

Building safer communities through art, music and lived experiences

The Global Freedom Fellowship (GFF) and Philippi Village, a creative and energetic community development hub in Cape Town, have teamed up to make communities in South Africa safer. The fellowship's tour to Philippi Village in March, which combined music, art, and theatre to examine important concerns relating to community safety, served to solidify the collaboration.

As a transformative platform for formerly incarcerated leaders from around the world, the GFF aims to nurture changemakers, build transnational solidarity, foster a shared sense of struggle and success, combat stigma against people who have been in prison and instigate innovative justice work worldwide.

The partnership between Philippi Village and the GFF marks a significant step forward in promoting positive change in South Africa and beyond. By bringing together some of the most visionary minds in the fields of criminal justice and community development, this tour sparked vital discussions, ignited creative solutions, and instilled hope for a more equitable and just society. The aim of the partnership is to elevate the message of building safer communities in South Africa and to change the narrative on how safety is talked about.

By leveraging the power of music, art, and drama, the event challenged traditional approaches to community safety and laid the groundwork for a new era of collaborative and innovative safety and security work.



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During the tour, the fellows collaborated with artists and entrepreneurs at Philippi Village and highlighted their journey and stories. They also participated in painting a mural and recording a podcast on what safety means to them. In addition, they recorded a song that is now the GFF global anthem, completed in three languages.

"We wanted to do more than visit Philippi Village. They are a community development hub and the perfect partner because together we can build safer communities that benefits all of South Africa. It starts by learning about lived experiences by previously incarcerated leaders," said Dr Baz Dreisinger, founder of the GFF.

The discussions culminated in the painting of the mural to celebrate the process. It was done by Cape Town-based graffiti artist Skubalisto, who has been involved in multiple public art projects at Philippi Village.



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“The objective of the mural was to have a permanent presence in a physical way, depicting a child in the arms of a parent to represent safety. Art is central to healing, and the GFF believes that art transcends barriers, including language barriers, and can be used to bond people across borders. It’s a universal language that everyone can understand. It’s powerful because the people involved aren’t claiming to be community safety experts but are using art to translate what safety means to them into something visual,” explained Dreisinger.

“Philippi Village has done a great job recognising the need to use an integrated approach to safety. They recognise that building safe communities is essential for their project to work. They have reached out to various projects, programmes, and agencies to help them explore how to do this. One of the ways has been through the Global Freedom Fellows partnership.”

The fellowship happens annually, and going forward one fellow will be selected every year to be a Philippi Village visionary. This person will be housed at Philippi Village and spend a year exploring different elements of building a safer community. The GFF will also have international residents coming every year to work in collaboration with Philippi Village.

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