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YOUTH MONTH

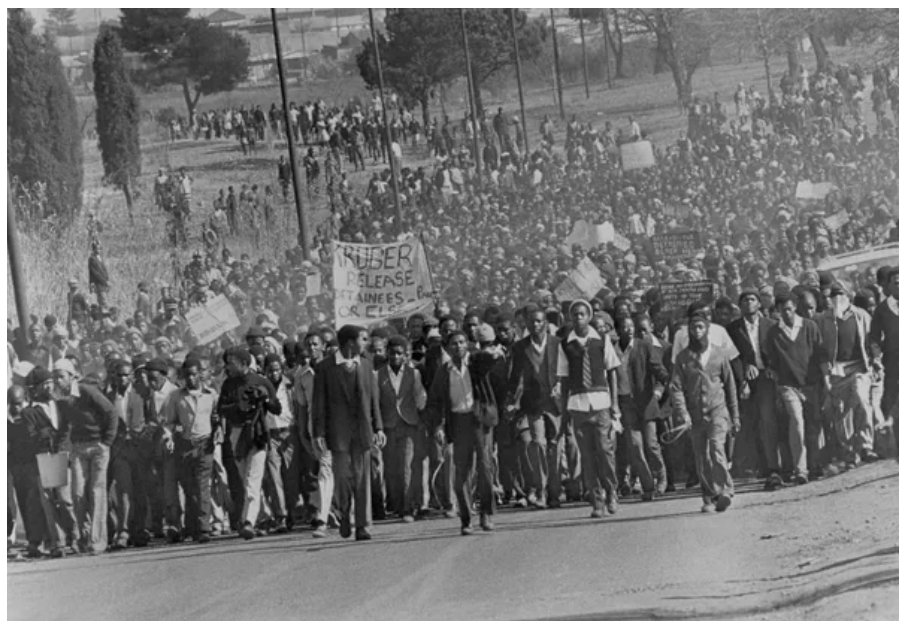




FROM POLITICAL LIBERATION TO ECONOMIC LIBERATION: THE UNFINISHED STRUGGLE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH

A Comparative Analysis of the 1976 Struggle for Political Liberation versus the 2026 Struggle for Economic Liberation and Digital Inclusion

As South Africa commemorates the 50th anniversary of the historic June 16, 1976 Youth Uprising, we are reminded that every generation is called upon to confront the defining challenge of its time. The youth of 1976 rose against an unjust political system that denied them dignity, freedom and the right to determine their own future. Their struggle was one for political liberation. The youth of 2026 inherit a different, yet equally urgent, mission: the struggle for economic liberation and digital inclusion.



The generation of 1976 confronted a system designed to exclude the black majority from meaningful participation in society. They understood that political freedom was not a privilege to be granted, but a right to be won through sacrifice and collective action. Many paid the ultimate price so that future generations could live in a democratic South Africa founded on equality, human rights and opportunity.



Their courage fundamentally transformed our nation. Today, South Africa has a democratic Constitution, universal suffrage and institutions that guarantee political rights for all citizens. However, while political liberation has been achieved, economic freedom remains an unfinished project.

Fifty years later, many young South Africans continue to face high levels of unemployment, poverty



and inequality. Millions of young people remain excluded from economic opportunities, quality education, skills development and meaningful participation in the economy. The reality is that political rights alone cannot fulfil the aspirations of young people if they are not accompanied by economic empowerment.

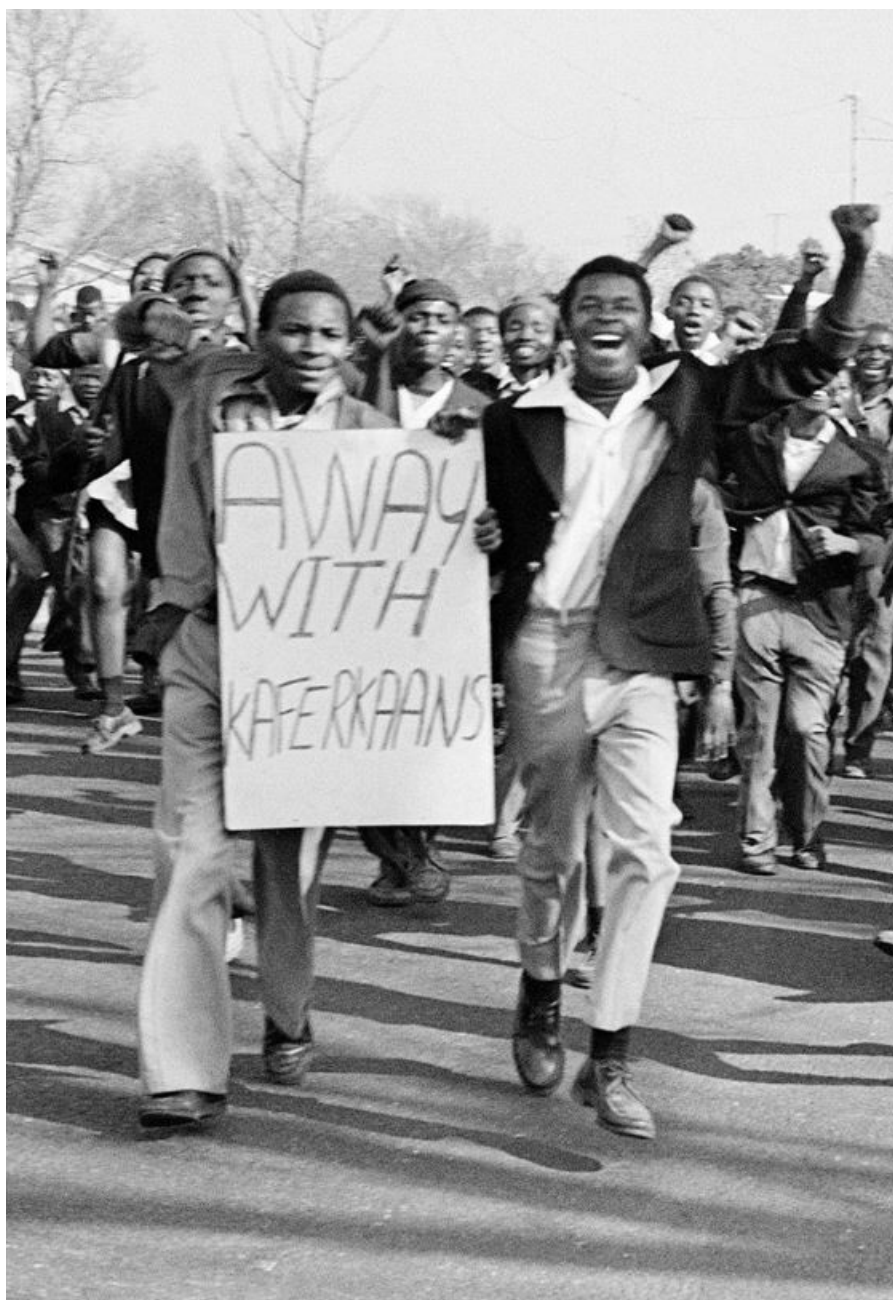
The struggle for economic liberation in 2026 is not simply about access to jobs; it is about transforming the ownership, control and participation patterns of the South African economy. It is about ensuring that young people are not only consumers in the economy, but active producers, innovators, entrepreneurs and owners of

