

PARLIAMENT: Following up on our commitments to the people.

# in session



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**PARLIAMENT**  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Mace of National Assembly

## Vision

An activist and responsive people's Parliament that improves the quality of life of South Africans and ensures enduring equality in our society.

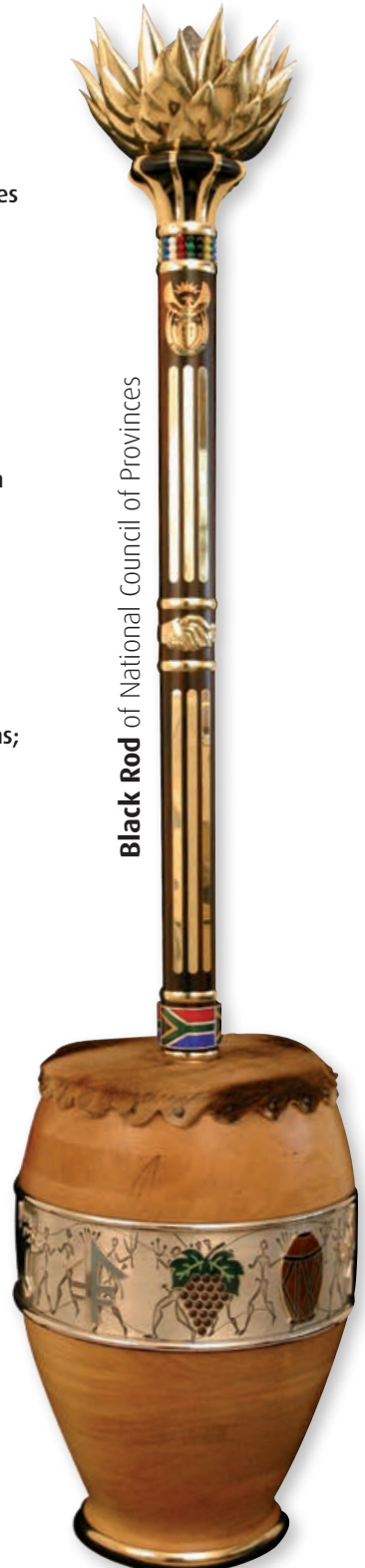
## Mission

Parliament aims to provide a service to the people of South Africa by providing the following:

- A vibrant people's Assembly that intervenes and transforms society and addresses the development challenges of our people;
- Effective oversight over the Executive by strengthening its scrutiny of actions against the needs of South Africans;
- Participation of South Africans in the decision-making processes that affect their lives;
- A healthy relationship between the three arms of the State, that promotes efficient co-operative governance between the spheres of government, and ensures appropriate links with our region and the world; and
- An innovative, transformative, effective and efficient parliamentary service and administration that enables Members of Parliament to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities.

## Strategic Objectives

1. Strengthening oversight and accountability
2. Enhancing public involvement
3. Deepening engagement in international fora
4. Strengthening co-operative government
5. Strengthening legislative capacity



Black Rod of National Council of Provinces

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**COVER:** Youth delegates from all over South Africa gathered in Kliptown, Soweto, in June to participate in the National Youth Parliament on the theme "Following up on our commitments to the youth: partnering with the youth to strengthen local governance".

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**OUR IDEALS**

**VISION** An activist and responsive people's Parliament that improves the quality of life of South Africans and ensures enduring equality in our society.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

Strengthening oversight and accountability; enhancing public involvement; deepening engagement in international fora; strengthening cooperative government; strengthening legislative capacity.

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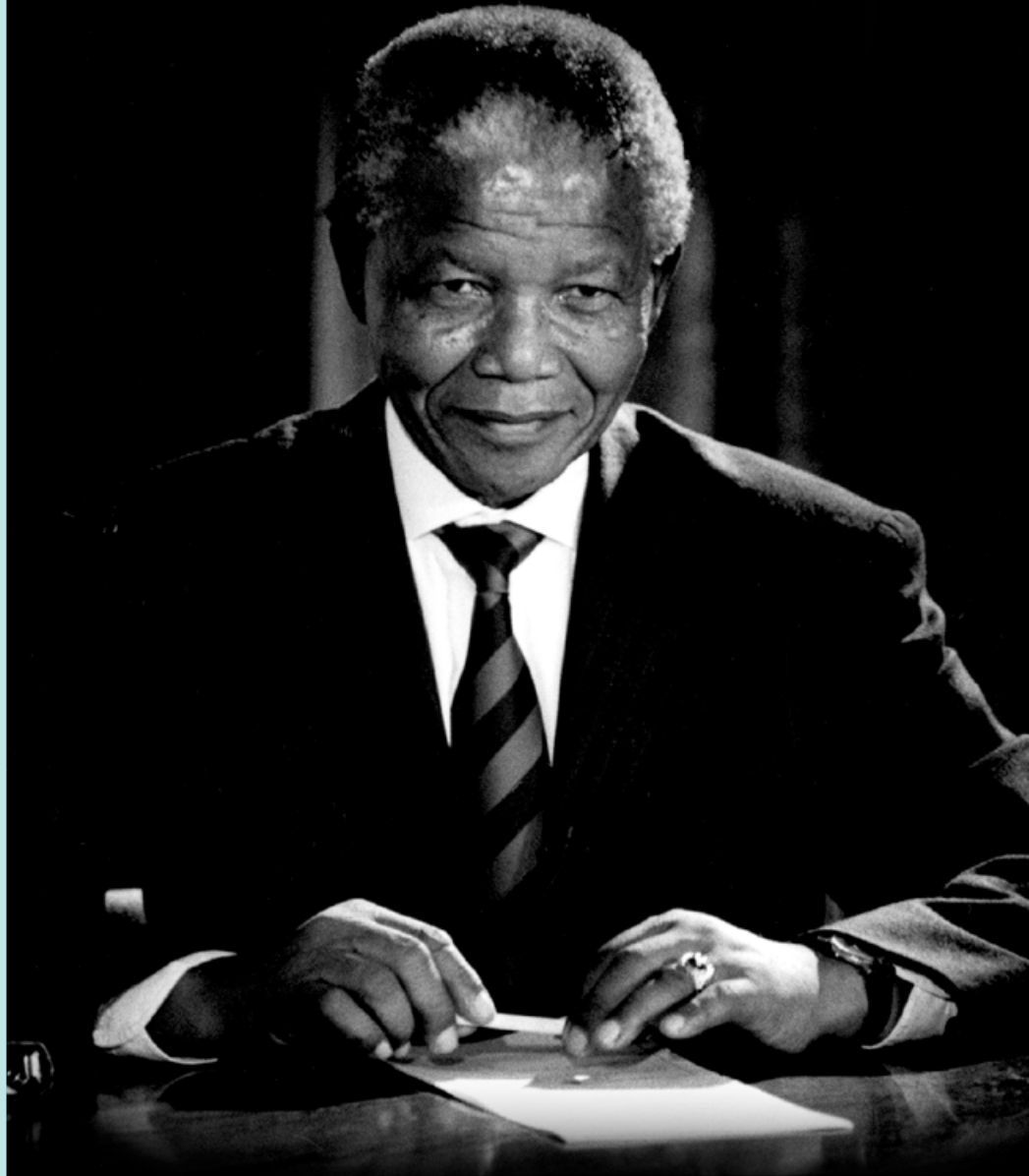
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# Parliament pays tribute to the father of the nation



The world celebrated his birthday, International Mandela Day, on July 18, by dedicating 67 minutes of service for the good of humankind, one minute for each year that Madiba fought against apartheid.



# 'Nothing about us without us'

Welcome to this 2016 Youth Parliament special edition of InSession.

This year's Youth Parliament was held in historic Kliptown where the Freedom Charter was signed at the Congress of the People. Hosted by the Gauteng legislature, it took place in Soweto in recognition of the 40th anniversary of the Soweto youth uprising. The precinct was officially declared a sitting of Parliament, as required by law, and its "Members" were delegations of youth representing all nine provinces.

The event was a joint effort by the Legislative Sector and the Speakers of all provincial legislatures and the "Members", or delegates, were addressed by national Parliament's Presiding Officers.

Discussions on matters of importance to youth were held in three separate commissions: "youth and economic opportunities"; "youth and access to education; and "the role of youth in social cohesion, transformation and participation in decision-making". Each commission was led by the chairpersons of the relevant parliamentary Committees.

