



# Y-talk

[www.saymca.org.za](http://www.saymca.org.za)

Empowering Young People for Life, Leadership & Service

## ...On 16 Days of Activism

2020 has changed the world's socio-economic landscape and the world is now facing new challenges and opportunities posed by Covid-19. In South Africa, the Covid-19 pandemic has replicated itself to cause a deepening, tragic, social epidemic which is a frightening increase of violence against women and children.

As the YMCA South Africa movement, we have escalated our programmatic focus so that our staff and youth mobilisation has taken on more of an activist role against this crime. Our children's lives and that of our sisters', our wives, our mothers are every day in danger and at risk of becoming victims.

For this reason we have increased our efforts to position the YMCA movement towards becoming a launching pad of war against this crime. We are increasingly asking questions of ourselves, to

secure the safety and security of our children and those who will live after us.

We therefore resolve to no longer just be programme professionals against this crime, but also activists.

We have been ensuring that our staff work to leverage our strong programme focus, adapting it to partner with communities, churches and organisations who are fighting in different ways against gender based violence. We are scaling up our efforts to enhance awareness measures, advocacy initiatives and seeking to strengthen the voice of communities and civil society within the justice system and policing field for the safety and justice for victims of this crime.

During this 16 days of activism, we are escalating the call upon our leaders, staff and the members within our movement to position themselves as activists to say "no more" to the perpetrators this violence.

## FROM THE NGS



16 Days of Activism...

25 Nov to 10 Dec 2020

Be an activist.

Make a pledge today (see Page 2)



# 16 DAYS of ACTIVISM



In South Africa, Gender Based Violence (GBV) is one of the issues that most affects progress of the country. A lot has been shared about GBV statistics, cases on the media, the negative effects that it has on women, children and the society at large. Not enough work has been done to tackle GBV, especially by young people. Tackling GBV should be a shared responsibility that we as young people take up with urgency.

We call on young people to participate in the **Africa YMCA Start Now Campaign** that runs throughout the 16 Days of Activism. The

campaign aims to encourage young people to play their part in the fight against GBV. Join young people across Africa as they make pledges and commit to playing their part.

To participate, make a pledge of what you believe you can do to help fight GBV.

Take a picture with your pledge and post on your social media using the Hashtags #EndingGBV #OrangeTheWorld.

Don't forget to tag South Africa YMCA and Africa YMCA in your posts.



## Youth in the Driving seat: Social Enterprise Digital Workshops

My name is Liam Ruitter, a youth intern at Athlone YMCA and I am a SA YMCA Social Enterprise Champion. It has been an amazing experience to be trained as a Social Enterprise Champion. I have learnt various aspects of starting a profitable business such as Scaling, registering a social enterprise, the definition of a social enterprise, various models of Social Enterprise and what it takes to be a social entrepreneur. There is so much I've personally learnt that it's hard to accurately share with you without making this a thesis.

Most of these concepts were hard to understand at first, however with extensive research I completely understood the term Social Enterprise and its processes. I can now easily explain them better for other young people.

The workshops have been presented in an interesting way for young people. I feel as youth we



Queen Ndlovu (top right) who has been leading the Zoom training on Social Enterprise.

have been given a great chance to take these concepts and apply our own creative ideas to the fundamentals of Social Enterprise. My highlight of the training was when I was selected to co-facilitate with Queen Ndlovu, the last session of the



Liam and Ryan Benjamin, General Secretary of Athlone YMCA.

Introduction to Social Enterprise. My experience of co-facilitating the workshop revealed to me the potential impact that I and other youth could have on our peers. Also, fundamentally how I could help elevate the thought process and perceptions young people have of the working environment and what opportunities are available to them through the various SE models.

As young people, we are casually branded as the future and with saying that, we are the crafters for our own future, so I believe that we have a huge role to play in communities and environments. As Social Enterprise youth champions we will pave the way for young entrepreneurs in our communities through SE workshops. These workshops will teach youth about the benefits of social enterprise and aspects of the business world. Peter Senge says, *"Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them. That is only valid for information sharing. Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes."* As youth leaders it is our duty to share knowledge and educate other youth.

