



# Y-TALK

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

Empowering Young People for Life, Leadership & Service

## From the NGS



As YMCA wrestles with the current challenges posed by Covid-19, we are conscious that our efforts of understanding the impact and ways to survive this pandemic is forging a future for us in the midst of the crisis. This also reminds us that the future is the world of young people and we affirm that they must be in the driving seat.

Our actions have been increasingly focussed on creating opportunities where young people are included in decision making. We recognize that as much as we are about serving young people, there is a need to ensure that young people feel safe in the Y, with a sense of ownership of the decisions they make. This will reshape the future of the Y.

We are pleased to share a part of the SAYMCA Covid-19 Response plan, to welcome the Youth Dialogues Zoom sessions that kicks off on 26 June, Youth Month, with young people crafting their own view of critical issues towards a good post Covid-19 future. This is, no doubt, Empowering young people for Life Leadership and Service, in action.

## THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN A DISRUPTED AND VOLATILE WORLD

The year 2020 ushered us into a world of seismic disruptions. These disruptions have laid bare the true state of our world socio-economic and political systems. We have seen the true extent of the deep and devastating fault lines of socio-economic inequality, racial and gender injustices.

Notwithstanding all the technological, scientific and economic innovations that have taken place in the past few decades, it seems the one thing that should have mattered most, how we relate to one another and nature, has increasingly suffered degradation over time.

Young people are inheriting a world system in crisis, where the few have profited through the subjugation and exploitation of others as well as nature. Young people will be living, loving and leading in a world system that is on the brink of collapse. The implication of this sobering reality is that unlike the generations that have gone before

them, young people can no longer afford to live in fragrant disregard of these realities.

So, the obvious question is what can young people do to equip themselves to navigate these

world system realities? I would like to suggest 3 focus areas that can position young people to navigate our world to safer waters:

1. **Systems Thinking** – The world systems that are in crisis were constructed by people. They can be changed by people. Young people need to study the dominant socio-economic and



political systems. They need to understand the fault lines and their root causes as well as how humanity can outgrow these fault lines.

2. **Social Engineering** – We live in a world where our relations with one another have been socially engineered to maximise the profits of the economically and politically powerful. Young people need to study these techniques and learn how might humanity outgrow such control.
3. **Civic Leadership** – Most of what I have learnt in life has been through my civic engagement. Learning studies indicate that 70% of what we learn is through active experimentation and immersion. Young people should invest their time participating in YMCA community projects to observe, experiment and grow their leadership experience. Young people should see the YMCA as the space (power space<sup>12</sup>) where they can equip themselves for life and leadership in a world steeped in crisis.

I conclude with this thought; In the late 1800's, big cities such as London and New York were drowning in horse manure. With the influx of people in the cities the large amount of horse dung and urine had begun to be a health hazard to the cities. This problem came to a head when in 1894, The Times Newspaper predicted... "In 50 years, every street in London will be buried under nine feet of manure." This became known as the 'Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894'.

However, the invention of the motor car enabled humanity to outgrow this crisis. I have no doubt in my mind that young people, immersed in systems thinking, social engineering and civic leadership, can navigate the world into safer waters, in the same way that the invention of the motor car averted a horse manure crisis in 1894!

So young people, let's get cracking!

**Vezi Mncwango. SA YMCA Ambassador.**

Author of Vessels of Glory.

Co-founder of Ubuntu Kithi Network.

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## The Future Support Initiative

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As it is still youth month, we celebrate the work that is being done by young people to make a change in the community by empowering other young people. In this issue we speak to Phumelele Hadebe, a youth volunteer at UKZN Student YMCA and a YAC Alumni, about the project they are working on.

**❓ What is the name of your project and its goal?**

**Future Support Initiative** is the name of the project. The project aims to equip young people in High School with necessary soft skills and sharing of information to help them decide on their academic future.

**❓ How did you come up with project idea?**

Growing up in the rural areas in Umzumbe, Port Shepstone (South Coast of Kwazulu-Natal) we had no access to technology or information about applying to Universities. I was lucky when I was in Grade 12 to have had former students in my school coming to assist us with applying for bursaries. In the past years volunteering with



YMCA at the Orientation week at UKZN Howard College, I have seen a lot of young people from rural areas and townships coming to check if the University has openings for late applications simply because they had not applied in advance due to lack of information. Most of these students end up taking a gap year because their applications are not accepted. These are the things that made me want to start this project.