Reportbacks from the commissions were then debated in a joint plenary sitting. In terms of parliamentary protocol, the House elected its Speaker for the session from among the youth delegates. Relevant government officials, including Deputy Minister in the Presidency Mr Buti Manamela, Minister of Economic Development Mr Ebrahim Patel and Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training Mr Mduduzi Manana, as well as veterans of the 1976 generation, took part in the Youth Parliament debate.

Parliament used this event to pay tribute to the youth of 1976 who by their determination and sacrifice changed South Africa for ever.

It also welcomed the opportunity to listen to the voices of today's youth, in recognition of their slogan "Nothing about us without us". The theme of Youth Parliament was "following up on our commitments to the youth: Partnering with the youth to strengthen local governance". This was in the run-up to the local government elections and was based on national Parliament's declaration of intent: "Following up on our commitments to the people".



MESSAGE FROM THE

# national assembly



Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete

*I am very pleased to be here today as I am always inspired by young people. I am also very pleased that we, as the South African Legislative Sector, are becoming exactly that – a sector that is increasingly cementing our relationship, by building common understandings, best practice and cohesion amongst ourselves. The value of collaborating as a sector is indeed beginning to yield excellent results, especially in respect of improved oversight and thus improved outcomes for our people.*

We meet during Youth Month which, 40 years ago, gave rise to the heroism of the youth of 1976. Each year, Parliament convenes, amongst other things, the Youth Parliament during Youth Month to commemorate the youth of past generations and the youth of today. We do so to acknowledge and celebrate the heroism of a generation of youth who stood resolute and principled against apartheid and an unjust and brutal regime. The youth of 1976 fought for the rights and the liberation of all of us, for me, for you and future generations.

During June, we as a nation also commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter, at the Congress of the People, which was held on 26 June 1955 in Kliptown, spelling out the people's vision of the kind of South Africa they desired. Today, the Freedom Charter is the foundation of our Constitution, and indeed as the Freedom Charter declares so boldly "The People Shall Govern."

Today, many of the youth of 1976 are bringing to fruition the Freedom Charter by contributing towards the reconstruction and development of our democratic South Africa, in many sectors of the country and the world.

Indeed the struggle and sacrifices of the youth of 1976 were not in vain. Your generation is growing up in times of breathtaking change. Race no longer determines where one lives, where one goes to school or church, what

work one can do, or even whom we love. Black people no longer have to carry passes or seek permits to live and work in urban areas. Indeed there are no longer public spaces that are designated for certain race groups only, such as beaches or public transport. These are all examples of the manifestations of the institutionalised racism that our people had to endure every day.

Today, we live in a vibrant democracy where the executive, Parliament and the judiciary perform their tasks cooperatively, advancing democracy and promoting the rights of all our people. Today we also live in a country where the ANC-led government has systematic and sustainable programmes in place providing basic services that improve the quality of life of our people.

Millions of people now have access to water, electricity, housing, hospital care, quality education and other services, which has led to an improvement in the quality of life. In your lives, you've seen massive global declines in poverty and disease, you've seen incredible strides for women's rights. You've mastered technology. The world is connected now in ways that we couldn't imagine even 10, 20 years ago.

And yet, even though you've come of an age where change is happening so rapidly, your generation believes deeply that you can change this world for the better. You are more interested

in hard work, the hard work of waging peace than the easy impulse towards conflict.

You are more interested in the hard work of building prosperity through entrepreneurship and innovation. I see a generation of youth who are more eager for the progress that comes not from holding down people who are not like you, but lifting everybody up so that everybody has an opportunity, regardless of what they look like or how they pray or whom they love. And that makes me hopeful.

Unlike any other time in history, the technology at your disposal means that you don't have to settle for the world as it is. You can create the world as you want it to be. You already have the freedom to build a world in powerful and sometimes disruptive ways. So this is extraordinary progress.

Of course, we do not live on an island. We are part of the global world, and we are just as much affected by what others do elsewhere in the world. In recent years, the global economy has slowed down, and this has affected our country's economic growth, inflicting hardships at home. We are aware that still too many communities endure pain due to the challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty. We know too well that many of our people are still waiting for basic services.

Rising to the call of the youth of 1976,

and indeed the call of the youth of today, our government continues to prioritise education as an instrument of liberation. Thus, education as a key to development and a better life receives the biggest chunk of the national budget. Each year we build new schools and refurbish others to improve the learning environment. Seven hundred and ninety-five schools have been built since 2009 at a cost of R23bn.

Communities throughout the country have been the recipients of 78 new libraries in addition to 304 that have been upgraded.

We are determined that poverty must never prevent a child from obtaining an education. To improve access to education, at least 80% of our public schools are now no-fee schools and nine million children are exempted from paying school fees. In this way, we are making sure that every child in our country has an opportunity to receive an education.

Ensuring that our country is equipped and skilled to move us forward, government is also building three new universities and 12 technical education colleges to expand access to higher education. Moving with the times, the need has also been identified to invest more and more resources in information and communications technologies in education. Right here in Gauteng, learners were offered tablets to promote e-learning in our schools.

Government is also increasing funding for education, from R318m in 2010 to R2.3bn in 2016. The objective is to promote technical education and provide more electricians, welders, plumbers and other artisans for the economy. We know that many more students are still struggling to afford tertiary education because they come from poor families.

It is perplexing, therefore, to see that in our communities, schools, libraries, clinics and community centres are being torched and burned to the ground. This rogue behaviour is unacceptable and hurts the very people who need these facilities most, our youth and the vulnerable. We should remember that not a single school was burnt during

the June 16 1976 student uprising.

Just recently, we witnessed students doing the unthinkable, by burning university buildings on some campuses and destroying other facilities and furniture, just to communicate that they cannot afford the fees. That conduct is unforgivable and totally unacceptable.

We live in a country where freedom of expression, association and of the media are enshrined in the Constitution, where we know we will not be shot and killed for staging a peaceful march to state our grievances. We clearly need to have much more dialogue on how we as communities put across our demands for services. We should not give in to those reactionary forces who are hell-bent and intent on taking our democratic country backwards.

Let us evoke the spirit of the Cosas [Congress of South African Students] slogan which says "Forward, Ever, Backwards, Never". We have it in our power to stop this tragedy, which goes against the spirit of our great heroes of 1976.

I therefore call on the youth, in particular, and leaders in communities to be at the forefront of reconstruction and development, rather than breaking down that which brings the promise of lifting our people out of poverty and a brighter future.

Together, we need to undertake some serious introspection, and to agree on solutions as a nation. We need the economy to grow so that jobs can be created, especially for our youth. To this end, we need to see more programmes aimed at promoting confidence in the economy, and this must be done in conjunction with the labour and business sectors.

As much as we encourage young people to open up businesses, more must be done nationally, provincially, and at municipal levels to provide the necessary skills, funding and markets for young entrepreneurs.

The youth, as the future of the country, have an important role to play in shaping our new democratic country.

On 3 August, we go to the polls to elect new municipal representatives. I urge the youth to come out in their thousands to exercise this right that many died for. And to those of you who are not old enough to vote, I want to urge you to encourage your parents, older brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles to vote. Each one of us has an obligation to ensure that we participate in the decision-making process of our democracy. You cannot make demands if you are not willing to participate in our democracy when you are called upon to do so. This, after all, is what our social contract entails.

All of us, including the youth, have to become involved in our communities, be it on health committees, the crafting of integrated development plans for the needs of a particular community, or attending school governing bodies' meetings. There is a place and a space for all of us to become active and involved. We all have the potential to be agents of change.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to emphasise that to solve today's challenges we have to work with each other.

I am confident that South Africa's youth is more than ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Wherever you find yourselves – in schools, in religious institutions, universities, at work, in sporting bodies, as cultural workers – be assured that your wellbeing remains our first priority. We stand firm in our conviction that you deserve a better quality of life than the generations that came before you.

I look forward to following the deliberations over the coming days. As the youth of 1976 demonstrated so powerfully, together we can build a brighter and more prosperous future for all, as the Freedom Charter calls upon us to do.

*This is an edited version of the address delivered by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete, during the National Youth Parliament in Kliptown, Soweto, on the theme "Following up on our commitments to the youth: partnering with the youth to strengthen local governance".*



# Youth Parliament looks to the future while remembering the past

**This** year marks the 40th anniversary of the historic June 16 Soweto youth uprising and in honour of this historic occasion the legislative sector hosted a National Youth Parliament in Kliptown, Soweto, to commemorate the sacrifices made by that generation that contributed to South Africa's successful transition to democracy, writes Abel Mputing.

