



# Persona Doll Training

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2014

2014 has come along and with it our 10th year of Persona Doll Training!! We have indeed come a long way since the beginning. In 1999, Carol Smith and Babette Brown (an anti-racism activist and SA exile living in London) had a vision of Persona Dolls in SA. Carol Smith's anti-bias experience was shaped by the work done with the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU), in Cape Town. ELRU's anti-bias project, initiated by Helen Robb, began in 1990 and led the South African ECD field at the time in research, materials production and training.

We were initially introduced to Persona Dolls through the writings of Louise Derman-Sparks from California, USA, and then again Carol met her and Babette at the Qhubeka Anti-bias Conference convened by ELRU in Cape Town in 1996. Carol's main exposure to the PD approach was through working with Babette Brown in the United Kingdom from 2000 to 2003 where they trained teachers throughout the UK, also coming from places like Iceland, India, Australia and New Zealand. Also while teaching part-time in the UK, Carol used the Dolls with three to five year old children, many from poor inner city and refugee families, and also trained and supported teachers to use the Dolls. She found the Dolls a powerful and useful practical tool for developing inclusion and human rights awareness, anti-bias and emotional intelligence.



The potential for using the Dolls in the very different context of South Africa became more of a reality as South Africa in 2003 had very few programmes to support teachers in anti-bias work. This was particularly disturbing given the recent history of oppression, and the need for change, for healing of the past, the challenges of high levels of poverty and HIV and AIDS.

We needed to get the dolls in South Africa. After a few dead ends and much help from Roben Penny (while Carol was still in London) and Michelle Kolnick who helped and developed a sample (we still have 'Joey').

We then approached Juanita Bosch, a crafter from Paarl. Juanita loved the concept and developed a pattern with us, and over time and much trial and error we had beautiful dolls to offer, plus skills training and job opportunities for a group of rural women.

Persona Doll Training South Africa (PDT-SA) was formally set up in 2004, with the help of a reference group, which later became the management committee/board of our NPO. Babette Brown and the PDT-UK team continued to provide inspiration, emotional and financial support.

Carol presented many workshops and introduced the methodology at conferences. We received much needed support including generous advice from Eric Atmore, the SDU at UCT, ex colleagues at ELRU, and the anti-bias network. As soon as people got to see the programme with the dolls and understood, they were excited. The HIV and AIDS programme (now disbanded) at WCED, partnered with us to provide training and dolls to schools in all districts in the Western Cape. We trained with NACCW in many rural Isibindi sites, the Eastern Cape ECD network, The Foundation for Community Work, Inclusive Education, Herzlia projects, etc. The Jim Joel Fund and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust were our first funders.

By 2009, PDT-SA expanded to work in most of the provinces in South Africa. The small training team- started with just Carol then Thikam Pillay, Pam O'Brien, Blossom Ngwevela, and Sue Rosie, later joined by Carohn Cornell, Sue Bailie and Pat Birkett. Some of our early participants moved on to develop their own programs e.g. Ububele in Gauteng.

Gene August held us together for the large WCED HIV Programme as our training coordinator. Now our team of anti-bias trainers train and support those who are using the Persona Doll Approach: ECD teachers, student teachers and ECD trainers, child care workers, home visitors, community workers, social workers and occupational therapists. We produce a range of Persona Dolls, their clothes, their wheelchairs and other equipment. We are developing blended eLearning materials to reach more communities.

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We have many exciting things lined up this year, one of which is our new Logo Launch. This will be up and running in April so keep a good look out!

We are busy with a major revamp of our website which will become more interactive and user friendly with information ranging from workshops to stories and ordering. We will have a full gallery where you will be able to view photographs of our workshops that have taken place over the last couple of years.



**Our twitter handle is @PersonaDoll**

follow us and keep up to date with all the current happenings.



**Persona Doll Training: Embracing Diversity.**

Like us and join us there!



We are currently working on an ECD learning programme in partnership with Ikamva Labantu which will provide an anti-bias curriculum and to use Persona Doll stories as a tool to teach children and to help them with social skills and conflict resolution amongst many other issues they may have. As an example the stories are designed to help children develop healthy self-esteem and skills to stand up against bullying and teasing.

