. It's the happiness chemical. It's the one that gives us a sense of joy and happiness and enjoyment and thrills and all those sorts of things. And that's innovative by a number of different things being touched. Touching somebody else saying hello. Somebody smiling at us. US smiling at somebody else. And these acts of kindness release this oxytocin, which in turn gives us that sense of happiness. And the oxytocin stays around for a little while in our bodies. And one of the other knock on effects of oxytocin is that boost your immune system. So it's not just a question of us smiling at somebody or us doing the right thing. It actually has benefits to us. To us, which we can measure under the microscope or if we took a blood test. So these are these what we call pro-social behaviours are very, very important and benefit us and the community around us is, again, to be crass, if you smile at somebody, then almost certainly smile back. If you smile at a number of people, then almost certainly smile back. In a sense, you're spreading a bit of oxytocin and you're spreading the happiness around.

Jake Lloyd 21:06

So the pandemic has affected all of us. And another thing that I suspect affects all of us is the challenge in a community of mixing with people who think and act differently to you. Now, we've made a couple of episodes on this subject, and in one of them, a world leading climate campaigner, Alistair Mackintosh, told us a story of what it means in practice to love your enemy.

Alistair McIntosh 21:34

My grandfather, on my mother's side, he used to have a saying. He used to say, 'I don't like that man. I must get to know him better'. And, you know, it's the same, you know, people who have a problem with racism or whatever it might be, the first question to put all these is, well, have you met such people? Have you got to know them? And if you have, then we can have this discussion a bit differently. But until we make the effort to get to know our adversary. And to me, that is what loving your enemy in practical terms of the boat.

Jake Lloyd 22:11

I also spoke with a mediator called Tara West, who gave her advice on how to resolve conflicts with other people.

Tara West 22:19

Listening is probably the most important one. If you can truly listen non-judgmental only with the goal of trying to understand where the other person is coming from, I don't think there's probably anything more important than that. And if you can reflect back with what you're hearing. So I guess the skill would be how do you reflect back in a way that allows that person to feel heard and doesn't do it in a way where your you

know, there's a little judgment attached to it or, you know, once you've you've decided, you've heard them, now you're moving on to the next thing. It's a skill to really just reflect back what you've heard and wait for that other person to confirm that. Actually, you did get it right.

Jake Lloyd 23:07

Tara focused on listening there. And I want to focus on this word as well as we bring this 50th episode to a close, because listening is a word that I think is appeared in possibly every single episode of this show. But there's one episode in particular that I want to end on because it tells a story that I think about quite often. The episode began with the question of what if the best way to impact a community is simply to listen to its members? The episode is called Secrets of Salt. You'll find out why if you listen to it in full. But the story is told by a social worker from the city of Panay in India called Bobby Zachariah. Now, Bobby was invited by a corporation in the city to help them with a community initiative they were trying to run as part of their outreach or corporate social responsibility program. Now, they tried all sorts of projects to serve this community building projects, training programs. They'd all failed. And when they asked Bobby to help them, he suggested that rather than do anything in the community, they simply listened to the community's members. Bobby trained a team of volunteers from the corporation to go and do this and they went door to door in the community to hear about people's lives. I let Bobby take up the story from here.

Bobby Zachariah 24:39

There are approximately 450 houses in that neighbourhood, and each of those families were visited by our team of volunteers. So initially, the community members were quite surprised that why do people come to listen to us like we are? It's quite unusual that somebody would come and sit in my home and ask me the question, How are you? And then sit with us for the next one and a half hour listening to our answers to the question of How are you? But then eventually what happened is that families felt that, you know, we might do even though we are poor and we are uneducated, we matter. And they also started feeling that we have capacities, we have capacities in us that we often did not know that we had. And these people who came and did the soul visits, they helped us to recognize that there is potential in me as an individual, as we as a family members and neighbourhood, we can come together and begin to do things. So that sense of affirmation and a sense of competence and a feeling of confidence began to emerge. Eventually, what happened is that after a year we did the dream building exercise with the whole neighbourhood. We invited the men, women and children into the company, and we asked them like, Would you come to our company? We will have this session to think about what our dreams are for the future. We were expecting only about 20 people. We had invited about more than 50 people. But after the services, when we invited them, nearly 100 people gathered such a huge response from the community. So we had to completely change the seating arrangement. We had to bring in new chairs, we had to order more food. And during that session, the members articulated their key thematic areas of change that they would like to see in their neighbourhood. So there were things like, you know, we would like to see them and developing their future, the communities around that area, we would like to see change happening for our children. And youth should have a good future. The third area that they said is that we would like to see infrastructure in our community develops for to one, they said, 'we would like to see the health aspects of our community change for the better'. And there was no sense of dependency on the community to say that, you know, we have identified these areas of change and you have to do all this for us. There was no sense of dependency.

They said that this is the area where we would like to see change happen. And we as men, women, children, we would make it possible. They said that, you know, our young people would do this or women would do this. And we are going to meet the politician who is responsible for our community. And we are we would like to advocate with people for water, for sanitation, for electrification of our neighbourhood, put good roads in place. So they went to the pony, what a simple corporation. They advocated with the officers who were responsible for urban renewal, sanitation, health, water supply, all of that. So they did their advocacy for many, many changes began to happen in the neighbourhood. So this was done entirely by the community. Our CSR team would guide them. They would say that, you know, this is the person responsible for health and sanitation, but it wasn't totally done by the urban neighbourhood members and by the youth and by the women. So there were lots of changes that were happening in the neighbourhood. The sanitation improved, the children who dropped out of school, many of them got back into the schools. Now the drop dropout from the school is almost reduced to zero because everybody is interested in good quality education. And they put pressure on the education officer to say that, you know, this school should provide good quality education to us. And they sought support from our company to say that, you know, can you also put some in with some of your money in improving the quality of education in the school? So the company invested a part of their money to build a good library, a good lab, training the teachers in good practices of education. So the company did their part little bit, but it was mostly the advocacy by the youth and by the women and the men, which really brought about a big change in the neighbourhood. And it's an ongoing process even now.

Jake Lloyd 28:45

And that is just one small extract of this amazing story. So, I do recommend you go and listen to the rest of that episode called *The Secrets of SALT*.

But that's almost it for this 50th episode. I really hope you've enjoyed this journey into our archives. As much as I've enjoyed making it. If you did, please do tell others about it and share it on your social media. And if you'd like to learn more about the people behind this show, then please do visit www.arukahnetwork.org and learn.tearfund.org . That's it for episode 50. Here's to another 50. I hope you'll be joining us. Bye for now.

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