Kliptown is the birth place of the Freedom Charter and is also the place where the Constitution was launched and so provided an inspirational setting for this meeting between the youth and members of provincial and national parliaments. It provided the perfect opportunity for young people to influence policies and legislation relevant to their needs and concerns.

Before the event started the youth broke into song, recalling the spirit of the generation that sacrificed their lives

for a democratic South Africa, free from the yoke of apartheid repression. The theme of this Youth Parliament was "Following up on our commitments to the youth: Partnering with the youth to strengthen local governance."

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Thandi Modise, emphasised the need for South Africa to use the opportunity afforded by this commemoration to reflect on how far our country has come and what its future course will be. "We have gathered here today as Members of Parliament and as youth from all provinces and we are all concerned about what the future holds for us. It becomes important in times like these for us to reflect, because if you cannot remember who you were yesterday you will find it very difficult to chart a way to the future. It is important to ask who we are, where we come from and what we stand for."



**FOLLOWING UP ON OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE YOUTH:** Presiding over the opening of the National Youth Parliament (from left), Parliament's Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Thandi Modise, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete and the Speaker of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, Ms Ntombi Mekgwe.

The Speaker of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, Ms Ntombi Mekgwe, expressed her gratitude for being the host of this important event. "The Gauteng Provincial Legislature is proud to have the opportunity to host this inaugural conversation between the South African legislative sector and the youth of South Africa."

She emphasised the symbolism of hosting this event at the birthplace of the Freedom Charter, a document that formed the basis of the Constitution. "The National Youth Parliament takes place a few days after the celebration of the Freedom Charter. Sixty-one years ago, our forebearers gathered at this venue to chart the future South Africa that was desired. The Freedom Charter was born.

"June 16 marked the day when the young people showed their collective courage and strength in death-defying activities, as they faced the might of the erstwhile apartheid crime against humanity. This bravery earned the youth of 1976 the name of the young lions. The June 16 uprising marked a historic turning point in the history of our struggle and gave impetus to the demise of apartheid and colonialism and all its vestiges," Ms Mekgwe said.

She contextualised the aim of this event. "The National Youth Parliament provides an opportunity for a reflection on the progress that our democracy has made and the challenges that we face. It provides an opportunity for young people to partner with the legislatures to strengthen oversight over the executive, improve public involvement on all legislative processes, ensure that the laws passed are relevant, address the socio-economic needs of young people and enable improved quality of life for everyone, young people in particular."

In her keynote address, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete, urged young people to learn from the generation of 1976, who never burnt down a single public facility during their fight against "Bantu education", but expressed their displeasure in the delivery of services in other ways.

Addressing hundreds of young people from all nine provinces during the National Youth Parliament, Ms Mbete said South Africans should have a dialogue on how communities put across their demands for services.

"It is perplexing to see that in our communities, schools, libraries, clinics and community centres are torched and burned to the ground. This rogue behaviour is unacceptable and hurts the very people who need these facilities most: our youth and the vulnerable.

"We should remember that not a single school was burnt during the 16 June 1976 student uprising. Just recently, we witnessed students doing the unthinkable by burning university buildings on some campuses and destroying other facilities and furniture, just to communicate that they cannot afford the fees," said the Speaker.

Ms Mbete called the burning down of schools "unforgivable and totally unacceptable conduct, which goes against the spirit of our great heroes of 1976. We have it in our power to stop this tragedy, which goes against the spirit of our great heroes of 1976.

"I therefore call on the youth, in particular, and leaders in communities to be at the forefront of reconstruction and development, rather than breaking down that which brings the promise of lifting our people out of poverty and a brighter future," she said.

"Rising to the call of 1976 and indeed the youth of today, our government continues to prioritise education as an instrument of liberation. Thus education, as a key to development and a better life, receives the biggest chunk of the budget."

The Youth Parliament is held every year during the month of June, usually in Parliament in Cape Town, to commemorate the 1976 youth uprisings in which students protested against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the 16 June Soweto uprisings and the commemoration was held in Kliptown, a historic site for South Africa's struggle for liberation, where the Freedom Charter was adopted on 26 June 1955.

"In June, we also commemorate the anniversary of the Freedom Charter, which was held on 26 June 1955 in Kliptown, spelling out the people's vision of the kind of South Africa they desired," the Speaker said.

The Speaker also paid tribute to the generation of 1976, some of whom attended the opening of the Youth Parliament. They included former Member of Parliament Mr Danny Montsitsi, Deputy Secretary to Parliament Ms Baby Tyawa; CEO of the Women's Development Bank Ms Totsi Memela, and Mr Jabu Khumalo from the Each One, Teach One Foundation.

"Today many of the youth of 1976 are giving fruition to the Freedom Charter by contributing towards the reconstruction of a democratic South Africa in many sectors of the country and the world. Indeed, the struggle and sacrifices of the youth of 1976 were not in vain," said the Speaker.

# Burning down schools 'foolish' - Deputy Speaker

**Three** *Commissions discussed topics affecting youth people in South Africa today during Youth Parliament. After the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli welcomed the delegates, youth attending the Commission on Higher Education spoke about issues of concern to them in tertiary education, writes Mava Lukani.*

The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Leshesa Tsenoli, told young people in Soweto during the opening of the two-day 40th anniversary of 16 June 1976 in Kliptown, Soweto recently that violence and anarchy are the antithesis of the order that is symbolic of the democratic dispensation.

Democracy was won at a heavy price, paid for in the painful persecution and death of many young people during the struggle against apartheid, he said.

He appealed to the young people to begin the promotion of constructive

engagement in frank debate when putting their views across.

“Be mindful always that when you have a view on something, somebody else has a different one and for you to ensure that yours wins, use the art of debate – not physical means or violence,” he said.

He said the promotion of the spirit of healthy and constructive debate among young people is part of the 40th anniversary of the 16 of June 1976 programme where three commissions discussed topics affecting young people in South Africa today.

The commissions addressed youth and economic opportunities; youth and access to education; and the role of youth in creating social cohesion, transformation and participation in decision-making.

The commissions were chaired by the relevant chairpersons of parliamentary Committees. To strengthen the commissions, Legislative Sector South Africa invited some legendary veterans of 16 June 1976 to participate in the commissions and share their experiences with the young people.

## Youth still leads the education struggle

**Heroes** *of 1976 took part in the commission on youth and access to education, bringing their past experience into the current debate on access to education. Mava Lukani reports.*

The Chairpersons of the youth and access to education Ms Nomalungelo Gina and Ms Cornelia September told the youth attending that commission that young people embody the values of innovation, critical thinking,

militancy, boldness and bravery from other sectors of the society. The nature of the young people in any society is to act as catalysts at the forefront in struggles for change.

“Use your natural innovation and thinking talents to deal with the challenges that face education in your time. You are fortunate, unlike the 1976 youth that was chained by apartheid. You live in a democratic dispensation. Deal with the challenges in constructive, productive and dynamic ways,” said Ms Gina.

The co-chairpersons of the plenary urged the young people to discuss the issues of education from provincial perspectives, as provincial youth parliaments had taken place before this one, which was hosted by Legislative Sector South Africa and was the culmination of the provincial parliaments. “Let the resolutions from your provinces be open to national



**LEADERSHIP:** The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli.

scrutiny to ensure the delivery of solid and workable national resolutions,” said Ms Gina.

Also participating in the commission on youth and access to education, a former 1976 student leader who was part of the Morris Isaacson High School student uprising, Ms Kefilwe Mathibe, emphasised the importance of school infrastructure, including libraries and laboratories.

“We ensured that our struggle avoided burning schools and all the critical school resources, including books. We targeted bottle stores and government buildings that were the symbols of oppression, such as municipal offices,” Ms Mathibe explained.

Ms Mathibe told the young people to refrain from participating in violent, destructive protests that destroy school property. “Be the defenders of your schools. Tell whoever wants to destroy a school, library or a road in your community that it is wrong [to do so]. Those are the public resources you need to nurture, build and strengthen your futures,” she said.

“You live in a time of amazing technological innovation. Unlike the youth of 1976, you don’t rely on pamphlets to organise meetings. You press keys on your cellphones to promote a progressive move and to condemn a counter-revolutionary one.”

In dealing with the topic on youth access to education, the commission

raised a variety of questions, which included ways to stop the culture of destroying public property by the youth during protests. Possible solutions included the promotion of patriotism among young people. The young people said that if that spirit can be promoted, no one would destroy something of which he or she takes ownership. No one would even open the school gate irresponsibly. People would begin handling their schools with great care. When that spirit exists there will be a guaranteed and permanent stoppage of that violence.

