

THE VILLAGE

VOICE



Welcome to The Village Voice!

You're warmly welcomed to the first volume of The Village Voice, the premier digital publication of Village-Connect (VC). It's our goal to bring timely, relevant, and empowering content to Village members and friends on a monthly basis. In this November issue, we take a look at some VC signature practices, dive into a meeting with The Brothas! and learn a thing or two about the power of a smile.

THIS ISSUE

- Pg.2** A Message from Our Founder & Director
- Pg. 3** SES - Student Spotlight: Nassir Ladzekpo
- Pg. 4** CBTC - Transform U: Self-Love & Culture
- Pg. 5** SES - Mentor Spotlight: Jeff Nutt
- Pg. 7** CBTC - Transform U: An Evening with the Brothas!
- Pg. 8** A Call to Action: The Power of a Smile
- Pg. 10** Upcoming VC Projects & Events



“Let us make future generations remember us as proud ancestors just as, today, we remember our forefathers.”

-ROH MOO-HYUN

A Message from Our Founder & Director

As we enter our 5th year of partnership with the San Lorenzo Unified School District, I pause to reflect on the significance of empowering African American children who will one day need to navigate the world as adults. Adults who will not be afforded the *benefit-of-the-doubt* commonly offered to children.

As adults, an unspoken cultural contract exists that communicates that your academic/social/emotional deficiencies serve as no excuse as to why you can't earn enough money to care for your family, emotionally navigate relationships that support success and establish the self-confidence necessary to withstand life's challenges.

The African American Empower Project (AAEP) aims to engage our children in a dialogue where “they are” the focal point. I ask each of you to powerfully invite our boys and girls on a journey inward and dare them to witness the greatness of themselves. This is a monumental challenge where our primary tools are each other, and our individual/collective quest to embrace *purposeful living, guiding principles, core values, natural talents*, and the process of being and becoming as we apply *winning processes* that regulate our health, relationships, wealth and spirituality.

I welcome you to the Village-Connect family and assure you that WE CAN, and WILL prevail in positively impacting children, community, and future generations of African Americans who are counting on us to act now, so they can later.

Gaylon Logan, Executive Director & Founder

Village-Connect

SES - Student Spotlight: Nassir Ladzekpo

This Month, to give villagers a closer look at our SES (School Enrichment Services) program and members, The Village Voice sat down with 10 year-old up and coming professional chef Nassir Ladzekpo. Nassir is a member of the VC boys group at Hillside Elementary School in San Leandro. His favorite color is blue—which he wore specifically for his interview—and he prefers Spider-Man over Superman.

We asked Nassir for some thoughts to share about VC check-in culture, as well as his personal reflections on VC's unique behavioral model that encourages students to keep their group agreements with VC dollars, which they can redeem for prizes and activities.

TVV: How do you feel about the VC prep exercises in boys group?

NAS: I feel like centering is a great way to be focused into what you're doing, and connection is just connecting with the village about what you're thankful for and the things you love most. And I also love human check in because you get to tell people about what happened with you in the last 72 hours or whatever else is on your mind.

TVV: What do you think about VC dollars as a behavior incentive?

NAS: I actually think that it's pretty cool that you guys buy this stuff and then we get opportunities to make money to get stuff that we can buy with our VC money.

TVV: Before this interview, you expressed some plans to master money-making in the VC boys group economy. Can you tell us more about that?

NAS: In the last couple of weeks, I made seven VC dollars. In the future I want to make at least about 20 more. After that, I would buy almost everything, and then I would make my own shop and then sell it back to make more money.

TVV: That's pretty genius. In the meantime, do you have a dream item that you wish they carried at the VC store?

NAS: Yes. AirPods.

For more information about VC School Enrichment Services, [visit us on Facebook](#).



As excited as he is to buy things at the VC store, and share experiences with friends at check-in, Nassir says his favorite time of the day is break time, when he can catch a quick game of football.



CBTC® - Transform U: Reflecting on Self-Love and Culture This Autumn

At VC, we succeed in supporting and strengthening our community through culturally grounded techniques and trained practitioners. Culture Based Transformative Coaching® (CBTC) is our founding technique for self-reflection. The model is based on the idea that self-knowledge and self-love are key to affect growth and change within ourselves.

“...we rarely take the time to appreciate those things in *ourselves* that we contribute to our families and communities.”