## Brought together by their passion for cooking



Brought together by a love and passion for cooking, food entrepreneurs and members of the UKZN Student Y, Mbongeleni Ngcobo (24) and Nokwanda Van Wyk (21) are partners of Organic Food Networking Catering Company. The company was founded in 2018 by Nokwanda Van Wyk who has had a passion for cooking from a young age and was also inspired by Sunday lunches which were normally prepared by mother and grandmother. It used to be a home business with Nokwanda making the food from home. In 2019 Mbongeleni became a partner and he pushed the emphasis of re-inventing it into something well-established. The business



became registered in November 2019 and they recently opened a kitchen at the UKZN YMCA. Their current clientele is students and the University Staff.

Organic Food Networking offers creative, colourful and authentic local and international cuisine options. The company has a motto that says **“food is what brings people together”**.

The emphasis is not only to bring people together to eat their food but also to create an opportunity for people to interact and network while enjoying their food. They cater to Individuals, organizations and business events, dinners parties, weddings and birthdays. The partners met in 2019 at UKZN Howard College where they were both students and they soon started to talk about their passion for cooking which led to the idea of working together. Mbongeleni has a Bachelor of Social Sciences in Criminology and Political Sciences while Nokwanda holds a Bachelor of Geography and Environmental Management. They are part of the many University students who have graduated but are unemployed. This prompted them to use their love for cooking to start a business. *“We love cooking and we are good at it. I feel as young people, we should value our art and God-given talents and make something out of it,”* says Nokwanda. Mbongeleni says that their dream is to open a restaurant one day and create employment for other young people.

# Norman Baartman 2-9-1969 to 3-11-2020



To read the newspaper article click on the link below.

[https://www.dailyvoice.co.za/news/hijackers-kill-pastor-d773ce25-31f4-4a1b-97de-44b89797ef01?fbclid=IwAR1H\\_RU6ojWcWgqJ-f5TI-8gEIQqVAKbecREp1YLBWJutE1gNLU-rCeL661](https://www.dailyvoice.co.za/news/hijackers-kill-pastor-d773ce25-31f4-4a1b-97de-44b89797ef01?fbclid=IwAR1H_RU6ojWcWgqJ-f5TI-8gEIQqVAKbecREp1YLBWJutE1gNLU-rCeL661)

*"A devoted church leader has been ruthlessly killed in an attempted hijacking in Philippi."*

The newspaper article opened with this news of the murder of Norman Baartman.

Norman was a YMCA volunteer and staff in the course of his life. He worked for the Cape Town YMCA and Western Cape Regional YMCA office for a few years in the 1990's and remained close to many YMCA staff over the years. He never really left the YMCA. About 2 years back he started his own church and became a full-time pastor.

Norman was one of the most enthusiastic and devoted YMCA volunteers I ever came across. When he volunteered he was like a full-time staff person, constantly looking for activities to pursue.

A likeable and honest man, he was a great asset to the YMCA, his community and most importantly, to his family.

This kind of tragedy strikes at the heart of everything we as community workers do. We are all devastated by this tragic loss.

We are again reminded of the need to urgently pursue justice and peace in our work with young people, to prevent this tragedy from happening again.

He leaves behind Leandri, his loving wife and three daughters.

Mike Cuthbert - worked with Norman for several years in the Better Life Options programme alongside Emmy Carstens du Toit.

# You don't ever really leave the YMCA



When I joined the YMCA as staff in 1989 I did not see the YMCA as a lifelong career. All I knew is that I wanted to work with young, disadvantaged people in South Africa. I don't know if it was a kind of penance for being a white man in South Africa or if it was an overzealousness to be part of a mission to save what I perceived to be 'lost souls'...perhaps a bit of both. Or perhaps it was actually a genuine, but at the time, unformed theology in my mind that God's desire for the world was for justice, compassion and humility. The idea of social justice was new to me, having graduated at the end of 1988, from a theologically conservative bible college, where the term 'social justice' was a swear word. Paradoxically, this same conservative college presented life changing opportunities to me that were to define the rest of my working life in the YMCA.

I can't speak of my life in the YMCA without talking about the people I have met and worked with over the years. From the young people in Umgababa high schools, to the staff ( I remember Mike Battison as a staff member of the UKZN Student Y having a massive influence on my Christian thinking) and Board members in the YMCA who recruited me and believed in me as a young, mostly ignorant, man. To those who I recruited into the YMCA over the years...Out of 7 national YMCA staff today, 4 of us come from the Amanzimtoti YMCA that I managed back in 1989; to the volunteers (Steve Hobbs, Len Abrams, Patrick Mbanjwa and Caeser Molebatsi come first to mind) who challenged my conservative thinking... to the international colleagues and volunteers who have helped me develop a global perspective on life's issues. You are all the reason I am who I am today. Happily, I am content with who I am, knowing I am still an unfinished product.