The young people from all the provinces demanded compulsory, inclusive and free education. According to them, the principle of autonomy



**CHAIRPERSON: Ms Nomalungelo Gina (second from left) participates in a breakaway session at the National Youth Parliament.**

of the South African universities is a camouflage for the perpetuation of white privilege. This principle and other related principles must be scrapped with immediate effect. The government must be in charge of the universities, the young people urged.

The merger of the historically privileged and underprivileged universities and technical colleges was criticised for not delivering the expected benefits to historically disadvantaged students.

Highlighting examples of the failures of mergers, the commission agreed that they had failed to put an end to the

perpetuation of inequality at the higher level of education in South Africa. In most merged institutions, be it a merged university or technical college, the historically advantaged campuses still retain their historical advantages. The historically disadvantaged ones are still impoverished, even in the merged situation, the young people said.

The provincial delegates agreed in the commission that a merger as a tool remains a solution theoretically, but must be translated qualitatively on the ground to ensure the end of the perpetuation of inequalities. Among those universities named as examples

of mergers that had not delivered the expected results were North West University in the North West Province, Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Western Cape.

Other problems were highlighted in the formal plenary sitting of the Youth Parliament, which took place on the second day of the programme and was attended by the relevant Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

The young people made suggestions to government to improve the system



of education in South Africa and to make it accessible to all, especially the historically excluded children of the poorest of the poor.

Delegates appealed to the government to mobilise the private sector to provide funding for education.

“The private sector plays a very minimal role in education currently here in South Africa. Start where the former and the late President of South Africa Mr Nelson Mandela stepped in by mobilising the private sector to play a role in South African education,” said Mr Sidwell Ximba of the Northern Cape

Province.

“We used to watch on television as new schools donated by the private sector opened in the townships and villages. It’s very rare to see that on television lately after the old man retired and passed away,” said Mr Kholiswa Siyaya of the Eastern Cape, also referring to Mr Mandela.

Provincial delegates appealed to government to strengthen the administration of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). They said the centralisation of NSFAS at universities and technical colleges

is the source of problems that beset the scheme. Young people called for the decentralisation of NSFAS at universities.

“A lot of NSFAS money does not reach the right and legitimate recipients. Centralisation of the scheme at multi-campus institutions is at the core of the problem of corruption and fraud,” said Mr Mlungisi Peteni of the Eastern Cape.

The young people called for an end to tendering for school nutrition and scholar transport. They said young people, as the recipients of the nutrition and transport schemes, must

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MP:**

Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa.

be encouraged to form cooperatives responsible for scholar transport and school nutrition in their communities.

“Both school nutrition and scholar transport systems are rendered unable to eliminate transport and nutrition challenges in communities where they are applied because of corruption and fraud,” said Ms Virginia Alberts of the North West province.

The young people appealed to the government to provide protection services to schools. According to them, the role of the South African Police Service (SAPS) in the protection of schools is very minimal.

They pointed at the burning of 27 schools at Vuwani in the Limpopo province recently as evidence supporting their argument about minimal SAPS prevention role at schools especially in rural areas. The young people appealed to the government’s Intelligence services to play a role in obtaining information about the destruction of schools.

The nonexistence of a structure responsible for the implementation of the resolutions of the Youth Parliament was raised as a serious problem. “We are an official parliament, like other parliaments. Our resolutions should be taken seriously and be implemented, as are resolutions taken by other parliaments,” one delegate said.

Giving the government’s response to

**DEPUTY MINISTER OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING:**  
Mr Mduzuzi Manana.

some of the challenges highlighted, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Mduzuzi Manana, said the government is trying to find solutions to the challenges. One problem was the lack of relevant skills.

“People have irrelevant skills. We are ensuring that young people acquire relevant skills, skills that are needed by industry,” said Mr Manana.

He said career guidance is central to what they do in the Department of Higher Education and Training. “We are working hard to ensure that technical and vocational education and training colleges are attractive centres of relevant skills,” Mr Manana said.

Asked by InSession for his view about the issues raised in the commissions and in the formal sitting of the Youth Parliament, a Member of the National Assembly and also a young person, Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, said the great challenge is the fact that the resolutions taken at youth parliaments do not see the light of day. “Remember that the Youth Parliament takes place in June of every year and its resolutions do not get implemented,” said Mr Hlengwa.

He believes that a parliamentary committee for young people is required. “There needs to be a permanent structure in Parliament with a mandate to ensure the implementation of the brilliant resolutions agreed upon and adopted by the youth,” Mr Hlengwa said.





# Youth at the centre of economic development

**Participating** *in a commission to debate the youth and economic development as part of Youth Parliament in Kliptown, Soweto, the Minister of Economic Development, Mr Ebrahim Patel believes that the Youth Parliament can also be used to hold the executive accountable for promises they made to young people, writes Sakhile Mokoena.*

“Maybe next year when the Youth Parliament convenes, it must start with a report by the National Executive where we table all the facts and figures, and all the examples. We use the Youth Parliament to ask some of the tough questions, to hold us accountable, show us where we

are making mistakes, but also praise us in those cases where we are getting it right,” Mr Patel said.

The Youth Parliament is held every year during the month of June, usually in Parliament in Cape Town, to

commemorate the 1976 youth uprisings where students fought against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools. The Youth Parliament programme has over the years evolved to become an important platform for the youth to have a say in the country’s policy-making process through exchanging ideas with Members of Parliament, legislatures and the executive.

Mr Patel said the outcomes of the Youth Parliament must be given due weight by government when developing policies, as young people make up the majority of the population and their views cannot be ignored.

“The youth are also represented at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac). The benefit of that is to include many of those things when policies are discussed. The youth are entitled to send representatives to Parliament and in all the Committees. When we pass a law or deal with a policy, we want to hear what young people want and we go out of our way as MPs to encourage that. We need



**MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

Mr Ebrahim Patel.

local government level.

“We have good plans in the NDP, but what is lacking is implementation. It is worse in our local government sphere, when you look into the IDPs of the municipalities. There are very few that speak to the NDP. We should put economic development at the centre of municipalities and ensure the implementation of NDP resolutions that are youth focused,” Mr Masondo said.

Minister Patel acknowledged this observation and promised that government was already making efforts to ensure that municipalities are aligned with the NDP.

“You are right that some of the IDPs don’t reflect the national priorities, but we have begun to shift from that. The Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Mr Madala Masuku, has visited all nine provinces, starting with the metros, to assist them in making sure that their plans are aligned to the National Development Plan,” Mr Patel explained.

Another delegate, Mr Lungile Bulwa, from Buffalo City in the Eastern Cape, also said the NDP must find expression in the IDPs and advised that local municipalities must involve the South African Youth Council during the development of IDPs. “This will ensure that the youth voice is fairly represented in municipalities’ IDPs,” he said.

Ms Nokuthula Sithole from the Free State said IDP time frames are a problem. “The conditions we face now will not be the same in 30 years. It makes the feasibility of measuring implementation difficult because conditions will have changed.”

Summit participants also advised Parliament and provincial legislatures to ensure that the Youth Parliament is not just a road show, but that resolutions taken there are endorsed and implemented.

They also proposed that government, state-owned enterprises and the private sector should invest in the development of youth-owned small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperatives to further assist in developing a youth economic development policy.

Minister Patel said the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) has set aside R4.5bn to support efforts by young people to form businesses. “We want South African-owned businesses to prosper and already we have allocated money to young people. An amount of R3.8m has been set aside to assist youth-run businesses in the chemical industry; machinery and equipment for young people has been given R13.5m, tourism R23m, agro-processing R37m, clothing and textiles R62m, heavy manufacturing R104m, media R300m and industrial infrastructure R438m. It is not enough but it is a solid start and we need to do more.”

One suggestion from delegates was that the youth had a useful contribution to make to the partnership of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (Brics) partnership, a move Mr Patel said was already under discussion.

“The Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Mr Buti Manamela, went to Russia late last year as part of an effort to get the Brics countries to talk about youth issues. We had youth representatives from Brics present at that discussion.”

Youth participating in the Parliament called on government to look into the operations of foreign-owned shops, alleging that they did not employ locals or pay tax. Minister Patel assured the youth that government would consider these issues, because the government is accountable to the people.

He said the energy, passion and innovation of young people are necessities for any developing economy and without the

to do more to let you know where those opportunities are.

“In all of the work that we do we try to increase efforts to bring more young people into employment, to encourage them to create their own companies. It’s what South Africa needs. It is a promise we need to make in Youth Month. It is a promise you must hold us to account for every year,” the Minister said.