What is self-love, and what knowledge of ourselves can we find through using CBTC in our lives?

The daily habits, routines and customs we practice form our cultural identity. From the complex, to the nearly invisible, we appear to others—and sometimes even ourselves—as cultural beings first. This is where knowledge of self comes into play, and how we feel about ourselves fuels our capacity for self-love.

Infusing CBTC Techniques into your Holiday

For many, the Fall season is a time to show gratitude to and for one another, but we rarely take the time to appreciate those things in *ourselves* that we contribute to our families and communities.

This November, while celebrating and acknowledging Thanksgiving, take a moment to self-reflect, or go around your family table and discuss the following:

1. What stories from your familial past can you share that change the way you see yourself, your family, and the community around you?
2. What behaviors and attitudes do you have, and who before you can you credit with endowing them to you?
3. What are the traits and traditions that make your family unique, and how do you want to emphasize or evolve those customs with the next generation of your family?

When sharing these questions with family members, or if reflecting on your own, remember that there are no wrong answers. These questions are designed to help us identify who we are, and why we love being who we are. With the Winter Solstice right around the corner and the New Year after that, let's not forget the traditions and values that keep us unique and our families strong.

SES - Mentor Spotlight: Brother Jeff Nutt on the VC Mission

Brother Jeff Nutt is a prominent mentor, youth advocate, and attendant of the Real Talk Wednesdays community forum hosted at the VC community space in San Leandro. The Village Voice sat down with Jeff this month to discuss his experience with the Village-Connect mission, and how its core values have helped him to re-examine his life.

TVV: *The mission of VC is to build the capacity of people to become more self aware and self directed resulting in sustainable positive self transformation.*

Do you feel like your capacity toward self-awareness has been changed since you've been working with VC?

JEFF: I'd say yes, because when you're asked what are your highlights or what are your challenges in a group of people who maybe you don't know, it allows you to be vulnerable; it allows you to dig deep sometimes. In that light you can learn things about yourself that maybe you didn't think you knew.

When I first came home from prison, I thought that I knew myself. I was like 'man, I been putting a lot of time into myself', but coming home, one thing that I learned is yes you can know the core of yourself but there's other things that break down who you



Brother Jeff instructing a member of the Hillside boys group on the best way to lace up his sneakers.

“When I first came home from prison, I thought that I knew myself.”

are that you can continually get to know further. So now I’m always, constantly trying to see what it is I can do to continue to know myself in a deeper light.

TVV: Meditation and centering of the breath are hugely important at VC. Do you feel like connection made through the breathing exercises have empowered you?

JEFF: I’d never practiced meditation prior to Village-Connect, and I believe that meditation allows you to think differently, to think a little bit outside the box and connect in a way that you never thought you would. Not just that but when you empower yourself I believe that you can empower others. Just by being your true self and allowing people to see who you are and hear your story, they can pick up things that you might never have thought they would.

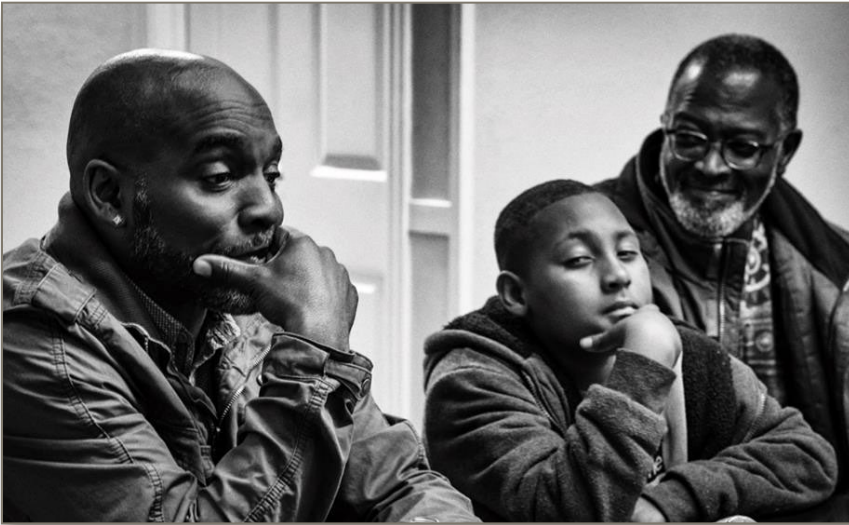
TVV: A couple of core values of VC are communication and accountability. What has your work mentoring Black youth taught you about communication and accountability?