productive assets. Economic liberation demands that the wealth of our country, its industries, natural resources, technological advances and economic opportunities work for the benefit of the many rather than the privileged few. It requires deliberate investment in youth-owned enterprises, industrialisation, skills development, land reform, digital innovation and access to finance. Just as the youth of 1976 rejected a system designed to limit their future, the youth of 2026 must challenge economic structures that continue to reproduce poverty, unemployment and inequality. The call of this generation is clear: political freedom must now be matched by economic power,

economic justice and shared prosperity for all.

The struggle of 2026 is therefore centred on ensuring that every young person has access to employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, quality education, digital skills and the resources necessary to participate fully in the modern economy. In an increasingly digital world, access to technology and connectivity has become as important as access to education was in previous generations.

Digital exclusion threatens to create a new form of inequality. Young people without internet access, digital devices or technological skills risk being left behind in the



people. The National Democratic Revolution remains incomplete while millions of young South Africans remain excluded from the mainstream economy. Our task is therefore to advance policies that create jobs, expand access to education and skills, support youth entrepreneurship, bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive economy that leaves no one behind.

The lesson from 1976 is clear. Change does not happen because it is convenient; it happens because courageous young people organise, participate and demand a better future. The youth of today must honour the legacy of 1976 not only through remembrance, but through action. They must become active participants in shaping South Africa's economic future, driving innovation, strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring that technological progress benefits all.

As we reflect on fifty years since the Soweto Uprising, we must recognise that the struggle continues. The battlefield has shifted from political exclusion to economic exclusion; from the denial of educational opportunities to the challenge of digital inequality. Yet the objective remains unchanged: the creation of a South Africa where every young person can live with dignity, realise their full potential and contribute meaningfully to national development.

The youth of 1976 fought for the right to vote. The youth of 2026 must fight for the right to prosper. That is the next frontier of freedom, and it is a struggle that demands the same courage, vision and determination that defined the generation of June 16•

Fourth Industrial Revolution. The digital divide often mirrors existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting young people in rural areas, townships and working-class communities. This is why digital inclusion must be understood not merely as a technological issue, but as a social justice and developmental imperative.

Just as the youth of 1976 demanded access to quality education and dignity, the youth

of 2026 must demand access to digital infrastructure, innovation opportunities, financial inclusion and economic participation. The tools have changed, but the principle remains the same: young people must have the means to shape their own future.

The African National Congress has long recognised that political freedom without economic transformation cannot fully realise the aspirations of our



REMEMBERING THE PAIN, COURAGE, BETRAYAL, RESILIENCE, AND SACRIFICE OF THE 1976 GENERATION

Every June, without fail, the democratic state and glorious movement gather to fulfill a sacred revolutionary duty. As wreaths are laid at the Hector Pieterse Memorial, we revisit the foundational vocabulary of our liberation struggle: courage, resilience, and supreme sacrifice. As we commemorate Youth Month and bow our heads in profound reverence, we do so in celebration of the heroic student generation that shook the apartheid regime to its core and awoke the conscience of South Africa.

But let us be brutally honest with ourselves, we must not reduce June 16 to a mere historical artifact or an annual ritual, lest we betray the very spirit we claim to honor. The harsh reality of 2026 is that the courage of the 1976 generation must never be weaponized. Our predecessors did not march against the might of apartheid bullets so that their grandchildren could become perpetual recipients of the Social Relief of Distress grants. They fought for true, uncompromised economic self-determination and political freedom.

The new battlefield of structural exclusion
The youth of 1976 fought a visible



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monster: the legal architecture of Bantu Education and an apartheid regime. Today's youth face an invisible monster with teeth just as sharp: economic inertia, structural neglect, and a massive mismatch between classroom theory and technological reality.

The tragic irony of our democracy is that the generation born into the fullness of this constitutional dispensation, is the very generation that continue to suffer and yearn for full attainment of the promises of the Freedom Charter and the Bill of Rights as contained in the constitution. If one considers the chilling statistics from the Statistics South Africa's Q1 2026 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, it shows that;

- Unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 stands at a staggering 60.9%. For those aged 25 to 34, it sits at 40.6%.

- More than 3.6 million young South Africans are officially classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

When nearly two-thirds of our youngest demographic are locked entirely out of the formal economy, the promises of 1996 start to read like a painful reality. The betrayal does not lie in the fact that we have challenges; it lies in the gaping chasm between our grand state blueprints and the reality on the ground. Therefore, the betrayal does not lie in the existence of these challenges, but in the bureaucratic complacency managing them. Grand public works programs that we have and short-term training initiatives are band-aids on a severed socio-economic situation. Training for training's sake without an expanding, dynamic economy simply produces highly qualified, deeply frustrated citizens.