The country’s ambitious National Development Plan (NDP) to end poverty and under-development by the year 2030 dominated discussions on economic development. A proposal was made that the NDP should also be reflected in local municipalities’ Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

During one commission discussion, youth delegate Mr Brian Masondo from KwaZulu-Natal’s Zululand region applauded the NDP as a good plan for the country, but criticised its lack of implementation at

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active participation of the youth the economy will be poorer.

“Without young people, the economy will be poorer and, indeed, because young people are not fully represented in our economy, we see that our own economy is poorer than it could be. Youth empowerment is not an act of charity by the old towards the young. It is not even a matter of equity. It is a fundamental requirement if we want to have a strong, growing and inclusive economy. Look at the world out there. One part of the global economy that’s growing rapidly is the ICT sector – Facebook, Google and others.

“Who came up with those ideas?  
Young people. The passion, energy and innovation that young people bring to an economy is absolutely necessary for us,” Mr Patel said.

“We are not doing them a favour when we make sure young people come into the economy as active participants. We are looking after the economy,” he said.

He also explained the impact on the South African economy of the vote by Great Britain to exit the European Union.

“Globally, we are in a period of turbulence. A week or so ago, the people of Britain voted to leave the European Union and you may ask what this has to do with us. South Africa has its own capital base, but some of the money that we need comes from other countries. When the British economy suffers, some of the foreign investments may not come here.

“Pension funds in South Africa currently invest money in the London Stock Exchange and if the British pound collapses it means the capital base of South Africa becomes smaller. When we make clothing, microphones or cars in South Africa we sell them here, but we also sell them to other countries and when those countries are in trouble it creates job losses here,” he explained.

He said South Africa must find policies

on the African continent, with Brics partners to chart a road to development. “The global economy is not growing fast enough and that means more work needs to be done here. We also now need to begin to expand our own markets and our neighbours’ markets. This we must do within the reality of the technology we can generate, the capital that we have, the skills base of our people and the innovation that we bring.”

Responding to the issue of foreign-owned shops, Minister Patel said government does not support xenophobia, but at the same time wants to make sure that local businesses also have space to operate.

“Next year we are going to have a series of public hearings to find out what makes it difficult for black South Africans to get space in the township to run successful, profitable spaza shops, retail outlets and other things like that. Is it that they don’t have access to cheap imports, access to capital, infrastructure in the townships? Whatever it is, your government must resolve that. We must make sure that there is space for black and white young South Africans to come into the economy and be the drivers of the economy,” the Minister said.

Youth Parliament participant from the North West’s Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Mr Bongani Hlatshwayo raised his “disappointment” at the absence of the Reserve Bank and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) at the Youth Parliament, and urged Parliament to invite them in future.

“It is disappointing that we are discussing issues around the economic development of young people, yet we don’t have financial institutions, such as the South African Reserve Bank and the JSE. Next time it is imperative that we have such institutions within our midst so that we can engage with them,” he said.

He also proposed that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform must conduct an audit on all land previously



given to cooperatives with a view to leasing this to black youth cooperatives.

The government’s 12-month internship programme was criticised for what the youth said is a lack of a proper post-training plan. “We cannot have government learnership and internship that is limited to 12 months without a plan about what is going to happen to them when they exit the programme,” Mr Hlatshwayo said.

Another delegate, Ms Nomsa Majola, from the Northern Cape called on Parliament, provincial legislatures and government to conduct a skills audit to determine which skills are relevant for the country’s economic development.

“We need to have a thorough skills audit of young people because currently it seems we are all focusing on skills development, but we are running it haphazardly. We can’t even identify which skills are important for our country’s



economy and the future," she said. The Minister noted this concern and promised to take the young people's message to Cabinet. "The design of internship is only exposure for up to 12 months. Then you fall off the cliff. We see internship not as permanent employment, but as an experience of the workplace, but we can do more as government," Mr Patel said.

"We can do more to enrich that experience to make sure that in that internship period you are given counselling guidance on how to look for work or employment opportunities elsewhere in government. You walk out there with a well-structured CV. You have references from the department. We need to do more like that," he said.

Former Member of Parliament and veteran of the June 16 Soweto uprising Mr Dan Montsitsi said it was time South Africa developed skills to process its raw

minerals to be cut, polished and refined and come back. That industry has to be established in South Africa.

"In order for us to get skilled and highly professional doctors, we take our youth to Cuba. This is good, because the Cubans are the best in the world in the medical field. We take cars from two different countries, Germany and Japan, and we assemble them in South Africa. We are not manufacturing, we are assembling cars that are made in other countries.

"For skills development to take place, let's tell the Germans and the Japanese to take our young people from South Africa to be part and parcel of their manufacturing industry in those countries.

"Let there not only be skills to assemble cars from other countries. Let there be skills to manufacture a South African car, a car that we can sell in Africa. We were confronted with a political demon, apartheid. We brought it to its knees. The

growth of our economy is confronting you," said Mr Montsitsi.

Another veteran of the 1976 generation, Mr Jabu Khumalo, from the non-governmental educational organisation Each One, Teach One, said: "As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, we need to understand that at the heart of the struggle against Bantu education was the struggle against the apartheid system, which was the oppression and exploitation of the majority of the people.

"We understand that the youth are an instrument for change. We also understand that the youth are the nerve centre of our society and that the youth have the ability to transform a society. If the youth don't appreciate and understand what constitutes a society, what norms govern the development of society, it means our response to the challenges facing us as youth and society may also be flawed."

# Youth consider social cohesion

**Youth** delegates from all nine provinces attended the commission on social cohesion to address their concerns in building a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa, writes *Abel Mputing*.

The Commission on Youth and Social Cohesion is related to what June 16 and many other struggles were about. Their common purpose was to build a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society, said the Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Mr Buti Manamela, who gave a greater context of the relevance of today's youth in championing this ideal.

"These are principles we need to cohere around. These are principles enshrined in our Constitution and our policy positions. Recently, there has been intentionally divisive tendencies aimed at breaking these hard-won principles of our democratic institution. This is exemplified by what our Parliament has now turned out to be, he said. We need to declare that such behaviour needs not to happen in our names. Although there are rights inscribed in our Constitution, there are also responsibilities that go with these rights," he said.

"We also need to interrogate what militancy means in our present context and ask ourselves what lesson can we draw from the militancy of the June 16 uprising, he said. "What youth militancy means today as opposed to June 16 1976 and in relation to the society we want to build. As the youth, we need to reflect on that in the course of this event," he said.

"We also need to emphasise that despite our diverse racial backgrounds, the futures of our identities are cut from the same cloth. Despite our racial and ethnic backgrounds, what unites us as a nation is our shared identity. As diverse as we are, we all share this country. And our future is based on our shared identity, which is now faced with many

challenges. And if we don't learn to live in harmony with one another, we stand to lose this country."

There is now a more urgent need than ever to inculcate the culture of youth service and citizenship, he said. "One of the big projects we are about to finish with regard to its conceptualisation is the national youth service. Through Parliament we will be engaging youth formations to foster social cohesion through the national youth service. It could be through these national programmes that the ideals enshrined in our Constitution can be achieved," he said.

Vuyiseka Mboxela, a youth delegate from the Eastern Cape province, said: "I come from the Eastern Cape and we propose that we look at the culture of circumcision and what challenges it is faced with and how we can ensure that it is practised safely to circumvent the high death rate associated with it. And how it can continue to be the pride of our traditions that foster social cohesion."

What is the role of the National Development Plan in creating cohesion among youth? She said the youth must be freed from all forms of economic discrimination. "Currently, there are many development projects in the Eastern Cape, but few young people are involved or benefit from them. Our submission is that the youth needs to participate in our country's economy if they are to be agents of change and development."

She added: "The youth that constitutes 60% of our population must be reflected in all spheres of life. It must not



only be reflected in our census, but must find expression in our daily economic realities through the utilisation of young graduates for sustainable progress in our province."

Social cohesion and unity won't happen by itself. If we speak of social cohesion we need to ensure that as much as we, black pupils, are compelled to use English as a medium of instruction at schools, our fellow white pupils must also be encouraged to learn our African languages. In doing so, they will be learning something about our cultures, said Tshepo Lekwape, a youth delegate from the Gauteng province.

"We need not conform to any form of assimilation that is fostered by our education system that elevates English above other languages. This is what creates cultural disparities and that defeats social cohesion."

Social cohesion can also find expression through sport, he said. "We need to encourage the black child to play rugby, we must not regard it as a white sport or soccer as a black sport. These are barriers that can be broken at school level at an early age."