JEFF: I find that you have to be vulnerable when you communicate sometimes. And not vulnerable in the sense that you’re gonna tell your deepest, darkest secret, but vulnerable in the sense where something you might communicate might be little embarrassing or you might have to put your pride to the side to communicate something. Even communication in the sense where you’re listening to someone; I think a lot of the time, when people call themselves “communicating” they only see themselves as talking or speaking, instead of listening. So with our students, communication is very important to me, and I don’t move forward unless communication is there. It has to be there for me in order for me to seek out a goal, or to move forward in life.

TVV: Do you have any tips for our Village members who might be on the fence about mentoring, or volunteering with the Village?

JEFF: If you’re interested in linking up with Village Connect, or serving a higher purpose or cause than yourself, I would say take it serious—your life, because we only have one. We don’t get to start over like you do in Call of Duty, this life of ours is very dynamic. Especially as we start getting older and people start looking up to us, whether it’s our own children—or even if we don’t have children—it’s our cousin, or our nephew, or somebody’s kid down the street, who we don’t even think is looking up to us, is looking up to us. Take it serious, your life. Take it serious and get to know yourself.

For more info on the Real Talk Wednesdays community forum or youth mentorship, [visit us on Facebook.](#)



CBTC - Transform U: An Evening with The Brothas!

The Brothas! is a community-based initiative from VC, under the East Oakland Ready for School Project (EORSP). The EORSP is a collaborative whose goal is to build a neighborhood network that includes nonprofits, community members, and other organizations in East Oakland. The EORSP aims to cooperate with the community to establish a shared vision of easy access to improved education outcomes, especially for African American families.

The Brothas! meet on the first and third Wednesday evenings of each month from 7-9:00 pm, and offer sliding scale cash incentives for fathers and men to come build with one another.

participants to re-think and re-tool beliefs that may not be producing results that benefit self, family, and community.

Community leaders consisting of fathers, sons, husbands, and bachelors reflected on experiences of intimacy and tenderness, as well as generational trauma and personal struggle. Elder brothers exchanged anecdotes on relationships and coming of age in urban America. Younger brothers found a place to pose questions and air vulnerabilities without judgement.

As an introductory activity, familiar faces shared their "homework", a previously agreed upon introspective writing activity, which prompted each writer to draft his own personal statement of purpose, and three or more accompanying core values.

Brother Gaylon Logan, executive director of Village-Connect was in attendance, and agreed to share his own purpose with The Village Voice.



“My purpose is to diligently stay mindful that it’s a healthy and natural act to engage in the process of introspection. Seeking and discovering the treasures embedded within me that derive from an infinite power source. Once I discover these treasures my purpose is to then unselfishly share with the world.”

-GAYLON LOGAN

The overarching theme social intelligence—sometimes called EQ (Emotional Quotient)—was applied to the experiences of the men, increasing our capacity toward compassionate leadership and self understanding, or *innerstanding*.

Questions posed included:



"How do we facilitate our emotions differently than we manage them?"