From my middle-class upbringing in a white

suburb of Cape Town during the 60's and 70's, (I grew up within 7 km's of Nelson Mandela

while he was imprisoned on Robben Island) my thinking had been shaped to believe a false narrative that took me years to break down and reshape. Many of my friends from that era and even from my later years as a theology student, did not manage to escape the indoctrination of the apartheid regime that we grew up in.

I can't write about my journey in the YMCA without mentioning my journey with Siphso (Sokhela), current National General Secretary of the South African YMCA. Our paths first crossed way back in 1986 at Theological College, along with several other young black men who were studying with me at the time. Apartheid was at its height and although a theologically conservative College, Rosebank Bible College was progressive for being one of the few inter racial higher education institutions in South Africa at the time. The College Board had to get special permission for black and white students

to live and study together. I was 26 years old and this was the first time I had ever engaged with people who were other than white, at a deep, personal level. Those 3 years we spent together set me on a journey that has literally changed my life. Most importantly, we all became friends. But it was Siphso and I who were closest. We connected on

many levels but especially on the sports field. I taught Siphso to play tennis and volleyball. He taught me to play soccer. I had only ever played

I was 26 years old and this was the first time I had ever engaged with black people, at a deep, personal level.



"...providing job opportunities for young people..."

rugby. I visited his home. He visited my home. We were on the college music team together. We travelled on mission trips, studied and had meals together. I only learned many years later, how uncomfortable the black students were at college. There were cultural and language issues to deal with. Eating preferences. Habits and customs that were swayed in favour of white students and lecturers.

***Those 3 years in College and my early years in the YMCA, were dramatic; they were awkward; they were stressful; they were confrontational; they were deeply transforming.***

While in my final year at college, the then SA YMCA National General Secretary, Laurie Vogt, visited the campus in Rosebank, Johannesburg to present YMCA to the students. Right at the end of his presentation, the time when most students were asleep, I managed to catch a phrase from Laurie that mentioned a job opportunity in Durban which led to my employment as General Secretary of the Amanzimtoti YMCA, in 1989.

Sipho and I have worked as colleagues in the YMCA, as staff and volunteer, for 30 years. We have remained true to ourselves and to our friendship despite many potential and real clashes. Despite many opportunities to waiver from our true convictions, we have remained steadfast. You have shaped my thinking about life in South Africa. Being your friend has given me hope in the future of this country. When faced with the agonizing, seemingly endless racist clashes in South Africa, I turn to my friendship with you, and I am convinced that the next generation of young people will bring about

a truly transformed, rainbow nation. I love your family and I know they love me. I will always be incredibly proud that I can be called your friend. That just as you have contributed to my personal transformation, I am aware of my own contribution, in small ways, to your journey through this tempestuous life in South Africa.

I leave the YMCA as a full-time staff person, 31 years after I joined. I have no regrets because I am content with what I have achieved in the YMCA. Of course I would have liked to see more change in this great movement, but will trust in the energy, enthusiasm, youthful resilience and insight of young people to achieve more.

I thank each staff and member that I have worked with over the years, for your friendship and patience with me . There have been many times when I have been the only white person in a meeting or conference. At those times, I am aware of the privilege you have all given me to be a part of you. During the times that I have been ashamed of being a part of the generation of white people who oppressed you and your families, you often laughed with me and joked with me to diffuse the tension I felt, or argued with everything you have; and I am able to stand up as a proud South African because I know that you accept me without reservation. I am a white man. I am, because of you. Thank you.

I'll see you all around soon...**because you dont ever really leave the YMCA!**

Sipho, my brother, you are the man.