**DEMOCRACY IN ACTION:** Delegates raise their hands to participate during the National Youth Parliament.

There are other elements of ubuntu that can be promoted at schools to underpin social cohesion, he said.

There is a need for a youth indaba on cultural practices such as virginity testing and others, said Nwabisa Dano, a youth delegate from KwaZulu-Natal province. "We need to educate people about them so that they can appreciate their origins and their current challenges. We also need to determine their relevance in our current context and how they can be made to foster social cohesion rather than being divisive."

One of the contributing factors to our country's racial problem is the issue of land, said Nomfundo Zwane, a youth delegate from the Gauteng province.

"The white minority becomes agitated when the land issue is raised and the black majority is also entitled to raise the economic disparity that was created by the dispossession of their land. This problem has deferred the economic emancipation of black people. And that process needs to be fast-tracked to level the playing fields and empower black people to guarantee their active economic participation."

The youth of today must proclaim that there is nothing for us without us, she added. "There should be steering committees – where the youth will be represented – that will ensure that all the policy decisions taken to advance the cause of the youth are implemented from local government level to national government."

The social cohesion debate should be everyone's business, not a responsibility of black people, said Moleboheng Motsumi, a youth delegate from the Free State province.

"The debate on social cohesion is everyone's business. But the constant absence of our fellow white youth in these debates leaves much to be desired. It is debates such as these that should unite us in our endeavour to address our divisive history."

Our Constitution as well as our National Development Plan proclaim our rights as youth, but these rights don't translate into what is happening on the ground, said Herman Rachidi, a youth delegate from the Limpopo province. "What is proclaimed by our Constitution and the NDP is contrary to what is happening on

the ground. We still have an unequal, unjust society in this country that is not a breeding ground for social cohesion. And if these disparities still afflict a large section of our society, it would be difficult to attain this noble cause."

Given our recent xenophobic attacks, it is disquieting that this issue has not been raised, said Haroldene Tshienda, a youth delegate from the Western Cape province. "Throughout this commission I have not heard anyone expressing the need for us to embrace foreign nationals as our endeavour to foster social cohesion because they are one of us and they live in our communities.

"But most of all, given their business acumen, we can foster business learnerships that can transfer their business acumen to our youth," she said.

"These programmes with business-minded foreign nationals can help our youth gain valuable skills in various forms of businesses. That will not only foster social cohesion between them and the locals, but will also help in producing a new breed of young entrepreneurs and such initiatives can go a long way in arresting youth unemployment."



## Youth must work together for a brighter tomorrow

**In** *In her closing remarks at the National Youth Parliament, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete, commended the input that the youth delegates made in their deliberations in various commissions, writes **Abel Mputing**.*

“We can say with confidence that the quality of inputs in various commissions was very good. A lot of content that emanated from these deliberations presented a whole range of issues that need to be taken further.

“I want to highlight that today we

saw practically that democracy is hard work,” she made this remark referring to the differences of opinion that emerged during the National Youth Parliament plenary session, which had the status and decorum of a parliamentary sitting. “What it requires is that we should all be ready to say

our bit, and say what we want to say with respect, but also to allow others to say what they want to say even if you disagree with what they have to say. Much as you feel strongly about your views, you need to give others space to say what they want to say,” she said.

She said the youth must learn from the disagreements that were aired – some of which delayed the plenary – that differences in opinion can enrich each other’s perspectives.

“The fact that we have different

**SPEAKER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: Ms Baleka Mbete**

She urged the youth delegates to go back to their respective provinces to identify unsung heroes and work to ensure that their heroic and selfless roles are not excluded from the liberation struggle's history of this country. "Let's continue to identify, recognise, celebrate and acknowledge those who fought for our freedom and democracy. We must see how we can do more to erect monuments to recognise human sacrifices."

As a sector we will have a detailed record of the National Youth Parliament proceedings and will look at areas that need to be taken forward, she said. "Much of what has been discussed here will be processed to relevant Committees, especially when there are new ideas that need further examination by certain Portfolio Committees in Parliament to make sure that they use them as references for their oversight work."

"The proposal that it is not enough to have only one National Youth Parliament a year is a consideration that needs to be looked at seriously, but in so doing we should also take into consideration the issue of resources," she said.

"We would like to use this opportunity to say, hopefully, that we have all learnt lessons out of this event, but democratic practice is hard work. It requires the willingness to take your space, but to also give space to others and to do things with respect, responsibility and pride. As we chart our future, we must recognise the

bravery of the 'young lions' who laid down their lives for our freedom and democracy," she said.

In his remarks, the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Raseriti Tau, said: "We have been blessed by your presence. Most importantly, let me thank those who made the history that we are here to observe and for igniting what has brought us here today. We should not lose sight of their sacrifices. We also pay tribute to the veterans for being with us, for sharing their experiences with us," he said.

He told the delegates how Parliament's Committees will address the issues raised. "The primary function of Committees is to pass legislation, to conduct public participation and oversight and to hold the executive accountable. We will make sure that Committees are capacitated to be able to relate to what has been said today. It is now the responsibility of Members of Parliament to ensure that our Committees respond to the challenges and opportunities raised."

"The youth has stated unambiguously: 'Nothing about us without us'. You have made that call loudly and clearly and you must live up to its expectation on 3 August," he said.

"Exercise your rights and vote. Help to shape a future for this country that is non-racial, democratic and prosperous, a country we can all live in, a country in which we and our children can be assured of a brighter future," he said.

opinions must not be a source of any form of a stalemate or disruption. Instead, we need to harness these differing opinions and manage them in a way that will enhance each other's understanding and knowledge. The challenge is how we say what we want to say without disrupting each other.

"In the past two days we had an opportunity to visit commemorative and historic sites of our liberation struggle to relive the spirit of the sacrifices made by many for the attainment of our freedom and democracy," she said.

"I hope that your visits to these sites have exposed the youth to what it took to be where we are today. I hope the youth also witnessed and had a sense of the strides made by others for the advancement of their future."

# Meet the 1976 Soweto generation

**InSession** spoke to some veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle who started their activism as teenagers in those fateful days of June in 1976. They shared their memories of those historic days with **Moira Levy**, **Sakhile Mokoena** and **Mava Lukani**.

## **Ms Baby Tyawa, Deputy Secretary of Parliament: Support Services.**

Forty years later, Ms Baby Tyawa can still recall in detail that historic walk, following school assembly, out of the gates of Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto and down the main road heading into Orlando West. The aim was simple: to hand over a petition at Orlando Stadium protesting against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

It was a chilly day in mid-winter, she recalls, and the mood was upbeat, as they were joined along the way by throngs of students from other local Soweto schools, bearing posters and chatting to friends.

Then came word that a young boy had been shot. Voices rang out over police loudhailers: "We are giving you five minutes to disperse, or we will disperse you." At that point they had to turn around and run for their lives.

"You cannot disperse 1 000-plus students in five minutes," she points out the obvious. "There had been no anger expressed, no stoning. That only erupted after the police came on to the scene.

"Havoc broke out, live bullets were shot. There was a stampede. There was teargas. We didn't even know what teargas was. It was stinging, horrible."

The march itself grew out of a process of political education and a series of

meetings held by the learners' South African Students Movement (SASM), which had been influenced in turn by the South African Students Organisation (Saso), active at tertiary education institutions.

Students had heard of Nelson Mandela, they had read about Sharpeville, but "there were no formations at that time," Ms Tyawa remembers. The black consciousness movement, gaining support among educated black youth, introduced notions of pride, confidence and a new strength from being African.

Thus, even before the momentous events of 16 June, the students of Soweto were already well aware of the horrors of apartheid and the blatant discrimination of Bantu education. Ms Tyawa recalls in particular one teacher who introduced them to the knowledge that despite the might of the apartheid state, there was already an evolving underground movement, one that was in contact with the newly liberated Frontline States.

But, 40 years later, she realises that the significance of the day did not immediately register with the students. Having made their point that they did not want to be taught in Afrikaans under an unequal education system, two-thirds of the students went back to school the next day, expecting to continue their education. However, the police arrived and surrounded the school, arresting everyone from the principal down. It became clear that life would never be the same again.

The first anniversary of June 16 found Ms Tyawa back in jail. "They made sure we didn't celebrate the anniversary. We were young and not as sophisticated as we were to become when we joined the underground. We were planning the anniversary openly when we were surrounded again by police. We were all arrested."