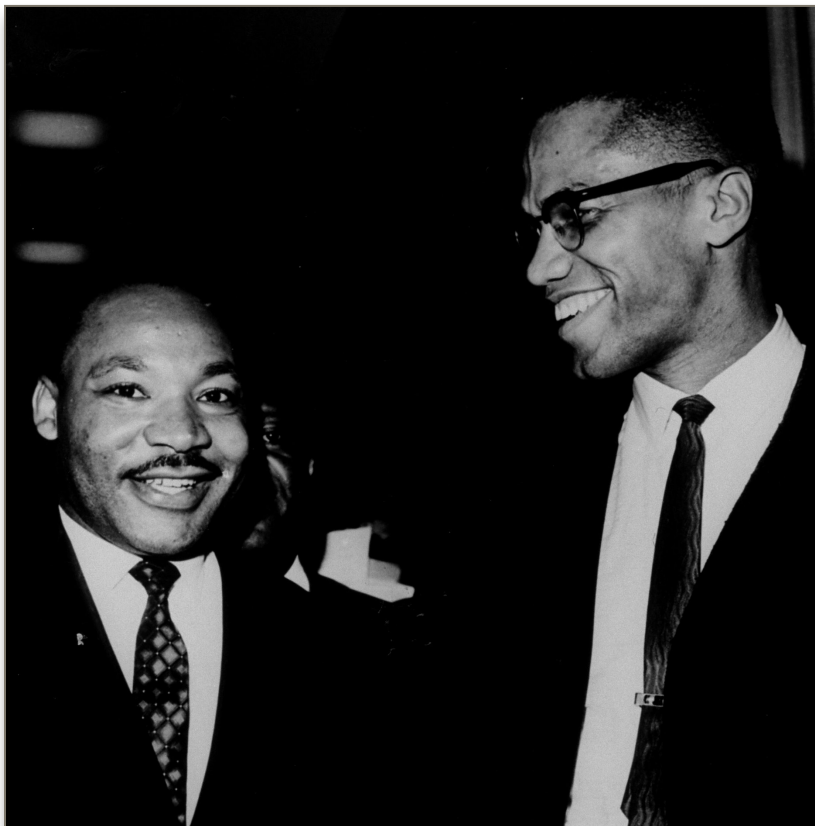
"How securely do we manage our relationships?"

"How self-aware are we, and how socially aware?"

Vulnerability surrounding social intelligence was embraced for the group to gain clarity and direction in discussing our individual strengths and areas to grow. By the end of the meeting, a shared sense of camaraderie and brotherhood was distinct.



For more info on "The Brothas!" meetings, [visit us on Facebook](#).



A Call to Action - The Power of a Smile :)

It's been said that the world may never truly know the power of one smile. Smiles have in them the capacity to bridge disconnected people, quell raging tempers, and put those we care for at ease. They're a signal to the outside world of our inner peace, goodwill, and confidence. To encourage your happiness and well-being, and to bring prosperity to your relationships, The Village Voice presents three scientifically-backed reasons to smile today:



1. Smiling Lessens Your Stress

A recent study published in the official journal of the Association for Psychological Science found a clear link between the act of smiling, and the release of cortisol. (Cortisol is a chemical released in the brain that produces the feeling of stress) Subjects in the study released less cortisol while smiling, even in stressful settings.

"The shortest distance between two people is a smile."

- AFRICAN PROVERB

2. Smiling Can Open Doors

Studies from Scotland measured participants likelihood to trust or cooperate with others in a work setting based on photos of the others smiling, frowning, and modeling neutral facial posture. Overwhelmingly, the participants ranked smiling profiles as more trustworthy, approachable, relaxed, and even more physically attractive.

3. Smiling Keeps You Young

The simple act of smiling—even alone in the mirror while brushing your teeth—is shown to release the chemical serotonin into the blood, which lowers heart rate, blood pressure, and eases muscular tension in the whole body, leading to a higher life expectancy and better quality of life overall.

Healthy, lasting lives and relationships are built with plenty of smiles. Besides grinning, eye contact with one another deepens personal connection and relationships. Take the time to examine how you interact with those around you, and show your loved ones and fellow villagers who you are with a smile.



Upcoming VC Projects & Events

Project / Event	Date	Time	Location	Cost
Think Outside the Boss <i>Cooperative Economics Workshop</i>	Saturday Nov. 30th 2019	9:00am - 3:00pm	Village-Connect <u>1572 150th Avenue</u> <u>San Leandro, CA 94578</u>	Sliding Scale
Cooperative Mastermind Cyber Session <i>Governance</i>	Tuesday Dec. 3rd 2019	5:30pm - 7:30pm	Zoom Video Conference	\$25
Real Talk Wednesday <i>Boys & Men</i>	Wednesday Dec. 11th 2019	6:00pm - 9:00pm	Village-Connect <u>1572 150th Avenue</u> <u>San Leandro, CA 94578</u>	None
Village-Connect Orientation	Monday Dec. 16th 2019	6:00pm - 7:30pm	Village-Connect <u>1572 150th Avenue</u> <u>San Leandro, CA 94578</u>	None
Real Talk Wednesday <i>Girls & Women</i>	Wednesday Dec. 18th 2019	6:00pm - 9:00pm	Village-Connect <u>1572 150th Avenue</u> <u>San Leandro, CA 94578</u>	None

Support the Village!