Today's youth are not passive. Their frustration is sharp, intelligent, and increasingly volatile. We see it in the rising tides of populist sentiment in some quarters of society, in the desperate turning toward anti-immigrant rhetoric as a proxy for economic anxiety, and in the absolute apathy toward the ballot box. When young people stop voting, it is not because they



do not care about their country, but it is because some feel totally disillusioned.

Political apathy

Because of this systemic inadvertent neglect, a dangerous silent disconnect has settled over our youth: the silence of political apathy. Millions have opted out of the national conversation. They look at parliament and see a closed shop, a political theatre of debate between elites that has no bearing on service delivery, whether clean water comes out of a tap, provision of electricity or whether economic opportunities exist.

Sadly, the apathy amongst the youth does not punish failing politicians; it makes life easier for the wrong political players to enter the terrain and a vacuum in political discourse. An unaccountable system and ideologically poor ideas thrive on silence. When a generation removes itself from the body politic, the vacuum is filled by careerists and anarchists who benefit from the status quo.

On November 4th this year, the country goes to the polls for the Local Government Elections. This is not about abstract ideology, but it is about who leads local council,

controls municipal budgets, service delivery and determines whether the communities are thriving economic zones and hubs full of potential.

Conclusion

We cannot legislate our way out of a structural crisis, nor can the country survive on a diet of historical nostalgia. We must move from managing youth distress to enabling youth disruption through three immediate shifts, amongst others;

Urgently replace restrictive commercial banking frameworks with state-backed, risk-tolerant micro-equity funds. Invest in potential rather than saddling young people with immediate debt. Overhaul a curriculum built for a 20th-century economy that no longer exists. Coding, digital commerce, artificial intelligence, data management, and automated mechanics must become foundational in all schools, not just private ones.

In pursuit of ethical and professional leadership in public service, we must enforce strict public sector oversight on training authorities (SETAs) to link skills directly to private-sector jobs. Enforce candidate selection rules to put

young, ethically vetted leaders directly on the ballot, dismantling internal political gerontocracies.

It is therefore worth mentioning that our job as leaders is not to act as museum curators of past struggles. Our job is to clear the path and hand over the keys to the economy. If we do not use our power to break open the economic gate-keepers and bureaucratic fortresses holding this generation back, they will eventually take the keys themselves.

We therefore reiterate that the if African National Congress is to honor its founding mission and arrest this generational regression, we must treat 2026 not as another year of administrative planning, but as a period of uncompromising, aggressive execution.

As a movement and government, we have the National Development Plan, what we lack is the disciplined institutional capacity to enforce it. In closing, we implore all the young people of our country to register in their numbers, show up on the 4th of November, and write the next chapter of this country and be counted•



DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS AND THE UNFINISHED AGENDA

South Africa's democratic journey has brought important gains for young persons with disabilities under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). Since 1994, the country has established one of the world's most progressive constitutional frameworks, grounded in equality, human dignity, freedom, and non-discrimination. Through policies, legislation, and institutional reforms, greater recognition has been given to the rights of persons with disabilities, including access to education, healthcare, social protection, public participation, and economic opportunities. These achievements reflect the broader democratic vision of an inclusive society where all people can participate fully and equally.

Yet democracy remains a work in progress. Many young persons with disabilities still face barriers to employment, entrepreneurship, accessible infrastructure, assistive technology, quality education, and meaningful participation in decision-making. While progress should be celebrated, much remains to be done to realise the full promise of an inclusive and equitable South Africa. The next phase of transformation requires stronger implementation, greater accountability, increased investment in accessibility, and the active involvement of young persons with disabilities in shaping the policies and programmes that affect their lives.



CDE M CHAUKE-ADONIS

As South Africa commemorates Youth Month, we are called not only to honour the courage and sacrifice of the generation of 1976, but also to confront the realities facing today's youth. As a young African woman living with a disability, I experience firsthand both the barriers and opportunities that shape many young lives. Among the most overlooked yet resilient groups in our society are young people with disabilities, whose aspirations and talents remain constrained by social, structural, and economic barriers.

The promise of democracy was never limited to political rights. It was about creating a society where every South African can participate meaningfully, live with dignity, and contribute to nation building. It was also about ensuring equitable access to opportunities that enable young people to thrive. Yet for many young persons with disabilities, the path from education to employment, entrepreneurship, leadership, and economic inclusion remains unnecessarily difficult.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF EXCLUSION

Youth with disabilities do not experience exclusion in the same way. Their realities are shaped by intersecting identities. As a young African woman with a disability, I understand how gender, race, age, geography, and disability combine to create distinct challenges. A young woman with a disability in a rural village faces different obstacles from a young man with a disability in an urban centre.



Likewise, the experiences of a young person living in poverty, a black graduate seeking employment, or someone requiring assistive technology are shaped by overlapping inequalities.

This intersectionality requires us to move beyond viewing disability as a standalone issue. We must understand it within the broader context of race, gender, geography, class, education, and access to opportunity. Failing to do so risks creating policies and programmes that leave many young people behind.

The challenge before us is not simply to create opportunities for youth with disabilities, but to reengineer the spaces in which they live, learn, work, and lead.

Too often, social and professional environments treat inclusion as an afterthought. Buildings remain inaccessible. Digital platforms lack universal design. Recruitment processes exclude capable candidates. Leadership structures lack representation. Public discourse often speaks about young people with disabilities instead of creating space for them to speak for themselves.

True inclusion is not charity. It is justice.

A truly inclusive economy requires workplaces that accommodate diverse abilities, educational institutions that provide equal support, entrepreneurs with access to funding and markets, and public spaces that affirm dignity rather than reinforce exclusion. It requires employers who recognise talent before disability and policymakers who place accessibility at the centre of development. It also demands a deliberate commitment to expanding economic and social opportunities for young people who have historically been excluded.