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# OUR BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Black Lives Matter movement has gained huge traction globally and has called each individual to take responsibility in their own individual capacity. But global as it is, it speaks to us all as South Africans – directly and urgently. In a country founded on racism that has been engraved on the lives of our people.

During this youth month, we remember the lives of young people in South Africa who rose up to confront the pain and injustice of racism in 1976.

The youth of this generation are still facing the manifestation of the apartheid legacy and daily realities of racism. As a young person, I have felt some hope at the amount of

schools being called out over racism in the last few weeks. That these voices are from young people themselves. Saying enough!



We are all invited to be a part of a swift solution towards the eradication of racism and any form of discrimination. As young people we must take action and drive the change towards a just society. And the role of the SAYMCA becomes more key in our country. As a youth development movement that sets out to Empower Young People for Life, Leadership and Service, we need to empower young people to

be free in our own country.

**Wandile Buthelezi. Change Agent.**

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## The Impact of Covid 19 on Student Well being

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### Mental health of students during Covid19

The outbreak of covid19 has left many civilians out in the dark as the uncertainty of what is to come rises. We have never experienced such social and economic turmoil, on such a global scale.

These unprecedented times impacts both the financial and physical wellbeing of many individuals. The impact of self-isolation on one's mental health should also not be underestimated. "The mental health impact of the pandemic has been sorely neglected, both in South Africa and globally", states the Human Science Research Centre (HSRC).

### The impact of the pandemic on mental health

Humans, being social and interactive beings, thrive on the illusion of having control which is fostered through our daily routines. The pandemic has disturbed this normal flow of our lives. People are

being forced to detach from the outside world. The ability to interact and socialize, for many, acts as a coping mechanism for their mental health and overall wellbeing. In South Africa, 1 in 10 people suffer from depression and/or anxiety disorders. Before the national lockdown, SADAG recorded that 59% of people had already been diagnosed with a mental illness. With limited mental health support, individuals who are already diagnosed with a mental

### MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

According to a survey report produced by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG);

- 59% of people were diagnosed with a mental health disorder prior to lockdown
- 43% diagnosed with depression
- 30% diagnosed with general anxiety
- And 12% diagnosed with bipolar

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## In memory of the late Mr Faizel Adam

10/6/1970-10/6/2020

Mr Adam was an educator and rugby coach at Florida Senior Secondary School in Ravensmead since 1995-2020. He also was the rugby coach at Stellenberg high school and Western Province Junior rugby. He was well respected and loved by his peers and learners.

Since we started the Better Life Option Peer Education programme at Florida high in 1997 Mr. Adam was a key supporter of YMCA programmes. In the last three years, he became an integral part of the implementation and success of the Youth Justice programme. He had a heart for the wellbeing of the learners and his goal was that every learner should get the attention needed and the opportunity to grow. He never shunned away to stand between those who wanted to cause physical or emotional harm to the learners. On several occasions, he would face off with gangsters to protect the learners and it was no surprise that those hardened gangsters respected him for the person he was.

Mr Adam could not be overlooked when you visit the school because of his stature and presence on the school ground. The learners he referred to us were always a mixture of those with behavioural challenges and those with great potential who were in need of some guidance. Although he was very strict as a teacher and coach, the love that he had for the learners was always evident in his eyes and smile. One of his quotes on FB was: "let your smile change the world but don't let the world change your smile".

In one of our sessions with the Youth Justice group, he laid bare his soul in front of those young boys and girls and shared his life experience with them as motivation. They were quite surprised to see their teacher open up to them and imprinting on



**"let your smile change the world but don't let the world change your smile"**

them that "Discipline is the bridge between Goals and Accomplishment". For 23 years he shared short moments of his life that was filled with dedication, compassion, discipline and laughter that was evident in all aspects of his life.

We as YMCA Ravensmead staff and volunteers, were shocked by the sudden death of an Educator, coach and friend of the YMCA. He always encouraged and motivated us to never give up on our children and youth and was grateful for the work we are doing. We are grateful for his support, motivation, guidance and friendship which is forever imprinted in the story of our YMCA. He will be missed but never forgotten.

**"God gave you a fingerprint that no one else has, so you can leave an imprint that no one else can"**

FB post: 12 April 2019. Mr Faizel Adam.

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Our General Secretary, Mr. Mafa, was very supportive. I improved the idea with him and Oyama Ngomezulu (fellow YAC alumni).

