

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY, THE RISE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The month of June is known as Youth month in our country with the climax being the commemoration of June 16. We remember in a special way the 1976 youth uprising, when young people gathered to confront the oppressive racial system that relegated black people into an animal status. While it is commonly stated that young people were fighting for the burn of the use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction, we now know that it was about fighting racism at its core. The challenges of the young then and now remain the same although circumstances have changed. Young people then were seeking quality education so as to better their lives. In the new dispensation when things are supposed to be better, young people are still faced with same struggle for free quality education. I would like to suggest that what is unique with the 1976 youth is their determination and solidarity to take a stand against oppressive system. Their political consciousness helped them to realise that silence is not a solution in the midst of injustice and oppression. Their level of courage and solidarity is something that is lacking in our time. Without social sensitivity and solidarity, the youth of today will never emerge victorious in their efforts to find a better life. There is a need therefore, to always remember the spirit of unity of the youth of 1976. Young people need to realize the wisdom behind the logic of solidarity to effect the envisaged societal transformation. While it is true that each generation is unique and has its own struggles, the principle of dealing with the problems remains the same. There is a need for solidarity and political consciousness to confront sociological issues. There is a need for young people to unite and fight for quality of life, otherwise they will remain in permanent junk status. We need to also acknowledge that it is unfair to completely compare the then youth and the current youth as times have changed. The youth of today need to also find pride in their own identity and uniqueness. There are also many opportunities in various sectors of our economy which the youth must maximize in order to live a better life. Technological developments have also improved the standard of life, and our young people need to learn to use social media to their advantage, not as a means for entertainment but as a channel for global solidarity to confront ills of society. We should not slip into an ocean of despair but should use this month to reflect and revive the hopes and dreams of our young people.

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