[Follow my future adventures via Instagram @2travelhippies](#)

A deep, heartfelt thank you to colleagues and friends of all the YMCA National movements I have had the privilege of travelling to and staying connected with over the years:

Norway (my International YMCA career started here)

World Alliance of YMCAs	Africa Alliance of YMCAs	Madagascar
Sweden	Zambia	Kenya
Denmark	Cameroon	Tanzania
Palestine	Zimbabwe	Ethiopia
Sri Lanka	Togo	Ghana
Germany	Senegal	Thailand
UK		

USA - San Diego/Boston/Long Beach/Twin Cities/Atlanta/Jacksonville/New York

I have attended World YMCA meetings in Germany (1998), USA (2014) and Thailand (2018)

# CIVIC EDUCATION with FREEDOM HOUSE

## CIVIC Education Program

In this Y-Talk edition we speak to Zikhona Mnyaka, the SAYMCA Civic Education Co-ordinator.

### What is the Civic Education Program?

We help young mostly young people in local communities understand how things work in local government and how service delivery should function.

The program has been running since 2018 in Luganda and KwaMashu.



### What are the activities that take place in the program?

We do Civic Education Workshops, where we tackle different topics such as service delivery, GBV, Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

There are Civic Education study groups where we discuss the Constitution and other Civic Education topics.

We conduct campaigns relating to community issues, where we invite all stakeholders and partners to participate.

### What are some of the program successes you have experienced?

Last year we were advocating for sanitation/bin collection to be done twice a week in the Luganda area. We then did a campaign and made it possible. The environment is in a cleaner state than before.

### Challenges experienced in the program?

Some community leaders do not understand the work we do as the YMCA; they believe we have political interests and agendas even though we repeatedly explain that we have the community's best interests in what we do.

### How has the program impacted your personal life?

I feel I've grown and acquired skills I believe to be important. I was never an expert in local government/service delivery. I didn't understand how things worked, but now I've

learnt the importance of participating as an individual to bring the change you would like to see. I've learnt the importance of standing together as communities and conversing with the government as to what change the community needs and being involved to see that change happen.

Most importantly I've learnt the value of building relationships with people, volunteers, stakeholders and partners. I am forever learning.

I would like to use this program to reach out to other disadvantaged areas where young people feel they have no voice.

**Freedom House** is a great partner to work with. They are patient and developmental in their approach and the YMCA has grown its capacity through working with them.





## Extract from old Y-Talk - Issue 16 - October

### WHERE DO YOUNG PEOPLE FIT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

#### YOUTH WORKER INTERN

## Where do young people fit

within the organisation?.

**W**hat a discussion during the last Youth Worker Intern Training!!!! During the last training in September, Interns spent time exploring some of the key role players within the structure of the organization and also tried to place themselves within their local and regional structures.

It could be clearly seen by the "pictures that were being painted" that young people are on different levels in terms of youth participation. For example; for International participants there was equal opportunities for youth and adults, whereas on the other hand in the SA YMCA regional youth partici-

pation was observed more in Western Cape and less in Gauteng / North -West Region. Young people in Gauteng / North -West are often seen as substitutes and beneficiaries, therefore they are always given second preference.

The debate was also used as an evaluation tool to check what some of the reasons were for the lack of youth participation in the Regions / locals. Is it because they are not effective in whatever they are doing, or is it because they are being judged based on their previous failures, or have never been given a chance to prove themselves, or maybe they are tokens? This is a challenge to any move-

ment especially to a youth movement like the YMCA.

The organization has been creating opportunities for young people, but how and where will they prove themselves if they are not given the necessary support and chances. While youth also have the opportunity to participate through a growing network of youth groups in the movement e.g. the National Youth Committee, the nature of their involvement must be from bottom up i.e. local, regional and then national. Young people do not only need opportunities and challenges, but also need adults to trust them more and not fear giving them added responsibilities. Participating in a meaningful way in local



structures through activities helps young people develop confidence in their skills and abilities. "I need exposure and experience to become a good self - starter, leader, motivator and an agent of change". Youth are the leaders of today. Tomorrow has come; adults please help young people to make a difference by guiding them in this long road of development.

**Sandra Siphwe Ndlovu**  
National Training and Development  
Co-ordinator

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## INNOVATIVE NEW PREVENTION/ARTS/CULTURE PROGRAMME - CAPE FLATS YMCA

#### ■ HISTORY

# Museum aims to educate, empower communities

*Room themes include apartheid Struggle and memorials of child victims of violence*

SHAKIRAH THEBUS  
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A MUSEUM dedicated to showcasing the raw and vivid colours of Cape Flats history, culture and the colossal impact gangsterism has on these communities, had a pre-launch yesterday.