### 📍 Which school are you currently working with?

We are currently working with Grade 12's at Velabahleke High school in Umlazi, Durban. Kaizen Apps is a new stakeholder we are in partnership. The CEO of Kaizen, Sahluko Sithole, has made available to us an App that allows learners to apply to all universities around the country. The App also has a goal setting function

to show how many points are required to study towards each qualification. Through this App we were able to secure a sponsorship for 255 learners, worth R102 000 (R400 per learner). We also assist them with NSFAS applications (a government grant scheme for university students) and opening of bank accounts.

### 📍 Future plans?

We plan to extend the project to the rural areas where young people are most in need.

Written by Pasca Ndlovu - From an Interview with Phumelele Hadebe

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## ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

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With Gender Based Violence I feel everything has been done from marches, dialogues, talks and night vigils but there hasn't been much change. At this point small individual acts will contribute to the ending of Gender Based Violence. As young people we need to start creating safe spaces within our circles as individuals. As friends we can form support groups where no matter what one is going through we are able to open up to each other and not bottle it up. Spaces where young people feel comfortable enough to talk about their challenges are in short supply.

As friends and sisters we need to be creating spaces where the young men in our lives feel comfortable to confide in us and share their struggles so that they don't end up releasing their anger on someone else, because they are walking, ticking time bombs that can explode at any given time. They are ticking time bombs because of the societal definition of masculinity that puts so much pressure on them.

The same goes to women. As young women we need to create spaces where we can open up if we are facing GBV in our relationships. We need to help each other to get to a point where we understand that what is happening to us is wrong. We need to build our confidence and be brave enough to stand up for ourselves to report abusive behaviour to the police or people we trust. Also, as young women we need to stop being toxic and we, at times, somehow



contributors. In as much as there is nothing we can do that can give any man the right to abuse a woman, as young women we need to stop having high expectations from men such as expecting them to provide for us, expect them to have certain things like cars and houses at a certain age. It's high time we empower ourselves and take care of ourselves. The fight against GBV begins with me and it begins with you.

By Oyamelencosini Mngomezulu.

YMCA member. YAC Alumni.

# SNAPSHOTS OF LOCAL YMCA ACTION



Having some fun with residents at the Cape Flats YMCA campsite.



The Soweto YMCA team getting ready for another food parcel distribution in Orlando.



Participants in the Nelson Mandela Bay Youth Justice programme, being supported with food parcels delivered by Pelisa

If you would like to feature your YMCA through a Snapshot...whatsapp your photo with text to 0833081501

## BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION

Being a young person living in the Cape Flats is difficult because you have to be prepared for whatever will happen. When you leave your house in the morning, you never know if you will make it back alive. However that has motivated me to play my part in making a change in my community as a young leader. I have been playing a role in the fight against COVID 19. I have been working with other



young people in my community to provide soup and food parcels to community members who are in need.

A month ago I started my own NPO – Romano Foundation that aims to empower young people in the Cape Flats community. I have partnered with other organizations that include Peace Centre, Hilltop, Mitchell's Plain Crisis Line and the University of Western Cape to start the Youth Internet Café which is our first project. The Internet Café will be mobile and being done in different areas of the community and we intend to use big spaces like churches. The Café is meant to teach young people

how to use digital technology and we aim to reach out to 1000 young people who need the digital skills. There 5 young people that have been employed in this project. As soon as the country moves to level one of the lock down, we will be working in one of the wards that do not have a Youth Department, we will be helping with youth programs. The Councillor for that ward is willing to support 20 young people which means 20 more young people will have a source of income for a certain period of time. There are a few other projects lined up for the coming few months.

I owe part of my success to the YMCA. YMCA has helped me grow as a young person and has helped me realize my potential in empowering other young people. Through the exposure I got being part of YAC, I got to view the world and poverty in a different way. It made me realize how much need the young people in my community had and that I can

**"we need to learn to find opportunities in our community struggles"**

play a part in coming up with solutions for our communities.

**I will forever be grateful to the YMCA.**

My advice to other young people would be to grab every opportunity that comes your way and as you develop be willing to take other young people with you. We can change and develop our own communities but we need to learn to find opportunities in our community struggles and come up with innovative ideas to solve the challenges we see. The role of young people is to make something out of their lives. It's for them to stand up and speak up.

**By Romano Shabango (Cape Flats YMCA).**