We have a new addition to our staff family. Natalie Watlington, our training coordinator has had a baby girl, Rachel born 20 January 2014. Congratulations to both her and her husband Eric. Natalie will be back in the office from May. We also welcome Mandy Hudson and Heidi Benn to our admin team!

Every 3 months or so we will be updating our newsletters and in doing so will feature one of our trainers who are out there in the field doing an amazing job in keeping the Persona Doll Training programme as ongoing and successful as it is.

This time we are focusing on **Mrs Rose N. Jakuja**, our trainer in the Mount Ayliff area within the District of Alfred Nzo. Rose, who is a teacher by profession has, over many, many years, made remarkable strides in developing and improving education in her community. She has been involved from 1982 when she established the first pre-school, Sakhisizwe, in her town, operating out of the local church. She started cooking for the community, when she saw the need to feed the children, out of the town hall kitchen using the garden project that she started for supplies.



She has been Deputy Mayor during which time she used her position to improve the conditions in Mount Ayliff, known as one of the poorest towns in the Eastern Cape. Rose trained for the Early Learning Unit for many years.



Working hand in hand with different stakeholders in the community to establish Early Childhood Development sites in various locations, several pre-schools were established in and around Mt Ayliff with the assistance of the Regional Educare Council.

In 1992 after knocking on many doors she managed to find funding for the permanent building of the preschool which had expanded to a high achieving private senior Primary School that offers Early Childhood and education up to Grade 7 and now employs 29 people. Due to the lack of library facilities, parents were moving their children to schools in bigger towns and so Rose knocked on more doors and in 2000 started a library with some 5000 books. The Sakhisizwe Toy and Book Library established a relationship with the National Library's Centre for the Book and R400 000.00 was raised from the Nedbank Foundation. This was shared across 5 schools. This library, renamed as Mount Ayliff Children's Library since 2007, have been lending toys and books to ECD centers in and around Mt. Ayliff village and book clubs have been formed amongst four different schools in the community. This library initiative has expanded the operation to include more than 900 beneficiaries with an annual increase of 60 beneficiaries.



Although Rose is supposed to be retired, she continues her work in the community as an ECD trainer encouraging school practitioners to enable themselves to become more educated in this field and due to her perseverance many have gone on to further study and are now fully qualified at foundation or intermediate phase. Rose went on to receive the award for the "Community Builder of the Year" in 2008. Today, although Rose is retired, she is still a member of many associations linked to pre-school and Self Help. She has a passion for farming which includes vegetables, a piggery and also cattle. She is one of our valued trainers using the Persona Doll approach and is training and mentoring young trainers in her area.

Last week we had the opportunity to interview one of our Home Visitor practitioners. Sibulele Mketi. A vibrant young man of 28 who, on foot, visits homes in the Delft area carrying his two dolls, Siphon and Asiphon, in his arms.



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Sibulele is studying part time to be a foundation phase teacher. He is currently in his third year and has two years to go. He has had to overcome many questions and some teasing but because the dolls work so well with the community he now feels quite comfortable and has become known in the area amongst the families. He has used the Persona Doll approach in his practical exams and work with children.

Sibulele is a home visitor (Family in Focus project, FCW) and goes from house to house to find out if there are families in need of support with their either their children or with the families themselves, encouraging parents to take responsibility for their children and themselves. Once he starts talking to them about community issues through the dolls they find it easier to speak openly. Working with the dolls he has found that parents enjoy the programme and that they do get involved. One story he mentioned was about how he gets the children to share at school. By using the dolls and explaining how hunger affects each child he does get them to share their lunch time meals at break time and encourages the children to care for each other.

He visits 5 families a day! Whilst walking the streets he now has children asking when they can see Sipho and Asiphi again and is now well known for the wonderful work he is doing amongst them all. We are sure that we will be seeing more of Sibulele in the future.

For the future we have many programmes coming up with the support of our funders The DG Murray Trust, Anglo AAC, DSD and both the Arts and Heritage and Charity Lottery Distribution Fund.

**We would like to thank our funders because without them we would not be able to continue to support communities and their children and to work for a better South Africa for all.**



## CONTACT US AT:

**Address:** PO Box 18183  
Wynberg,  
7824,  
South Africa

**Tel:** +27 (0) 21 762 1116

**Email:** [info@pdt.org.za](mailto:info@pdt.org.za)

**Website:** [www.pdt.org.za](http://www.pdt.org.za)

