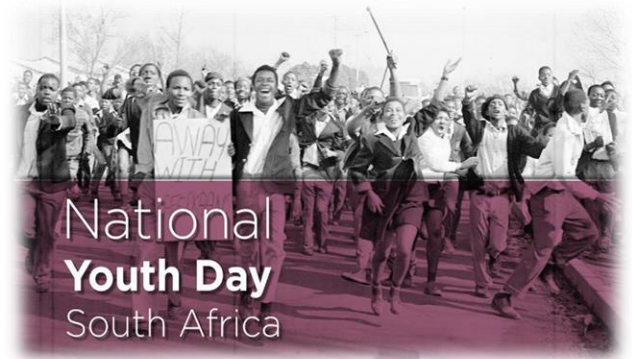


WHAT IS FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA – The young Cry.

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The day 16th of June is recognised as an important day in South African history because the day commemorates the 1976 Soweto Uprising, in which High school learners stood up against issues, which affected them, imposed by the Apartheid government. Youth day is a day set to remind us of the role the young people of 1976 played in the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa. Many lives were lost, and the masses left with memories and some, scars from events of this day. However, we still stand to celebrate the power and unity the youth of the era demonstrated. Youth day is a day in which the potential and power of our youth to create positive influences and shape our country's future is celebrated. A future still covered with roots of uncertainty and fear - a future where the only way to the fruits of freedom ought to be through death.



On this day, we have an opportunity to reflect on the great strides that the country has taken towards addressing issues facing the young in SA and recognise the role of the youth in the liberation of the country from the Apartheid regime injustices.

Despite the efforts made by the youth of 1976, to win over freedom and Liberation for the post-apartheid generations, the youth of today still face a large number of issues, in their academic, financial, social and personal prospects, to mention a few. These issues that are not efficiently addressed and prioritised by both the State and society at large – which consequently creates a life-long effect on their personal development, social behaviour and the overall desire to participate in economic activities. Therefore, it is important that we as a country continue to remember and value the principles learned from the 1976 events of the massacre. The State decisions that impact on all South Africans should be made in the best interest of all South Africans and embrace the concept that the youth has the power, the spirit and potential to shape our future and strive for a meaningful change. Amongst others, young people still face a number of issues and their cry for liberation, economic freedom and education still not prioritized.

The Youth demand an opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes that not only affect their lives but also the nation at large. The youth is still contending with the effects of the apartheid era exclusion and alienation and the majority of them are still denied opportunities to gain an education that would benefit them and their families. They are faced with an uncertain future characterised by persistent poverty, unemployment, mental health issues, inequality and violence. This affects their self-esteem, self-identity and their ability to appreciate being fully part of a promised dream of freedom in the democracy.

Movements such as #FEESMUSTFALL and #MENARETRASH saw young people claiming platforms to speak out and voice their frustrations regarding an environment that seemed to reinforce the structure, systematic and gender based oppression that prevented them from enjoying the promised prospects of democracy. The youth of 1976 fought for equal and quality education for all and the government is duty bound to provide opportunities for all South Africans to be educated, not only for ease of access to good paying jobs and careers, but also to a good way of life. The youth and societies must be educated on a vast number of issues – diversity being one. We also see the young *LGBTQI* community being deprived of the basic rights to life as a result of inadequate understanding and insufficient education and awareness around the *LGBTQI* Issues, as well as appreciating them as a differentiated and integral part of the society .

Earlier in the year, a 23-year-old gay boy – Lindokuhle Cele, born in KwaZulu Natal, was brutally murdered on the basis of his sexuality - his only truth. Another young gay boy in South Africa deprived of his dreams and aspirations for a better tomorrow, only to live his freedom in the depth of his grave. Is this the same free South Africa the likes of Simon Nkoli and Hector Pieterse died for?

“Society must acknowledge that Diversity is integral to our democracy. Its purpose not to be silenced.”



Image: famous picture of the late Hector Pieterse body carried by Mbuyisa Makhubo, alongside Hector's sister. This image symbolises the brutality experienced during the apartheid, which ironically still signifies the death of the young's dreams killed by society nowadays.

In the years 2010-2020 South Africa has experienced an increasing number of cases, of rape, addiction and brutal killings of the young for reasons unjustified. Certainly the young are hungry - the young are angry and - the young are depressed!

The state is failing to provide desirable prospects for a better living and the youth struggle to secure comfortable lives and freedom; academically, socially and financially and, end up resorting to toxic activities with the hope of numbing their realities of tomorrow.

Opportunities that exist are not efficiently communicated. Thus leaving the young lost and uninformed, often discouraging them from participating in programmes set to save them from disaster and the subsequent increase in unemployment and other social issues such as depression, substance abuse, crime and violence. Furthermore, the belief of communities that there is a lack of employment opportunity and minimal chances of a good life, result in crime for survival.

The government's investment in technical vocational and educational training institutions as well as in the National Student Financial aid scheme (NSFAS), are some of the methods the state uses with the aim of delivering skills and training that is essential, however this is not sufficient to address the skills gap in our economy. A priority should be given to 'Life Skills' programmes to teach society the principles of **UBUNTU** and the beauty of unity, as lived in the year 1976, for, there is an endless potential for the South African youth to do better.

Alcohol and illegal substances (most common in South Africa being **Nyaope**) remains a problem for the youth of today and what is worse is that no one seems to be taking any initiative to save the lost souls from this harm. The late **Thoriso Themane** (aged 28 years old) and Matwetwe's very own talent: **Sbu Khwinana**, lost their talents to teenagers who allegedly murdered them under the influence of these substances and for what is known to be "Clout". It is, therefore, evident that the battle against these issues seem to be far from over. South Africa needs to do better.

Mental health is one of the major issues young people are battling daily and still goes unnoticed. Depression has claimed the lives of many goal driven and life-filled young people and is still not made a priority in our societies and the world at large. The youth have a lot of pressure on them to succeed with little prospects of success. There is evidence of little awareness of mental health and related conditions such as depression and anxiety. Society fails to pay attention to the young's cry and thus an increased number of suicide cases have been experienced in 2010-2020. In October 2017, a 19-years-old Wits student, Kago Moeng jumped from the 6th floor of the South Point accommodation in Braamfontein. What could possibly be the reason - a longing for freedom perhaps!

Bias-motivated harassment and violence is a "thing" now, so they say. Kids are so vulnerable that they end up attacking what is meant to save them, evident in school violence cases trending on social media where teachers are being attacked and harassed by learners and parents are humiliated by their very own.

South Africa, wake up, and let us unite, for we can do better. After all, a backbone is far stronger than a wishbone.