She sounds surprised as she relives the students' shock at their treatment at the hands of the police, the trial that followed where she was one who refused to give evidence against her comrades. The result was almost two years of solitary confinement.

That was just the start. Though still a teenager, she became used to the years of harassment during which she was repeatedly detained under apartheid's barbaric legislation, moved from prison to prison around the country, tortured and subjected to emotional abuse.

"It was frightening. When they took you to the [interrogation room on the] ninth floor of John Vorster Square police station, you just prayed, you cried."

Now a Deputy Secretary to Parliament, Ms Tyawa is part of a generation that made an indelible mark on the future of South Africa. She was just 16 when she was incarcerated for two years in solitary confinement, but caught up with lost years of schooling by eventually studying matric by correspondence through Unisa, and was rewarded by being granted a scholarship to study abroad. Perhaps



**DEPUTY SECRETARY TO PARLIAMENT:**

Ms Baby Tyawa.

it made up for some lost opportunity, but how can anyone make up for teenage years lost.

For her and many others, that was the start of formalised political activism. First came the Student Representative Councils (SRCs), then the umbrella body of Soweto SRCs (SSRC), and later the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) was formed, with Ms Tyawa as one of its founders.

She praised the role played by international activists and the churches.

“After that I realised I could survive this. And there was a sense of purpose now, political resolve. There were strong networks. I began to read about separate development, the Land Act. I began to be very politically conscious. It became my life.”

It was a life of underground contacts with comrades in Botswana and Lesotho, bringing guns into South Africa, building structures in the country, creating dead letter boxes, distributing banned material, delivering of messages from exiled comrades.

It’s an experience she believes must be shared with the youth of today. Mindful of what she learned from that struggle, she says there is a mentoring and coaching role for the Soweto generation. But her experience has taught her humility as well as an understanding of a need to support people and form networks “that can grow you and not destroy you”.



### Mr Mnyamezeli Booi, Member of Parliament

"I have never told my story before," MP Mr Mnyamezeli Booi, said as he recounted his experiences in detention and of working in the African National Congress underground in the aftermath of the June 1976 uprising.

He repeated this again while walking away from an interview with Parliament's Spokesperson Mr Luzuko Jacobs, in a tone that suggested surprise and a degree of disbelief.

He almost seemed to be wondering himself how he had lived for more than half a lifetime burdened by the experience of being tortured by the apartheid security police, and the years spent in hiding and on the run, without ever having an opportunity to share that memory.

How could he have buried those experiences when he is faced daily with the scars on his wrists, still visible, left by the handcuffs used by the state security officers who suspended him for hours on end hanging upside down from a broomstick, in a common torture practice from that time, euphemistically called "the helicopter".

"I have never even shown my mother these scars," he muttered, almost to himself, as he ended his story.

His mother – "always my pillar" – looms large in his story, determinedly unbowed by the notorious Security Branch while Mr Booi and his brother spent years in detention and on trial and their sister fled into exile at the age of 13.

Mr Booi's memories take him back to before 1976, where as a child on the

brutal receiving end of apartheid he was prepared early on to embrace black consciousness when it emerged. By the time the 1976 uprising swept across South Africa, as a youngster of 18, he understood the notion: "Black man, you are on your own. All you have to do is break the chains that bind you."

It was the teachings of Steve Biko, he said, that gave the youth the courage, and prepared them psychologically to free themselves from the indoctrination of oppression and challenge white power.

He recalls the funeral of Steve Biko – the crowds, the tributes, the songs – as an experience that changed his life, and gave him the strength to get through what was still to come. "As African youth that is when we decided we would fight apartheid."

By the time he attended the funeral in Graaff-Reinet of Pan-Africanist Congress leader Robert Sobukwe, Mr Booi was militant. "By then funerals had become assembly points, [places] to exchange views and learn about what has happened in the African liberation movements."

It was also the support and guidance of the South African Council of Churches and the religion it brought into his life that kept him going, he says.

His political life began in the black consciousness-based South African Students Movement (SASM). But debates with comrades and the leadership of the Black People's Convention (BPC) raised questions for him. He found himself asking what kind of society he wanted.

The youth of the Soweto 1976

generation debated what role there was for the ANC as the national liberation movement. He heard people argue "these older people sold us out. They have left the country. We have to make our own way."

Yet, through debate and over time, it was the non-racial, non-sexist model of the Freedom Charter that "became attractive to me". Driving whites from the country did not present a viable solution to him. As more young people shared his thinking SASM dissolved and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) emerged in its place.

With that dramatic change in ideology his life in the ANC underground began. Through secret trips to the ANC in Lesotho and messages from Botswana he got his instructions.

His schooling was interrupted when he was told to take up a leadership role in the 1980 boycott in the Eastern Cape, and his life on the run from the police began, punctuated by several spells in detention, in Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth and Aliwal North.

It was during an attempt to leave the country for exile that he was detained at the notorious prison in Aliwal North. Accused of involvement in uMkhonto weSizwe he was badly tortured. He was convinced he was facing a long prison sentence. He recalled that what kept him going were the birds that he heard outside the bars that sometimes settled on his window sill, bringing him signs of life outside.

Isolated in a remote prison outside Grahamstown, with no family or lawyers, where interrogation was almost welcomed because it brought some form of human contact, he

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT:**

Mr Mnyamezeli Boozi.

embarked on a hunger strike, fearful that no one knew where he was and that the security branch could do as they wanted with him.

On his release he returned to his underground work in MK, this time with even more conviction and determination.

“We were sharper then, more determined. When you have knowledge and ideological clarity, there is nothing that could stop you. An ideological system like apartheid that quite clearly was not for human beings could not stop you. You had to find an alternative system, a democratic system.

“That’s when we started to work really hard, started to build organisation across the country.”

After all he had suffered, Mr Boozi admits one of the most difficult moments came after 1990 when Mr Nelson Mandela, then still Commander-in-Chief of MK, called him and other MK combatants to the ANC headquarters and announced the suspension of the armed struggle.

His personal struggle with that, all these years later, is still evident, but he is at pains to explain, mainly to the youth of today, that it was at that moment that MK demonstrated the enormous discipline required of those committed to building a better future.

“Now we had to face the other, look into each other’s eyes, and talk to each about how we were going to take South Africa forward, leave the bitterness of the past that I had suffered at the hands of my torturers, and put the country first.”



### **Totsie Memela, Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Development Bank**

One of the 1976 struggle veterans, Ms Totsie Memela who participated in the 40th anniversary Youth Parliament, has compared the 1976 struggle against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools to the recent #FeesMustFall campaign for free tertiary education, saying both events were centred on education.

However, Ms Memela, the Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Development Bank, added that the youth of today have more advantages than her generation, which had to confront the brutal apartheid regime.

"Both the 1976 and the 2015/16 youth struggles were centred on education. Today's youth are advantaged because as much as they face challenges regarding access to funding, economic freedom and opportunities for jobs, they have freedom of association and can pursue any profession or career they choose.

"With us, if you were a woman, the only careers that you could choose from was to be a teacher or a nurse. You couldn't be an engineer. Today, young people can fly planes. Whether they are men or women, they can be engineers. They can choose where they want to contribute to the development of our nation.

"The struggle of 1976 related to a language issue, whilst the recent

**VETERAN ACTIVIST:** Ms Totsie Memela.

#FeesMustFall struggle relates to a wide range of issues but central to it is financial access to education to bridge the gap between rich and poor," she said.

Ms Memela said access to finance for education cannot be necessary for all, because some parents can afford to pay for their children's education. "But we need to ensure that those parents that cannot afford get access (to funding) for their children to access tertiary education.

"We had engagements with young leaders from different universities where we were looking ahead to ask where we want to be as a nation 40 years from now. It was exciting to acknowledge the fact that as students of 1976, the advantage we had was that we were disciplined cadres.

"We want to hope that as our young people chart their own path, they can take the responsibility of making sure that they become disciplined whilst they engage and demand their rights, particularly when it comes to issues that relate to education.

"I stand here with pride. It is because of the struggle of 1976 and the struggle before us that was charted by the youth that we are here today. Today we can say we can choose where we want to study. Of course this has to do with whether we have access to finance or not, but we can choose as young people which careers we want to pursue, the colour of our skin does



not define where we can be and what we can do.

"I stand here with pride, privilege and gratitude. Privilege because I was fortunate that coming from a family that I consider to have been destitute, my twin sister and I took the path and said we would pursue education and also ensure that we contributed to the struggle against apartheid, and that was a privilege.

"I stand here with gratitude because we were able to go to school, which was in many instances funded through the liberation struggle support that was galvanised by the international community, and we were also able



to be involved in the underground struggle,” she said.