The Y-Wise Up museum, located at the YMCA Rotary Camp in Strandfontein, is an initiative by YMCA Cape Flats that attempts to educate and empower communities while creating more awareness in societies.

YMCA Cape Flats director Ricardo de Reuck said the idea was birthed when he visited the 18 Gangsters Museum in Khayelitsha early last year.

De Reuck also lost his nephew to gang violence, prompting him to think more determinedly about spreading gang prevention messages in an unconventional manner, and learning on Cape Flats history and culture.

The museum consists of a broader room depicting infamous areas, and Cape Flats symbols and language, as well as everyday lived experiences, painted boldly on to the walls. The museum also consists of three rooms, each with its own theme – a jail cell, a room dedicated to anti-apartheid Struggle veterans and other iconic figures, and another in memory of the young children who lost their lives



THE Cape Flats Museum in Strandfontein is dedicated to showcasing local culture and history. | ARMAND HOUGH African News Agency (ANA)

because of violence.

"We want our community to remember these people and not forget their names and the role that they played in the Struggle.

"We also want to identify young men and women who have come out of the Cape Flats and have made a positive contribution to society," said

De Reuck.

Reformed gangster Solomon Staggie, was responsible for the room depicting a jail cell, which will focus on gang culture.

"Your environment does not dictate where you will end up, your choices do, but it does play a role.

"Revenge, there is no room for it,"

he said.

Rise Up founder Ivan Jones, works with families affected by or have lost loved ones through gang violence.

"We find that the families of these children never go for counselling and never get help. Those families had to relocate from where they used to stay because they can't handle coming out of their houses daily and seeing where their child was shot and killed. We want to be a voice for these children."

Retired architect Kenneth Alexander, responsible for the artwork, said: "Every work I do is based on current events and working away from being in denial. Everybody says we are all equal but that is not true. I work with people in the area where the Trojan Horse massacre took place – those people are still battling."

Cape Flats Stories founder Stanley Jacobs said: "We need to understand where we come from, we need to understand our history in order for us to move forward as a people of the Cape Flats.

The pre-launch was supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport and Vumatel.

Cultural Affairs MEC Antroux Marais said the department's role was not only to provide financial support but emotional as well.

This is an innovative new program that the YMCA can be proud of. If you are in the Cape Town area, please feel free to pop in and enjoy a tour of the museum. It's an ongoing project. We need all your support to make it a sustainable success.

# MENTAL HEALTH IS AS IMPORTANT AS PHYSICAL HEALTH

The theme “Mental health for all” is the main focus that encompassed various activities for mental health awareness in 2020. It looks at the need for every individual to embrace mental health. Mental health is as important as physical health, yet, is neglected in most sectors of society.



Some still believe mental health is madness, while others believe it is witchcraft but, it simply has to do with the state of one’s mind; how one thinks, how one acts, and how one responds to the day to day pressures of life. Over the years there has been a rising need to embrace mental health from a different point of view. This involves engaging society, schools and universities in mental health awareness.

A view of mental health being as important as physical health draws the society’s attention to means and ways of maintaining a positive mental health. A look into an average university student’s life shows that adopting positive mental health concepts yields a significant difference on their outlook to life as many positive minded students tend to embrace daily challenges well and find healthy coping skills.

There comes a phase where after one realises the importance of mental health, they are to live in a way to better their mental state. Unfortunately, it is at this phase that many fail. Even the mental health advocates find difficulties in coping with stressors sometimes. The ones who lead, such as parents, guardians, and the duty bearers entrusted to protect their society such as young advocates, teachers, social workers need also to apply positive mental health to their day to day lives.

Through the course of the past two years there has been an increase in the rate of suicide

among mental health advocates, leaders, and parents. Society is left to wonder why these people were the target for suicide when they lived their best lives. In this, society fails to see what goes on behind the closed doors of these up-lifters of society. They decided to carry the loads of society and yet forgot their own, not realising the

burden they built upon themselves. When they felt like they had enough, they ended it all. This should prove that mental health is also applicable to the up-lifters of society, the leaders, parents and advocates.

There is more to mental health awareness, which means society ought to find means to cope with daily stressors, and apply these means each and every day. Only then will a positive change be seen, and then, mental health will be embraced through a comprehensive, holistic approach.



**Norah Chabu (Zambia YMCA)**  
Youth Volunteer on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights