

Turning tragedy into an opportunity for change

Tragedy struck not once, not twice, but five times in New York City. The first was on November 25, 2006, when NYPD officers fired fifty bullets at three men, killing unarmed Sean Bell on the night before his wedding.

Thousands of protesters marched the streets of New York City following Bell's death, including Derrick Boykin, Associate Minister at Walker Memorial Baptist Church. Looking around at the crowd, he realized it was mainly homogeneous. He left the march feeling unsatisfied because he knew that for real change to happen, many different kinds of people needed to be involved.



Participants in Conversations for Change strengthened relationships

Three weeks later, Timur Person was shot dead at point-blank range a half a block from Boykin's church. He knew then that something needed to be done. With the pastor's blessing, Boykin formed a partnership with New York Faith & Justice that ultimately led to implementing the Conversations for Change in the South Bronx.



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Community members and police officers came together to strengthen relationships, promote greater representation of Latinos and African Americans on the South Bronx police force, and develop solutions to racial profiling and violence.

“Both the police and the community members were shocked at how effective the process at breaking down the barriers of communication, opening ears to begin to hear each other ... leading to common action towards real change,” said Lisa Sharon Harper, former Executive Director of New York Faith & Justice.

The success of the dialogues has led to other efforts to address public health, public safety, police-community relations, and food security in the area. A coalition of churches, service providers, schools, lawyers, and community members are still working to create change in the South Bronx.

About Everyday Democracy

A national leader in the field of civic participation and community change, Everyday Democracy helps people of different backgrounds and views talk and work together to create communities that work for everyone.

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