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Ukuhlangana Tikkun: designing for intergenerational interaction

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Abstract

The nature of the human family is such that members give and take, teaching and learning from one another, and providing and reaping the benefits. The fragility of the aged makes security and protection, physically, emotionally and medically, imperative. The elderly share this fragility with the youth in our communities. Children, too, are vulnerable and require elements of protection and guidance. There are many cases, however, when these circumstances do not exist.

My thesis asks how one can design a facility that will promote and encourage the intergenerational interaction necessary to bring together the youth and elderly in a way that will solve the challenges and obstacles that each group faces.

There is an existing literacy program in which residents from Our Parents Home, a charity run home for elderly members of the Jewish community, volunteer at H.A Jack Primary School, teaching literacy skills to students. It is evident, during these sessions, that many of the challenges met by the individual participants are eased. Residents of Our Parents Home, many of whom experience feelings of isolation and abandonment, have the benefit of interaction with the children, and the stimulation that comes with it. The children, on the other hand, many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds, some more troubled than others, are offered one on one attention, support, encouragement and guidance. It is clear that these sessions are mutually beneficial to both parties.

Tracing a line through Apartheid South Africa, and the course and progression of the general family structure, as well as the individual users involved in the current program, this document explores the different layers of its users and context, and concludes with the optimum space, in terms of the development of this mutually beneficial interaction.
The site that I have chosen behaves as a physical link between these two groups, and forms the basis of a structure that works to encourage varying levels of interaction between the two groups, as well as the current users of the site, in an appropriate manner, while playing on, and continuing the theme of contrast that currently exists between these old and young, and generally black and white users, in a positive and stimulating way.
The facility that I have designed is a day centre named Ukuhlangana Tikkun. This is a space that not only provides, but also encourages the opportunity, and the privilege, for the youth and the elderly to interact with one another during the times that they require it most, thus allowing them to reap the benefits of intergenerational interaction.

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