

Taking The High Road? Reformed Youth Turn To Entrepreneurship



Megacities

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Chelina Odbert, Contributor

Meet my friends: “Be Good,” “Boyz” and their sidekick “Sam.” I’ve know these three guys for a few years now. We met when they joined the community group at our first project in Kibera in 2007. Boyz and Be Good are inseparable.

Be Good is the chairman of Moja Youth Reform and a serial entrepreneur. But, before switching to business he was a serial criminal.



The author with Be Good, Boyz and Sam

Be Good and Boyz had a nearly fool-proof method for robbing middle-class Kenyans of whatever they had in their pockets and making it look like someone else was to blame. But about five years ago, their friend and fellow thief got caught, and his punishment was enough to scare the thief out of Boyz and Be Good.

Since then Boyz and Be Good have reformed, become legitimate business partners and convinced many of their other friends to take the high road too. Or have they? You decide.

In 2006, right about the time I met them, Boyz and Be Good started Moja Youth Reform, a group with a mission to change the perception that all young men in Nairobi are criminals. Be Good’s nickname was coined at this time to mark the end of his criminal past. They wanted to help people understand that the youth in Nairobi were capable of much more, so their group focused on developing businesses and community service. The Moja Youth Reform group has grown to