POLICY PRIORITIES FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Recognising these challenges is only the first step. Meaningful inclusion requires practical, measurable interventions that transform opportunities into outcomes.

1. Expand Employment Opportunities

- Require government departments, state-owned entities, and companies contracting with the state to ensure that at least 5% of all new youth hires are young persons with disabilities by 2030.
- Mandate annual public reporting on recruitment, retention, promotion, and workplace accommodation outcomes.

- Link public procurement incentives to demonstrated compliance with inclusive employment targets.

2. Enforce Universal Accessibility

- Require 100% of new public infrastructure projects to comply with universal design standards.
- Complete accessibility audits of government facilities, schools, transport systems, and digital platforms within defined national timelines.
- Upgrade existing public infrastructure and services to meet nationally enforced accessibility standards.
- Ensure all government websites and digital services comply with internationally recognised accessibility requirements.

3. Invest in Inclusion and Economic Participation

- Establish a dedicated Youth Disability Inclusion Fund to support assistive technology, entrepreneurship, skills development, workplace accommodations, and accessible transport.
- Finance the fund through national budget allocations, public-private partnerships, and development finance mechanisms.
- Ring-fence a defined percentage of youth development and enterprise support programmes for young entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Expand access to capital, markets, mentorship, and business development support.

4. Promote Representation and Leadership

- Increase the participation of young persons with disabilities in decision-making structures across government, education, business, and civil society.
- Ensure youth with disabilities are represented in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies that affect them.
- Create leadership development pathways that support participation in public life and economic governance.

5. Challenge Discrimination and Shift Public Attitudes

- Implement sustained public awareness campaigns that promote the capabilities and contributions of young persons with disabilities.
- Integrate disability inclusion objectives into education, workplace training, and public communication programmes.
- Measure progress through regular surveys and reporting on inclusion and representation outcomes.



STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Policy commitments alone will not deliver change unless they are accompanied by robust accountability mechanisms.

1. Annual Public Reporting
2. Independent Monitoring
3. Enforcement and Corrective Action

A CALL TO ACTION FOR LEGISLATURES, LAWMAKERS, EXECUTIVE AUTHORITIES AND IMPLEMENTERS

The advancement of disability inclusion and youth empowerment cannot rest solely on policy aspirations. It requires coordinated action across all spheres of government, legislative bodies, public institutions, the private sector, and civil society. The responsibility to transform South Africa into a truly inclusive society belongs not only to advocates and communities, but equally to those entrusted with making, implementing, and overseeing public policy.

Parliament, provincial legislatures, municipal councils, and lawmakers must actively champion progressive legislation that advances the rights, development, empowerment, and inclusion of young people and persons with disabilities. Existing legislative frameworks must be strengthened, reviewed, and continuously improved to respond to emerging challenges and ensure that no one is left behind in South Africa's developmental agenda.

The time has come to accelerate the advancement of progressive legislation and policy reforms that seek to dismantle systemic barriers, expand opportunities, and promote meaningful participation for young people and persons with disabilities. Such legislative interventions must not only protect rights but also create pathways to economic empowerment, education, entrepreneurship, leadership development, accessibility, and social inclusion.

Executive authorities, government departments, state-owned entities, and public institutions must move beyond policy commitments towards effective implementation. Targets, plans, and strategies must translate into tangible outcomes that improve the daily lives of young persons with disabilities.

Accessibility, inclusion, economic participation, skills development, entrepreneurship support, and representation must become measurable priorities across government programmes and budgets.

Implementers at all levels of society must recognise that inclusion is not an optional consideration but a constitutional imperative. Every public policy, infrastructure project, educational programme, employment initiative, and economic intervention

should be assessed through the lens of accessibility, equity, and meaningful participation.

Greater urgency is required to advance and accelerate progress on progressive legislation, policies, and programmes that seek to empower, develop, protect, and include young people and persons with disabilities. This requires stronger political will, adequate resource allocation, enhanced oversight, and a commitment to ensuring that implementation keeps pace with the aspirations contained in our Constitution and democratic vision.

The future of South Africa depends on our collective ability to unlock the potential of all its people. By removing barriers, expanding opportunities, and strengthening accountability, we can build a society in which young people and persons with disabilities are not merely beneficiaries of development but active participants and leaders in shaping the future of our nation.

CONCLUSION: FROM COMMITMENT TO ACTION

The future we seek cannot be built by excluding those whose lived experiences can help shape a more equitable society. A nation that removes barriers for youth with disabilities creates opportunities for everyone. Accessibility benefits all. Inclusion strengthens all. Dignity belongs to all.

As we reflect on the legacy of the youth of 1976, let us ask a difficult but necessary question: Are we creating a South Africa where every young person can realise their full potential, or are we allowing old barriers to take new forms?

The answer lies not in our intentions, but in our actions. This Youth Month, let us commit to re-engineering our social and professional spaces so that young people with disabilities are not merely present, but visible; not merely accommodated, but empowered; not merely included, but valued as equal partners in building South Africa's future.

The call to action is clear: Nothing about youth with disabilities should be decided without youth with disabilities. Their voices must shape policy, inform institutions, and drive transformation. By setting measurable targets, enforcing accessibility standards, investing dedicated resources, strengthening accountability, and accelerating progressive legislation, we can build an economy and society that truly reflect the constitutional values of equality, human dignity, freedom, and opportunity for all.



EMPOWERING YOUTH TO ORGANIZE LOCALLY: STRENGTHENING SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITY SAFETY, AND MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY



Executive Summary

This article argues that youth participation at local level is critical to improving service delivery, enhancing community safety, and strengthening municipal accountability. By equipping young people with civic knowledge and creating formal spaces for engagement, municipalities can leverage youth capacity to identify



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local challenges, implement community-based solutions, and monitor public resource use. Institutionalizing youth involvement is therefore a strategic intervention for responsive and sustainable local governance.

1. Improving Localized Service Delivery

Service delivery deficiencies such as infrastructure deterioration, inconsistent water supply, and



inadequate waste management have direct impacts at ward level. Young residents are most affected by these failures. Through structured organization in community forums, school-based structures, or youth collectives, young people can systematically document service delivery gaps, collect verifiable evidence, and engage constructively with ward councillors and municipal officials. Youth-led initiatives including infrastructure monitoring and community maintenance programs demonstrate that localized, evidence-based action produces measurable improvements. Youth participation ensures interventions are targeted and responsive to actual community needs.

2. Enhancing Community Safety

Community safety requires a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach beyond policing alone. Young people are both primary beneficiaries and key contributors to safety strategies. Through organized safety forums, structured dialogues, and partnerships with Community Police Forums, traditional leadership, and civil society, youth can advance crime prevention initiatives. Programs such as peer mentorship, recreational activities, and community awareness campaigns address socio-economic drivers of crime. Incorporating youth perspectives into local safety planning strengthens social cohesion and promotes shared responsibility for public safety.

3. Promoting Municipal Accountability

Local government decisions on budget allocation, infrastructure, and service provision directly affect community wellbeing. Effective accountability depends on transparency and citizen oversight. It is essential that young people gain understanding of municipal processes, including Integrated Development Planning, budget cycles, and service delivery reporting. Informed youth can participate meaningfully in public participation processes, submit formal inputs, and monitor project implementation. Constructive engagement between organized youth structures and local government enhances transparency, builds public trust, and ensures efficient utilization of public resources in line with community priorities.

Conclusion: Institutionalizing Youth Participation

Youth organization at local level must be recognized as integral to effective governance, not as a supplementary activity. Schools, NGOs, faith-based institutions, and municipalities bear responsibility to provide training in civic education, leadership, data management, and public engagement. Formal mechanisms should be established to guarantee youth representation in decision-making platforms.

Empowering young people to organize locally is a strategic investment in sustainable development. A governance model that integrates youth participation is more responsive, accountable, and resilient. Sustainable improvement of service delivery and community safety begins at local level, and young people are both willing and capable of leading that process•



MENTAL HEALTH SHOULD BE A NATIONAL PRIORITY

Normalising and Expanding Institutional Support for Psychological Wellbeing, Burnout, and Anxiety Among Youth Navigating a Volatile Economic Climate



Mental health has become one of the most pressing challenges facing young people today. In an era marked by economic uncertainty, rising unemployment, increasing living costs, and rapid social change, many young people experience overwhelming levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout. Despite growing awareness of mental health issues, access to adequate



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psychological support remains limited for many individuals. Therefore, governments, educational institutions, and workplaces must treat mental health as a national priority by normalising conversations about psychological wellbeing and expanding institutional support systems to help youth navigate an increasingly volatile economic climate.



One of the major contributors to poor mental health among young people is economic instability. Many youths face uncertainty regarding their future careers, financial security, and ability to achieve independence. The pressure to succeed academically while preparing for a competitive job market often creates chronic stress. Additionally, rising tuition fees, student debt, and the high cost of living place further burdens on young adults. These challenges can lead to anxiety disorders, depression, and burnout, affecting both personal wellbeing and long-term productivity.

Unfortunately, mental health struggles are often accompanied by stigma. Many young people hesitate to seek help because they fear being judged, misunderstood, or perceived as weak. This stigma prevents individuals from accessing the support they need and can worsen existing mental health conditions. Normalising discussions about mental health is therefore essential. Public awareness campaigns, school-based education programmes, and open conversations led by community leaders can help create an environment where seeking psychological support is viewed as a sign of strength rather than weakness.

Educational institutions play a critical role in promoting mental wellbeing. Schools and universities should provide accessible counselling services, mental health workshops, and peer-support programmes. Students spend a significant portion of their lives in educational settings, making these institutions ideal places for early intervention and support. By equipping students with coping strategies, stress-



management skills, and emotional resilience, schools can help prevent minor mental health concerns from developing into serious conditions.

Workplaces must also recognise the importance of mental health, particularly for young employees entering the workforce. Many young professionals face intense pressure to perform, adapt quickly, and maintain productivity in uncertain economic conditions. Employers should implement policies that promote work-life balance, offer mental health resources, and encourage employees to seek support when needed. Flexible working arrangements, employee assistance programmes, and regular wellness initiatives can significantly reduce workplace burnout and improve overall job satisfaction.

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that mental health services are affordable, accessible, and adequately funded. This includes increasing the number of mental health professionals, integrating mental health care

into primary healthcare systems, and investing in community-based support programmes. Mental health should receive the same level of attention and funding as physical health because both are essential to an individual's quality of life and ability to contribute to society.

In conclusion, mental health should be a national priority because the wellbeing of young people directly influences the future of society. Economic instability, social pressures, and uncertainty have created an environment where anxiety and burnout are increasingly common among youth. By normalising conversations about mental health and expanding institutional support in schools, workplaces, and healthcare systems, societies can empower young people to thrive despite economic challenges. Investing in mental health is not only a moral responsibility but also a necessary step toward building healthier, more resilient communities •



ADDRESS BY NELSON MANDELA AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS YOUTH LEAGUE DECEMBER 1951



Mankind as whole is today standing on the threshold of great events - events that at times seem to threaten its very existence. On the one hand are those groups, parties, or persons that are prepared to go to war in defence of colonialism, imperialism, and their profits. These groups, at the head of which stands the ruling circles in America, are determined to perpetuate a permanent atmosphere of crisis and fear in the world. Knowing that a frightened world cannot think clearly, these groups attempt to create conditions under which the common men might be inveigled into supporting the building of more and more atomic bombs, bacteriological weapons, and other instruments of mass destruction. These crazy men whose prototype is to be found at the head of the trusts and cartels of America and Western Europe do not realise that they will suffer the destruction that they are contemplating for their innocent fellow beings. But they are desperate and become more so as they realise the determination of the common men to preserve peace. Yes, the common man who for generations has been the tool of insane politicians and governments, who has suffered privations and sorrow in wars that were of profit to tiny privileged groups, is today rising from being the object of

It is always a most difficult task to deliver a presidential address to an organisation such as ours. One is expected to give as comprehensive a picture as possible of the political situation, both nationally and internationally. Then included must be the review of the organisational strength and power of the movement and the progress it has made in its efforts to

carry the people to victory. Lastly, some indication must be given to the reply the organisation must make to the situation having regard to the preceding analyses. Quite clearly it is not possible to do justice to all these, and yet a presidential address in which anyone of them is missing is not worthy of the name. I have [heard] it said that Dr. Nkrumah addresses conferences for five hours. I do not intend to break his record.



history [to] becoming the subject of history. For the ordinary men and women in the world, the oppressed all over the world are becoming the conscious creators of their own history. They are pledged to carve their destiny and not to leave it in the hands of tiny ruling circles - or classes. Whilst the dark and sinister forces in the world are organising a desperate and last-minute fight to defend a decadent and bankrupt civilisation, the common people, full of confidence and buoyant hope, struggle for the creation of a new, united, and prosperous human family. That this is so can be gathered from the increasingly militant and heroic struggle that is being waged in all colonial countries against heavy odds. Our mother body has in clean and unmistakable terms indicated in which camp we are in the general world contest. We are with the oppressed all over the world and are irrevocably opposed to imperialism in any form.

In Africa the colonial powers - Great Britain, Portugal, France, Italy, Spain, and their servitors in South Africa - are attempting with the help of the notorious American ruling class to maintain colonial rule and oppression. Millions of pounds are pouring into the continent in the form of capital for the exploitation of our resources in the sole interests of the imperialist powers. So-called geological and archaeological expeditions are roaming the continent ostensibly engaged in gathering material for the advancement of science and the furtherance of humanity but being in reality the advance guard of American penetration. It is important for us and for the African people as a whole to realise that but for the support of American finance it would have been difficult if not impossible for the Western colonial powers to maintain rule in Africa, nor indeed anywhere in the world.

In thinking of the direct enemies of the African people, namely, Great Britain, Spain, France, Portugal, Italy and S.A. [South Africa], we must never forget the indirect enemy, the infinitely more dangerous enemy who sustains all those with loans, capital, and arms.

In common with people all over the world, humanity in Africa is fighting these forces. In the Gold Coast a situation exists which is capable of being translated into complete victory for the people. [events] in Nigeria are leading to a similar situation. In French West Africa, the Democratic Rally of African People is leading the people into what is virtually open war against the French imperialists. In Egypt the heroic struggle is being waged which must receive the support of all genuine anti-imperialist forces, albeit with certain reservations. In Uganda the leaders of the Bataka Association who were condemned to fourteen years of imprisonment have had to be released as a result of the attitude of the masses. In Central Africa the people saw through the tricks of the British imperialists who sought to foist a bogus federation scheme on them. What the rulers have reaped instead is a rejection of partnership, trusteeship, and white leadership and a clear demand for self-determination and independence. These are hopeful signs, but precisely because the African liberation movement is gaining strength the rulers will become more brutal and, in their desperation, will practice all manner of deception in order to stay on at any rate to postpone the day of final victory. But history is on the side of the oppressed.

Here in South Africa the situation is an extremely grave and serious one. The plans of the Broederbond to set up an openly police state have so far almost run to schedule. About that

there can be no question. This is in the interest of the ruling class in South Africa whether it is nominally in the U.P. [United party] or the Nationalist party.

The United party represents the mining interests and also the rapidly rising industrialist power. The Nationalist party represents farming interests and the growing Afrikaner commercial interest. The farming group as a distinct and separate interest is, of course, dying out if it is not dead already! The financial lords are destroying the farmer group, and instead we have huge semi-industrial estates and plantations through which the big money power seeks to extend its monopoly of economic South Africa to the agricultural sphere. At one time it was thought that the development of a powerful industrialist class would produce a clash involving the primitive feudal-capitalist farming and mining interest on the one hand and the industrialist on the other. It was thought that this clash might result in a realignment of forces that might be advantageous to the oppressed people in the country. But it is becoming clear that there is no possibility of [a] clash between such groups. There is no chance that Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, the leading mining magnate, will clash with Harry Oppenheimer, the leading industrialist. There is also noticeable a growing affinity among the English, Jewish, and Afrikaner financial and industrial interests. It is quite conceivable that all their interests find the fascist policy of Malansuitable, as it will enable them to continue their bankrupt role by crushing the tribal union movement and the national movements of the people. It is true that in the rank-and-file of the white parties are a number who whilst they support the maintenance of colour as an instrument of white political and



economic supremacy are scared of a naked Hitlerite regime which might later turn out to be a danger to themselves; hence movements like the now thoroughly discredited Torch Commando. This white South African people who have lost all their moral backbone [sic]. The possibility of a liberal capitalist democracy in S.A. [South Africa is] extremely nil. The propaganda among the whites and their desire to maintain what they imagine to be a profitable situation make it utterly unthinkable that there can be a political alignment that favours a liberal white group. In any case the political immorality, cowardice, and vacillations of the so-called progressives among whites render them utterly useless as a force against fascism.

The situation is developing [in] the direction of an openly fascist state. The Broederbond is the centre of the fascist ideology in this country, but like other things it is itself merely an instrument of the ruling circles which are to be found in all white parties. The commandos are the nucleus of a future Gestapo. The acts passed by the government, in particular the Suppression of Communism Amendment Act and the Group Areas Act, provide the readymade framework for the establishment of the fascist state. True to the pattern depicted for the rest of the imperialist world, South African capitalism has developed [into] monopolism and is now reaching the final stage of monopoly capitalism gone mad, namely, fascism.

But the development of fascism in the country is an indication of the fear they have [of] the people. They realise that their world is a dying world and that the appearance of

impregnable strength is a mere facade. The new world is the one in which the oppressed Africans live. They see before their eyes the growth of a mighty people's movement. The struggles of 1950 were an indication that the leaders of the Africans and their allies were fully aware of the weakest link in the chain of white supremacy. The labour power of the African people is a force which when fully tapped is going to sweep the people to power in the land of their birth. True, the struggle will be a bitter one. Leaders will be deported, imprisoned, and even shot. The government will terrorise the people and their leaders in an effort to halt the forward march; ordinary forms of organisation will be rendered impossible. But the spirit of the people cannot be crushed, and no matter what happens to the present leadership, new leaders will arise like mushrooms till full victory is won.

The people are possessed of tremendous potential powers which can be unleashed at short notice by a determined leadership. But is the African movement as at present organised capable of answering to the challenge of the present conditions?

African Nationalism

On the ideological plane there can be no question of [the] dynamism of African nationalism as an outlook for our people in the present stage of our struggle. At the present historical stage African nationalism is the only outlook or creed for giving the African people the self-confidence and subjective liberation without which a people can never hope to challenge effectively any national oppression.

As the guardian of African nationalism, the Congress Youth League and, to a lesser extent, the senior Congress are undoubtedly the greatest hope that the African people, and indeed all oppressed people, have that they will ever live in a free, independent, united, democratic, and a prosperous South Africa. The Congress and the Youth League are the instruments through which these aims will be achieved.

African nationalism was born in the ANC and grew in confidence through years of struggle. In the Congress Youth League, African nationalism found new form and was made concrete and crystallised. I wish to say emphatically as possible that there is only one African nationalism and that is the African nationalism propounded by the Congress and the Youth League. In certain quarters there is a feeling that the language of African nationalism within the movement is not uniform. It is said that there are various brands of African nationalism. I think it is more a question of concept of struggle.

I have no doubt that so far as this stage of struggle is concerned, our language is sufficiently uniform. It is, however, when we seek to apply our creed to concrete situations that there are revealed different approaches. This was made clear during the three struggles of the past two years. I refer to campaigns of May 1st, June 26th, and May 7th this year. Owing to differences that developed regarding them, there is a tendency to think that these campaigns revealed differences in our concept of African nationalism. Fundamentally, African nationalism is one, and what these campaigns revealed was our inexperience in actual struggle. There is nothing to



be afraid of in the setbacks we have suffered. Many of us grew in those campaigns by [the] very reason of our failure. The Youth League has, in my opinion, become stronger.

We learned in those struggles that the face of a liberatory movement must always be turned against the main enemy - fight fascism. We learned that when the masses of the people were on the march, even if we had genuine principled objections to the move, we must never be against the mass movement of the people. We learned that always a true fighter must be on the side of the people against the oppressor. We learned during these campaigns that the political dilettante, the [person] who regards politics as the attendance of conferences and the making of beautiful analyses, is over.

Today politics has become the affairs of a professional revolutionary. Our policy and attitude towards the national groups was in practice severely tested in the campaigns. In short, these were in a way a test of our concept of actual struggle. Our imperfections were made clear to us, and the duty of the conference will be directed towards correcting these mistakes and practising honest objective and serious self-criticism to fully prepare ourselves for the struggle we will have to wage early next year. Sons and daughters of Africa, I do not think we differ concerning our ideas of the aims of African nationalism in Africa. In any case the very nature of [the] national movement to which we belong makes it impossible to expect [an] absolutely identical approach. The very nature of the national struggle and the manner of its organisations make it impossible to achieve what is perhaps possible to achieve in a party. African nationalism has to my

mind been sufficiently concretised, and its aims are, for the present historical stage, clear. Any attempt to go beyond this might well be unconstructive and will merely [delay] the consideration of what our answer should be to the immediate crises facing our people.

Expressed in what is perhaps an oversimplification, the problem of the Youth League and the Congress today is the maintenance of full dynamic contact with the masses and the fight in the daily issues that face them. We have a powerful ideology capable of capturing the imaginations of the masses. Our duty is now how to carry that ideology fully to the masses. In the past two years we have registered certain big successes in this task in spite of setbacks.

We must here in conference confine our attention to a few vital considerations. Firstly, our National Executive of the Senior Congress has called upon the country to rally to [a] nation-wide struggle that will probably begin at this national conference. In accordance with this policy it has called upon other national organisations to fall in line with this programme. In view of our claim to leadership of South Africa, it was perfectly logical that Congress should take initiative in calling all the people of South Africa to join in its struggle.

Needless to say, the whole situation demands an answer of struggle. The possibility of our movement being banned makes it doubly necessary that the message of struggle should be carried to the people in the manner contemplated by the Senior Congress! It is clear that if a movement is banned and its readers' activities proscribed, this should happen in the midst and

as a result of an actual struggle. Then also we must make clear our attitude to the participation of other national groups in our struggles, always bearing in mind the international situation and the political theses that the mind of the masses must always be directed towards the fight against Malan and must not be diverted from this for any reason.

Then we have to decide on concrete steps to be taken to deal with the situation that has arisen as a result of the Suppression of Communism Amendment Act. How are we going to react to the liquidation of Congress leaders as [a] result of this act? And how are the operations going to be carried on in the event of our being banned? This is a serious matter and can hardly be discussed in the conference except in very general terms.

We have to discuss measures [for] the creation of strong nuclei of active workers in the struggle on the proper organisation of the League and the Congress [and] the elimination of unredeemable reactionaries, which work has proceeded quite far in certain areas. We have to consider measures to eliminate the looseness and lack of discipline in the movement and also the cultivation of a serious approach to the struggle. In this context we have to examine various tactics and weapons in our struggle, including boycott, civil disobedience, and strikes.

Sons and daughters of Africa, our tasks are mighty indeed, but I have abundant faith in our ability to reply to the challenge posed by the situation. Under the slogan of **FULL DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA NOW**, we must march forward into victory•



BOOK REVIEW

Cde Saul Pelle

50th Anniversary of the June 16 Students' Uprising

“Unlike previous generations, the youth of 1976 inherited very little organised memory. The ANC was banned. The PAC was banned. The Communist Party was banned. SACTU was immobilised. The leaders of the liberation struggle were imprisoned, exiled or silenced. The history of resistance was largely absent from the schools. Yet history has a way of reasserting itself. The conditions under which young people lived became so intolerable that they rediscovered the necessity of resistance. Initially, they saw themselves as students confronting educational injustice.” Keynote address by **ANC Veteran Mac Maharaj** on the 50th Anniversary of the June 16 Uprising, June 16, 2026.