Ms Memela also paid homage to her fellow comrades of the 1976 generation who did not live to see the fruits of their struggle. “I’m here not only for myself, but also for those who have passed on, and in their involvement in the struggle they did not live to see today. I stand here sad that many that were part of the 1976 struggle did not live to see today to celebrate together with us the 40th anniversary of June 16. I was privileged to serve under Khotso Seatlholo’s leadership, who served together with other women that were in the leadership at the time.”

She said it was unfortunate that women continued to suffer triple oppression in terms of gender, race and class. She urged young women to respect themselves, prove their potential and refrain from some of the challenges of today, such as teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse.

“I stand here as a mother in pain because I have seen the destruction that drugs can do to our communities and what they can do to families as we have seen recently with Comrade Hope (Zinde) where a child can take the life of a mother because of drug abuse,” said Ms Memela.

The veteran also warned the youth,

especially young women, against the modern trend of blessers (old rich men who spoil young girls in exchange for sexual favours). “Young women need to respect themselves and prove their potential and protect themselves from the phenomenon that has become a big thing in our country, the phenomenon of blessers which we have to work against as young girls and as parents.

“Much as we understand that in some instances it is because of lack of opportunities and because we want to change our lives, we cannot change our lives through blessers, especially because more opportunities exist for us today than in the past,” she said.



**STUDENT OF 1976:** Ms Kefilwe Mathibe.

in particular,” Ms Mathibe explained. Ms Mathibe was born in 1956 and grew up in Soweto. She enrolled at Morrison Isaacson High School in 1972. “I was formed, influenced and baptised politically at Morrison Isaacson by the people I admired and still admire. I am very proud about that part of my personal history.

“I didn’t anticipate the massacre to our non-violent and peaceful protest against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in the education of black people in South Africa on that fateful day of June 1976.”

Ms Mathibe said 16 June 1976 will always be remembered in the history of struggle against apartheid, largely because of the role that day played by showing young people the way to uMkhonto weSizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress inside and outside South Africa. “It is a fact that after 16 June 1976, the vibrancy of MK was not the same. It was changed by its 1976 detachment.”

After writing examinations in March 1977 and passing matric, Ms Mathibe enrolled at the University of Zululand in 1978 for a degree in social work, which she completed and subsequently became a social worker in KwaZulu-Natal. “While I worked as a social worker, I also worked in the political underground network of the ANC where I also joined MK.”

Ms Mathibe later joined the South African Council of Churches where she worked under Dr Brigalia Bam and Rev Frank Chikane. “It was at that time when I became exposed to the unspeakable viciousness of apartheid against black people in South Africa. That deepened my involvement in the underground of the ANC and in MK.”

Ms Mathibe praised the role of the Anglican Church in Soweto in 1976 and afterwards. “As some of us had no direction and knew nothing about the underground network of the ANC, the church gave us direction and offered

**Ms Kefilwe Mathibe, retired Brigadier-General in the SANDF**

“The 1976 Soweto student protest was not isolated from the broader national struggle against the system of apartheid, which was started by heroes and heroines, some of whom were in the South African prisons, underground, in exile and in the graves. [The uprising] was just a turning point and a new course of struggle against apartheid.”

These were the words of Ms Kefilwe Mathibe, one of the 1976 students who fearlessly took on apartheid. She

spoke to InSession at Kliptown during the Youth Parliament and the 40th anniversary celebrations of 16 June 1976. Ms Mathibe was a Grade 12 matric student at Morris Isaacson High School in 1976.

“I was among the group of students who supported the street action right from the beginning when it was explained by the leadership as the course of action to be taken to intensify the struggle against apartheid in general and Bantu education and the imposition of Afrikaans upon black students as the medium of instruction

the best counsel. It was the Anglican Church that became a safe bush for refuge for most of us.”

In 1994, after the first democratic general elections, Ms Mathibe joined the new South African National Defence Force where she became a Brigadier-General, a position she held until she retired at the beginning of 2016 at the age of 60. “As an activist, I can’t vanish into the world of passivity. I am a veteran activist, always watching jealously the gains [made because of] the sacrifices of the people who paid a very heavy and painful price for this constitutional democracy we enjoy today.”

#### **Ms Sarah Shakong, Parliamentary Constituency Office in Limpopo**

According to struggle veteran Ms Sarah Shakong, the severe torture and harassment she and others of her generation endured at the hands of the police in the aftermath of 16 June 1976 had unintended consequences for the police as it made a whole generation more aware of the horrors of apartheid.

Even children were not spared the brutality of apartheid police during the uprising – its first victim was the 13-year-old Hector Pieterse. The divide between black and white South Africans was glaring, according to Ms Sarah “Nkanini” Shakong, who was 14 years old in 1976. She described the response of the police to the peaceful demonstration of the high school students.

Sharing her experience of her involvement in the student struggle with InSession during the 40th anniversary celebrations of the June 16 1976 uprisings, Ms Shakong said she is proud about her history, particularly as she was one of those fearless protesters on the day.

“I salute our leadership on that day who sacrificed their lives under difficult and dangerous conditions. Among them was David Molapo, who was our leader at our school,” Ms Shakong said.

Ms Shakong was born in Kwa-Thema in Springs on 24 August 1962. She was in Standard 7 (now Grade 9) at Phulong Secondary School in 1976 when the protest broke out.

“It was on a Wednesday morning, June 16 1976, when students from other schools got into our school yard during the morning assembly singing revolutionary songs. While we were still shocked by the visit, teachers ran away for their lives,” said Ms Shakong.

“We spontaneously joined everything, the singing and the action. The then South African Defence Force troops surrounded each and every school in Kwa-Thema. But notwithstanding that intimidation, we proceeded to the Civic Centre for speeches and direction. The crux of the message was ‘Down with Afrikaans as medium of instruction and Bantu education’.”

Ms Shakong said her political journey began on that day when she went into hiding, because she was among the students who the police wanted to arrest. “Although I was on the run for days, changing hiding places, ultimately the police caught me and put me in custody at Gabedi police station. I spent two days sharing a cell with male comrades. That was where punishment in the form of torture, kicking, belittling and so on was the order of the day and where I endured an injury on my right thigh. In spite of that, police wouldn’t release me.”

According to Ms Shakong, the severe torture and harassment she and her generation endured at the hands of the police in the aftermath of June 16 was a political education, which had unintended consequences for the apartheid police. “The more the system put pressure on us to surrender, the more we became committed to the cause of liberation and our political convictions deepened,” she says.

Ms Shakong said the youth of that time listened to its leadership and regarded discipline as among the

pillars of the struggle against apartheid.

She said the youth of that time didn’t destroy property indiscriminately. “We identified our target correctly, as we sought to make a meaningful impact on apartheid and ensured that we maintained the moral and material support we enjoyed locally and from the international community.”

Convinced by the ideals enshrined in the Freedom Charter, Ms Shakong became a United Democratic Front activist in its various affiliates in the 1980s. One of those affiliates was the Limpopo province’s Sekhukhuni-based Lebowakgomo Youth Congress, or Leyco as it was called at the time.

In 1988 she met the late Mr Peter Mokaba, who was the President of the South African Youth Congress and who asked her to recruit women to join uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress.

“I readily accepted the order and recruited women to join MK and the ANC. In 1989, my house became a cell base for members of the ANC underground. I was their source for food, clothes, transport and political education.

“My message to young people is that they must be disciplined and ensure that their struggle enjoys the support of other sections of society because a struggle that doesn’t enjoy the support of other role players in society dies along the way.”

She said she always appeals to young people to read the history of the struggle against apartheid in order for them to take the fight against socio-economic inequalities forward.

Because of her passion to serve the people, Ms Shakong works in the Parliamentary Constituency Office in Lepelle in the Nkumpi Local Municipality, supporting the Member of the National Assembly, Kgosi Setlamorago Thobejane.



#### **OUR SOUTH AFRICA – THE SUN**

The sun heals the divisions of the past, improves the quality of life of all South Africans, frees the potential of each person and builds a united and democratic South Africa, taking its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.



#### **OUR PEOPLE – THE PROTEA LEAVES**

Our people, building on the foundation of a democratic and open society, freely elect representatives, acting as a voice of the people and providing a national forum for public consideration of issues.



#### **OUR PARLIAMENT – THE DRUM**

The drum calls the people's Parliament, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, to consider national and provincial issues, ensuring government by the people under the Constitution.



#### **OUR CONSTITUTION – THE BOOK**

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