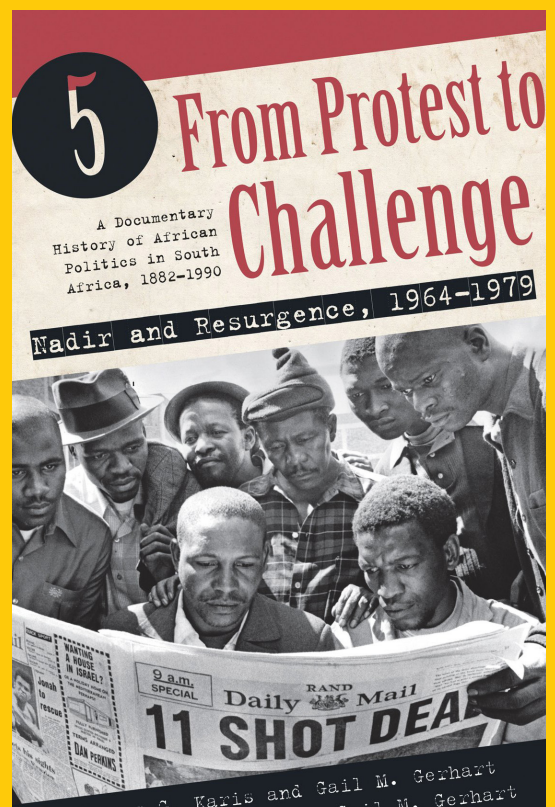


This documentary history of African politics in South Africa, covering the period 1882 to 1990, is the fifth of six volumes titled 'From Protest to Challenge'. The sub-title, Nadir and Resurgence, is an overview of liberation politics from 1964

to 1979, emphasising aspects of the struggle which, until recently have largely been hidden from both public and scholarly eyes “because of the nature of exile and prison life and the surreptitiousness of clandestine political and military work, as well as by the deliberate distortions of apartheid propaganda.”

The South African government’s ability to shrug off the world’s criticism remained relatively strong until the Soweto uprising of 1976 -77. As long as international markets of South African minerals remained buoyant, inflows of foreign capital and new technology held steadily, and white voters continued to return the National Party to power by wide margins. Excuses could be found for the ‘ignorance’ and ‘malevolence’ of other countries.

The Soweto revolt gave rise to doubts that were new and unexpected. Foreign investors now had reason to question the country’s long-term prospects of stability. South Africa’s propaganda image of itself as a successfully evolving





“multinational” society was exploded by media images of white police killing black school children in township streets. The Transkeian bantustan, granted “independence” at the height of the uprising, failed to win international recognition, sinking Pretoria’s hopes that territorial partition could win legitimacy for continued minority control in “white” South Africa.

Pressure intensified from anti-apartheid groups and religious bodies worldwide, forcing some multinational companies to pledge adherence to codes of corporate conduct that did not correspond with South African traditions in the workplace. The death in police custody of Steve Biko in September 1977, and the crackdown on dissident black organisations a month later, further exposed the South African government to the world’s condemnation, forcing many whites to conclude, some publicly and many privately, that sweeping reforms were essential if the country’s future was to be insured against turmoil and ultimately against radical revolution.

The student’s uprising deepened existing disagreements in the National Party over how best to defend and legitimize Afrikaner power, and ultimately set the party on an uncertain path of reform that led to its eventual fall from power two decades later. Blacks were forced by the uprising to confront their failure to find a strategy for liberation, but they emerged from the turmoil of 1976-1977 with stronger sense of the vulnerability of white power

and a deeper appreciation of the need for thorough political organisation.

The revolt raised awareness of millions of young South Africans who thereafter dated their political coming of age in relation to its events. To an unprecedented degree, South African Coloured minority made common cause with the common majority in demonstrating its rejection of the apartheid system. For older generations, of Africans, 1976 marked the transition from a period of conservative political culture in which the young played a distinctly subordinate role, to a new era of struggle energised by the participation and leadership of thousands of youth activists for whom the student uprising had been a political baptism by fire.

The uprising eventually affected more than a hundred urban areas of South Africa and took nearly a year to run its course, passing through a series of stages as student leaders changed tactics in an effort to sustain the protests, draw in adult participants, and respond to government repression.

Starting in August, a series of experiments with economic pressure was launched, in which students used stayaways (from wok) and consumer boycotts to weaken the state through blows directed at white business.

Hereunder are examples of documents/flyers/messages mass produced and churned out by the Soweto Students Representative Council and directed to

communities: They are captured in Part Two of this volume.

- i. Document 69. Press Statement by Tsietsi Mashinini, Chairman of Soweto Students Representative Council,, August 18, 1976 (handwritten)
- ii. Document 70. “To all residents of Soweto, hostels, Reef and Pretoria”. Flyer in English and Isizulu by Soweto Students Representative Council, September 7, 1976.
- iii. Document 71. “Azikhwelwa on Monday.” Flyer by Soweto Students Representative Council calling for a stayaway from September 13, 1976.
- iv. Document 72. “To Town!!! To Eloff!!! To the exclusive white paradise!!! From Monday!!!” flyer by Soweto Students Representative Council announcing Demonstration on September 23, 1976
- v. Document 73. “To All fathers and Mothers, Brothers and Sisters, Friends and Workers, in All Cities, Towns and Villages in the Republic of South Africa. “ Flyer in English and Sesotho by the Soweto Students Representative Council, October 15, 1976.

This 827-page volume, *Nadir and Resurgence*, by Thomas G Karis and Gail M Gerhart includes David Lewis who worked in the South African trade union movement from 1976 to 1990, serving as secretary of the General Workers Union and then as national organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union. This book was first published by Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd in 2013 •